

THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND THE THIRD PERSON PLURAL SUFFIX PRONOUN IN THE MEDINET HABU HISTORICAL INSCRIPTIONS

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Introduction

This paper discusses the variation in the form of the 3rd person plural suffix with respect to the historical military texts found on the walls of the mortuary temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu¹. The texts are known for describing the conflicts between Egypt and the Libyans and Sea Peoples which took place during the Twentieth Dynasty and they demonstrate a distinct uniformity in subject matter, lexicon, grammar and structural arrangement². The recognition of recurrent thematic units (crucial to the ideological argumentation that characterises the subject matter) within both the longer narrative texts and the shorter incidental inscriptions permits the close study of textual features according to quantifiable contextual parameters.

The author's preparation of a catalogue of all suffix attestations in these texts has brought to light the puzzling (though common for Ramesside monumental inscriptions) behaviour of the 3rd person plural suffix: it appears in both the typically Middle Egyptian form *sn* and the Late Egyptian form *w*. Both forms of the suffix are used without semantic difference and each plays a number of roles: as a possessive attached to a noun or possessive adjective (e.g. *snf=sn* "their blood"; *py=sn h'* "their lifetime"); as a pronoun forming the subject or indirect object of a clause (e.g. *hdb=w n=f n3 t3.w b'.w* "they (the gods) subjugate for him the boastful lands") or in an adverbial phrase (*n.t itn hr=sn* "the beauty of the sun's disk is before them"); or as the object of an

¹ The texts included in the scope of this paper consist of the great inscriptions (Year 5, 8, 11 and 11 poem), the lion hunt, the war scenes (Nubian, Libyan, Sea Peoples and Syrian), the Year 12 stelae and the first pylon triumph scenes (north and south). They are published in EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY, *Medinet Habu I: Earlier Historical Records of Ramses III*, Oriental Institute Publications 8 (Chicago, 1930), pls. 1-54; *Medinet Habu II: Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, Oriental Institute Publications 9 (Chicago, 1932), pls. 55-113; K.A. KITCHEN, *Ramesside Inscriptions. Historical and Biographical*, vol. V (Oxford, 1970), 8-98 [herewith as KRI]. Annotated translations can be found in W.F. EDGERTON and J.A. WILSON, *Historical Records of Ramses III. The texts in Medinet Habu volumes I and II* (Chicago, 1936).

² The structural similarities in particular become apparent from simple skeleton outlines of the major "sections" of the texts, for which see the introductions given to each of the longer inscriptions in EDGERTON and WILSON, *Historical Records*. Spalinger presents similar structural breakdowns and discusses similarities between the texts: A.J. SPALINGER, *Aspects of the Military Documents of the Ancient Egyptians*, Yale Near Eastern Researches 9 (New Haven and London, 1982), 213-20.

infinitive (e.g. ...*r smj*=*w* “...in order to slay them”). It is the intention of this paper to make some observations on this feature and suggest possible reasons for this variation.

Possibilities for investigation

There are many possibilities for such an investigation, one of the most promising of which is the consideration of the relationship between grammatical features and variation, both from traditional grammatical and functional linguistic perspectives. There are however no direct connections to be observed between suffix variation and, for example, the role that the suffix plays in the sentence, or the role of the word to which the suffix is attached. There is a multiplicity of avenues to explore here, although the analyses conducted in this area have yielded so far no substantial results.

The phonetics of the co-text in which the suffixes are found may play some role, although once again no clear relationships are discernible. Given the so far negative results and that the usual difficulties in studying phonetics in Egyptian significantly hinder this area of investigation, this potential examination will be left aside.

An appealing context in which one may locate this suffix variation is that of the combination of Middle Egyptian and Late Egyptian, features of both of which are present in the Medinet Habu texts. Given that the *sn* suffix is the regular form for the Middle Egyptian third person plural suffix and *w* is regular for Late Egyptian, it is easy to presume that those words which are considered to be more “traditional” may have the traditional ending *sn* (i.e. archaistic) and those which are “new”, or at least considered by the Egyptians to be connected to Late Egyptian, may take the *w*. However, the evidence speaks strongly against such a direct dependency. Thus, for example, a word such as *rmj* “people” is attested since the Pyramid Texts³, yet consistently takes the *w* suffix at Medinet Habu.

As for the pattern of occurrence in direct speech, there seems to be no distinctive, uniform trend, but this is an aspect of the investigation that will be revisited at the end of the paper. There are many other avenues of investigation that could be pursued with no promise of results. However, making first some observations on the material itself may give some useful clues.

Observations

Observation I: exclusivity of suffixes

The catalogue of suffixes⁴ shows that some words are found exclusively with one suffix type, and this can be determined statistically, even if the reason for this exclusivity

³ A. ERMAN and H. GRAPOW, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1971), 421.

⁴ There is unfortunately no room for reproducing here the whole catalogue.

is not clear: e.g. (the lists are not exhaustive but include words that occur in the excerpts given below) *sn*-exclusive: *in.w* “tribute”; *ˁ.wy* “arms”; *b3* “soul”; *m33* “to see”; *msi.w* “children”; *r-ḥ3.t* “before”; *r3-ˁ.w* “limit”⁵; *ḥˁ.w* “body/limbs”; *ḥm.wt* “wives”; *ḥ3s.(w)t* “hill countries”; *s.t* “place”; *t3* “land”. *w*-exclusive: *rmt* “people”; *rd.wy* “legs”; *tni* “to lift up”; *dr.t* “hand”. There are also words which exhibit a preference for one suffix type but for which exceptions are attested, e.g. *sn*-preferred: *m-s3* “behind”; *ib* “heart”; *im* “among”; *w*-preferred: *ks̄i.w* “bones”; *sh̄r(.w)* “plan(s)”; *iri* “to make/do”.

Some of these words are only attested once and therefore no descriptive generalisations about them would be valid: e.g. *hrd.w* “children”; *swi* “district”. There are, of course, also words that are attested with both suffix types and it is these that form the chief focus of this paper: e.g. *iw* particle; *n* “to/for”; *r-r* “against”; *hr* “face”; *ḥ.t* “body”. Note that henceforth the different suffixes will be distinguished wherever they occur: *w* will appear surrounded by a box and *sn* will appear shaded, e.g. *ḥdb=w* or *snf=sn*.

Observation II (a): clusters

The occurrences of one or another type of suffix often cluster together in small groups, the attestations of *sn* appearing in contexts directly concerning the king and the attestations of *w* appearing in contexts not concerning the king. By way of example we can consider an extract from the text of Year 5:

[1] Year 5: 22-25 (KRI V, 22.6-11)

*ist [wn] [i]ḥwn m̄i ḥḥ sh̄n whˁ-[i]b m̄i Mḥ.y md.[w=f...] bsi=sn m̄i ts m [...] pri m r3
nb r [d]r mnfy.wt=f wdn [hrw iw]=sn m̄i k3.w hr [...] hr b3.wy ssm.wt=f m̄i
bik.w m33=sn ḥp.wt [...] hrr m̄i m3i sh̄nš knd snn.yw sh̄m.w m̄i Ršp.w m33=sn dbˁ.w
m̄i.tt df̄d ph.ty=f r-ḥ3.t=sn m[i] Mnt.w*

Now, there was a young man like a griffon, an intell[ige]nt commander like The-One-Who-Fills (Thoth); as for [his] wor[ds...], they come forth like speech in [...] which issues from the mouth of the lord to the limit. His infantry are heavy [of voice]; they [are] like bulls, [they] being ready (for battle) [...] upon the battlefield. His horses are like falcons when they see small birds [...] bellowing like a lion, agitated and enraged. The chariot riders are powerful like Resheps, they seeing tens of thousands as if (mere) drop(s). His power is at their front li[ke] Montu.

Here the topic is the military power of the king and his troops and the *sn* suffix predominates. By contrast, in lines 27-28 the topic concerns the actions and plans of the enemy and the *w* suffix predominates instead:

⁵ *r3-ˁ.w=sn* is one almost certain case of an archaism, whose nature is brought out especially in one (hypercorrective) attestation in Year 5: 35 (KRI V, 23.9), where the suffix *sn* has no logical antecedent (see EDGERTON and WILSON, *Historical Records*, 26, n.35a).

[2] Year 5: 27-28 (KRI V, 22.13-15)

$\overline{[n3y=w]}$ $\overline{[h3.w]}$ hn hr $\overline{[shr=w]}$ $\overline{[iw(.w)]}$ $\overline{[ib=w]}$ $m\overline{h}$ $\overline{[iw=n]}$ r $\overline{[dh3=n]}$ $\overline{[n3y=w]}$ $sh.yw$ m $\overline{[h.t=w]}$
 $\overline{[iw=n]}$ r $\overline{[iri.t]}$ $\overline{[ib[...]]}$ $m\overline{h}$ m s^c $\overline{[d3]}$ hr $pn^c.t$ $\overline{[shr=w]}$ $hd\overline{i}$ gws hr ib $n.y$ $n\overline{tr}$

Their fighters were confident because of their plan and had come, their heart(s) being full (i.e. confident): “We will advance ourselves!” Their advice in their bod(ies) (was): “We will act!” (and) [their] heart(s) were full with destruction and wrongdoing. (But) their plan was destroyed and thwarted at the wish of god.

This is not to imply that there is a direct correlation between reference to the king and the occurrence of *sn*, on the one hand, and the enemy and *w*, on the other; the situation is a little more complex than that. And indeed, it is not expected that there will be clear-cut groups of *w* or *sn*, chiefly because of the “interference” of the words which have invariable suffixes. Since the goal is to investigate variation in suffix forms, those words which demonstrate invariable suffixes have not been highlighted in the rest of the citations given below.

Observation II (b): protagonists

Closer inspection of the evidence actually suggests that when the king is the dominant protagonist, the suffix *sn* is used, *regardless of whom it refers to*. Conversely, when anybody or anything else is the dominant protagonist, the *w* is the suffix in use. Year 8: 20-22 illustrates clearly this pattern:

[3] Year 8: 20-22 (KRI V, 40.7-13)

$\overline{[di=i]}$ grg $r3-h3.t$ $m\overline{i}$ $sb.ty$ nht m $\overline{[h^c.w]}$ $\overline{[h3.w]}$ $mn.w$ $br.w$ nsk $\overline{[iw=sn]}$ $\overline{[pr]}$ tm m $\overline{[h3.t]}$ r $\overline{[ph.w]}$
 m $\overline{[h3.w]}$ $\overline{[kni.yw]}$ $hr.y$ $\overline{[h^c.w=sn]}$ $mnfy.t$ m stp nb $n.y$ $T3-Mri$ $\overline{[iw=w]}$ $m\overline{i}$ $m3i$ hrr $hr-tp$ $\overline{[dw.w]}$
 $n.t-h\overline{trw}$ m $\overline{[phrr.w]}$ m $\overline{[t3y.w-tkm]}$ m $\overline{[snn.yw]}$ nb nfr $gm\overline{i}$ $\overline{[dr.t=w]}$ $\overline{[ssm.wt=w]}$ hr nwt m $\overline{[h^c.w=sn]}$
 nb grg r $\overline{[p\overline{t}p]}$ $\overline{[h3s.wt]}$ hr $\overline{[ib.ty=w]}$ $tw=i$ m $\overline{[Mntw]}$ $\overline{[kni]}$ $mn.kwi$ $hr-h3.t=sn$ $nw=sn$ hr $n3$
 $hf^c.n$ $\overline{[wy=i]}$

I caused that the river-mouth be prepared like a strong wall, with fighting ships, boats and barges, they being completely equipped from top to bottom with brave fighters bearing their weapons. The infantry consisted of the choicest (men) of Egypt, they being like a lion, roaring upon the mountains. The cavalry was of runners and Tekem-carriers and all the good chariot riders, whose hands were capable. Their horses were quivering in all their limbs, ready to crush the foreign lands beneath their hooves/hoofs. I am brave Montu, firm before them, so that they might stare at those whom my arms have seized.

When the king relates his involvement in the preparation for battle, which includes the navy, the *sn* suffix is used. When the king’s infantry themselves become the dominant focus, the *w* suffix is employed. Note also that when the king reasserts himself as subject, beginning with $tw=i$ *m Mntw*, the *sn* suffix reappears.

The same pattern occurs when the topic involves the divine sphere, where one would otherwise expect a prevalence of the *sn* suffix. Consider, for example, this quotation

from the second series of Syrian war scenes, in which Horus and Seth are referred to with the *w* suffix twice:

[4] Syrian Scenes II: a.i. (KRI V, 82.14-16)

k3 rnpī nšny spd 'b.wy nḥt 'w htm ḥr b3.wy n ḳni mhr nb 3b twt.w bnd m Ḥr.w
Sth [ph.ty=w] [šf.yt=w] 3bh m ḥ'.w=f

Young raging bull, sharp of horns, strong of arm, bold upon the field of valour; a warrior; lord of desire; enfolded in Horus and Seth: their power and their awe are united in his body.

Observation III: thematic context

The textual treatment of the gods also shows up attestations of the third person pronoun *sn*, for instance:

[5] Year 8: 8-9 (KRI V, 38.11-12)

'n sndm ḥr wts.t mi 'Itm.w šsp.n=f ḥkr Ḥr.w Sth nb.ty Šm'.w=s Mḥ.tyt=s iri=sn s.t=sn
ḥr tp=f ḥf' '.wy=f ḥk3.t ḥr nḥ(3)ḥ(3)

Beautiful of countenance upon the throne like Atum, he having received the regalia of Horus and Seth; the Two Ladies, she of the south and she of the north, they make their place upon his head; his arms grasp the sceptre and the flail.

Although in both this example and [4] from the Syrian war scenes the gods are assisting the king in some way, the important difference lies in the theme characterising the context: the Two Ladies are here acting in the context of assigning him his royal right and with it the appropriate regalia, while in the previous excerpt Horus and Seth offered their support to the king in a *military* context, bestowing on him their divine military qualities. A similar situation can be found when a reference is made to the enemy, in which context *w* is most frequently employed. However, in rhetorical contexts where the theme involves adoration of, or submission to, the king, they take a *sn* suffix, for example:

[6] Year 5: 13-15 (KRI V, 21.14-15)

p3 n(.y) 'Im'r m ssf.y n pri.t=f ḥ3k rmt=f nb ḥnr dr' sp nb m t3=f iwī m i3w.wt r gmḥ
p3 r'.w 3 n(.y) Km.t ḥr=sn 'n.t 'Itn ḥr=sn

The one of Amor is as ashes, his seed does not exist. All his people have been captured and they are scattered and beaten, and every remaining (person) in his land has come praising in order to see the great sun of Egypt upon them. The beauty of the sun's disk is before them.

Hypotheses

Based on observation I, it is clear that there are words bearing suffixes that are variable (taking both *w* and *sn*) and others that are invariable (attested only with one of

the two suffix types). Concerning the words with variable suffixes, observation III suggests that the selection of a given suffix may have been influenced by the contextual theme, a major variable of which (according to observation II) seems to be the presence of the king. The remainder of the paper will be concerned chiefly with these variable suffixes.

Thematic considerations

Defining a theme

If suffix selection may be related to the context of occurrence, then contexts need to be able to be compared and contrasted in an effective and meaningful way. The Medinet Habu texts share a situational context (= time and place), as well as subject matter, and hence they also share an ideological argument and message⁶ — this is verified by the ubiquitous rhetorical content emphasising the king's role as protector of Egypt, destroyer of enemies and restorer of order. Thus it is not surprising that the texts also possess a uniformity in lexicon, grammar and structural arrangement. There is no space here to comment on the narratological aspects of the Medinet Habu style of composition, but suffices to say that the texts have an episodic configuration consisting of distinct thematic units, such as *setting*, *rebellion*, *attack*, *defeat*, and *submission*, among others⁷. The longer texts exhibit sequences of these themes, while the shorter texts serving as captions often represent just one theme. The recurrence of these themes presents an opportunity to isolate and describe the characteristics of particular contexts and subsequently compare — on the basis of multiple attestations — the usage of textual features, such as the suffix variation.

Cifola's categorisation

Barbara Cifola has published two articles⁸ in which she deconstructs the Medinet Habu texts according to discrete thematic units. For Cifola's structural analysis, a thematic

⁶ On this point (which underlies some of the basic assumptions of this paper's approach), see the discussion given in P. LUNDH, *Actor and Event: Military Activity in Ancient Egyptian Narrative. Texts from Tuthmosis II to Merenptah* (Uppsala 2002), 10-2, from which it is here pertinent to quote: "The thematic frame and guidelines, that form a text, are the result of structured effort to embody a message. It is this message, with its inherent function, that decides the choice of thematic components and structural guidelines, as the tool with which the author works. Function, in this sense, determines the form."

⁷ See LUNDH, *Actor and Event*, in which thematic analyses are conducted for military texts from Tuthmosis II to Merenptah. These "contextual fields" are discussed and defined (in relation to the selected material) on pages 23-8.

⁸ B. CIFOLA, 'Ramses III and the Sea Peoples: A structural analysis of the Medinet Habu inscriptions', *Orientalia* 57 (1988), 275-306; B. CIFOLA, 'The terminology of Ramses III's historical records with a formal analysis of the war scenes', *Orientalia* 60 (1991), 9-57.

unit constitutes a distinct group of vocabulary items usually used in connection with one another. She, thus, presents a number of categories:

- (A) Precedents in Egypt
- (B) Enemy's precedents
- (C) Enemy's actions
- (D) King's precedents
- (E) King's action
- (F) Unfortunate situation of the enemy
- (G) Fortunate situation of Egypt

These are then subdivided into a number of subcategories on the basis of associated vocabulary. A few examples will suffice⁹:

- (B1) Rebellion: *nwt* "to quiver"; *hnn* "to rely"; *šdi* "to conspire"; *kʒi* "to plot"; *tni* "to lift oneself up (i.e. in challenge)"; *dhʒ* "to advance"; *bʿ* "to boast"; *bšt* "to rebel"
- (E2) King's Attack: *k* "to enter (to charge)"; *pri* "to go forth"; *nḥnh* "to attack"; *swhi* "to roar"
- (F4) Enslavement: *ini* "to carry off"; *dnḥ* "to be pinioned"; *hʒk* "to plunder"
- (F6) Submission: *iwi m hms/nyny/iʒw/ksi* "to come humbly/with greetings/with praise/bowing"; *in.w* "tribute"; *šlm* "to beg for peace"

These categories are given credence in that each theme is established on the basis of *recurring* groups of vocabulary items drawn from a number of texts in the Medinet Habu corpus.

Protagonist and focus

Cifola's thematic categorisation implies dependence on a textual element other than vocabulary: each theme is oriented around a particular protagonist, such as the king, the enemy or Egypt herself. There may be many protagonists playing roles in a particular theme, but in any given theme there is generally a *dominant* protagonist (whether an active or passive participant), which will henceforth be referred to as the "focus". This focus often appears textually as the grammatical subject of a clause, and we can easily observe that particular subjects generally occur with recognisable and distinct sets of vocabulary. This is exemplified by the observation that a change in vocabulary is often accompanied by a change in subject:

⁹ For a full list and discussion of vocabulary items, see CIFOLA, *Orientalia* 60 (1991), 9-57.

[7] Year 5: 36-38 (KRI V, 23.12-14)

s[p nb] inì m ḥ3k̄ r Km.t kp.w k̄rn.wt n r3-'.w=sn msi m ḥ3k̄.w dnḥ ḥr p3 sšd.w wr.w ḥ3s.wt twt ḥr gmḥ [b̄in=w] m b3y.t sšm.w n(y) nsw '.wy=sn pd nḥm.w=sn r ḥr.t m ib mri.w

Every remaining (person) has been brought as plunder to Egypt, hands and phalli without limit; they have been brought as prisoners and bound before the window of appearances, while the chiefs of the foreign lands are brought together and (now) see their wickedness. As for the council of thirty and the entourage of the king, their arms are outstretched; they jubilate to the sky with loving heart(s).

Here an enslavement theme (characterised by *inì*, *dnḥ*, and *ḥ3k̄*) changes to a triumph theme (characterised by *nḥm* and *ib mri*) by means of the topicalisation of the subject “the council of thirty and the entourage of the king”.

Looking at the most common subject is actually a good way of determining the focus of a section of text and hence it is also a good indicator of the theme in which it is located, but this is not always fail-safe, since themes are able to involve other participants without effecting any change in focus:

[8] Year 8: 27-28 (KRI V, 41.10-13)

ḥ3w=i ḥr b'ḥi [m k3.w df3.w] dd.tw n=i ḥpš nḥt ḥr n3y=i 3ḥ.w n ntr.w ntr.wt m ib mri.w rwi=i n3y=tn ihm.w n.tyw m ib=tn d̄i=i ḥmsi=tn hn.tw nn 'n(n) sḥr=i 3m.w [...] t3=sn d̄3i=sn sḥ3=sn rn=i m mn.t

My time is overflowing [with food and provisions]. It is because of my benefactions to the gods and goddesses with a willing heart that a strong arm was given to me. I mollify your woes which are in your hearts and cause that you sit comfortably, without relapse. I overthrow the Asiatics [...] their lands and they become ill when they remember my name daily.

Here the context is rhetorical and the focus is the king, yet a mention is made of the Asiatics. They come to occupy the role of active subject, but they do not become the focus¹⁰. Hence there is good textual support for the idea that a theme is comprised of two coinciding elements: a distinct vocabulary and a particular focus¹¹. It is also noteworthy to mention that there are combinations of theme with subject that never occur. For example, one wouldn't expect to find the “enslavement” terms used to describe the royal court, just as one would never find the verb *nḥm* “to rejoice” used to describe the actions of the enemy.

¹⁰ This may be reflected in the behaviour of the suffixes describing them — they do not attract an *w* suffix here, as is usual with a focus on the king.

¹¹ There is more that can be considered in this equation, of course, but these two elements are highlighted here, because they are the major components playing roles in the particular problem under scrutiny (i.e. suffix selection). Focus and theme as discussed here can be compared with the “actor” and “event” components of Lundh's study (*Actor and Event*, esp. 21-8).

Results

Given this framework of analysis based on Cifola's thematic units, occurrences of themes of the same type can be compared and the behaviour of the 3rd person plural suffix can be noted in each context. Encouraging results of this theory appear when recurrent themes agree in suffix selection.

(B1), (B2), (B3) *Enemy rebellion, coalition and coming*

We can see tight clusters of the *w* suffix around the reportedly unprovoked actions of the enemy (categorised in Cifola's system as B1, 2 and 3). This recurring theme has the enemy as its focus and describes their rebellion, coalition and arrival. The following excerpts clearly show this predominance of the *w* suffix for this theme:

[9] Year 5: 27-28 (KRI V, 22.13-14)

$\overline{[n3y=w]}$ 'h3.w hn hr shr=w iwī $\overline{[ib=w]}$ mh iw=n r dh3=n $\overline{[n3y=w]}$ sh.yw m $\overline{[h.t=w]}$ iw=n
r iri.t ib[...] s'd3 hr pn.t

Their fighters were confident because of their plan and had come, their heart(s) being full (i.e. confident): "We will advance ourselves!" Their advice in their bod(ies) (was): "We will act!" (and) [their] heart(s) were full with destruction and wrongdoing.

[10] Year 11 Poem: 23-24 (KRI V, 69.14-15)¹²

$\overline{[w3w(3)=w]}$ r k3i sbi m whm sp r skm $\overline{[p3y=w]}$ 'h' hr t3š.w Km.t $\overline{[nw=w]}$ h3s.wt t3.w n.w
swi=sn $\overline{[w3h=w]}$ p3 mtr $\overline{[hr=w]}$ r T3-Mri iwī hr rd.wy=w $\overline{[ds=w]}$ r t3 [...]

It was in order to end their lifetime on the border of Egypt that they conspired once again to plan rebellion. They collected the hill countries and flat lands of their district and they placed death upon themselves (in acting) against Egypt, coming on their feet themselves to the [...]

(E2) *King's attack*

The king's attack is always a short theme, with him as focus and characterised especially by *prī* "to go forth". The *sn* suffix appears in the following excerpts referring to enemy troops:

[11] Year 5: 33 (KRI V, 23.6-7)

hm=f prī r-r=sn mī.t t sd.t

His majesty went forth against them like a flame.

¹² Note that the occurrence of *swi=sn* in this excerpt is not necessarily an aberration from the trend, but it is most likely a word that takes the *sn* suffix exclusively. However, it is impossible to claim this with certainty, since to my knowledge this is the only attestation of the word with a third person plural suffix at Medinet Habu.

- [12] Sea Peoples scenes (sea battle): d.i. (KRI V, 32.8)

hm=f prī mī d' r-r=sn hr 'h3 hr pg3

His majesty went forth like a tornado against them, fighting upon the battlefield.

These examples show correlations between theme and suffix selection based on the multiple attestations of the same theme. Furthermore, they exemplify the observation made earlier that occurrences of the *sn* suffix are contextually associated with the king, while the *w* suffix appears in contexts not associated with the king.

(F6) Submission

Sometimes however the situation is a little less clear. The theme of submission seems to have the enemy as focus, describing their coming to the king, often carrying tribute, but they are always referred there with *sn*:

- [13] Year 5: 73-74 (KRI V, 27.5-6)¹³

h3s.wt iwī m ksy n b3.w hm=f in.w=s(n) msī.w=sn hr psd=sn

The foreign lands come bowing because of the power of his majesty, their tribute and their child(ren) upon their back(s).

- [14] N. Triumph Scene: 3-6 (KRI V, 97.3-4)

*dī=i iwī n=k wr.w h3s.wt rs.yw in.w=sn msī.w=sn hr psd=sn m3'.w nb(.w) nfr n h3s.
t=sn dī=k t3w n 3bb=k im=sn*

I (Amun-Re) cause that the chiefs of the southern hill countries come to you, their tribute and their children upon their back(s), (as well as) all the beautiful goods of their hill country, that you may give the breath to the ones among them which you wish.

There are a number of *sn* exclusive words in this theme of submission (such as *in.w* “tribute” and *msī.w* “children”), but the most indicative word for this context is *psd(.w)* “back(s)”. The difference in suffix selection can be observed, when this word is used in a different theme such as in Year 11: 25, where the theme is the enemy defeat and their being plundered¹⁴; here the *w* suffix is used:

- [15] Year 11: 24-25 (KRI V, 61.14-15)¹⁵

*n3y=f phrr 'h3.ty inī(.w) m [...hm.wt]=sn hrd.w=sn [...] 'wy=sn tp=sn m skr.w-ñh
ih.wt=sn msī.w=sn wd[n] hr [psd.w=w] mnmn.wt ssm.wt [i]ni r Km.t [n]hm [...]*

¹³ See also Year 8: 35 (KRI V, 42.9-10) (although partially broken) and Year 5: 58 (KRI V, 25.14), which attests *iwī=sn* describing the enemy (designated F6 in Cifola, The Terminology of Ramses III's Historical Records), and a similar attestation in Year 11: 13 (KRI V, 60.3-4) (F6a in Cifola, The Terminology of Ramses III's Historical Records).

¹⁴ What distinguishes the two themes, apart from the wider context and their respective positions in the narrative sequence, is the presence of the word *in.w* “tribute”.

¹⁵ Note that the occurrence of *hrd.w=sn* in this excerpt is not necessarily an aberration from the trend. This could be a word taking exclusively the *sn* suffix, although there are no other attestations in the Medinet Habu texts.

His (enemy chief) runner(s) and fighter(s) have been brought as [...] and their [wives] and their children [...] their arms and their head(s) as prisoners. Their goods and their children are heavy upon their backs and their cattle and horses have been [bro]ught to Egypt and [ta]ken away [...]

Hence the submission theme attracts the *sn* suffix, although the reason is not obvious. One may assume that because this theme is always found in rhetorical passages accompanied by encomia of the king, it naturally follows that the textual presence of the king is enough to attract the *sn* suffix. Equally possible is the suggestion that the decisive element is the nature of the activity. These examples ([13], [14] and [15]) together with [5] and [6] perhaps suggest a subtle distinction between military and religious spheres¹⁶.

These constitute some of the more concrete examples of results. However, it must also be noted that approximately the 10% of occurrences does not seem to fit into the categories formed above, suggesting that the assumptions made here do not always apply.

Direct speech

To return briefly to direct speech: attestations of the 3rd person plural suffix occurring in direct speech seem to follow the same patterns. Nonetheless, there may be trends observable, since direct speech by a particular protagonist will feature particular themes, thus particular vocabulary, and hence the appropriate forms of the suffix. However, such an investigation would not contribute to the study of the variation in suffix forms, but only to the study of thematic patterning.

Conclusion

The most confident observation one may make on suffix variation is that the existence of words that exhibit an invariability of suffix. When it comes to the determination of a variable suffix, the texts seem to support the idea that the contextual theme, the two key elements of which are the dominant protagonist and the vocabulary, plays a large role. Finally, when particular themes can be linked to the use of particular suffixes, the textual presence of the king seems to effect the use of the *sn* suffix. In terms of the wider application of these results, the theory is promising and is worth testing on other texts. However, the results discussed here are specific to the Medinet Habu corpus of historical inscriptions and if this theory is applied outside this corpus, the parameters may need to be altered in order to account for various differences.

¹⁶ For a discussion on the link between textual features and text types (Alltagstexten and feierliche, eulogische Reden), see K. JANSEN-WINKELN, 'Diglossie und Zweisprachigkeit im alten Ägypten', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 85 (1995), 95ff. and esp. n. 59.

