AERE PERENNIUS

Mélanges égyptologiques en l'honneur de Pascal Vernus

édités par

PHILIPPE COLLOMBERT, DOMINIQUE LEFÈVRE,
STÉPHANE POLIS et JEAN WINAND

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

'HE ALMOST HEARD'*
A CASE STUDY OF DIACHRONIC REANALYSIS
IN COPTIC SYNTAX

Matthias MÜLLER & Sami ULJAS (University of Basel)

Résumé. La présente contribution analyse les changements syntaxiques subis par les constructions coptes exprimant le proximatif, « quelque chose a failli arriver ». Il s'avère que la construction la plus ancienne, une phrase nominale bipartite, fut plus tard considérée comme une proposition suivie d'une expression subordonnée. Ce processus a parcouru plusieurs stades intermédiaires qui se reflètent dans la documentation. Ces observations soulignent l'importance d'une perspective diachronique dans l'analyse des phénomènes grammaticaux coptes en général et de la syntaxe en particulier.

Abstract. The present paper examines the syntactic changes undergone by one of the constructions used in Coptic for the expression of proximative 'something almost happened'. It is shown that the diachronically earliest form thereof, a bipartite nominal sentence, was gradually reanalysed as consisting of a clause followed by an adjunct expression. This process went through several intermediary stages recognisable in the data. The findings underline the importance of a diachronic perspective in analysing Coptic grammatical phenomena in general and syntax in particular.

Treatises on the grammar of Pharaonic and generally pre-Coptic language commonly take the division between synchrony and diachrony very seriously indeed. For instance, when the aim is to discuss matters from a

---

synchronic perspective, readers are usually presented with an outline of
what the author envisages as constituting the language stage studied and
all material that does not meet the criteria is mercilessly weeded out.[1]
Such practises arise from recognition that language is constantly in flux
and that the effects of this need to be recognised. Yet in discussions of
Coptic this differentiation is often less prominent, and the language of
the Christian period emerging from scholarly discussions sometimes
appears as a monolithic entity that seems to have stayed the same over
centuries.[2] Particularly in reference works attending to the different age
of Coptic material often seems to be sacrificed for the sake of conve-
nience of presentation.[3] Of course the problems with dating of manu-
scripts as well as quantitative defects between different dialects or
documentary versus literary texts should not be mitigated.[4] Yet neither

---

[1]   One may mention here e.g. Junge's study of the syntax of Middle Egyptian literary
texts, where all post-Middle Kingdom material is excluded (*Syntax der mittelägyptischen
Literatursprache,* 1978, p. 15–16). In Doret's summary of the verbal system of Old and
Middle Egyptian (E. Doret, *The Narrative Verbal System of Old & Middle Egyptian*
[*CahOr* XII], 1986), only First Intermediate Period sources are accepted as representativ-
es of the latter. In the grammar of Late Egyptian non-literary texts by Černý & Groll, the
material is limited, as far as possible, to late 20th Dynasty sources (*A Late Egyptian
Grammar* [*StudPohl: Series Maior* 4], 4th edition, 1993, p. LI).

[2]   There are of course some notable exceptions to this generalisation. One might
mention e.g. G. Mink, "Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft und Koptologie", in: R.McL. Wil-
son (ed.), *The Future of Coptic Studies* (*Coptic Studies* I), 1978, p. 71–103, as well as the
recent studies on auxiliation etc. by E. Grossman, "Periphrastic perfects in the Coptic
dialects: a case study in grammaticalization", *LingAeg* 17 (2009), p. 81–118.

[3]   Below the approximate or specific dates appearing in editions of the manuscripts
will be given at the end of the references for each example cited. In some cases, like with
the Shenute manuscripts from the White monastery, dating even to the nearest century is,
according to the most eminent scholar in the field (S. Emmel, *Shenute's Literary Corpus* I
[*CSCO* 599/*Subsidia* 111], 2004, p. 13), ill-advised. The same holds also for the episto-
lary material from the Theban area. Accordingly, the Shenutean texts will be dated only
very roughly as being from the 10–12th century (see T. Orlandi's "The Library of the
Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe", in: A. Egberts, B.P. Muhs & J. van der Vliet
[eds.], *Perspectives on Panopolis. An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the
Arab Conquest* [*P.L.Bat.* 31], 2002, p. 215–217, convenient listing of the data in A. van
Lantschoot, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d'Égypte* I: *Les colophons
coptes des manuscrits sahidiques* [*BiMus* 1], 1929), the manuscripts from the monastery
of Macarius from 9–13th (H.G.E. White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrûn* I: *New
Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius* [*PMMA*], 1926, p. XXV–XXVI) and
the Theban letters from the 6–8th century.

[4]   Indeed, the data in the present study derive almost exclusively from Sahidic and
Bohairic literary texts whereas only very few examples of the constructions discussed
were found in documentary sources or in texts written in other dialects.

should they be seen as impeding efforts to appreciate the difference between static and dynamic in the language.[5]

The purpose of the present article is to focus on one seemingly minor phenomenon in Coptic in order to illustrate the point that the use and appearance of linguistic patterns often makes sense and can be explained only when they are set into their proper synchronic and/or diachronic context. The phenomenon in question is the grammatical behaviour of one of the Coptic expressions for the 'proximative' meaning such as in 'The governor almost killed all the saints' or 'The governor killed almost all the saints'. In the first case the word 'almost' is an adverbial attribute to the predicate 'killed' (no killing took place) whereas in the second it is an 'adnominal' attribute to the NP 'all the saints'.[6] There are four principal ways in which such meanings can be conveyed in Coptic. A relatively frequently encountered means is to use the (variously spell-ed) Greek lexeme σχεδόν as an attribute of either a verbal or a nominal expression:

Ex. 1 Benjamin is speaking to a feverish monk who refuses food and takes Benjamin's hand asking where he might run. He then falls to the ground shaking:

ϩⲱⲥⲇⲉ   ⲥⲭⲉⲧⲟⲛ   ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ-ϫⲟⲟ-ⲥ   ϫⲉ   ⲉ-ϥ-ⲟⲩⲱϣ
so_that   almost   CNJ.1S-say-3SF   that   FOC-3SM-wish

ⲉ̇-ⲉⲣ   ⲉ̇ⲃⲟⲗ   ⲙ̄-ⲫ-ⲙⲟⲩ   ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ-ϥ-ⲫⲱⲧ
to-do   out   OBJ-DEF.M-death   CNJ-3SM-run_away

so that I almost said/thought that he wants to escape death and run away.
(ᴮBenjamin of Alexandria, *On the Marriage of Cana*; 9-13th cent.)[7]

Ex. 2 Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel in Antioch:

ϩⲙ̄-ⲡ-ⲕⲉ-ⲡ-ⲥⲁⲃⲃⲁⲧⲟⲛ-ⲇⲉ   ⲥⲭⲉⲇⲟⲛ   ⲧ-ⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ   ⲧⲏⲣ-ⲥ
in-DEF.M-other-Saturday-yet   almost   DEF.F-city   all-3SM

---

[5] In particular, the status of (probably) much of the Coptic literature as translations should not be viewed as somehow devaluing it as 'proper' Coptic. Translating is, if anything, active use of language that is only a short step away from composing and does not in any way equal mechanic 'transfer' of the kind performed by modern computer programs. Moreover the Coptic translations were intended to propagate important religious ideas to varying audiences. As such they had to be couched in an idiom that a native speaker would not view as anomalous 'translationese'.

[6] Technically, in 'The governor killed almost all the saints' *almost* is an attribute to the quantifier *all*. Cf. also e.g. German 'ein fast perfekter Tag' or 'das fast weisse Tuch' or English 'almost as bad/good as'. The terms 'adverbial' and 'adnominal' are used here because of their familiarity, although the second label in particular must be deemed somewhat questionable.

[7] H. de Vis, *Homélies Coptes de la Vaticane* I (*Coptica* I), 1922, p. 101, 14–102, 1 = C.D.G. Müller, *Die Homilie über die Hochzeit zu Kana und weitere Schriften des Patriarchen Benjamin I. von Alexandrien* (*AHAW Ph.-hist. Klasse* 1968.1), 1968, p. 248, 5–8.

ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲥⲟⲩⲱϩ ⲉ-ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲉ-ⲡ-ϣⲁϫⲉ   ⲙ̄-ⲡ-ϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ
PF-3P-gather to-hear   to-DEF.M-word of-DEF.M-Lord
Next Saturday almost the whole city gathered to listen to the word
of the Lord.   ([S]Acts 13:44; 7th cent.)[8]

Although both uses are attested in the two major as well as in other
dialects, it seems that σχεδόν is the prototypical means for expressing
'adnominal' attribution.

  Less commonly, the verb [S]ϩⲱⲛ/[B]ϧⲱⲛⲧ 'approach' may be used as an
auxiliary followed by ⲉ + infinitive:

  Ex. 3   Ptolemy boards a boat to Ashmunein. As soon as the ferry is in the
           middle of the river it gets into a whirlwind:
           ⲁ-ϥ-ϩⲱⲛ   ⲉ-ⲱⲙⲥ̄ ⲧⲏⲣ-ϥ ⲛⲁ-ⲁ-ⲡ-ϣⲁⲩ   ⲙ̄-ⲟⲩ-ϣⲏⲙ
           PF-3SM-approach to-sink all-3SM about-ADV-DEF.M-unit of-IDF.S-small
           It nearly sank completely in only a brief moment.
                                             ([S]Mart. Ptolemy; 10th cent.)[9]

  Ex. 4   The narrator introduces the circumstances of Shenute's final days
           as he was advanced in days:
           ⲉ-ⲁ-ϥ-ϧⲱⲛⲧ   ⲉ-ⲉⲣ-ⲣ̄ⲓⲏ̄   ⲛ-ⲣⲟⲙⲡⲓ
           d DEP-PF-3MS-approach to-do-NUM   of-year
           … being almost 118 years old.
                              ([B]Ps. Besa, Life of Shenute, §175; 10th cent.)[10]

From the examples listed in Crum's Dictionary it seems that this use is
prevalent in Sahidic seeing that the Bohairic versions of the text cited all
use different constructions and vice versa.[11]

  Rather special is the use of (ⲉ)ⲣ-ⲡⲁϣⲉ 'do the half' + genitival ⲛ +
infinitive that is mainly confined to the expression 'to be half-dead':

  Ex. 5   Soldiers are slaughtering the orthodox, but Silas sees the Saviour
           talking to Mary and a host of Angels. He falls on the ground and:
           ⲁ-ϥ-ⲉⲣ-ⲡⲁϣⲉ   ⲙ̄-ⲙⲟⲩ
           PF-3SM-do-half   of-death
           He was almost dead.
                    ([SF]Dioscorus of Alexandria, On Macarius of Tkow; 10th cent.)[12]

---

    [8]   Sir H. Thompson, The Coptic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline
Epistles in the Sahidic Dialect, 1932, p. 40.
    [9]   S. Uljas, "A Leaf of the Coptic Martyrdom of Ptolemy in Cambridge", ZPE 178
(2011), p. 179-184.
    [10]   J. Leipoldt, Sinuthii vita bohairice, (CSCO 41/SC 1), 1906, p. 73,9–10.
    [11]   W.E. Crum, A Coptic Dictionary, 1939, p. 687b sub vbal & p. 691b sub vbal.
    [12]   D.W. Johnson, A Panegyric on Macarius, Bishop of Tkow, Attributed to Dioscorus
of Alexandria (CSCO 415/SC 41), 1980, p. 55b,3.

Ex. 6   Two merchants are attacked by lions on their way to Damascus:

ⲁ-ⲩ-ϩⲉⲓ   ê-ⲡ-ⲉⲥⲏⲧ   ⲛ̄ϫⲉ-ⲛⲓ-ⲣⲱⲙⲓ   ⲁ-ϥ-ⲉⲣ-ⲡⲁϣ-ⲙⲟⲩ
PF-3P-fall   to-DEF.M-ground   PVS-DEF.P-man   PF-3SM-do-half-death

The men fell to the ground and almost died.

(ᴮ*Fifth Miracle of St George*; 14ᵗʰ cent.)[13]

A further method, and the one discussed here, is to use the word 'small' ˢⲕⲟⲩⲓ/ᴮⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ, rarely ϣⲏⲙ, that is sometimes prefixed by ⲕⲉ- or ⲟⲩ- as ˢⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ and ˢⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ and preceded by the Greek preposition ⲡⲁⲣⲁ 'less'[14] or the adverb ⲉⲧⲓ/ⲉϯ 'still' in Sahidic and by the indigenous expression ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ 'less' in Bohairic.[15] In Sahidic, this expression is found in three syntactic environments:

- Immediately before a verbal pattern:

Ex. 7   Celestinus exhorts his audience to remember the deeds and martyrdom of St. Victor:

ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄-ⲧⲣ-ⲛ̄-ⲕⲁ-ⲡⲉ-ⲛ-ϩⲏⲧ   ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
NEG.IMP-CAUS-1P-put-POSS.M-1P-heart   out

ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄-ϭⲱ   ⲉ-ⲛ-ⲣ̄-ⲛⲟⲃⲉ   ⲛ̄ⲥⲉ-ϥⲓⲧ-ⲛ̄   ϩⲛ̄-ⲟⲩ-ϣⲉⲡ
CNJ.1P-persist CIRC-1P-do-sin   CNJ.3P-carry-1P in-IDF.S-moment

ⲛ̄-ϣⲱⲡ   ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄-ⲃⲱⲕ ϩⲛ̄-ⲟⲩ-ϣⲓⲡⲉ   ⲙⲛ̄-ⲟⲩ-ⲙ̄ⲕⲁϩ   ⲛ̄-ϩⲏⲧ
of-moment   CNJ.1P-go in-IDF.S-shame   and-IDF.S-sorrow   of-heart

ⲁⲗⲗⲁ   ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲃⲱⲕ   ϩⲛ̄-ⲕⲉ-ⲥⲕⲁⲙⲙⲁ
but   less-IDF.S-little   PF-1S-go   in-other-pit

ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲣ̄-ⲡ-ⲱⲃϣ̄   ⲛ̄-ⲛ̄-ϭⲟⲙ   ⲙⲛ̄-ⲛⲉ-ϣⲡⲏⲣⲉ
PF-1S-do-DEF.M-neglect of-DEF.P-power   and-DEF.P-wonder

                      ⲙ̄-ⲡ-ϩⲁⲅⲓⲟⲥ   ⲃⲓⲕⲧⲱⲣ
                      of-DEF.M-saint   Victor

Let us not lapse and continue committing sin so that we will be carried off suddenly and will walk in sorrow and shame. But I also

---

[13] E.A.W. Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia* (*Oriental Texts Series* 1), 1888, p. 58, 20–21 = I. Balestri & H. Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrium* II (*CSCO* 86/*SC* 6), 1924, p. 334, 2–3.

[14] This special meaning (H.G. Liddell & R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9ᵗʰ edition, 1996, p. 1303b) is preferable to the more common 'more' for ⲡⲁⲣⲁ as it easier explains why Bohairic makes use of an expression 'minus, less'.

[15] There are some instances of the use of ⲡⲁⲣⲁ also in Bohairic: see e.g. in the Bohairic *Life* of *Pachomius* (L.Th. Lefort, *S. Pachomii Vita, Bohairice Scripta* (*CSCO* 89/*SC* 7), 1953 (reprint of 1929 ed.), p. 77, 28; 81, 20; 116, 19 besides ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ in p. 124, 14). However, the use of ⲡⲁⲣⲁ here might be related to the suggested status of the Bohairic *Life* as a translation from Sahidic (A. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* I: *The Life of Saint Pachomius & his Disciples* [*Cistercian Studies Series* 45], 1980, p. 2).

> had almost fallen into a pit and had forgotten the mighty deeds and miracles of St Victor."
>
> (Celestinus, *Encom. on Victor the General*; 10th cent.)[16]

- Again before a verbal pattern, but with an additional element ⲡⲉ in between:

  Ex. 8 A woman tells the story of her childhood. After her father died he was not buried but his corpse remained in the house while the mother committed adultery:

ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲉ-ⲥ-ⲙⲟⲩ-ⲇⲉ	ⲉⲛⲉ	ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲡⲉ
TEMP-2SF-die-yet	CNT	less-IDF.S-little	SE.M

	ⲛ̄ⲥⲉ-ⲕⲟⲟⲥ-ⲧ	ⲛⲙ̄ⲙⲁ-ⲥ
	CNJ.3P-bury-1S	with-3SF

  But when she died, they nearly buried me with her.

  (AP #210; 11th cent.)[17]

- As a sentence-final adjunct:

  Ex. 9 John Chrysostom explains a passage from *2Pet 3:8*:

ⲥ-ⲛⲁ-ϣⲱⲡⲉ	ⲉ-ⲁ-ϥ-ⲣ̄-ⲕⲉ-ϥⲧⲟⲟⲩ	ⲛ̄-ϩⲟⲟⲩ	ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ
3SF-FUT-happen	CIRC-PF-3SM-make-other-four	of-day	less-IDF.S-little

ⲉ-ϥ-ϣⲟⲟⲡ	ϩⲛ-ⲁⲙⲛⲧⲉ	ⲙⲛ-ⲛⲉ-ϥ-ϣⲏⲣⲉ
DEP-3SM-happen.STA	in-Hell	with-POSS.P-3SM-children

  Thus he (Adam) will have spent almost four extra days in hell with his children.

  (John Chrysostom, *On the Resurrection & Apostles*; 9th cent.)[18]

The expression has been noted in passing by previous commentators. Crum listed combinations of the word (ⲕⲉ)ⲕⲟⲩⲓ with ϣⲁⲧⲛ or ⲡⲁⲣⲁ meaning 'almost' and once 'plus minus' as well as presented some additional instances under ϣⲁⲁⲧ-ⲛ.[19] Shisha-Halevy cites examples of 'ⲡⲁⲣⲁ/ⲉϯ ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ ⲡⲉ + conjunctive' meaning "shortly, nearly, almost" and apparently considers it a translation of the Greek expression *eti/para*

---

[16] E.A.W. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms etc. in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (*Coptic Texts* IV), 1914, p. 91, 1–5.

[17] M. Chaîne, *Le manuscrit de la version copte en dialecte sahidique des "Apophthegmata Patrum"* (*BEC* VI), 1960, p. 55, 19–20; for the date see B. Layton, "A Sahidic Manuscript with Djinkim Points: The Sahidic Coptic Apophthegmata Patrum Aegyptiorum", in: L. Painchaud & P.-H. Poirier (eds.), *Coptica — Gnostica — Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (*BCNH. Section «Études»* 7), 2006, p. 491.

[18] L. Depuydt (ed.), *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library. Seven Coptic Homilies Attributed to Basil the Great, John Chrysosthom, and Euodius of Rome* (*CSCO* 524/*SC* 43), 1991, p. 63, 36–37.

[19] W.E. Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, p. 94a, sub e & p. 593b; the use is also mentioned by W. Westendorf, *Koptisches Handwörterbuch*, 1965–77, p. 58. The instances quoted by Crum are our ex. 30 (S) & 49 (B), 45, 56, 13, 43 as well as 48 (B) & 29 (S), 64, 50 (B) & 31 (S), 51 (B) & 37 (S) below.

mikron "yet/more than a little".[20] He labels the verbal pattern 'adnexal' to a 'non-verbal nucleus', noting that "both nucleus and [the] conjunctive are here essential *sentence constituents*, with the conjunctive the adnexal ('predicative') expansion of an element, which, in its own extent, constitutes or contains a predicative unit".[21] According to Layton, in "ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲛⲧⲉ-" the conjunctive functions as "an entity statement expanding the subject of the clause".[22] In other words, Layton analyses the complex as consisting of a bipartite nominal sentence ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ ⲡⲉ followed by an appositional conjunctive semantically co-indexed with the referent of ⲡⲉ (i.e. [ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ] [ⲡⲉ]ᵢ ⲛⲧⲉⲥⲱⲧⲙ̅ᵢ) whose 'literal' sense is something akin to "it was almost, namely (that) he heard".

Restricting ourselves to Sahidic data for the moment, in case of examples such as the following where ⲡⲁⲣⲁ (or ⲉϯ) ⲟⲩ-/ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ is followed by ⲡⲉ and the conjunctive, the analysis proposed by Layton seems quite appropriate:

Ex. 10   Moses complains to the Lord about the behaviour of the Israelites:

ⲉϯ	ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲡⲉ	ⲛ̅ⲥⲉ-ϩⲓ-ⲱⲛⲉ	ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲓ
still	other-little	SE.M	CNJ.3P-throw-stone	to-1S

They almost stoned me!   (Ex 17:4; 14th cent.)[23]

Ex. 11   After telling a parable, Basil of Caesarea returns to his topic:

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲡⲉ	ⲛⲧⲛ̅-ⲕⲱ	ⲛⲥⲱ-ⲛ	ⲙ̅ⲡⲣ-ⲡ-ⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ
less-other-little	SE.M	CNJ.1P-let	after-1P	do.NEG.IMP-DEF.M-thought

---

[20]   A. Shisha-Halevy, *Coptic Grammatical Categories, Structural Studies in the Syntax of the Shenoutean Sahidic* (*AnOr* 53), 1986, p. 207 §7.3.1 with n. 68 & p. 210, §7.3.2.(1). For the latter expression, see G. Bauer, *Konkordanz der nichtflektierten griechischen Wörter im bohairischen Neuen Testament* (*GOF* VI.6), 1975, p. 624–625 *eti* c & p. 1212 *para* III.4. In favour of this etymology one might point to the use of ⲉⲧⲓ ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ ⲡⲉ for "Yet a little while, …" in the Sahidic version of the *Gospel of John* (John 7:33; 12:35 (ⲉⲧⲓ ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓϣ ⲡⲉ); 13:33 & 14:19, see H. Quecke, *Das Johannesevangelium Saïdisch. Text der Handschrift PPaulau Rib. Inv.-Nr. 183 mit den Varianten der Handschriften 813 und 814 der Chester Beatty Library und der Handschrift M 569* (*PapCastr, Studia et textus* 11), 1984, or the *Letter to the Hebrews* (Hb 10:37; see H. Thompson, *The Coptic Version*, p. 181). In Bohairic one finds examples without any introducing preposition or adverb; cf. Theodore of Antioch, *On the Theodores* (E.O. Winstedt, *Coptic Texts on Saint Theodore the General, Saint Theodore the Eastern, Chamoul and Justus* [*Texts & Translations*], 1910, p. 38, 17) ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩⲓ ⲡⲉ ϣⲁⲧⲁϩⲱⲗ ⲉ̀ϥⲙⲱⲓⲧ ⲛ̀ⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛ "It is only a little while until I will follow the trail of all humans." (= I. Balestri & H. Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p. 126, 4–5).

[21]   A. Shisha-Halevy, *Coptic Grammatical Categories,* p. 207 (italics in the original).

[22]   B. Layton, *A Coptic Grammar, With Chrestomathy & Glossary. Sahidic Dialect* (*Porta Linguarum Orientalium*), 2nd edition, revised & expanded 2004, p. 282.

[23]   A. Ciasca, *Sacrorum Bibliorum Fragmenta Copto-Sahidica Musei Borgiani* I, 1885, p. 48; see K. Schüssler, *Biblia Coptica. Die koptischen Bibeltexte* I⁴: *Das sahidische Alte & Neue Testament, Vollständiges Verzeichnis mit Standorten*, 2000, p. 60 for the dating.

ⲙ-ⲡ-ⲁⲣⲭⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ　　ⲙⲓⲭⲁⲏⲗ
of-DEF.M-archangel　　　Michael

We almost lost ourselves. Let us not forget the Archangel Michael.
(Basil, *Hom. Archangel Michael*; 9th cent.)[24]

Ex. 12　Pachomius laments the times and says:

ⲉⲧⲃⲉ　　　ⲡⲁⲓ　　　　ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ　　ⲡⲉ
because　　DEM.M.ABS　　less-other-little　　SE.M

　　　　　ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ-ⲧ-ⲟⲣⲅⲏ　　ⲙ̄-ⲡ-ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ　　　ⲉⲓ
　　　　　CNJ-DEF.F-wrath　of-DEF.M-God　　　come

ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄-ⲣ̄-� ϩ ⲏⲃⲉ　　　ⲉ-ⲙⲛ̄-ⲡ-ⲉⲧ-ⲥⲟⲗⲥⲗ　　　　ⲙ̄ⲙⲟ-ⲛ
CNJ.1P-do-mourn　　CIRC-NEG-DEF.M-REL-console　　OBJ-1P

Because of this the wrath of God almost came, and we grieved
while there was none to console us.
(Pachomius, *Instr. conc. a spiteful monk,* §49; 10th cent.)[25]

Ex. 13　Shenute explains the different traditions in the Gospels relating to
the two thieves crucified with Jesus as reflective of the relation-
ship between Jews and the gentiles:

ⲛ-ⲉⲧ-ⲛⲁ-ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲓⲉ　　ⲅⲁⲣ　　ⲛ-ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓ ϣ　　ⲛⲓⲙ
DEF.P-REL-FUT-repent　　since　of-time　　　　all

ⲉ-ⲩ-ⲟ　　　ⲛ ϩ ⲉ　　ⲛ-ⲟⲩ- ϩ ⲏⲩ　　　ⲛ-ⲛ-ⲉⲧ-ϣⲓⲛⲉ　　ⲛⲥⲱ-ⲟⲩ
FOC-3P-do.STA　like　of-IDF.S-profit　for-DEF.P-REL-search　after-3P

ⲙⲛ̄ⲛⲥⲁ-ⲧⲣⲉ-ⲩ-ⲥⲱⲣⲙ　　ⲛ ϩ ⲉ　　　ⲙ-ⲡⲓ-ⲗⲏⲥⲧⲏⲥ
after-CAUS-3P-err　　　like　　　of-DEM+.M-robber

ⲉⲧⲉ　ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ　ⲡⲉ　　ⲛ ϥ -ϣⲱⲡⲉ　　 ϩ ⲙ-ⲡ-ⲧⲁⲕⲟ
REL　less-other-little　SE.M　CNJ.3SM-happen　in-DEF.M-perdition

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　ⲙ-ⲡⲉ-ⲩ-ϣⲃⲏⲣ
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　of-POSS.M-3P-friend

Since whoever will repent at any time is like a profit for those who
search for him, after having gone astray like this robber who
almost became the perdition of their friend.
(Shenute, *Well Did You Come*; 10–12th cent.)[26]

Ex. 14　Shenute castigates a group for their sinful behaviour and their
reluctance to repent. He says that if they intend to pursue their
error further, a judgement unknown to them is waiting for them:

ⲉⲛⲉ　ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧ-ⲟⲩ　ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ϣⲏⲙ　ⲡⲉ　ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ-ⲡ-ⲉⲧ-ⲣ-ⲡⲁ ϩ ⲣⲉ
CNT　because-3P　　less-other-little　SE.M　CNJ-DEF.M-REL-do-remedy

ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲛ　　ⲥⲗⲁⲧⲉ　ⲙⲛ- ϩ ⲉⲛ-ⲱⲛⲉ　ⲉ-ⲩ-ⲥⲕⲟⲣⲕⲣ　ⲙⲙⲟ-ⲟⲩ
for-1P　　stumble　with-IDF.P-stone　CIRC-3P-roll　　OBJ-3P

 ϩ ⲛ-ⲟⲩ- ϩ ⲓⲏ　ⲉ-ⲥ-ⳓ ⲏⲩ　　　　ⲉ- ϥ -ⲙⲟⲟϣⲉ　 ϩ ⲁⲣⲟ-ⲟⲩ
in-IDF.S-road　REL-3SF-narrow.STA　CIRC-3SM-walk　towards-3P

24　L. Depuydt (ed.), *Homiletica,* p. 20, 18–19.
25　L.Th. Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (*CSCO* 159/*SC* 23), 1956,
p. 20, 9–11.
26　É. Amélineau, *Œuvres de Shenoudi* II, 1914, p. 390, 13-15.

ⲛ̅ϩⲏⲧ-ⲥ   ⲉ-ϥ-ⲟⲩⲱϣ   ⲉ-ⲑⲉⲣⲁⲡⲉⲩⲉ-ⲡⲓ-ϣⲱⲛⲉ
inside-3SF   CIRC-3SM-wish   to-cure-DEM+.M-disease

Because of them, the maker of the remedy for us all would almost stumble upon stones that they roll on a narrow road on which he is walking towards them, wishing to cure this disease.

(Shenute, *Who But God Is the Witness*; 10–12th cent.)[27]

Ex. 15   Shenute addresses heretics and adumbrates severe punishments to them from the Lord:

ⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲧⲏⲩ   ⲉⲧⲉ   ⲡ-ϭⲱⲛⲧ   ⲙ-ⲡ-ϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ   ⲡⲉ   ⲛⲓϥⲉ   ⲉⲣⲱ-ⲧⲛ̅
PF-IDF.S-wind REL DEF.M-anger of-DEF.M-Lord SE.M blow   to-2P

ⲁ-ⲧⲉⲧⲛ-ϣⲟⲟⲩⲉ   ⲁⲩⲱ   ⲑⲁⲧⲏⲩ   ⲉⲧⲉ   ⲧⲉ-ϥ-ⲟⲣⲅⲏ   ⲧⲉ
PF-2P-be_dry   and   DEF.F-wind REL POSS.F-3SM-wrath SE.F

ⲉ-(ⲥ)-ⲛⲁ-ϥⲓ-ⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ   ⲛⲑⲉ   ⲛ-ϩⲛ-ϭⲗⲙ
FOC-3SF-FUT-carry-2P like   OBJ-IDF.P-twig

ⲉⲧⲓ   ⲅⲁⲣ   ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲡⲉ   ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲛ-ⲧⲙ̅-ϣⲱⲡⲉ   ⲉ-ⲡ-ⲧⲏⲣ-ϥ
PTC   for   other-little SE.M CNJ.2SM-NEG-happen   to-DEF.M-all-3SM

A breeze, which is the Lord's anger, has blown over you, and you have become desiccated. And the tempest, i.e. his wrath, shall lift you up like mere twigs; for you almost do not exist.

(Shenute, *The Lord Thundered*; 10–12th cent.)[28]

Ex. 16   The owner of the vineyard sent one of his servants to the tenants, but:

ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲉⲙⲁϩⲧⲉ   ⲙ̅-ⲡⲉ-ϥ-ϩⲙ̅ϩⲁⲗ   ⲁ-ⲩ-ϩⲓⲟⲩⲉ   ⲉⲣⲟ-ϥ
PF-3P-seize   OBJ-POSS.M-3SM-servant PF-3P-beat   OBJ-3SM

ⲛⲉ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ   ⲡⲉ   ⲛ̅ⲥⲉ-ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲧ-ϥ
PRT-other-little SE.M CNJ.3P-kill-3SM

They seized his servant and beat him up. They almost killed him.

([SL]*EvThom*; 4th cent.)[29]

Ex. 17   Cyril accuses the heretic of always changing his mind:

ⲉⲛⲉ-ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲡⲉ   ⲛⲅ-ϫⲟⲟ-ⲥ   ϩⲱⲱ-ⲕ
CNT-less-other-little   SE.M CNJ.2SM-say-3SF self-2SM

                        ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ   ⲛ-ⲛ-ⲓⲟⲩⲇⲁⲓ   ϫⲉ
                        like   of-DEF.P-Jew   that

ⲛ̅   ⲟⲩ-ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ   ⲁⲛ   ⲡⲉ   ⲡⲉ-ⲭ̅ⲥ̅
NEG IDF.S-god   NEG SE.M DEF.M-Christ

Like the Jews you would almost claim: "The Christ is not divine".

(Cyril of Jerusalem, *In Crucem*; early 10th cent.)[30]

---

[27]   É. Amélineau, *Œuvres de Shenoudi* II, p. 113, 14–114, 2; according to the collated text by D.W. Young, "Additional Fragments of Shenute's *Eighth Canon*", *APF* 44 (1998), p. 68.

[28]   É. Amélineau, *Œuvres de Shenoudi* II, p. 140, 8–10.

[29]   B. Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7* I: *Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes* (NHS 20), 1989, p. 78 45, 6–7. Layton suggests an emendation ⲉⲛⲉ- for ⲛⲉ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ, but this seems unnecessary.

Ex. 18 The sorcerer Athanasius offers a cup of bewitched water to St George, which does him no harm. The sorcerer tells the emperor:

ⲉⲧⲓ	ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲡⲉ	ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ-ⲇⲟⲕⲓⲙⲁⲍⲉ	ⲙⲙⲟ-ϥ
PTC	other-little	SE.M	CNJ.1S-test	OBJ-3SM

I almost tested him. (*Martyrdom of St George*; 8/9th cent.)[31]

Some negative examples are also forthcoming; note here the regular absence of the Greek preposition *para/eti*:

Ex. 19 Isaiah laments people's confusion:

ⲛ̄	ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ̈	ⲁⲛ	ⲡⲉ	ⲛ̄ⲥⲉ-ⲡⲉⲉⲛⲉ-ⲡ̄-ⲗⲓ̈ⲃⲁⲛⲟⲥ	ⲉ̂ⲃⲟⲗ
NEG	other-little	NEG	SE.M	CNJ.3P-exchange-DEF.M-Libanon	out

ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ	ⲙ̄-ⲡ̄-ⲧⲟⲟⲩ	ⲛ̄-ⲭⲉⲣⲙⲉⲗ	ⲁⲩⲱ̂	ⲛ̄ⲥⲉ-ⲉⲡ-ⲡ̄-ⲧⲟⲟⲩ
like	of-DEF.M-mount	of-Carmel	and	CNJ-3P-count-DEF.M-mount

ⲛ̄-ⲭⲉⲣⲙⲉⲗ	ⲉ-ⲩ-ⲙⲁ	ⲛ̄-ϣⲏⲛ
of-Carmel	CIRC-IDF.S-place	of-tree

One barely exchanges Lebanon for Mount Carmel and considers Mount Carmel a grove! (Is 29:17; 9–10th cent.)[32]

Ex. 20 Shenute says that it befits the audience to listen to advice:

ⲛ	ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲁⲙ	ⲡⲉ	ⲛⲧⲛ̄-ⲥⲙⲓⲛⲉ	ⲛⲁ-ⲛ
NEG	other-little	NEG	SE.M	CNJ.1P-establish	for-1P

ⲛ̄-ⲕⲉ-ⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ	ⲙⲁⲩⲁⲁ-ⲛ
OBJ-other-Scripture	self-1P

ⲛⲧⲛ̄-ⲁⲑⲉⲧⲉⲓ	ⲛ̄-ⲛ-ϣⲁϫⲉ	ⲉⲧ-ⲥⲏϩ	ϫⲉ …
CNJ.1P-deny	OBJ-DEF.P-word	REL-written.STA	that

We would barely establish another scripture for ourselves and deny the words written thus: "…"

(Shenute, *Why, O Lord*; 10–12th cent.)[33]

Ex. 21 Shenute contrasts some people's quotes from the scripture (Ez 37:9 vs. I Cor 15:53) and resumes:

ⲛ	ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲁⲛ	ⲡⲉ	ⲛⲅ-ⲟⲩⲱϣⲙ	ⲟⲩⲃⲉ	ⲡ-ⲣⲉϥ-ⲥⲱⲛⲧ
NEG	other-little	NEG	SE.M	CNJ.2SM-object	against	DEF.M-AGT-create

You would barely object to the creator.

(Shenute, *Who Speaks through the Prophet*, 10th cent.)[34]

---

[30] A. Campagnano, *Ps. Cirillo di Gerusalemme, Omelie Copte sulla passione, sulla croce e sulla vergine* (*TDSA* LXV), 1980, p. 146, 8–9; see ex. 24 for a later version.

[31] E.A.W. Budge, *Martyrdom & Miracles of St George,* p. 177, 5–6. W.C. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- & Märtyrerlegenden* II (*OCA* 108), 1936, p. 94, translates "Noch ein wenig will ich ihn prüfen, …" which is also possible.

[32] A. Ciasca, *Sacrorum Bibliorum Fragmenta* II, 1889, p. 234; see K. Schüssler, *Biblia Coptica* II[2], 1996, p. 76 for the dating.

[33] J. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii archimandritae vita & opera omnia* III (*CSCO* 42/*SC* 4), 1908, p. 173, 28–174, 1.

[34] BN Copte 131[5] f. 79v, 12–13, unpublished, from a Shenute Lectionary, White monastery codex DD 84; quoted by Shisha-Halevy, *Coptic Grammatical Categories*, p. 208. We would like to thank Anne Boud'hors/Paris for supplying us with the details

Ex. 22 Shenute castigates the heretics and argues that those who call or
liken Jesus to a created thing will fall:

н ке-коүι	ан	пе	нсе-крине	ммо-н
or other-little	NEG	SE.M	CNJ.3P-judge	OBJ-1P

ϩιⲧⲛ-ⲛⲉⲓ-ϣⲁϫⲉ	ϫⲉ
by-DEM.P-word	that

Surely are *we* barely judged by these words: "…"?
(Shenute, *I Am Amazed*; 10–12th cent.)[35]

Yet other examples seem to call for a different analysis. There are many
instances in which the verb form is indeed the conjunctive, but the all-
important element ⲡⲉ is missing; for example:

Ex. 23 The *Dux* tells his officials:

ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲛⲁⲩ	ⲉ-ϩⲉⲛ-ⲛⲟϭ	ⲛ̄-ϣⲧⲟⲣⲧⲣ̄	ⲛ̄-ⲧⲉⲓ-ⲟⲩϣⲏ
PF-1S-see	to-IDF.P-great	of-trouble	in-DEM.F-night

ϩⲱⲥⲧⲉ	ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲛ̄ⲥⲉ-ϥⲓ	ⲛ̄-ⲧⲁ-ⲯⲩⲭⲏ
hence	less-IDF.S-little	CNJ.3P-carry	OBJ-POSS.F.1S-soul

That night I saw great troubles, and they almost carried away my
soul.   (*Life of Pachomius, 5th Sahidic Life*; 9th cent.)[36]

Ex. 24 Cyril accuses the heretic of always changing his mind:

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲛ̄-ϫⲟⲟ-ⲥ	ⲛ̄-ϯ-ϩⲉ	ϫⲉ
less-IDF.S-little	CNJ.2SM-say-3SF	in-DEM.F-way	that

ⲛ̄	ⲟⲩ-ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ	ⲁⲛ	ⲡⲉ	ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲛⲟⲩⲏⲗ
NEG	IDF.S-god	NEG	SE.M	Immanuel

Thus you would almost say: "Immanuel is not divine".
(Cyril of Jerusalem, *In Crucem*; 11th cent.)[37]

Ex. 25 Shenute accuses people of scorning and claims to know who they
are and that also the community knows them and their offspring:

н	ⲉϣϫⲉ	ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲛⲥⲉ-ⲧⲣⲉ-ⲩ-ⲡⲱϩⲧ	ϩⲁϩ	ⲛ-ⲥⲛⲟϥ
or if		less-other-little	CNJ.3P-CAUS-3P-pour	much	of-blood

ⲛ-ϩⲏⲕⲉ	ⲉⲃⲟⲗ	ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ	ⲛⲧⲁ-ⲩ-ⲧⲁⲁ-ⲩ	ⲉ-ⲡ-ⲙⲟⲩ
of-poor	out	like	REL.PF-3P-give-3P	to-DEF.M-death

ⲉⲧⲃⲉ	ⲧⲉ-ⲩ-ⲙⲛⲧ-ⲙⲁⲓ-ϩⲏⲩ	ⲛ-ϣⲗⲟϥ	ⲉⲧ-ⲣ-ϩⲱⲃ
because	POSS.F-3P-ABST-love.PAR-profit	of-shame	REL-do-work

on the co-text. For the codex see S. Emmel, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus* I, p. 362–368
who considers it possible that text is an excerpt from *The Lord is Long-Suffering*.

[35] H.-J. Cristea, *Schenute von Atripe: Contra Origenistas. Edition des koptischen
Textes mit annotierter Übersetzung und Indizes einschließlich einer Übersetzung des 16.
Osterfestbriefes des Theophilus in der Fassung des Hieronymus (ep. 96)* (*Studien und
Texte zu Antike und Christentum* 60), 2011, p. 142 = T. Orlandi, *Shenute Contra Orige-
nistas. Testo con introduzione e traduzione* (*CMCL*), 1985, §310.

[36] L.Th. Lefort, *S. Pachomii Vita, Sahidice Scripta* (*CSCO* 99 & 100/*SC* 9 & 10),
1953 (reprint of 1933–34 ed.), p. 176, 19–21.

[37] E.A.W. Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (*Coptic
Texts* V), 1915, p. 227, 22–23; cf. the version given above as ex. 17.

ⲛⲁ-ⲩ   ⲛ-ϫⲓⲛϫⲏ   ⲛⲥⲉ-ϯ-ⲥⲟ   ⲉ-ⲥⲉϣ-ⲑⲏⲩⲧⲛ   ⲛⲧⲱⲧⲛ
for-3P   in-vain   CNJ.3P-give-spare   to-despise-2P   2P.ABS

Even if they almost let them shed rivers of poor blood, as they put
them to death according to their shameful love for profit that earns
them nought, they spare to despise you.

(Shenute, *God, Who Alone Is True*; 10–12th cent.)[38]

Ex. 26 The governor orders Julius of Aqfahs to him. As he appears he
        asks him:

ⲕ-ⲟⲩⲱϣ   ⲧⲣⲁ-ⲡ̄-ⲟⲩ   ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ
2SM.PRS-wish   INFL.1S-do-what   now

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲛ̄ⲥⲉ-ϩⲓ-ⲱⲛⲉ   ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲓ
less-other-little   CNJ.3P-throw-stone   to-1S

What do you want me to do now? They almost stoned me.

(*Mart. Apa Epima*; 10th cent.)[39]

Here the nominal sentence analysis is clearly impossible. The same
holds even more with the numerous examples where ⲡⲉ is absent and the
verb form is not the conjunctive but e.g. the 1st perfect (see also ex. 7):

Ex. 27 Severus quotes a certain Mikis who apparently accused another
        man called Theognostos: *With your words you cleaned Theo-
        gnostos of the accusation of fornication.*

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ-ⲇⲉ   ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲁ-ⲕ-ⲧⲣⲁ-ⲉⲣ-ⲕⲱⲱⲥ
1S.ABS-yet   less-IDF.S-little   PF-2SM-CAUS.1S-be-corpse

ⲉ-ⲓ-ⲥⲱⲧⲙ   ⲉ-ⲛⲓ-ϩⲟⲧⲉ   ⲛⲧ-ⲁ-ⲕ-ϫⲟⲟ-ⲩ
CIRC-1S-hear   to-DEM+.P-fear   REL-PF-2SM-say-3P

As for me, you almost slew me through hearing those terrors of
which you spoke.

(*Letter of Severus of Antioch to Theognostos*; no date given)[40]

Ex. 28 Diometes returns to Ephesus not knowing how long he has slept
        and is amazed to see that everything has changed. After being told
        that he really is in Ephesus, he says:

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲁⲛⲟⲕ   ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲡ̄-ⲡ-ⲱⲃϣ
less-IDF.S-little   1S.ABS   PF-1S-do-DEF.M-neglect

ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁ-ⲓ-ϣⲱϥⲧ̄   ϩⲙ-ⲡⲁ-ϩⲏⲧ   ⲁⲗⲗⲁ   ⲕⲁⲁ-ⲧ
and PF-1S-err   in-POSS.M.1S-heart   but   let.IMP-1S

ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ-ⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ   ϩⲛ-ⲧ-ⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ   ⲙⲏⲡⲟⲧⲉ   ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ-ⲥⲱⲣⲙ̄
CNJ.1S-go forth   in-DEF.F-city   lest   CNJ.1S-lost

I almost forgot and my mind slipped. But show me out of the city
lest I get lost (again).   (*Seven sleepers*; 11th cent.)[41]

---

[38] J. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii archimandritae vita & opera omnia* IV (*CSCO* 42/*SC* 4), 1913,
p. 100, 2–5; see also É. Amélineau, *Œuvres de Shenoudi* II, p. 207, 6–8.
[39] T. Mina, *Le Martyre d'Apa Epima,* 1937, p. 28, 16–18 (F 49 r°).
[40] A. van Lantschoot, "Une lettre de Sévère d'Antioche à Théognoste", *Muséon* 59
(1946), p. 473, 25–26.

Ex. 29 The psalmist offers a personal testimony of his struggle with the age-old problem of why the wicked prosper. He begins:

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ-ⲇⲉ	ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲁ-ⲛⲁ-ⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ	ⲕⲓⲙ
1S.ABS-but	less-IDF.S-little	PF-POSS.P.1S-feet	move

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲁ-ⲛⲁ-ⲧⲁⲟϭⲉ	ϫⲱⲱⲣⲉ	ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
less-IDF.S-little	PF-POSS.P.1S-step	slide	away

But as for me, my feet had almost slipped. I had almost lost my foothold. (Ps 72[73]:2; 7th cent.)[42]

Ex. 30 The psalmist asks who would stand by him against his adversaries:

ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲃⲏⲗ	ϫⲉ	ⲁ-ⲡ-ϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ	ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲉⲓ	ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲓ
except	that	PF-DEF.M-Lord	help	to-1s

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲁ-ⲧⲁ-ⲯⲩⲭⲏ	ⲟⲩⲱϩ	ϩⲛ̄-ⲁⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉ
less-IDF.S-little	PF-POSS.F.1S-soul	put	in-hell

Had the Lord not helped me, my soul would almost have descended in Hell. (Ps 93[94]:17; 7th cent.)[43]

Ex. 31 God's commands are a reliable guide to right and wrong. By keeping them the psalmist is doing what is right, and yet he is still persecuted:

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ	ⲁ-ⲩ-ϥⲟⲧ-ⲧ	ⲉⲃⲟⲗ	ⲙ̄-ⲡ-ⲕⲁϩ
less-IDF.S-little	PF-3P-wipe-1S	out	in-DEF.M-earth

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ-ⲇⲉ	ⲙ̄ⲡⲓ-ⲕⲱ	ⲛ̄ⲥⲱ-ⲓ	ⲛ̄-ⲛⲉ-ⲕ-ⲉⲛⲧⲟⲗⲏ
1S.ABS-but	NEG.PF.1S-put	behind-1S	of-POSS.P-2SM-order

They almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken your precepts. (Ps 118[119]:87; 7th cent.)[44]

---

[41] J. Drescher, *Three Coptic Legends: Hilaria – Archellites – The Seven Sleepers* (*SASAE* 4), 1947, p. 54, 7–8.

[42] E.A.W. Budge, *The Earliest Known Coptic Psalter*, 1898, p. 76. The IVth century Psalter from Berlin displays some slight variation: (A. Rahlfs, *Die Berliner Handschrift des Sahidischen Psalters* [*AGWG, phil.-hist. Klasse,* neue Folge IV⁴], 1901) [ⲁⲛⲟⲕⲇ]ⲉ ⲡⲁⲣ[ⲁⲟⲩ]ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲁⲛⲁⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲕⲓⲙ [ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟ]ⲕⲟⲩ[ⲉⲓ] ⲁⲛⲁⲧⲁⲟϭⲥⲉ ϫⲱⲱⲣⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ), whereas the Mesokemic version offers only grapho-phonemic variation: (G. Gabra, *Der Psalter im oxyrhynchitischen (mesokemischen/mittelägyptischen) Dialekt*, mit Beiträgen von N. Iskander, G. Mink & J.L. Sharp [*ADAIK. Kopt. Reihe* 4], 1996, p. 144) ⲁⲛⲁⲕⲇⲉ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ ϩⲁⲛⲁⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲕⲓⲙ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲕⲟⲩⲓ ϩⲁⲛⲁⲟϣϣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥϭⲉ ϫⲟⲣⲉ ⲉⲃⲁⲗ). The citation by John of Constantinople, *De Poenitentia & Abstinentia*, (E.A.W. Budge, *Coptic Homilies in the Dialect of Upper Egypt edited from the Papyrus Codex Oriental 5001 in the British Museum*, 1910, p. 22, 6–4 from below) shows a similar text except having ⲁⲧⲁⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ (if correct).

[43] E.A.W. Budge, *Earliest Known Psalter*, p. 101. The IVth century Psalter from Berlin displays some graphic variation only: (A. Rahlfs, *Berliner Handschrift*) [ⲛⲥ]ⲁⲃⲛⲗ ϫⲉ ⲁⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲉⲓ [ⲉⲣ]ⲟⲉⲓ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲅⲉⲓ ⲁⲧⲁⲯⲩⲭⲏ [ⲟⲩⲱϩ ϩ]ⲛ̄ⲁ[ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉ]). The Mesokemic version display only grapho-phonemic variation: (G. Gabra, *Psalter*, p. 164) ⲛ̀ⲥⲁⲃⲛⲗ ϫⲉ ϩⲁⲡϫⲥ̄ ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲁⲉⲓ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ ϩⲁⲧⲁⲯⲩⲭⲏ […]ⲛ ⲁⲙⲉⲛⲧⲉ).

[44] E.A.W. Budge, *Earliest Known Psalter*, p. 130. Yet again, the Mesokemic version display only grapho-phonemic variation: (G. Gabra, *Psalter*, p. 190) ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ ϩⲁⲩϥⲁⲧⲧ ⲉⲃⲁ[ⲗ] ϩⲓϫⲛⲡⲕⲉϩ ⲁⲛⲁⲕⲇⲉ ⲙⲡⲓⲕⲱ ⲛⲥⲟⲓ ⲛⲛⲉⲕⲉⲛⲧⲟⲗⲏ).

Ex. 32 After a short excursion condemning Nestorius, Celestinus returns
        to his main topic:

ⲁⲗⲗⲁ   ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲁ-ⲛ-ⲃⲱⲕ   ⲁ-ⲛ-ⲣ̄-ⲡ-ⲱⲃⲱ̄
but   less-other-little   PF-1P-go   PF-1P-do-DEF.M-neglect

   ⲙ̄-ⲡⲉ-ⲕ-ⲧⲁⲓⲟ   ⲙⲛ̄-ⲡⲉ-ⲕ-ⲉⲟⲟⲩ
   of-POSS.M-2SM-honour   and-POSS.M-2SM-glory

ⲱ   ⲡ-ⲛⲟϭ   ⲛ̄-ⲁⲣⲭⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ   ⲅⲁⲃⲣⲓⲏⲗ
PTC   DEF.M-great   of-archangel   Gabriel

But we almost forgot your honour and glory, O great Archangel
Gabriel.   (Celestinus, *Hom. Archangel Gabriel*; 7th cent.)[45]

Ex. 33 Evodius returns to his main topic:

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲅⲁⲣ   ⲁ-ⲡⲉ-ⲥⲗⲟϭ   ⲛ̄-ⲧⲉ-ⲧⲛ-ⲁⲅⲁⲡⲉ
less-IDF.S-little   for   PF-DEF.M-sweet   of-POSS.F-2P-love

ⲧⲣⲉ-ⲛ-ⲕⲧⲟ(ⲛ)   ⲛ-ⲥⲁ   ⲕⲉ-ⲥⲁ   ⲱ ⲡ-ⲗⲁⲟⲥ   ⲙ̄-ⲙⲁⲓ-ⲭⲥ̄
INFL-1P-turn-1P   OBJ-side   other-side   PTC DEF.M-folk of-love.PAR-Christ

ⲁⲩⲱ   ⲛⲧⲛ-ⲣ̄-ⲡ-ⲱⲃⲱ̄   ⲟⲛ   ⲛ̄-ⲧⲉ-ⲧⲣⲁⲡⲏⲍⲁ ⲉⲧ-ⲥⲁⲣⲱ-ⲛ
and   CNJ.1P-do-DEF.M-neglect   again   OBJ-DEF.F-table   REL-before-1P

But, O Christ-loving people, the sweetness of your love almost
distracted us and made us forget the table that is before us.
                 (Evodius, *On the Passion & Resurrection*, §45; 9th cent.)[46]

Ex. 34 The writer has received a ⲡⲗⲁϩ and says:

ⲉⲓⲥϩⲏⲧⲉ   ⲥ[…]   ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲧⲛⲛⲟⲟⲩ-ⲥ   ⲛⲏ-ⲧⲛ
behold   3SF-[…]   less-IDF.S-little   PF-1S-send-3SF   to-2P

Look, it is […]. I almost sent it to you.
                                   (oCrum #368,6–7; 6–8th cent.)[47]

Ex. 35 Returning from a mission to Djeme, John is attacked by hyenas.
        Afterwards Pisenthius reminds his disciple that he had warned
        him:

ⲙ̄ⲡⲉ-ⲓ-ϫⲟⲟ-ⲥ   ⲛⲁ-ⲕ   ϫⲉ   ⲣϣⲁⲛ-ⲡ-ⲛⲁⲩ   ⲡⲣⲟⲕⲟⲡⲧⲉⲓ
NEG.PF-1S-say-3SF   to-2SM   that   COND-DEF.M-hour   advance

ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄-ⲉⲓ   ⲉ-ϩⲏⲧ   ϣⲁⲛⲧⲉ-ⲡ-ⲛⲁⲩ   ⲛ̄-ϣⲱⲣⲡ̄   ϣⲱⲡⲉ
NEG.IMP-go   to-front   CMPL-DEF.M-hour   of-morning   happen

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲁ-ⲛⲉ-ⲑⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ   ⲁⲛϩⲁⲗⲁⲥⲕⲉ   ⲙ̄ⲙⲟ-ⲕ
less-other-little   PF-DEF.P-beast   kill   OBJ-2SM

ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲃⲏⲗ   ⲉⲧⲃⲉ   ⲧ-ⲙⲛ̄ⲧ-ⲛⲁⲏⲧ   ⲙ̄-ⲡ-ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ
except   because   DEF.F-ABST-mercy   of-DEF.M-God

Did I not tell you that if it is late, you should not go forth until
morning comes? The beasts almost killed you but for the grace of
God.   (John the Presbyter, *Life of Pisenthius*; 11th cent.)[48]

---

[45] W.H. Worrell, *The Coptic Manuscripts in the Freer Collection* (*UMichS, Human-istic Series* X), 1923, p. 136, 19–137, 1.

[46] L. Depuydt (ed.), *Homiletica*, p. 91, 30/31.

[47] W.E. Crum, *Coptic Ostraca from the Collections of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Cairo Museum, & Others*, 1902, pl. 64.

Ex. 36 Gregory of Nyssa reasons about the decision of Solomon on the two women claiming to be the mother of the same child (1 Kings 3:16sq.):

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲁ-ⲩ-ϣⲱⲡⲉ   ⲛ̄-ⲑⲉⲁⲧⲣⲟⲛ   ⲉ-ϥ-ⲥⲁϣⲉ
less-IDF.S-little   PF-3P-happen   as-spectacle   CIRC-3SM-be_bitter.STA
ⲛ̄-ⲟⲩⲟⲛ   ⲛⲓⲙ   ⲉⲧ-ϣⲟⲟⲡ   ⲙ̄-ⲡⲉ-ⲩⲟⲉⲓϣ   ⲉⲧⲙⲙⲁⲩ
for-one   all   REL-happen.STA   in-DEF.M-time   that
It almost became a spectacle that was bitter for everyone present.
(Gregory of Nyssa, *On Gregory Thaumaturgus*; 10–11th cent.)[49]

In the next example the variant ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ϣⲏⲙ occurs, cf. also Ex. 14 above from Shenute's writings:[50]

Ex. 37 Solomon exhorts his sons to stay away from a foreign temptress:

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ϣⲏⲙ   ⲁ-ⲓ-ϣⲱⲡⲉ   ϩⲙ̄-ⲡ-ⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ   ⲛⲓⲙ
less-other-small   PF-1S-happen   in-DEF.M-bad   all
ⲛ̄-ⲧ-ⲙⲏⲧⲉ   <ⲛ>-ⲛⲓ-ⲥⲟⲟⲩϩⲥ̄   ⲙⲛ-ⲛⲓ-ⲙⲏⲏϣⲉ
in-DEF.F-middle   <of>-DEM+.P-congregation   and-DEM.P-crowd
I have almost come to utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and the crowd.   (Prov 5:14; 6th cent.)[51]

Instances with other verb forms are less frequent; from Sahidic sources only the following examples with the preterite first future may be quoted:[52]

Ex. 38 A monk tells how some villagers falsely accused him of violating a virgin:

ⲁⲩⲱ   ⲁ-ⲩ-ϩⲓⲟⲩⲉ   ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲓ   ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ-ⲇⲉ   <ⲛ>ⲉ-ⲓ-ⲛⲁ-ⲙⲟⲩ   ⲡⲉ
and   PF-3P-beat   to-1S   less-other-little-yet   PRT-1S-FUT-die   PTC
So they beat me up, and I almost died.   (AP #101; 11th cent.)[53]

---

[48] E.A.W. Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (*Coptic Texts* III), 1913, p. 110, 20–24.

[49] M. van Esbroeck, "Fragments Sahidiques du panégyrique de Grégoire le Thaumaturge par Grégoire de Nysse", in: P. Naster, H. de Meulenaere & J. Quagebeur (eds.), *Miscellanea in honorem Josephi Vergote* (= *OLP* 6–7 [1975–76]), p. 550, 4–5.

[50] The Achmimic version (A. Böhlig, *Der achmimische Proverbientext nach Ms. Berol. orient. oct. 987* I: *Text & Rekonstruktion der sahidischen Vorlage* [Studien zur Erforschung des christlichen Ägyptens 3], 1958, p. 24) displays only the expected graphophonemic variations as does the texts of pBodmer VI (R. Kasser, *pBodmer VI: Livre des Proverbes* [CSCO 194/SC 27], 1960, p. 24/25).

[51] W.H. Worrell, *The Proverbs of Solomon in Sahidic Coptic according to the Chicago Manuscript* (*OIP* XII), 1931, p. 16.

[52] Occurrences of the other pattern are attested in Bohairic; see below.

[53] M. Chaîne, *Le manuscrit*, 1960, p. 23, 16. The emendation to preterite is called for by the presence of ⲡⲉ.

Ex. 39 Referring to some earlier disagreeable words by his addressee,
        Severus exclaims:

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ   ⲛⲉ-ⲓ-ⲛⲁ-ⲣⲓⲙⲉ
less-IDF.S-little   PRT-1S-FUT-cry

You almost made me cry!

        (*Letter of Severus of Antioch to Theognostos*; no date given)[54]

In his grammar Layton noted the occurrence of ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ with the
first perfect, but he understood them as conditional apodoses marked as
'contrary to fact' and refrained from further discussion.[55]

  Finally, the nominal sentence analysis is, of course, wholly excluded
in instances where ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ appears as a clause-final adjunct:

Ex. 40 Pisenthius has sent his disciple John to Djeme. As he rides back on
        his donkey, night falls and two hyenas attack him:

ⲛⲁⲙⲉ   ⲁ-ⲛⲉ-ⲩ-ⲟⲃϩⲉ   ⲧⲁϩⲉ-ⲛⲁ-ⲟⲩⲣⲏⲏⲧⲉ   ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ
truly   PF-POSS.P-3P-tooth   touch-POSS.P.1S-feet   less-IDF.S-little

Verily, their teeth almost touched my feet.

        (John the Presbyter, *Life of Pisenthius*; 11th cent.)[56]

Ex. 41 During his interrogation, holy Panesnew is beaten badly. Yet the
        hegemon urges restraint, since all Christians are sorcerers. He re-
        minds the interrogator of what a man called Panta, deacon of Pso-
        bet had done and says of Panesnew:

ⲕⲁⲓⲅⲁⲣ   ⲛⲁⲙⲉ   ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲉ-ϥ-ⲥⲙⲟⲧ   ⲉⲓⲛⲉ
for   truly   FOC.N-POSS.M-3SM-form   equal

ⲙ̄-ⲡⲁⲓ   ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ
OBJ-this.M   less-IDF.S-little

Actually, his appearance is almost exactly like (that of) the said
person.   (*Mart. Panesnew*; no date given)[57]

Ex. 42 Epiphanius of Salamis describes the topaz in his *De Gemmis*:

ⲡ-ⲇⲱⲡⲁⲇⲓⲟⲛ ⲟⲩ-ⲱⲛⲉ   ⲡⲉ ⲉ-ϥ-ⲧⲣⲉϥ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲱⲱ   ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ
DEF.M-topaz   IDF.S-stone   SE CIRC-3SM-be.red.STA   less-IDF.S-little

ⲛⲑⲉ   ⲙ̄-ⲡ-ⲱⲛⲉ   ⲉⲧ-ⲟⲩ-ⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟ-ϥ   ϫⲉ   ⲁⲛⲑⲣⲁⲝ
like   of-DEF.M-stone   REL-3P-call   to-him   PTC   garnet

The topaz; it is a stone that is almost red like the stone called
garnet.   (Epiphanius, *De Gemmis*; 10th cent.)[58]

---

[54] A. van Lantschoot, *Muséon* 59 (1946), p. 473, 10.

[55] B. Layton, ²*Coptic Grammar*, p. 412. However, as can be seen, most of the exam-
ples are not conditional.

[56] E.A.W. Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha*, p. 109, 26/27.

[57] W.C. Till, *Kopt. Heiligen- & Märtyrerlegenden* I (*OCA* 102), 1935, p. 95, 21–22.

[58] R.P. Blake & H. De Vis, *Epiphanius De Gemmis* (*Studies & Documents* II), 1934,
p. 238, 2/3.

Ex. 43 Epiphanius of Salamis describes the onyx in his *De Gemmis*:

ⲚⲀⲒ   ⲉ-ⲩ-ⲟⲩⲃⲁϣ   ⲘⲉⲚ   ⲉ-ⲩ-ⲥⲱⲕ   (ⲉ)-ⲡ-ⲁⲟⲩⲁⲚ
DEM.P CIRC-3P-white indeed DEP-3P-draw to-DEF.M-colour

Ⲙ-ⲡ-ⲀⲂⲒϬⲉⲉ   ⲡ-ⲀⲂⲒϬⲉⲉⲒⲚⲉ-Ⲇⲉ   ⲀⲚ   Ⲛ-ⲔⲀⲐⲀⲢⲟⲚ
of-DEF.M-glass DEF.M-glass-yet NEG of-true

ⲀⲗⲗⲀ ⲡ-ⲉⲧ-ⲟⲩ-Ⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ   ⲉⲢⲟ-ϥ   Ϫⲉ   ⲒⲰⲒⲀⲥ
but DEF.M-REL-3P-call to-3SM that violet

ⲉ-ϥ-ⲧⲣϣⲣⲱϣ   ⲡⲀⲢⲀ-ⲟⲩ-ⲔⲟⲩⲒ   ⲚⲐⲉ   Ⲙ-ⲡ-ⲰⲚⲉ   ⲡⲉ
DEP-3SM-be_red.STA less-IDF.S-little like of-DEF.M-stone SE.M

ⲉⲃⲟⲗ   ϨⲚ-ⲆⲰⲔⲒⲘⲒⲟⲚ
from in-proof

Those that are white do indeed resemble the colour of glass; not true glass, however, but that which is called *violet*, which is almost red like the 'proof-stone'.   (Epiphanius, *De Gemmis*; 10th cent.)[59]

Ex. 44 Paphnutius and Pseleusius go to meet Apa Isaac on the island of Philae:

Ⲛⲧⲉⲣ-Ⲛ-ⲉⲒ-Ⲇⲉ   ⲉⲢⲏ[ⲥ]   Ⲁ-Ⲛ-ϨⲰⲚ   ⲉϨⲟⲩⲚ   ⲉ-ⲡ-ⲘⲀ
TEMP-1P-come-yet south PF.1P-approach into to-DEF.M-place

Ⲛ-ϣⲱⲡⲉ   Ⲙ-ⲡ-ϨⲖⲖⲟ   ⲡⲀⲢⲀ-ⲟⲩ-ⲔⲟⲩⲒ
of-dwell of-DEF.M-old.man less-IDF.S-little

Having come south, we had almost approached the dwelling of the old man.   (Paphnutius, *Hist. Monks Upper Egypt*; 10th cent.)[60]

In the following example the particle ⲡⲀⲢⲀ is replaced by the indigenous ϣⲀⲀⲧ-Ⲛ "short of, excepting, minus" which is more typical for Bohairic:

Ex. 45 Emperor Julian is seeking St Hilarion, who is forced to go into hiding:

ⲀⲡⲀ   ϨⲒⲖⲀⲢⲒⲰⲚ-Ϭⲉ   ϨⲘ-ⲡ-ⲧⲣⲉ-ϥ-ⲉⲒ   ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
Apa Hilarion-then in-DEF.M-INFL-3SM-come out

ϨⲘ-ⲡⲉ-ⲡⲢⲟⲩⲭⲒⲟⲚ   Ⲁ-ϥ-ⲂⲰⲔ   ϨⲚ-ⲧ-ⲉⲢⲏⲘⲟⲥ   ⲉⲧⲉ   ⲘⲉⲢⲉ-ⲖⲀⲀⲩ
in-DEF.M-Bruchium PF-3SM-go in-DEF.F-desolate REL NEG.AOR-any

Ⲙⲟⲟϣⲉ   ϨⲒⲰⲰ-ⲥ   ⲉϨⲟⲩⲚ   ⲉ-ⲟⲩⲁϨⲉ   ⲀⲩⲰ   Ⲁ-ⲩ-sic-Ϫⲉⲕ-ⲟⲩ-ⲢⲟⲘⲡⲉ
walk in-3SF into to-Oasis and PF-3P-complete-IDF.S-year

ϣⲀⲀⲧⲚ-ⲟⲩ-ⲔⲟⲩⲒ   ϨⲘ-ⲡ-ⲘⲀ   ⲉⲧⲘⲘⲀⲩ
except-IDF.S-little in-DEF.M-place that

So, when Apa Hilarion left Bruchium, he wandered in the desert where no-one was walking, to the Oasis, and he (lit 'they') spent almost a year there.   (Jerome, *Life of St. Hilarion*; no date given)[61]

---

[59] R.P. Blake & H. De Vis, *Epiphanius De Gemmis*, p. 306, 20–308, 1. Note that De Vis emends the text into ⲉⲧ-ⲟⲩⲃⲁϣ.

[60] E.A.W. Budge, *Misc. Coptic Texts*, 1915, p. 443, 2/3.

[61] F. Rossi, "Vita di Sant'Ilarione e Martirio di Sant'Ignazio, vescovo d'Antiochia", *Memorie della Reale Academia della Scienza di Torino* II/38 (1888), p. 38, col. 3.

Not all attestations of this particular construction can be taken to express the notion of 'almost'. In ex. 45 a translation of ϣⲁⲧⲉ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ in the first clause as 'almost' is certainly possible, but the following clause suggests otherwise. In addition, one of the later Bohairic versions of this passage uses an explicit construction for 'except'[62]:

> Ex. 46 Theodosius tells the story of Dorotheos and his wife and of their faith in God during a famine that had already lasted two years:
>
> | ⲁ-ⲛⲕⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ | ⲱϫⲉⲛ | ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲧ-ⲟⲩ | ϣⲁⲧⲉ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ |
> | --- | --- | --- | --- |
> | PF-thing all | perish | with-3P | except-IDF.S-little |
>
> | ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁ-ⲛⲉ-ⲩ-ⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩ | ⲧⲏⲣ-ⲟⲩ | ⲙⲟⲩ | ϣⲁⲧⲉ-ⲟⲩⲁ ⲛ-ⲟⲩⲱⲧ |
> | --- | --- | --- | --- |
> | and PF-POSS.P-3P-sheep | all-3P | die | except-IDF.S of-single |
>
> Everything they owned perished except for a small part, and all their sheep died except for a single one.
>
> (Theodosius of Alexandria, *In Michaelem*; 9th cent.)[63]

Presented like this the Sahidic data above do not project a particularly clear picture. Nevertheless, it is argued here that the material reflects a gradual cline of grammaticalisation that progressed through a number of main stages. It appears that the original construction was the sort of complex proposed by Layton, where a bipartite nominal sentence was followed by an appositional conjunctive fleshing out the semantics of the element ⲡⲉ serving as the subject of the preceding non-verbal predication (schema [ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ] [ⲡⲉ]$_i$, ⲛ̄ϥ̄ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄$_i$). The examples of ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ followed directly by the conjunctive seem to reflect a breakdown of this construction, with the dropping of ⲡⲉ resulting from a reanalysis of ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ as an adverb followed by a conjunctive clause. That is to say, the syntax of the construal seems to have been simplified and ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ re-classified as a mere initial adverb meaning 'almost' that, akin to many Coptic words of the said sort and occupying this position, at first demanded the conjunctive form to follow. Sentences with this 'adverb stage' ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ probably then saw further syntactic and syntagmatic 'loosening' within the construction. The examples with the 1st perfect and imperfect 1st future perhaps bear testimony of a subsequent dropping of the requirement for the use of the conjunctive, whose place after ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ could henceforth be occupied by some other suitable conjugation. Finally, the attributive function of ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ might have resulted to its eventual moving to the canonical syntactic position of such expressions at the end of the clause, with the resulting 'adjunct

---

[62] See E.A.W. Budge, *St. Michael the Archangel: Three Encomiums by Theodosius, Archbishop of Alexandria, Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, and Eustathius, Bishop of Thrake*, 1894, p. 28, 17–20. The other Sahidic versions do not contain this specification, see E.A.W. Budge, *Misc. Coptic Texts*, p. 368, 13–14 & 29–30.

[63] From Pierpont Morgan codex M 607 fol. 13 r°, a4–8.

stage' representing the final step in the grammatical evolution of ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-
ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ. The development just outlined may be expressed diagrammatic-
ally as follows:

I	*Nominal sentence stage*	[ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ] [ⲡⲉ]$_i$ ⲛ̄ϥ̄ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄$_i$
II	*Adverbial stage 1*	ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ$_{adv}$ ⲛ̄ϥ̄ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄
	Adverbial stage 2	ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ$_{adv}$ ⲁϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄
III	*Adjunct stage*	ⲁϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ$_{adc}$

Unfortunately, the reality of this development cannot, in fact, be demon-
strated by using the Sahidic data alone inasmuch as none of the stages of
the proposed evolution undergone by ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ can be shown to be
clearly primary either absolutely or in relation to the other stages sug-
gested. This is largely due to the usual problems, noted above, of dating
of manuscripts, but also to the fact that simultaneous occurrence of
typologically earlier and later forms is typical for patterns undergoing
grammaticalisation. Nevertheless, the analysis proposed above does
seem to be corroborated by the data from Bohairic, which is often
(although by no means always) later than the Sahidic material
typologically and commonly also in terms of the age of manuscripts.
Significantly, in Bohairic texts there are no examples representing what
was above termed stage I. That is, ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ, the Bohairic
equivalent[64] of Sahidic ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ, is not used with ⲡⲉ as part of a
bipartite nominal sentence. There seems to be only one single exception
to this, and this appears as a variant of a Biblical passage where all other
earlier and later witnesses have no ⲡⲉ.[65] There is also only one single
example with the bare conjunctive, but in this exceptional case it could
be argued that the form is not imposed by the preceding ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ
but rather results from the status of the clause as expressive of a result:

---

[64]   For Bohairic examples with ⲡⲁⲣⲁ see above note 5. As noted for Sahidic above, it
must be pointed out for Bohairic as well that not every instance of ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ auto-
matically means "almost", cf. *Wondrous Deeds of St Theodore Stratelates* (I. Balestri &
H. Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrium* I [*CSCO* 43/*SC* 3], 1907, p. 196, 14–16) ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲥⲱⲣ ⲙ̄-ⲫⲏ
ⲉⲧⲉ-ⲛⲧⲱⲟⲩ ⲧⲏⲣϥ ⲛ̄-ⲛⲓ-ϩⲏⲕⲓ ⲛⲉⲙ-ⲛⲓ-ϫⲱⲃ ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ϩⲁⲛ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ ⲉⲧ-ⲟⲩ-<ⲉⲣ>-ⲭⲣⲓⲁ "They di-
stributed all their belongings among the poor and feeble ones, except for some little
things that they needed."

[65]   Horner, in his critical apparatus on *Acts* 26:28 (G. Horner, *The Coptic Version of
the New Testament in the Northern Dialect otherwise called Memphitic and Bohairic
with Introduction, Critical Apparatus, and Literal English Translation* IV: *The Catholic
Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles edited from the Ms. Oriental 424, The Apocalypse
edited from the Ms. Curzon 128 in the care of the British Museum*, 1905, p. 417) notes a
variant ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ ⲡⲉ from an unedited Vatican manuscript dated 1357 AD, which is thus
roughly fifty years later than the main manuscript cited below sub ex. 50.

Ex. 47   A woman grabbed her daughter…

ⲁ-ⲥ-ϯ   ⲛ̄-ϩⲁⲛ-ⲙⲏϣ   <ⲛ̄>-ϣⲁϣ   ⲛⲁ-ⲥ
PF-3SM-give   OBJ-IDF.P-multitude   of-blow   for-3SF

ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥ-ϧⲟⲑⲃⲉ-ⲥ   ⲉⲑⲃⲉ-ⲡⲉ-ⲥ-ϫⲱⲛⲧ
less-other-little   CNJ.3SF-kill-3SF   because-POSS.M-3SF-wrath

… and she gave her such a beating that she almost killed her in her
wrath.   (Cyril of Alexandria, *On Repentance*; 9th cent.)[66]

Instead of (ⲡⲉ) + conjunctive, instances of a clause-initial ⲉⲧⲓ/ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-
ⲕⲉ/ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ occur with the 1st perfect (ex. 47–50) and the imperfect
(ex. 51) as in Sahidic, but also with the 1st and the 2nd future (ex. 52–59
and 60 respectively):[67]

Ex. 48   The psalmist offers a personal testimony of his struggle with the
         age-old problem of why the wicked prosper. He begins:

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ-ⲇⲉ   ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲕⲓⲙ   ⲛ̄ϫⲉ-ⲛⲁ-ⲫⲁⲧ
1S.ABS-yet except-other-little   PF-3P-move   PVS-POSS.P.1S-feet

ⲟⲩⲟϩ   ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲫⲟⲛ   ⲉⲃⲟⲗ   ⲛ̄ϫⲉ-ⲛⲁ-ⲧⲁⲧⲥⲓ
and   except-other-little   PF-3P-pour   out   PVS-POSS.P.1S-step

But as for me, my feet had almost slipped. I had almost lost my
foothold.   (Ps 72[73]:2; 12/13th cent.)[68]

Ex. 49   The psalmist asks who would stand by him against his adversaries:

ⲉⲃⲏⲗ ϫⲉ   ⲁ-ⲡ-ϭⲟⲓⲥ   ⲉⲣ-ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲓⲛ   ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲓ
except that PF-DEF.M-Lord   AUX-help   to-1s

ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲁ-ⲥ-ϣⲱⲡⲓ   ⲛ̄ϫⲉ-ⲧⲁ-ⲯⲩⲭⲏ   ϧⲉⲛ-ⲁⲙⲉⲛϯ
except-other-little   PF-3SF-happen   PVS-POSS.F.1S-soul   in-neitherworld

Had the Lord not helped me, my soul would almost have descend-
ed in Hell.   (Ps 93[94]:17; 12/13th cent.)[69]

Ex. 50   God's commands are a reliable guide to right and wrong. By keep-
         ing them the psalmist is doing what is right, yet he is still persecut-
         ed:

ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲙⲟⲩⲛⲕ-ⲧ   ϩⲓϫⲉⲛ-ⲡ-ⲕⲁϩⲓ
except-other-little   PF-3P-destroy-1S   upon-DEF.M-earth

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ-ⲇⲉ   ⲙ̄ⲡⲓ-ⲭⲱ   ⲛ̄ⲥⲱ-ⲓ   ⲛ̄-ⲛⲉ-ⲕ-ⲉⲛⲧⲟⲗⲏ
1S.ABS-yet   PF.NEG.1S-put   behind-1S   OBJ-POSS.P-2SM-order

They almost wiped me from the earth, but I have not forsaken your
precepts.   (Ps 118:87; 12/13th cent.)[70]

---

[66] M. Chaîne, "Sermon sur la Pénitence attribué a St Cyrille d'Alexandrie", *MFOB* 6
(1913), p. 505,6–8.
[67] Compare the Boharic examples (48–50), (51), (54) and (57) with their Sahidic
variants (29–31), (37), (10), and (26) above.
[68] P. de Lagarde, *Psalterii versio mephitica*, réédition avec le texte copte en carac-
tères coptes par O.H.E. Burmester et E. Dévaud, 1925, p. 85.
[69] P. de Lagarde, *Psalterii versio mephitica*, p. 115.
[70] P. de Lagarde, *Psalterii versio mephitica*, p. 150.

Ex. 51 Solomon exhorts his sons to stay away from a foreign temptress:

ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲁ-ⲓ-ϣⲱⲡⲓ   ϧⲉⲛ-ⲡ-ⲑⲉϣⲟⲩ   ⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛ
except-another-little   PF-1S-happen   in-DEF.M-bad   all

   ϧⲉⲛ-ⲑ-ⲙⲏϯ   ⲛ-ⲟⲩ-ⲉⲕⲕⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ   ⲛⲉⲙ-ⲟⲩ-ⲥⲩⲛⲁⲅⲱⲅⲏ
   in-DEF.F-middle   of-IDF.S-church   and-IDF.S-congregation

I have almost come to utter ruin amidst church and congregation.
(Prov 5:14; 13/14th cent.)[71]

Ex. 52 The monks of Simeon's former monastery search for him and
finally find him at a swamp. He wants to know why they looked
for him:

ϯ-ⲙ̀ⲡϣⲁ   ⲅⲁⲣ   ⲁⲛ   ⲗⲟⲓⲡⲟⲛ   ⲉ-ⲑⲣⲓ-ⲱⲛϧ
1S-worthy   for   NEG   further   to-INFL.1S-live

ⲉⲑⲃⲉ   ϫⲉ   ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲉⲣ-ⲉⲡⲓⲃⲟⲩⲗⲉⲩⲓⲛ   ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲓ   ⲙ̀ⲙⲁⲩⲁ-ⲧ
because   that   PF-1S-AUX-contemplate   to-1S   self-1S

ⲛ̀-ϯ-ⲥⲱⲟⲩⲛ   ⲁⲛ   ⲟⲩⲟϩ   ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ
NEG-1S-know   NEG   and   except-other-little

ⲛⲁ-ⲓ-ⲛⲁ-ϯ   ⲙ̀-ⲡⲁ-ⲡ̅ⲛ̅ⲁ̅   ⲡⲉ
PRT-1S-FUT-give   OBJ-POSS.M.1S-soul   PTC

For I am not worthy to live any further, because I contemplated
about myself unknowingly and almost gave up my soul.
(*Life St Simeon Stylites the Elder*; 10th cent.)[72]

Ex. 53 Pisura argues that the Christian faith is superior to the pagan reli-
gion and points out idiosyncrasies and contradictions in the latter.
The governor answers:

ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲭ-ⲛⲁ-ⲥⲟⲣⲙⲉ-ⲛ
except-other-little   2SM-FUT-lead_astray-1P

You almost lead us astray.   (*Mart. Pisura*; 12–13th cent.)[73]

---

[71] O.H.E. Burmester & E. Devaud, *Les Proverbes de Salomon, Texte Bohairique,*
1930.

[72] M. Chaîne, *La vie et les miracles de Saint Syméon stylite l'ancien* (*BEC* 3), 1948,
p. 34, 8–12. Chaîne's translation is slightly different (*St. Syméon*, p. 75): "C'est pourquoi
je me suis imposé à moi-même d'être inconnu. Encore un peu, j'aurais rendu l'esprit."

[73] H. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte tirés des manuscrits coptes de la
Bibliothèque Vaticane et du Musée Borgia*, 1886 (reprinted as a single volume 1977),
p. 127, 4–5. The 'source text', the *Martyrdom of St Ignatius* §8.1, is different here both in
S and B, see L.Th. Lefort, *Les pères apostoliques en copte* (*CSCO* 135/*SC* 17), 1952,
p. 90.

Ex. 54 Moses complains to God about the behaviour of the Israelites:

ⲉ̇ⲧⲓ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲥⲉ-ⲛⲁ-ϩⲓ-ⲱ̇ⲛⲓ   ⲉ̇ϫⲱ-ⲓ
still-other-little   3P-FUT-throw-stone   upon-1S
They almost stoned me!   (Ex 17:4; 14th cent.)[74]

Ex. 55 Paul asks Agrippa whether he believes the prophets. He replies:

ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲭ-ⲛⲁ-ⲑⲉⲧ-ⲡⲁ-ϩⲏⲧ
other-little   2SM-FUT-persuade-POSS.M.1S-heart

     ⲉ-ⲁⲓ-ⲧ   ⲛ̇-ⲭⲣⲏⲥⲧⲓⲁⲛⲟⲥ
     to-make-1S   OBJ-Christian
You nearly convinced me to become a Christian.

                                 (Acts 26:28; 14th cent.)[75]

Ex. 56 After the crowd had demanded an end to the torture and release of
the martyrs, the Hegemon says to his councillor:

ⲱⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲥⲉ-ⲛⲁ-ⲑϩⲓⲱⲛⲓ   ⲉ̇ϫⲱ-ⲛ
except-another-little   they-FUT-stone   upon-1P

     ⲉⲑⲃⲉ   ⲡⲁⲓ   ⲁⲛⲟⲥⲓⲟⲥ   ⲛ-ⲭⲣⲏⲥⲧⲓⲁⲛⲟⲥ
     because   DEM.M   wicked   of-Christian
They would almost have stoned us because of that wicked
Christian.   (*Mart. Didimus*; 10th cent.)[76]

Ex. 57 The governor orders Julius of Aqfahs to him. As he appears he
asks him:

ⲭ-ⲟⲩⲱⲱ   ⲛ̇ⲧⲁ-ⲉⲣ-ⲟⲩ   ⲛⲁ-ⲕ
2SM.PRS-wish   CNJ.1S-do-what   for-2SM

ⲱⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲡⲓ-ⲙⲏⲱ   ⲛⲁ-ⲧⲱⲟⲩⲛ-ⲟⲩ   ⲉ̇ϩⲣⲏⲓ
less-other-little   DFA.M-crowd   FUT-rise-3P   down

     ⲉ̇ϫⲟ-ⲓ   ⲛ̇ⲥⲉ-ϩⲓ-ⲱ̇ⲛⲓ   ⲉ̇ϫⲱ-ⲓ
     on-1S   CNJ.3P-throw-stone   on-1S
What do you want me to do for you? The crowd almost rose
against me and stoned me.   (*Mart. Apa Epima*; 10th cent.)[77]

Ex. 58 The fame of St Apatil spreads and news of his deeds reach the go-
vernor. Filled with anger he asks his entourage what to do wih this
'magician':

ϩⲏⲡⲡⲉ-ⲅⲁⲣ   ⲱⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ϥ-ⲛⲁ-ⲥⲉⲕ-ⲟⲩⲟⲛ   ⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲣⲟ-ϥ
look-for   less-other-little   3SM-FUT-draw-one   every   to-3SM
ϩⲓⲧⲉⲛ-ⲛⲓ-ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ̀   ⲉ̇ⲧⲉ-ϥ-ⲓ̇ⲣⲓ   ⲙ̇ⲙⲱ-ⲟⲩ
through-DFA.P-magic   REL-3SM-do   OBJ-3P
For look, he almost drew everyone to his side through the magic
that he practises.   (*Mart. Apatil*; 10th cent.)[78]

---

[74]   P. de Lagarde, *Der Pentateuch koptisch*, 1867 [reprinted 1967], p. 168.

[75]   G. Horner, *Coptic Version NT Northern Dialect* IV, p. 416.

[76]   H. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs*, p. 301, 9–10.

[77]   I. Balestri & H. Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrium* I, p. 148, 4-6.

[78]   I. Balestri & H. Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrium* I, p. 95, 13-14.

Ex. 59 A saint in distress asks the Lord to send Archangel Michael to his comfort. On his appearance Michael says:

ϫⲉⲙ-ⲛⲟⲙϯ ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲙⲁⲣⲉ-ϥ-ⲧⲁϫⲣⲟ ⲛ̀ϫⲉ-ⲡⲉ-ⲕ-ϩⲏⲧ
find-strength and JUSS-3SM-be_strengthened PVS-POSS.M-2SM-heart
ⲉ̀ⲧⲓ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ ⲭ-ⲛⲁ-ϫⲱⲕ ⲉ̀ⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̀-ⲡⲉ-ⲕ-ⲁ̀ⲅⲱⲛ
except-another-little 2SM-FUT-fulfill out OBJ-POSS.M-2SM-contest
Be firm, and may your heart be strengthened, for you have almost fulfilled your contest. (*Mart. Anatolius*; 10th cent.)[79]

Ex. 60 The queen tells the king of her nightmare and says:

ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ <ⲛⲁ>ⲣⲉ-ⲡⲁ-ⲡⲛⲁ̄ ⲛⲁ-ⲓ ⲉ̀ⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̀ϩⲏⲧ
except-other-little PRT-POSS.M.1S-soul FUT-go out inside.1s
ⲡⲉ ϩⲓⲧⲉⲛ-ϯ-ϩⲟϯ ⲛ̀ⲧⲉ-ⲛⲏ ⲉⲧ-ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲱ-ⲟⲩ
PTC by-DFA.F-fear of-DEM.P REL-PF-1S-see OBJ-3P
ⲛⲉⲙ-ⲛⲏ ⲉⲧ-ⲁ-ⲓ-ⲥⲟⲟⲙ-ⲟⲩ
and-DEM.P REL-PF-1S-hear-3P
My soul would have almost left me for fear of what I saw and heard. (Mena of Nikiou, *Life of Isaac of Alexandria*; 9–13th cent.)[80]

Ex. 61 Dorotheos has been accused of sexually abusing the daughter of a local leader who sends men to attack the monastery. After the raid the other monks say:

ⲓⲥϩⲏⲡⲡⲉ ⲁ-ⲕ-ⲛⲁⲩ ϫⲉ ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲛⲁ-ⲣⲱϩⲕ[sic]
behold FOC-2SM-see that except-other-little FOC-3P-FUT-burn
ⲙ̀-ⲡⲓ-ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲧⲏⲣ-ϥ ⲛⲉⲙ-ⲛⲉ-ⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲧⲏⲣ-ⲟⲩ
OBJ-DFA.M-monastery all-3SM and-POSS.P-1P-other-soul all-3P
ⲉ-ⲩ-ⲥⲟⲡ ⲉⲑⲃⲉ-ⲛⲉ-ⲕ-ⲟⲩⲱϣ ⲛ̀-ⲁⲧ-ϩⲏⲧ
to-IDF.S-time because-POSS.P-2SM-wish of-NEG-heart
Behold, you have seen that they almost burned the whole monastery and even all our souls because of your mindless desires.
(*The Life of Dorotheos*; 10–11th cent.)[81]

Accordingly, the nominal sentence construction and the pattern ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ followed by the conjunctive are apparently not used in Bohairic. The most natural explanation to this state of affairs is that, as suggested above, these constructions are typologically and diachronically earlier and had already disappeared from the language when Bohairic

---

[79] I. Balestri & H. Hyvernat *Acta Martyrium* I, p. 28, 4-6.
[80] É. Porcher, "Vie d'Isaac, Patriarche d'Alexandrie de 686 à 689, écrite par Mina, évêque de Pchati", *Patrologia Orientalis* 11 (1915), p. 367, 13–15. He gives the text as ⲉ̀ⲣⲉ-ⲡⲁ-ⲡⲛⲁ̄, which is surely a mistake by the ancient copyist given the appearance of ⲡⲉ later in the sentence. The emendation into the preterite seems necessary. Whether the Coptic expression means "to lose conscience" (thus Porcher) or "to be frightened to death" (thus D.N. Bell, *Mena of Nikiou, The Life of Isaac of Alexandria & The Martyrdom of Saint Macrobius* [*Cistercian Studies Series* 107], 1988, p. 69) is irrelevant here.
[81] F. Pericoli-Ridolfini, "Un testo agiografico inedito in lingua copta (Boheirico) della Biblioteca Vaticana", *RSO* 24 (1949), p. 3, 5th–3rd from below.

replaced Sahidic as the main literary idiom of Coptic. In other words, in Bohairic material the grammaticalisation of the construction discussed seems to have reached the later 'adverbial stage', ('adverbial stage 2' above) where restrictions concerning which conjugation type could be used after ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ no longer obtained. In fact, given the greater number of conjugations attested, the degree to which this requirement was relaxed in Bohairic appears to be greater than in Sahidic, which again suggests a later diachronic stage.

Significantly, Bohairic material also provides instances of the said expression in sentence-final position:

Ex. 62 People bring the corpses of the saints back to their village by camel:

ⲁ-ⲥ-ϣⲱⲡⲓ-ⲇⲉ   ⲉ̇ⲧⲁ-ⲩ-ⲫⲟⲏⲧ   ⲉ̇ⲃⲟⲩⲛ   ⲉ̇-ⲡⲓ-ϯⲙⲓ
PF-3SF-happen-yet TEMP-3P-reach into   to-DFA.M-village

  ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲁ-ⲩ-ⲉⲛⲕⲟⲧ   ⲛ̇ϫⲉ-<ⲛ>ⲟⲩ-ϭⲁⲙⲟⲩⲗ
except-IDF.S-little   PF-3P-lie_down PVS-POSS.P.3P-camel

When they had almost reached the village, their camels laid down.
(*Mart. Pirow & Athom*; 12–13th cent.)[82]

Ex. 63 An ascetic named Paul spends the night standing and praying, when suddenly he is stung by a scorpion:

ⲛ̇ⲑⲟϥ-ⲇⲉ   ⲙ̇ⲡⲉ-ϥ-ⲭⲁ-ⲧⲟⲧ-ϥ   ⲉⲃⲟⲗ   ⲓⲥϫⲉⲛ-ⲣⲟⲩϩⲓ
3SM.ABS-yet NEG.PF-3SM-put-hand-3SM out   from-evening

ϣⲁ-ϣⲱⲣⲡ   ⲉ-ϥ-ⲉⲣ-ⲙⲉⲗⲉⲧⲏ   ϩⲱⲥⲧⲉ   ⲛ̇ⲧⲉ-ϥ-ϯ
until-morning CIRC-3SM-AUX-recite so_that CNJ-3SM-give

ⲙ̇-ⲡⲉ-ϥ-ⲡⲛⲁ̄   ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ   ⲉⲑⲃⲉ-ⲡ-ϩⲓⲥⲓ
OBJ-POSS.M-3SM-spirit except-other-little because-DEF.M-pain

ⲛ̇-ϯ-ⲙⲁⲑⲟⲩⲓ̇   ⲉⲧ-ⲁ-ϥ-ⲓ   ⲉ-ⲡ-ϣⲱⲓ
of-DFA.F-poison REL-PF-3SM-go to-DEF.M-height

                         ⲉϫⲉⲛ-ⲡⲉ-ϥ-ϩⲏⲧ
                         upon-POSS.M-3SM-heart

Yet he did not stop reciting from dusk till dawn, so that he almost gave up his spirit because of the pain of that poison that went up to his heart.   (*Vita Pachomii* §99; 9th cent.)[83]

Ex. 64 St Macarius tells how the inhabitants of a village once ridiculed and tortured him:

ⲟⲩⲟϩ   ⲁ-ⲩ-ϩⲓⲟⲩⲓ   ⲉⲣⲟ-ⲓ   ⲉ-ⲑⲣⲓ-ⲙⲟⲩ   ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ
and   PF-3P-struck OBJ-1S to-INFL.1S-die except-other-little

And they beat me so that I almost died.
(*Apophthegmata of St Macarius* §1; 10th cent.)[84]

---

[82] H. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs,* p. 171, 1st line from bottom–172,1.

[83] L.Th. Lefort, *S. Pachomii Vita Boh. Scr.*, p. 124, 13–15.

Ex. 65   Acacius starts his fourth letter to Peter: *I thank God, O my holy father, that he persuaded you to suffer with me, this sinner…*

ⲟⲩⲟϩ   ⲉⲧ-ⲁ-ϥ-ⲧⲁⲕⲟ   ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ
and   REL-PF-3SM-perish   except-little
…who almost perished.

(*Correspondence of Peter Mongus & Acacius*; 10th cent.)[85]

Ex. 66   Enraged soldiers torture Father Daniel who had anathematized the tome of Leo and Chalcedon:

ϩⲱⲥⲇⲉ ⲛⲧⲉ-ϥ-ϧⲱⲛⲧ   ⲉ-ⲫ-ⲙⲟⲩ   ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛ-ⲕⲉ-ⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ
so_that CNJ-3SM-approach OBJ-DEF.M-death except-other-little
…so that he almost approached death.

(*Life of Daniel of Scetis*; 10th cent.)[86]

It was suggested above that this construction represents the final, 'adjunct' stage of grammaticalisation of ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ (etc.), which, subsequent to its re-interpretation as an adverb, was finally moved to the syntactic position prototypically occupied by such expressions. The evidence from Bohairic suggests that this interpretation is indeed correct and that the Sahidic evidence represents a continuous chain of grammaticalisation and linguistic evolution. The difference between the two dialects is that whereas in Sahidic the development is observable from its (possible) diachronic origins, in Bohairic only the last two stages are observable due to the typologically and historically later nature of the evidence. The evolution as reflected in both these dialects may be presented thus:

		SAHIDIC	BOHAIRIC
I	*NomS. stage*	[ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ] [ⲡⲉ]$_i$ ⲛ̄ϥ̄ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄$_i$	–
II	*Adv. stage 1*	ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ$_{adv}$ ⲛ̄ϥ̄ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄	–
	Adv. stage 2	ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ$_{adv}$ ⲁϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄	ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ$_{adv}$ ⲁϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄
III	*Adjunct stage*	ⲁϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ$_{adc}$	ⲁϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ϣⲁⲧⲉⲛⲕⲉⲕⲟⲩϫⲓ$_{adc}$

Also noteworthy is the fact that in stages I to II the construction is truly semantically 'ad-verbial' in that it only qualifies the predicative verb and never any other part. Only in stage III the construction is free to be

---

[84] É. Amélineau, *Histoire des Monastères de la Basse-Égypte. Vies des Saints Paul, Antoine, Macaire, Maxime et Domèce, Jean le Nain, &^{a}, Texte copte et traduction française* (*AnGuim* 25), 1894, p. 204, 1–2.

[85] É. Amélineau, *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne aux IVe et Ve siècles* (*MMAF* IV), 1888, p. 213, 1–2.

[86] I. Guidi, "Texte copte", in: L. Clugnet (ed.), *Vie (et récits) de l'Abbé Daniel le scétiote (VIe siècle)* (BHO I), Paris 1901, 97,1–2.

used 'adnominally' as in examples 9 and 45 above or the following instance:[87]

Ex. 67 Gregory of Nyssa tells how an earthquake struck…
     ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ-ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲕⲓⲛⲇⲓⲛⲉⲩⲉ ⲉ-ⲡ-ⲙⲟⲩ ⲡⲁⲣⲁ-ⲟⲩ-ⲕⲟⲩⲓ
     and CNJ-every all venture to-DEF.M-death less-IDF.S-little
     …so that almost everyone was in danger of death.
          (Gregory of Nyssa, *On Gregory Thaumaturgus*; 10–11th cent.)[88]

Yet the clause-final ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ (etc.) of stage III is still used predominantly for adverbial rather than adnominal function. This suggests further that the various constructions above are diachronically sequential and do not reflect mere synchronic differences in function.

To sum up, the first change undergone by ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ and its variants, namely the breaking-up of the nominal sentence, seems to provide a fine example of grammaticalisation through syntactic reanalysis in Coptic. The erstwhile pattern with ⲡⲉ was re-bracketed and the essentially three-part (not 'tripartite') division of the construction was simplified into a two-part complex without ⲡⲉ. This was clearly the most significant change of all seeing that it resulted in the construction losing its nominal sentence status in one sweep and, at the same time, in re-classification of ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ as an adverbial. Compared to this, the subsequent dropping of the requirement of the use of conjunctive was a relatively minor adjustment, but the moving of ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ to the end of the clause was again a major rupture. This final adjustment would, in turn, seem to furnish an example of semantically-motivated syntactic change resulting in an adverbial being moved to the position standardly occupied by such expressions. The development undergone by the expression discussed thus illustrates a number of generic processes underlying Coptic diachronic syntax, which was constantly evolving and changing.

---

[87] First signs of this development might be discernible already at the preceding stage II.2. In ex. 58 the function of *almost* might also be understood as adnominal ("He drew almost everyone to his side").

[88] M. van Esbroeck, in: P. Naster, H. de Meulenaere & J. Quagebeur (eds.), *Misc. Vergote*, p. 550, 4–5.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR THE GLOSSING

1, 2, 3	number	IMP	imperative
ABS	absolute	JUSS	jussive
ABST	abstract	M	masculine
ADV	adverb	NEG	negation
AGT	agent	OBJ	object marker
CAUS	causative	P	plural
CIRC	circumstantial	PF	perfect
CMPL	completive	POSS	possessive
CNJ	conjunctive	PRS	present
CNT	counterfactual	PRT	preterite
COND	conditional	PTC	particle
DEF	definite	PVS	postverbal subject marker
DEM	demonstrative	REL	relative
DFA	definite & anaphoric	S	singular
F	feminine	SE	subject element
FOC	focus marker	STA	stative
FUT	future	TEMP	temporal
IDF	indefinite		