COLLECTION
ÆGYPTIACA LEODIENSIA

Outside the Box

Selected papers from the conference
"Deir el-Medina and
the Theban Necropolis in Contact"
Liège, 27-29 October 2014

Andreas DORN & Stéphane POLIS (eds.)

Presses Universitaires de Liège

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Dialectal, sociolectal and idiolectal variations in the Late Egyptian texts from Deir el-Medineh and the Theban area

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Abstract. This paper first deals with the issue of dialects in Late Egyptian, with a special focus on the material coming from Deir el-Medineh (and more broadly from the Theban area). Variations found in phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon are scrutinized and pondered to see how they can support the hypothesis of distinct dialectal features in Thebes. The second part of the paper examines the existence of possible linguistic differentiations according to social classes (sociolect and idiolect) through case studies such as the variation between =*sn* and =*w* for the 3PL suffix pronoun, scribal differences in the corpus of the Great Tomb Robberies, and the use of slang.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Dialects in Egyptian?*

To be sure, the definition of what is a dialect remains impressionistic in Egyptology.[1] To put it very simply, scholars quite often come with what amounts to be a non-definition.[2] This finds some distant echoes in the general literature where it is largely acknowledged that the definition of dialects by nature will always be in part subjective.[3]

Except for a few statements, which seem rather isolated,[4] the existence of dialects has never been seriously challenged in Coptic. Some scholars have (more or less successfully) reached an extreme

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[1] See now Winand (2016). Here I leave aside some uses of the word where dialect is not obviously at issue: for instance, when Goldwasser (1999) speaks of low and high dialects in Late Egyptian, she is clearly dealing with something else, registers actually.

[2] E.g. Feder (2001: 7): "*Ich verwendete hier den Begriff 'Dialekt', der Einfachheit halber, im 'traditionellen Sinn'*". In his highly valuable paper on the Subakhmimic dialects, Funk (1985: 136) starts from a common sense definition of the word dialect (let us simply assume…), before asserting that the features required to justify the term 'dialect' "cannot be established in a theoretical way or with general validity". In a loose way, he says that "it is a practical matter of how to handle the linguistic phenomena one is concerned with in an appropriate manner. Thus," he concludes, "it largely depends on the purpose."
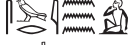
[3] This can easily lead to a complete dismissal of the problem, a position one can see in the following statement made by Ross (2003: 177) for a collective volume on *Motives for Language Change*: "[i]t is a linguistic truism that there is no sharp boundary between the concepts of 'a language' and 'a dialect', and one can dodge the terminological problem by referring to both simply as 'lects' and to speakers who speak two or more lects as 'polylectal'."

[4] See Loprieno (2006: 165–170) with the response of Kasser (1984), and the more general commentary by Winand (2016).

sophistication in the way linguistic variants can be arranged in dialects, proto-, sub-, meta-, meso-dialects, or "dialecticules."[5] Even if one can dispute the more or less direct link that might exist between variants in spelling and the phonetic rendering of Coptic, the existence of dialects in Coptic is not, very fortunately, grounded in phonology alone: undisputable, meaningful variants can be observed in morphology, syntax, and lexicon as well.[6]

1.2. *Dialects in pre-Coptic Egyptian?*

When it comes to pre-Coptic Egyptian, evidence becomes more elusive.[7] The reasons for this are manifold:

(1)   The hieroglyphic system does not much help those interested in an in-depth study of phonetics. It was in the essence of the hieroglyphic writing to stick to a fixed (if not frozen) orthography, even if there are some occasional adaptations to cope with phonetic evolution (see the "historical" spellings like 𓋴𓏤𓂋𓏭𓂻 *swr* "drink" > cⲱ; or some modern spellings like *hȝb* "send" > ϩⲱⲃ sometimes written 𓈎𓃀𓂻).[8]

(2)   When reporting words spoken by individuals belonging to social classes where dialectal or sociolectal variation was the most likely to appear, the scribes reformulated what they heard to conform to a linguistic norm (and to an administrative style) that can be labelled Standard Late Egyptian.[9] The corpus of the Great Tomb Robberies is exemplary in this respect as it involves many witnesses that clearly did not belong to the middle or higher class.[10]

(3)   The nature of the corpus does not help: for some periods, texts belonging to genres where the scribes have a chance of freeing themselves from decorum and the normative forms of their times constitute an exception.

(4)   As already noted, the corpus is rarely well balanced geographically: while some areas are over-represented (the Theban area for Late Egyptian), others are either virtually absent, or are only represented by texts belonging to the royal or religious sphere, that is genres where uniformity of style and expression is to be expected at the national level.

(5)   The provenance of many texts can only vaguely be guessed at. But, even when one is on safer ground, caution is always required:
a) one cannot automatically equate the provenance of a document with its place of composition; this is of course self-evident for letters: by nature, they were written only to be sent somewhere;[11] moreover, high officials, army officers when travelling throughout the country probably kept part of their archives with them;

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[5]   See for instance Kasser (1990b: 189).

[6]   See the valuable studies by Funk on (sub)-akhmimic dialects (1985), by Shisha-Halevy (1981) and Grossman (2009) on some peculiarities of Bohairic. As regards the lexicon, the contrastive list of very common words in Sahidic and Boharic given in Peust (1999: 327) leave much to think about. See also the case study by Feder (2001) in Coptic contrastive lexicography, but consider also the doubts expressed by Funk (1985) as regards the use of lexical isoglosses in the description of dialects. On the primacy of phonology in dialectal studies, see e.g. Satzinger (1990: 416).

[7]   On the general issue of linguistic variation in pre-Coptic Egyptian, see Polis (2017a).

[8]   One can also point to the use of the so-called "syllabic writing" in the New Kingdom for writing new genuine Egyptian words, or ancient words that were not apparently used during the Middle Kingdom. See Winand (2017a).

[9]   See Winand (forthcoming a).

[10]   See Winand (2015).

[11]   See for instance P. Louvre E 27151, a letter discovered in Elephantine, but written in and sent from Thebes (Posener-Krieger 1978).

b) people, most often officials, but also army members, could be assigned to different posts; thus a document found in Thebes, and probably produced in that city, can be written by someone who was born or educated elsewhere, for instance in Memphis or in the royal residence at Pi-Ramses.[12] This of course is evident in the case of the graffiti left by visitors on monuments and tombs across the country.[13]

(6) Texts are intertwined in a web of phraseological formulae, registers, aesthetic and cultural habits that largely contribute to obscuring or at least downplaying what can be particular or original in a specific composition.

Despite the difficulties alluded to above, the existence of dialects in pre-Coptic Egyptian is accepted by many scholars as a matter of common sense, as the country is stretched over a distance of one thousand kilometres.[14] One has also some — admittedly limited — emic evidence to support it.[15] In my opinion, it could hardly be seriously disputed that Egyptians spoke different dialects. Actually the question rather is whether dialects were confined to oral communication, without ever finding their way into more formal media of communication, or whether they were present (and if so to which extent) in the written documentation.

At this point, one word of caution is needed. In the specialized literature, the word dialect is used in two different perspectives:

(a) in the most common sense, dialects are linguistic varieties within a synchronic stage of Egyptian, as are Sahidic, Bohairic or Fayumic for Coptic;

(b) dialects are also discussed in relation with the historical evolution of Egyptian (diachrony). Since the pioneering study of Edgerton (1951), scholars' attention has been alerted to the existence of possible isoglosses between two non-contiguous states of Egyptian (for instance, between Old and Late Egyptian, bypassing Middle Egyptian). Such links could suggest that Old and Late Egyptian had a common geographical origin, distinct from that of Middle Egyptian.[16]

In this paper, I shall not discuss the general issue of dialects in pre-Coptic Egyptian, nor the position of Late Egyptian in this respect.[17] In order to keep with the topic of the conference, the linguistic diversity in Deir el-Medineh should ideally be considered from two points of view: to which extent do the available data support (or challenge) the presence of a regional variety of Late Egyptian in the Theban area (§2)? Are some linguistic varieties better explained as manifestations of sociolects or idiolects (§3)? While the evidence is sufficient enough to discuss the first point with some accuracy, the data available to positively assess the existence of sociolects/idiolects are far more difficult to handle.[18]

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[12] For the case of the royal butler Ynes, who was present at Thebes during the hearings of the Great Tomb Robberies scandal, see Winand (forthcoming a). The case of P. Anastasi VIII, as discussed by Groll (1998), should be reconsidered.

[13] For a general overview, see Peden (2001).

[14] See Uljas (2010: 374). See also Osing (1984).

[15] The best known example remains P. Anastasi I, 8,5–6: "your words are regrouped on my tongue and remained fixed on my lips. They are so confused when heard than there is no interpreter who can explain them. They are like a conversation between a man of the Delta and a man of Elephantine". See Kammerzell (1998: 43), Allen (2013: 5–6).

[16] From a purely typological perspective, see Shisha-Halevy (1981) for some possible isoglosses between Late Egyptian and Bohairic.

[17] See Winand (2016).

[18] See however Polis (2017b).

2. DIALECTAL FEATURES IN DEIR EL-MEDINEH LATE EGYPTIAN

The issue of dialects in the synchrony of Late Egyptian has already been touched upon, but most often sporadically, and in a very fragmented way.[19] After quickly reviewing the nature of the evidence in Late Egyptian (§2.1), and discussing some possible strategies for isolating dialectal features (§2.2), I consider some cases where variations suggest a possible geographical distribution (§2.3).

2.1. *Assessing the data*

As for other questions dealing with the study of language, the issue of dialects cannot be properly considered without first assessing the nature of the corpus. Late Egyptian is very fortunately known by a large collection of texts, whose variety remains unparalleled except for Demotic. These texts belong to different genres: literary texts (tales, wisdom texts, poetry, etc.), documentary texts (accounts, lists, contracts, legal matters, wills, letters, etc.), royal inscriptions, and, to some extent, religious texts. These genres do not exactly access the same registers of Late Egyptian; while some might reasonably — but with due caution — be viewed as being not too far from the vernacular,[20] some are more or less distant from what I have called elsewhere "*néo-égyptien complet*" (Winand 1992: §21–22), retaining some features from classical Egyptian that will survive, with some adaptations, in "égyptien de tradition". It seems reasonable to give some precedence to the first group when looking for traces of regional dialects.

This methodological position comes with both an advantage and a disadvantage. While the place of composition of many literary texts (*sensu lato*) can be disputed, even when the provenance of the documents can be relatively well secured, one feels on safer ground with the documentary texts (but see the comments above, §1,2, n° 4). Limiting the corpus of reference to the documentary texts gives a clear decisive advantage, but the price to pay is that we are dealing with a geographically strongly unbalanced corpus, as the data from Deir el-Medineh and the Theban area are statistically over-represented.

The chronology of the documentary texts is relatively well fixed, above all for Deir el-Medineh. This will suffice for this study, as an extreme accuracy in the dating of the texts is not absolutely required, except perhaps as regards sociolects where generational factors can play an important role (see below §3).

2.2. *Which strategy?*

When looking for dialects in the synchrony of Late Egyptian, one can adopt two basic strategies:

(1)   Finding differences in the Late Egyptian corpus that can be mapped onto regional differences in later stages of Egyptian: Demotic and, of course, Coptic.[21]

(2)   Finding regional differences within the Late Egyptian corpus that left no observable trace later on. Although this could *a priori* seem to weaken the analysis, this is actually not the case. Considering the

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[19]   See Davies (1973), Groll (1984, 1987, 1998), Kruchten (1978), and Vycichl (1958).

[20]   There are of course no written documents that mirror exactly the spoken language. Even in the most propitious circumstances, as in Great Tomb Robberies corpus, the famous "as if spoken" (Winand, forthcoming a) remains an elusive mirage.

[21]   One can also consider features belonging to standard LEg but found in only one specific Coptic dialect (cf. the isoglosses between Late Egyptian and Bohairic as studied by Shisha-Halevy 1981).

important chronological gap between the last attestations of Late Egyptian and the first ones in Coptic, it would not be surprising that some dialectal features did not, for whatever reason,[22] survive in the long run.

A preliminary step when studying dialectal features is to look for differences. Some very basic questions immediately arise: what is a difference? What kind of differences are we looking for? How to evaluate a difference, according to which corpus of reference?

In Coptic, phonology remains the ultimate touchstone in dialectal studies.[23] In Late Egyptian however — as for the other stages of Egyptian that make use of the hieroglyphic (viz. Demotic) writing(s) —, the possibilities of observing phonological variations are limited for well-known reasons:

– absence of a system of notation for vocalic patterns,[24]

– writing of many words with multi-consonant logographic signs that remain opaque to any change in phonology (e.g., ⌀🐍〰 *sḏm* > ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ 𝟯𝟯 *šzp* > ϣⲱⲡ), or to any dialectal variation (e.g. ▽ *nb* > ⲛⲓⲙ [S] vs. ⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛ [B]),

– persistence of traditional, well-received ways of writing words even when changes can convincingly be proved to have occurred (e.g. prep. ▭ *r* > ⲉ).

Nevertheless, scribes sporadically come with innovative spellings that open a timid window to what was probably closer to the spoken reality: e.g. prep. *r* in pron. state ◌ or ⸢📿⸣◌ (cf. ⲉⲣⲟ⸗ϥ), pron. infinitive 🍃🏺 *ḏd=f* (cf. ϫⲟⲧ⸗ϥ), etc.

Changes or variations in morphology and syntax are of course easier to detect (see below §2.3.2). An in-depth study of the lexicon would certainly be rewarding, but except for some occasional remarks (see below §2.3.4), one is not yet capable of making a complete survey due to the lack of up-to-date lexicographical tools.

2.3. *Evidence for dialectal features in Late Egyptian*

It is obviously not possible in this paper to discuss all the evidence. I nevertheless do hope to build a strong case while limiting myself to a few points taken from phonology (§2.3.1), morphology (§2.3.2), syntax (§2.3.3), and lexicon (§2.3.4).

2.3.1. Phonology

As already observed, variations in phonology cannot be expected to be seen outside the consonantal system, which of course drastically limits the playing field. An interesting case is offered by *ꜣtp* "load". This verb is regularly written 🏺 (with variants), showing the expected depalatalisation of the second radical (cf. Coptic ⲱⲧⲡ). One can also find (with minor variants) the spelling 🏺◌. As expected, this spelling occurs with the old perfective, in the 2nd masc. sing., and 3rd fem. sing. More

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[22] For instance, possible variations in the Late Egyptian suffixal conjugation could not possibly have left many traces in Coptic since the predicative verbal system had by then systemically moved in other directions.

[23] Satzinger (1990: 416), Kasser (1990b: 165): "[t]he basis for judgement is, of course, on the lexical and morphosyntactical levels, but also and above all, using the most convenient and practical criterion, on the phonological level, through the number of phonemic oppositions, their quality, and the clarity of their representation in their respective orthographic systems."

[24] For some possible representations of vowels in pre-Coptic Egyptian, and the related question of the *matres lectionis*, see Peust (1999: 217), Werning (2016).

surprisingly, it also appears in the 3rd masc. sing. (O. Florence 2619, rº 3), and in the pron. state of the infinitive (P. Turin A, vº 1,3; P. Orbiney 4,4, and P. Turin 1882, vº 1,3). The grapheme ⌒ℰ (var. 𓏪) is not uncommonly used to write the presence of the *-t* ending of many weak verbs (e.g., 𓂋𓈖𓏏⌒ℰ𓂝 *gm.t⸗f*, cf. ϭⲚⲦ⸗), and more occasionally to note some phonological changes as in the case of *ḏd⸗f* already alluded to in the preceding section. Nothing of the like can be advocated here. So one has to turn to another explanation. The grapheme ⌒ℰ could be a manner to note the metathesis of the last two consonants;[25] this would be in agreement with the form found in Bohairic (ⲟⲡⲧ as opposed to Sahidic ⲱⲧⲡ).[26] In Late Egyptian, the four texts where the exceptional spelling 𓄿𓏏𓊪𓂝⌒ℰ is found can be reasonably linked to the Memphite area.[27]

Another case is the passive participle 𓄿𓈖𓊪𓏏 found in P. BM EA 10568 (1, 5). This exceptional spelling, with an intrusive *-n-*, could be related to some Coptic forms known in Bohairic (ⲘⲈⲚⲢⲈ-ⲘⲈⲚⲢⲓⲦ⸗), since, as it turns out, P. BM EA 10568 very probably comes from Lower Egypt.[28]

2.3.2. Morphology

2.3.2.1. Non-verbal morphology

As regards nominal morphology, a possible example is offered by the variations observed for the noun *hrw* "day". Except for the abbreviated spelling ☉ı, regularly found in administrative texts, the "classical" spelling 𓉔𓂋ℰ☉ı is widely used in any type of text. From the 20th dynasty onward, the spellings 𓉔𓏥☉ı and 𓉔𓏤☉ı become increasingly popular. More explicit spellings dating from the second half of the 20th dynasty and the TIP show that the cursive spellings can be interpreted as 𓉔𓄿𓏤☉ı and 𓉔𓄿ℰ☉ı. This probably reflects a phonological evolution (cf. ϩⲟⲟⲩ). The latter spelling, 𓉔𓄿ℰ☉ı, is more frequent with the three strokes for plural (𓉔𓄿ℰ☉ı𓏥). It is found in texts that can be connected with Upper Egypt (sometimes more precisely with the Theban area), where it can also be used in the singular.[29] In *Wenamun*, as was already pointed out by Gardiner (*LES* 63a), there seems to be an opposition between singular and plural. While in singular, the word is regularly written 𓉔𓄿𓏤☉ı (or 𓉔𓏤☉ı), in plural (*Wen.*, 1,21) the spelling 𓉔𓄿 ℰ ☉ı𓏥 was preferred. With due caution, such a spelling could be linked to ϩⲣⲉⲩ, which is found only in A and A² in Coptic. [30]

One of the most prominent features of Late Egyptian is the replacement of the 3rd pl. suff. pron. from ⸗*sn* to ⸗*w* (Erman 1933: §77). Very simply, although ⸗*sn* is still overwhelmingly used in the 18th

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[25]   Cases of metathesis in Coptic that can be 1/ related to an opposition between Sahidic and Bohairic, or 2/ linked to an Egyptian pre-Coptic etymon are not very common: but see ⲗⲁⲧⲡ vs. ⲗⲁⲡⲧ "turnip", ⲚⲟⲨϥⲧ vs. ⲚⲟⲨⲦϥ "loosen", and ⲥⲱ2ⲣ vs. ⲥⲱⲣ2 "sweep".

[26]   The testimony of Bohairic must be considered with caution; as was pointed out to me by Matthias Müller, the form ⲟⲡⲧ is only "attested in text editions of Amélineau and Budge, who are not the most trustworthy witnesses in such matters".

[27]   O. Florence 2619, which has a passage from the Miscellanies, is a duplicate of P. Lansing 9,3–8; the provenance of the Miscellanies must probably be sought in the region of Memphis. It is also worth noting that P. Lansing, which was found in the Theban area, does not have the spelling with ⌒ℰ, but the regular one, which sheds an interesting light on how those texts were transmitted.

[28]   See Allam (2001).

[29]   See P. Boulaq 4,21,15.

[30]   Add now the relevant discussion by Vernus (2014a: esp. 220–225) about the *Wisdom of Amenemope*, whose composition can be connected to the region of Akhmim.

and the beginning of the 19th dynasty, it dwindled to only 5% (against 95% for *-w*) by the end of the 20th and into the TIP. The decline of *sn* did not however follow a regular pace, as the process leading to the disappearance of *sn* was sensible to the syntactic functions fulfilled by the pronoun;[31] sociological factors can also explain some variations still unexplained in synchrony (see below). The origin of the new pronoun *-w* is still anyone's guess. To the best of my knowledge, one has never suggested a dialectal origin for the newcomer. According to Edel (1959), the newer form found its origin in the absolute use of some prepositions, and in the subjectless expression of the *sḏm.n=f*, which can be traced back to Old and Middle Egyptian.[32] Allen (2013:66) adds that "it could also represent a case of morphological levelling with the plural of nouns or with the 3pl stative pronoun, both *u."

In my corpus, *-w* first appeared in texts that can be related to the Memphite area, such as the Tale of Astarte,[33] and P. Cairo GC 58054 (from Saqqarah). It is also present in royal inscriptions, like the Amarna stelae and the decree of Horemheb. It of course remains difficult to assess how these texts were composed, but it is probable that those in charge worked with the central administration in Memphis. If one looks at the other end of the history of Late Egyptian, one quite surprisingly finds that *sn* is still in use in some administrative texts from Deir el-Medineh, or more broadly from the Theban area.[34] It is quite common in the Giornale,[35] and it occasionally shows up in P. Abbott and P. Léopold II-Amherst, and O. Louvre 698. During the 21st and 22nd dynasty, it is attested in P. Boulaq 4 (7 times), in the oracular decree for Henuttaoui and the oracular text of Sheshonq I, and somewhat later in P. Turin 248, a Theban contract from the time of Psammetichus I written in abnormal hieratic.

This could suggest that *-w* had a northern origin, whence it gradually spread over the whole country. In the Theban area, *sn* has virtually disappeared by the end of the 20th dynasty, but was still retained in some texts even as far as in the TIP. This could probably indicate a dialectal split.

2.3.2.2. The pronominal state of infinitives

For the verbal morphology, the most significant feature is probably the form of the pronominal status of the infinitive for the *3ᵃᵉ infirmae*. Although these verbs in Earlier Egyptian show an ending *-t* in the infinitive, by Late Egyptian the ending is no longer preserved except in the pronominal state.[36] Scribes regularly underlined the opposition by adding ⌒𝅭 or 𝁶𝅭 after the classifier, if any, a technique that is also found with feminine nouns in the same situation (𝊀𝅭𝅭𝅭 *s.t=f* "his place"). In Coptic, there seems to be a regular opposition between Bohairic, which has regularly the bare stem, and the other dialects, which show a *-t* ending (compare for ⲉⲓⲛⲉ "bring" ⲛⲧ⸗ SAA², ⲉⲛⲧ⸗, ⲛⲓⲧ⸗, ⲓⲛⲧ⸗ F; ⲉⲛ⸗ B). This

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[31] In a previous study (Winand 1995), I considered the following main categories where the suffix pronoun can be found: after a noun for expressing possession, after a verb for expressing the subject (e.g. perfective *sḏm=f* and subjunctive), after a verb for expressing the object (*i.e.* after infinitive), after some auxiliaries or conjugation bases like *mtw-*, *jw* (future III, sequential *jw=f ḥr sḏm*, circumstantial present I), after a preposition, and in combination with *p3j-* to form the possessive article. The statistics could now be considerably improved thanks to the Ramses database. But one fact remains pretty clear: the older form (with *sn*) was more likely to be kept after a noun and a preposition.

[32] Edel's study, which remains highly valuable, does not take into account the possibility of analysing some forms as examples of ø-subject (for this, see recently Vernus 2014b).

[33] For geographical provenance of the tale, see Collombert & Coulon (2000: 198).

[34] See P. ESP C and D.

[35] See P. Turin 1945. To this add P. Turin 2013, P. Turin 2084, P. Turin 1999, P. Turin 1960 (particularly frequent in this last document), P. Turin 1884, P. Turin 2001, and P. Turin 2018.

[36] For a complete description according to classes of verbs, see Winand (1992: 41–101).

distribution can unfortunately be blurred since the dialects where the ending *-t* appears can also show the bare stem, as illustrated by well-known and widespread verbs like *gmj* "find": ϭⲛⲧⲥ SAA², ϭⲉⲛⲧⲥ SF, ⲕⲛⲧⲥ, ϭⲏⲛⲧⲥ, ⲅⲛⲥ S; ϫⲉⲙⲥ B; ϭⲏⲧⲥ, ϫⲓⲛⲧⲥ, ϭⲛⲥ, ϭⲏⲛⲥ F, or *jrj* "do": ⲁⲁⲥ, ⲉⲓⲁⲧⲥ S; ⲉⲉⲧⲥ AA², ⲉⲉⲓⲧⲥ A², ⲉⲉⲥ, ⲁⲥ A²; ⲁⲓⲥ B, ⲉⲓⲥ, ⲉⲓⲧⲥ F, ⲁⲓⲧⲥ O. What seems consistent nevertheless is the regular absence of the ending *-t* in Bohairic.[37]

The situation in Late Egyptian is extraordinarily diverse and seems, at first glance, to defy any possible organisation. I leave for another occasion a more complete study, and I here limit myself to three well-attested verbs, namely *jnj* "fetch", *jrj* "do" and *gmj* "find".

The verb *jnj* "fetch" appears with the following spellings in the pronominal state:

glyph		glyph		glyph	
𓏶	1	𓏶	1	𓏶	1
𓏶	4	𓏶	27	𓏶	15
𓏶	5	𓏶	1		
𓏶	5	𓏶	1		
𓏶	1	𓏶	9		
𓏶	14	𓏶	1		
𓏶	1	𓏶	63		
		𓏶	1		
		𓏶	3		
	31		**107**		**16**

Table 1. Pronominal state of the infinitive of *jnj*

Here I consider only the data of the last two columns, which show a clear opposition between *jn.t* and *jn*; the "conservative" spellings displayed in the first column are inconclusive as regards the presence or absence of the ending *-t*. In Coptic, there seems to be a clear division between Bohairic and the other dialects. Despite the relatively poorly documented evidence from Lower Egyptian texts, the distribution of the data in Late Egyptian is far from being so clear-cut. Texts from the Theban area can show the bare stem (Ex. 1),[38] and conversely texts from the North occasionally display the *-t* ending (Ex. 2).

(1)   *j.jr⸗j tm šm.t <r> jn⸗s* (𓏶) *r sḏm p3 ḏd⸗k*
       "I did not come to fetch her to hear what you had to say" (O. Leipzig 16, v° 4–5)

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[37]   There are of course exceptions, like ϭⲓⲧⲥ "take".

[38]   The situation is quite complex: a majority of *3ᵃᵉ inf.* having the bare stem are actually followed by the neutral pronoun *se*, which must be analysed as the dependent pronoun. It is thus debatable, in Late Egyptian, if the verb is in this case built in the construct or pronominal state. One will also note that the dependant pronoun -ⲥⲟⲩ remains in use in Coptic, except for Bohairic (Till 1931: § 39a2). Of course, and this is quite common in Late Egyptian writing habits, there are also cases where a verb with the ending *-t*, thus clearly in the pronominal state, is followed by the 3ʳᵈ fem. sing. suff. pronoun written like the dependent pronoun (𓏶, 𓏶, ϯⲉ, and variants). Finally, in letters (especially in the sub-corpus of the *LRL*), the formula *jn wj* "bring me (back)" can be grammatically ambiguous: although the imperative remains the normal form, there seem to be clear instances of infinitive with a jussive function, which is diachronically speaking an innovative feature. As a result, a spelling like 𓏶 can be analysed as *jn⸗j* (infinitive with bare stem + suff. pron.) or *jn (w)j* (imperative + dep. pron.).

(2)   *jw⸗f ḥr tm {ḥr} jn.t⸗f* (𓏶𓈖𓂝𓏌)
   "but he did not bring it back" (P. Anastasi VI, 31)

In some cases, the two variants can appear in the same text:

(3)   *wn.jn p₃ ym ḥr jn⸗s* (𓏶𓏌𓂝) *r km.t*
   "and the Sea brought her to Egypt" (*Two Brothers* 10,8)

(4)   *wn.jn ḥm⸗f ꜥ.w.s ḥr dj.t šm rmṯ-mšꜥ knw m-mjt.t t-n.t-ḥtr r jn.t⸗s* (𓏶𓂝𓏌𓏭) *ꜥn*
   "and his Majesty l,p,h sent many soldiers and some chariotry to bring her back" (*Two Brothers* 11,10)

The data for *gmj* "find" show a similar lack of clear-cut distribution.

𓅅𓐍𓂝	6	𓅅𓐍𓂜	4	𓅅𓐍\\	5
𓅅𓐍𓏤	1	𓅅𓐍𓏤𓂝𓏌	43	𓅅𓐍𓏤	16
𓅅𓐍𓏤•	2	𓅅𓐍•𓏤𓂝𓏌	4	𓅅𓐍𓂜𓏥	1
𓅅𓐍𓏤•	1	𓅅𓐍𓏤\\	3		
		𓅅𓐍𓏤\\\	2		
		𓅅𓏌\\\	4		
		𓅅𓐍𓏤𓂋	3		
		𓅅𓐍𓏤𓂋𓏥	1		
		𓅅𓐍𓂝\\𓂝𓏌	1		
		𓅐𓂝𓏌	2		
10		**67**		**22**	

Table 2. Pronominal state of the infinitive of *gmj*

The forms showing the ending *-t* are in the majority, but the bare stem is far from being marginal (25%, if one leaves aside the data of the first column as inconclusive). This distribution is perhaps supported by the Coptic evidence: as was the case for ⲉⲓⲛⲉ, Bohairic seems to always stick to the bare stem, but in the other dialects, both stems, the bare one and the one with -ⲧ, can appear (ϭⲛⲧ⸗ SAA², ϭⲉⲛⲧ⸗ SF, ⲕⲛⲧ⸗, ϭⲏⲛⲧ⸗, ⲅⲛ⸗ S; ⲭⲉⲙ⸗ B; ϭⲏⲧ⸗, ⲭⲓⲛⲧ⸗, ϭⲛ⸗, ϭⲏⲛ⸗ F).[39] In our corpus, the bare stem is well attested in texts from the Theban area, but it should also be stressed that the suffixed stem only remains in use after the 20th dynasty:

(5)   *j.jr⸗tw gm⸗s* (𓅅𓐍𓏤𓏶𓂝) *m p₃j⸗f pr*
   "it is in his house that it has been found" (P. Salt 124 v° 1,12)

(6)   *jw⸗j (ḥr) gm.t⸗f* (𓅅𓐍•𓏤𓂝𓏌) *ḥms <m> t₃j⸗f ꜥrr.t*
   "I found him seated in his upper room" (*Wenamun* 1,48)

As was the case with *jnj*, the suffixed stem is also occasionally attested in Northern texts:

(7)   *jw⸗j ḥr gm.t⸗w* (𓅅𓐍𓏤𓂝𓏌𓏭)
   "and I found them" (P. Sallier IV, v° 9,4)

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[39]   Unfortunately, there are no statistics on the distribution between the two stems in these dialects.

I now come to *jrj* "do". The spellings for the pronominal state are as follows:

⌒	11	⌒⌒ꞑ	5	⌒⌒	110	⌒⌒	1
⌒𓏭	5	⌒⌒ꞑ	3	⌒⌒⌒	1	⌒⌒	25
⌒𓏭ııı	1	⌒𓏴	2	⌒⌒•	12	⌒⌒	19
⌒ꞑ	1			⌒⌒—	2	𓀀⌒⌒𓀠	1
𓀀𓀁⌒ꞑ	1			⌒⌒\\	10		
				⌒⌒ꞑ	49		
				⌒⌒𓏴	7		
	18		**10**		**191**		**46**

Table 3. Pronominal state of the infinitive of *jrj*

In the pronominal state, ⲉⲓⲣⲉ in Coptic can appear under a great diversity of forms: ⲁⲁϥ, ⲉⲓⲁⲧ⸗ S; ⲉⲉⲧ⸗ AA², ⲉⲉⲓⲧ⸗ A², ⲉⲉϥ, ⲁϥ A²; ⲁⲓϥ B, ⲉⲓϥ, ⲉⲓⲧ⸗ F, ⲁⲓⲧ⸗ O. Forms with and without -ⲧ can be found in every dialect, except, once more, for Bohairic where only the bare stem is used. In our data — and quite surprisingly —, the forms with *-t* are a minority (5.4%, leaving aside the forms recorded in the last column as inconclusive).[40] They are however always found in texts whose southern provenience can be ascertained:[41]

(8)   *mtw⸗k jr.t⸗f* (⌒𓏴⌒)
          "and you shall do it" (P. Turin 1975, v° 2)

In conclusion, the presence or absence of the ending *-t* in the pronominal state can be diversely interpreted. The first impression that comes from the study of only three verbs — even if they are widely attested — cannot be but greatly improved by considering the whole body of verbs that display the same behaviour. The Coptic evidence suggests a dialectal distribution in two groups, with Bohairic standing alone. Although the ending -ⲧ is frequent in the other dialects, the bare stem is not completely unknown. Furthermore, the picture can vary — sometimes considerably — according to the verbs themselves (see the contrasted situation of ⲉⲓⲛⲉ and ϭⲛⲓ in S and F). Without distorting the data, one can with much caution suggest that the absence of any ending is more frequent in the documents coming from the Memphis area, and that correlatively the presence of the ending *-t* is, as in the case of *jrj*, only seen in documents from the Theban area. A possible explanation for this fluctuating situation is that the disappearance of the ending *-t* in the pronominal state, which was already under way in Late Egyptian, was a slow and gradual process that extended over many centuries.

2.3.2.3. The subjunctive of *jwj* after *rdj*

In Late Egyptian, the verb *jwj* "come" can be realised with two stems, *jw-* and *jj-*. Their distribution is morphologically conditioned.[42] In subjunctive, the form is always *jw(.t)*.[43] This "rule" consistently

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[40]   There are also two occurrences of the spelling ⌒⌒\\ , which can be interpreted either as *jrj* or *jr.t*.

[41]   See P. Harris 500, r° 3,11, O. BM EA 66408, col. 2, r° 3, P. Geneva D 187, v° 4, O. DeM 419,4, P. Turin 1975, v° 2, P. Turin 2022, r° 6, O. Leipzig 23, r° 7, P. Berlin P. 10497, v° 1, P. Louvre E 30144, 5,6, P. Boulaq 4, 17,5.

[42]   See Winand (1991); to this one must be added the special form used in the imperative (*mj*), which is borrowed from another radical.

applies in the very common causative construction with the auxiliary (r)dj, but with two exceptions. The first one comes from O. DeM 1057, a document that has been dated to the end of the 19th dynasty (Grandet 2006: 102–103, no. 15):

(9)   *mj ij.t* (𓏺𓏺�) *t3 mn.t ms.n t3 mn.t m-s3⸗j*
       "let this one born of this one come after me…" (O. DeM 1057,3)

(10)   *jr tm⸗w dj.t ij.t⸗s* (𓏺𓏺�) *m-s3⸗j*
       "if they do not let her come after me…" (O. DeM 1057,6–7)

The second exception occurs in two letters written by Djutmose:

(11)   *r-dd jmj jj⸗f* (𓏺𓏺�) *n⸗j*
       "let him come to me…" (P. BM EA 10326, v° 9)

(12)   *… w⸗ ⸗dd ⸗3 jw jw⸗k dj.t jj⸗f* (𓏺𓏺�) *r ḥms dj jrm⸗n*
       "an older boy that you shall let come to live here with us" (P. Berlin P. 10494, v° 3)

One must immediately note that in P. BM EA 10326 (v° 8), the verb *jwj*, in the causative pattern, has also been written with the normal spelling (�). As already said, the stem *jw-* is used pervasively: in the Ramses database, there are 146 occurrences of the causative pattern *rdj + jwj*; in 142 cases, the stem is invariably written *jw-*. The three documents where the alternative stem, *jj-*, has been preferred come from Deir el-Medineh (or more correctly from Medinet Habu in the case of the two letters by Djutmose). One could of course explain the four instances of *jj-* as scribal mistakes; after all, the stem *jj-* is well attested too, being the regular and exclusive form for the infinitive, which is the commonest morphological form in Late Egyptian. But the fact that this stem appears twice with the same hand (twice in O. DeM 1057, and once in two letters written by the same scribe) cannot be too quickly dismissed. In Coptic, the causative inherited from *dj.t + jwj* has kept in all dialects the trace of an ancient *waw* (ⲧⲁⲟⲩⲟ-), which seems to link unilaterally the Coptic forms to *dj.t-jw-* rather than *dj.t-jj-*. But, as has been reasserted many times, one must be very cautious when trying to match Coptic data with Late Egyptian data, which are at least 1500 years older (see 2.4). In this case, there remains the possibility that the stem *jj-* after *rdj* represented something different from Standard Late Egyptian, a slight variant perhaps that was distinctive to the Deir el-Medineh idiom. From a methodological viewpoint, this case study nicely shows how fragile the boundary can be between a supposed dialectal variant and a sociolect/idiolect because of the fragmented nature of the documentation. For some time, I was only aware of the two instances coming from the *LRL*. Had my collection of examples remained in this previous state, I'd probably been inclined to explain them as a curiosity of Djutmose, thus as an idiolect (or an ideograph; see below 3). The presence of this exceptional spelling in a text that is pretty much older (19th dynasty) forces us to reconsider the case as a possible manifestation of a dialectal split.

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43   On this variation, which is chronologically conditioned, see Winand (1992: §399).

2.3.2.4. The Future III

In Standard Late Egyptian, the Future III splits in two patterns according to the nature of the subject:

jw + suf. pron. + *r* + infinitive[44]

jrj + NP (+ *r*) + infinitive[45]

This complementary pattern might be explained as a dialectal split, as suggested by the chronology and the provenance of the first data with the newer pattern with nominal subject (see below).[46] In some texts, however, a unique pattern was used, generalising throughout the morph *jw*; the interpretation of the examples given here is non-ambiguous as *jw* immediately follows the negation *bn* or the so-called direct indicator of initiality:[47]

(13)   *bn jw rmṯ nb n pꜣ tꜣ* [*r*] *ḫꜣꜥ⸗t jm r-bnr*
       "nobody on earth will throw you out" (O. Petrie 61, vᵒ 2–3)

(14)   *r-ḏd: jw pꜣj⸗j* [*ḥrj*] (*r*) *jj mtw⸗tn* [*dj.t*] *fꜣj.tw, jn⸗j*
       " 'my lord will come, and you shall make the transport', said I" (P. ESP A, A7)

(15)   *jn bn jw pꜣj⸗s nb* (*r*) *gmj 10 n js.t m-dj⸗t*
       "will his master not find 10 crews belonging to you?" (*Wenamun*, 2,82–83)

All examples come from texts of the Theban area, or culturally belonging to it, as is obviously the case for *Wenamun* and the "el-Hibeh" letters. Although some examples date back to the 19ᵗʰ dynasty, the bulk of the evidence is somewhat later, in the 20ᵗʰ dynasty and the TIP. This alternative pattern is of course marginal even in the corpus of texts coming from Upper Egypt. The situation can be summarized as follows:

	Nominal subject	**Pronominal subject**
Lower Egypt	*jrj* NP (*r*) *sḏm*	*jw⸗f r sḏm*
Upper Egypt	*jrj* NP (*r*) *sḏm* *jw* NP *r sḏm*	*jw⸗f r sḏm*

Table 4. The patterns of the Future III in Late Egyptian

In Coptic, there is a clear opposition between Upper Egypt dialects (Akhmimic and related sub-dialects) and the rest of Egypt as regards the pattern of the Future III, as shown in the following table:[48]

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[44]   Other types of predicate are also marginally possible, in what I called elsewhere the "constructions analogiques" of the Future III (Winand 1996a).

[45]   The preposition *r* was probably introduced by analogy with the far better attested pronominal pattern. The *jrj* NP *sḏm* pattern is originally a periphrastic construction; as regards the morphology of the auxiliary *jrj*, it could represent what was ultimately left of the old future *sḏm.w⸗f*.

[46]   See also Kruchten (2010), with the comment by Winand (2016: fn. 58).

[47]   Other undisputable contexts are after circumstantial *jw* (*jw jw* + NP: P. Aberdeen 170ag+174a+d+175o, vᵒ 4), relative *nty* (P. Turin 2071+2091, with lacunae); past converter *wn* (P. Vandier 1,2).

[48]   For a more detailed approach see Winand (2016) which was written after, but published before this study.

	Nominal subject	Pronominal subject
Sahidic	ⲉⲣⲉ-ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ (ⲉ)-ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄	ⲉ-ϥ-ⲉ-ⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄
Akhmimic	ⲁ-ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲁ-ⲥⲱⲧⲙⲉ	ⲁ-ϥ-ⲁ-ⲥⲱⲧⲙⲉ

Table 5. The patterns of the Future III in Coptic (Sahidic and Akhmimic)

One thus feels on safe ground in suggesting that *jw* with nominal subject is a dialectal trait (Winand 1992: § 771–784). The case of the Future III is all the more interesting as it gives us the rare opportunity to make a distinction between the two acceptations the word "dialect" can have in our studies (see above §1.2). Since the pattern of the future is regular in Middle Egyptian, the split that occurred in Late Egyptian between *jw* + pron. subj. and *jrj* + nominal subj. can be explained as an influence of the regional dialect where Late Egyptian had its nest before becoming the new national standard. As was pointed out, it was probably somewhere around the area of Memphis. The permanence of *jw* in some texts from Upper Egypt must thus be analysed as a regional variant in the synchrony of Late Egyptian (see also below, §2.4).[49]

2.3.2.5. The imperative of the verb "to go"

The basic opposition between the two generic verbs of motion ("go" vs. "come") is expressed in Earlier Egyptian by the pair *šm* vs. *jwj*.[50] In Late Egyptian, the centrifugal movement is rendered by two verbs, *šm* and *ḥn* (together with *nˁj*, but to a lesser extent). Peust (2007) must be credited for an inspiring paper where he suggested that these two (three) verbs are in complementary distribution according to the grammatical tenses they are used with. This overall picture remains probably true, but, as it turns out, only up to a certain point. In the imperative, for instance, both *šm* and *ḥn* can be used in Late Egyptian texts.

O. DeM 1064, rº 2	unknown	
O. DeM 117, 2	19th dynasty	
O. Petrie 62	19th dynasty	
P. DeM 39, rº 5	19th dynasty	
O. DeM 10061, 19	Ramses II	
P. Sallier I, 5,10	Merenptah	
P. BM EA 10429, vº 1	20th dynasty	
P. BM EA 10054, rº 2,2	Ramses IX	
P. BM EA 10054, rº 3,11	Ramses IX	
P. BM EA 10052, rº 6,4	Ramses XI	
P. BM EA 10403, vº 3,4	Ramses XI	
pMoscow 120 (= *Wenamun*), 1,45	21st dynasty	
P. BM EA 10800, 5	22nd dynasty	
O. DeM 1064, rº 2	unknown	
P. BN 202 + P. Amherst 9 (= *Astarte*), 2,x+11	18th dynasty	
P. Cairo CG 58054, 4	Amenhotep III	
P. DeM 01 (Ani), 3,5	19th dynasty	

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[49]   One could also consider the possibility that *jw* was a substrate left by the Middle Egyptian standard. This hypothesis, given our present state of knowledge, remains however fragile.

[50]   See Winand (1991).

P. Harris 500 (= *Taking of Joppe*), 2,11	19th dynasty	
O. DeM 636, rº 3	Seti I	
P. Orbiney (= *Two Brothers*), 3,1	Seti II	
P. Anastasi V, 24,4	Seti II	
O. Cairo prov. nº 175, vº 4	20h dynasty	
P. DeM 19	20th dynasty	
P. Turin 1880, rº 4,21	Ramses III	
O. Cairo CG 25364, rº 6	Ramses IV	
P. DeM 26, vº B2	Ramses III	
O. Gardiner 54, vº 3	Ramses III	
O. Chicago OIC 12074	Ramses IV	
P. Chester Beatty 1 (= *Horus & Seth*), 10,12	Ramses V	
P. Abbott, 5,2	Ramses IX	
P. Boulaq 4 (*Ani*), 15,16	21st dynasty	
P. Boulaq 4 (*Ani*), 19,12	21st dynasty	
Inscription of Taharqa (Karnak), col. 20	Taharqa	

Table 6. Distribution of *ḥn* and *šm* in the imperative

The conclusions seem evident: while *šm* is attested all across Egypt, *ḥn* seems to be limited to texts coming from the South. The only counter-example (courtesy of P. Sallier I, 5,10 = *LEM* 82,14) is not sufficient to invalidate the hypothesis. As often in the humanities, one rarely deals with clear-cut, black and white situations, and some grades of grey are only to be expected. In this particular case, the statistics strongly support the claim made here.

2.3.3. Syntax

2.3.3.1. Word order

As was already noted (Depuydt 1997), the canonical order verb + *n⸗f* + *sw* of Classical Egyptian is reversed in Late Egyptian:[51]

   (16)   *bw jn⸗k sw n⸗j*
          "you did not bring it to me" (O. DeM 554, vº 2)

One is now capable of refining considerably this first observation, which remains basically correct. The new order is found with the imperative, the participles, the perfective and the subjunctive. It is also attested twice with the infinitive with the dependent pronoun *se* (O. DeM 592, 7, and P. BM EA 10906, rº 7). The older scheme remains in use, but it has become very rare in Late Egyptian: 8 occurrences on 7 different documents. Interestingly enough, all these instances come from the Theban area, with one exception — a letter from the "el-Hibeh" archive[52] —, which does not actually contradict the claim that is made here:

   (17)   *dj⸗k n⸗f sw*
          "you gave it to him" (O. DeM 10105, vº 1)

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[51]   This of course does not apply to the infinitive, as this form selects the suffix pronouns for expressing the direct object.

[52]   As was pointed out to me by Matthias Müller, this letter was sent by someone from the entourage of the God's wife of Amun. It explicitly states that the person is to be sent back southwards with a letter noting the date. Hence one may surmise that the letter comes from Thebes.

(18)   … ḥr tȝj⸗k šꜥ.t nty jw⸗k (r) dj.t jn n⸗f se

"… on your letter that you shall have brought to him" (P. Strasburg 25, v° 2)

With due caution in regard to the very low statistics, the conclusion of this could be that the older, classical order, which was still sparingly used in the South, remained as a dialectal variant as the new construction, probably coming from the North, gradually superseded the ancient one.

By the TIP, texts from the Theban area had overwhelmingly adopted the newer pattern; the last examples of the older one can still be found in the oracular decree for Henuttaui[53] and P. Strasburg 25 (cited in Ex. 18).[54]

2.3.3.2. The causative

The expression of the causative in Late Egyptian is divided, as in Earlier Egyptian, between the old Afro-asiatic causative scheme with prefix *s-*, and the new pattern *rdj* + subjunctive, active or passive. In Late Egyptian, the pattern *rdj* + *sḏm.tw(⸗f)* is sometimes challenged by a new construction *rdj* + infinitive (Winand 2009). Although the innovative pattern never succeeded in replacing the older one, it was far from remaining marginal or exceptional. When looking at the data, one can immediately note that the distribution for both constructions is not evenly balanced: while the pattern with infinitive is widely represented in the Theban area (as is also the case for the older pattern with subjunctive), the new construction is exceedingly rare in the Memphite area, for it is actually found only in P. Orbiney, a text that shows different linguistic strata.[55]

2.3.3.3. The case of *nty wn* in Wenamun

In a short note (Winand 2007), I discussed the curious pattern *nty wn⸗f* in *Wenamun* 2,27:

(19)   … jn sw dy, jn bn sw pȝ nty wn⸗f

"(but you know, you let this great god spend these 29 days mooring in your harbour without trying to know whether he was there or not, he who (actually) was there" (*Wenamun* 2,27)

I suggested that this exceptional combination of the relative *nty* with the past converter *wn* was a dialectal feature (as shown in Akhmimic and Subakhmimic). This first impression is also supported by the fact that *Wenamun* also uses the pattern *jw* NP + (*r*) + *sḏm* instead of *jrj* + NP + (*r*) *sḏm* to build the future III with a nominal subject (see above §2.3.2.4).

2.3.4. Lexicon

A contrastive study of the vocabulary in Late Egyptian is still lacking. This remark of course applies to the other stages of ancient Egyptian as well. By contrastive, I here have in mind different words — at least two — for expressing the same referent, whose distribution is geographically conditioned. In a study already alluded to,[56] Peust presented such a contrastive list for some very basic Coptic notions

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[53]   *jw⸗tw* (*r*) *dj.t n⸗f sw* […] "one will give it to him" (oracular decree for Henuttaui, l. 16).

[54]   This conclusion is probably supported by a similar move that can be observed for the adjectival predicate; the classical word order *nfr n⸗f sw* "it is good for you" is no longer found, being replaced by the new pattern *nfr sw n⸗f* attested in texts coming from all over the Nile Valley. The old construction is attested only once in a document coming from Deir el-Medineh (O. Michaelides 72, 3,4), which was not actually written in plain Late Egyptian.

[55]   This very interesting text seems to follow two distinctive patterns for a series of unrelated facts (graphemics, morphology, syntax, lexicon). I hope to be able to deal with this in another paper.

[56]   See above fn 7.

expressed by different words in Sahidic and Bohairic (e.g. ⲃⲱⲕ vs. ϣⲉ "go"). Not exceptionally, both words (in Sahidic and Bohairic) were already known in previous stages in the history of ancient Egyptian, appearing sometimes in the same synchronic corpus (e.g. ⲟⲩϣⲏ < *wḫꜣ* vs. ϭⲱⲣϩ < *grḥ*, for "night"). In Late Egyptian, the two following pairs can perhaps qualify for regional variants.

First, for expressing "outside" (as opposed to *ẖnw* "inside, interior"), Earlier Egyptian used the noun *rw.t* (⟨hieroglyphs⟩, and var.), and in combination with the preposition *r* (⟨hieroglyphs⟩) as opposed to *r-ẖnw*. The noun *rw.t* is remarkably absent in Late Egyptian. The complex *r-rwtj* has been replaced by *r-bnr*, which will be widely used in Coptic as post-verb for expressing the notion of "outside", but also, like "out" and "up" in English as a marker of telicity for expressing the complete fulfilment of a process, an evolution that can actually be traced back to Late Egyptian. The second element of the compound preposition *r-bnr*, usually written ⟨hieroglyphs⟩, is scarcely used in isolation. It first seems to appear in the 18th dynasty, where it is written ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ or ⟨hieroglyphs⟩. It is first used in work reports,[57] and in tomb captions,[58] always in the Theban area. The old expression *r-rwtj* is found only once, in the wisdom of Ani (P. DeM 1,1),[59] and the variant *m-rwty* four times, only in literary texts.[60] The noun *rwtj* is only attested thrice, always in texts dating from the TIP.[61] The fact that *bnr(w)* was very quickly spelt in syllabic writing shows that the noun was felt by the scribes either as foreign or as new, that is outside the written tradition, in the Late Egyptian lexicon.[62] To conclude this small case study, the fact that *rw.t* (and the related expressions *m/r-rwtj*), which was well attested in Earlier Egyptian, dramatically went out of use in Late Egyptian, except in some literary texts, and the fact that the newcomer, *bnr(w)*, very quickly became the new standard in Late Egyptian, strongly suggest that the latter was a regional variant, outside the written tradition, that came to the fore with the extension of Late Egyptian as the new national standard idiom across the country. As is the case for other words, the scribes opted for a syllabic writing.

The distribution of the two well-known prepositions for expressing accompaniment and coordination, *ḥnꜥ* and *jrm*, is not without parallel with the above discussion. In a previous study (Winand 2014), I showed how *jrm*, which is first attested in the beginning of the 19th dynasty, gradually superseded *ḥnꜥ*. However, *ḥnꜥ* did not completely disappear: it survived in Late Egyptian for expressing coordination, while *jrm* could express both accompaniment and coordination. Moreover, contrary to expectation when considering the general evolution of *ḥnꜥ* over time, the preposition did not fall out of use in Demotic; quite the contrary, it seemed to experience a second life. The etymology of *jrm* so far remains opaque, but the use of a syllabic writing once more implies that it did not belong to the repertoire of the scribes in Earlier Egyptian. This could thus suggest that *jrm*, as was the case for *bnr(w)*, belonged to a local variety of Egyptian that eventually gave birth to Late Egyptian as we know it. The fact that *ḥnꜥ*, whose decline was regular in Late Egyptian, experienced a new surge in Demotic

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[57]   See O. MMA 17, r° 6 and O. MMA 21, r° 7 (both from the reign of Thutmosis III).

[58]   See Louvre N 1430, and Tomb of Paheri (pl. III).

[59]   In the parallel version of P. Boulaq 4 (18,9), there is no post-verb, but the noun *rwtj* "exterior" is attested in the previous column (17,5).

[60]   See P. Boulaq 4, 16,13; P. BM EA 10474, 9,12 and 11,9; O. BM EA 29549, r° 6; P. Harris I, 75,3.

[61]   See P. Boulaq 4, 17,5; P. Turin 1984, 59, and stela Cairo JE 31882, 29.

[62]   On this, see Winand (2017a).

reinforces the impression that some vocabulary items shared the vicissitudes of the regional varieties of Egyptian as they moved to and receded from the national stage.[63]

2.4. *Conclusion*

In the preceding sections, I reviewed some cases where dialectal variation can be advocated for explaining peculiarities in the corpus against what can be assumed to be Standard Late Egyptian. Cases in phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon have been discussed. While some of them contribute quite marginally to the discussion (and could be disputed), the bulk of evidence seems reasonably strong enough to assess the claim that was made in the opening of this paper: even if the writing system used in the New Kingdom is not very collaborative for helping linguists finding fine-grained variations in the data, even if by essence any written document in ancient Egypt was moulded by tradition and decorum, variation was to be expected, and did actually happen. Of course, the number of documents coming from Lower Egypt — which here means quite exclusively from the Memphite area — is very low if compared to what has been preserved in the South, especially in the Theban area (§1.2).

Two strategies were applied for analysing the data. In some cases, it was possible to explain a regionally conditioned distribution by suggesting some continuity from Late Egyptian to Coptic, as most clearly shown by the case of the Future III (§2.3.2.4). In other cases, the regional distribution of the data cannot be matched onto later stages of Egyptian, probably because the forms or constructions under consideration did not leave any trace. This is best illustrated by the variations for expressing the causative (§2.3.3.2).

This opens new avenues on how one reconstructs the history of Egyptian. Starting from a straight, vertical, mother-to-daughter scheme, which was, quite naturally, the first one adopted in Egyptology, one gradually became more open to the role that regional varieties could play. This was most evident in the succession from Old Egyptian to Middle Egyptian and from Middle Egyptian to Late Egyptian. Edgerton convincingly argued that Old and Late Egyptian shared some features that bypassed, so to speak, Middle Egyptian. The short fact-list provided by Edgerton can now be extended.[64] One is now in a situation to refine the model by adding two new considerations:

(1)   in some cases, remnants from the previous national idiom (for instance Middle Egyptian) can still emerge under the new linguistic standard (for instance Late Egyptian) as a substrate, creating variation in synchrony. This can explain the resistance of *ꜥšn* as found in some southern texts, and of *jw* with nominal subject in the Future III;

(2)   within a new linguistic standard (in this case Late Egyptian), dialectal fragmentations can appear, which have nothing to do with the original provenance of Late Egyptian before it acceded to national audience (e.g. see the variations between *rdj* + subj. vs. infinitive for expressing the causative).

3. SOCIOLECT AND IDIOLECT IN DEIR EL-MEDINEH

Sociolect and idiolect basically refer to the same point of view: linguistic differentiations according to social classes, everything else being equal (time, place, literary genres and registers). What distinguishes the two terms is a matter of quantification: whereas sociolect points to a class of

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[63]   In the same vein, the negative emphatic marker *jwnꜣ* (also written in syllabic writing) would perhaps qualify as a regional innovation too (for its uses in Late Egyptian, see Winand 1996b).

[64]   See Winand (2016).

individuals that share some properties (age, gender, occupation, etc.), idiolect, as the name implies, deals with the habit of one particular, or of a handful of persons (prototypically, a family).

The rich collection of data from Deir el-Medineh should place us in an ideal — maybe unique — situation to study linguistic variety from this particular angle.[65] This is unfortunately only partly true. As will be illustrated in the next sections, there are a lot of variants in our data that cannot reasonably be explained as motivated by any kind of diachronic process, by geographic dispersion, or by some switch in textual genres or registers. One inevitably senses that this kind of variation has to do with idiosyncrasies of a particular character or a group of individuals. The problems then immediately arise as one tries to substantiate this hypothesis by assigning documents to a specific scribe. We are indeed in a most curious and frustrating situation: we have succeeded gathering an impressive lot of texts, compiled a similarly impressive list of scribes, whose activity is sometimes quite well known, but we are still faced with extreme difficulties when trying to match the two groups.[66] In any study in sociolinguistics, the limits are naturally set by our knowledge (or ignorance) of individuals. The problems we are faced with are too well known:

- although most of the texts can be roughly dated (*i.e.* within a dynasty), one is still left with too many texts floating freely in time without being assigned to a specific reign;
- the mention of a scribe in a text is no sufficient guarantee that he was in charge of its writing; the problems are of course more acute when two or more scribes appear in the same text;[67]
- palaeography, as a tool for classifying hands, is still in its infancy; texts that have long been attributed to a particular scribe are now newly questioned; texts that were once claimed to be written by a single hand are now reconsidered;
- the confidence one can put in palaeography for identifying scribes, rather than hands, can also be questioned; in some cases, there seems to be a very close continuum in handwriting on texts that cannot obviously be assigned to a single scribe (Eyre 1979); this means that there were "schools" (maybe based on family ties or mutual friendship) whose members shared strong writing habits.

In the following sections, I try to envisage cases that could shed some light on these complex issues. In this first attempt to reach the individual under the crust of linguistic uniformity, my ambition remains above all methodological. Even if the concrete results will admittedly turn up to be quite limited, I hope that this will contribute to a better understanding of the question.

The criteria that were used for tracking dialects (phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon) obviously still apply, but other domains should be considered as well, like graphemics and phraseology. Although the distinction between sociolect and idiolect seems intuitively clear, there are inevitably border cases, as in any matter where the classification rests on a question of granularity.

3.1. *Sociolects*

If one hopes to find significant variants, one has better to try first with phenomena that are widely attested in the corpus. I thus started this quest by looking at two well-known issues in Late Egyptian: the gradual replacement of the 3rd pl. suf. pron. *⸗sn* by *⸗w* and the gradual disappearance of the

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[65]   A variety of case studies in the last decade shows how we now have gained some confidence in our ability to do micro-historic studies that focus on one single individual's production (the best example is certainly Amunnakhte's (v); see Polis 2017b).

[66]   See however van den Berg & Donker van Heel (2000); Donker van Heel (2003); Hudson (this volume).

[67]   On the discrimination between scribes and authors, see Polis (2017b).

prepositions *r* and *ḥr* in some complex predicative patterns (§3.1.1). I then consider differences between two closely related documents that have often been assigned to a single scribe (P. BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A, §3.1.2), and I end this section by considering the use of slang in the Great Tomb Robberies corpus (§3.1.3).

3.1.1. *=sn* vs. *=w* for expressing the 3rd pl. suf. pronoun, and the presence/absence of *r*/*ḥr* in compound tenses

A well-known evolution in the history of Late Egyptian during the New Kingdom is the gradual replacement of the Earlier Egyptian 3rd pl. suf. pron. *=sn* by *=w*. The general evolution is now well understood, but there are some oddities in the distribution of the data that still await explanation. The general evolution is pretty clear: *=sn*, which is still preferred in the beginning of the 19th dynasty, virtually came out of use by the end of the 20th dynasty (§2.3.2.1).

Another remarkable phenomenon is the gradual disappearance of the prepositions *r* and *ḥr* appearing before the infinitive to build widely used compound patterns: the future III (for *r*), the present I, the sequential, and some narrative constructions like *wn.jn≠f ḥr sḏm* and *ʿḥʿ.n≠f ḥr sḏm* (for *ḥr*). This has for a long time been noted as a distinct feature in the evolution of Late Egyptian, and can be used as a reliable criterion for dating documents.[68] When one looks at the data from a very general perspective, this evolution seems once again to proceed in a straightforward way: while in the 18th dynasty, the presence of the prepositions is overwhelming (more than 95%), it has dropped to a mere 3% by the end of the 20th dynasty.

When one takes a closer look at the data, the situation is actually a bit more confused, or rather more complicated. I shall illustrate my point by focusing on the data of the first half of the 20th dynasty (Ramses III — Ramses V). This period, which extends over a bit less than 50 years, is well suited for this purpose, as it seems to be a turning point in the evolution of (written) Late Egyptian. I first give some rough statistics on the use of *=sn* vs. *=w*, and on the presence/absence of *ḥr* and *r* in the present I, the sequential (and some related narrative patterns), and the future III. I then consider the data for each text to test if their statistics match the general distribution for the period. I finally test if the two criteria lead to the same result. In my conclusion, I consider the case of Amunnakhte (v), a scribe whose activity is well recorded for this period.

The two first tables give the general statistics for the distribution of *=sn* vs. *=w*, and for the presence/absence of *ḥr* and *r* during the reigns of Ramses III — Ramses V.[69]

	=sn	*=w*
Tokens	106	455
Percentage	16%	84%

Table 7. The distribution of *=sn* and *=w* in the compound tenses in Late Egyptian
(Ramses III – Ramses V)

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[68] Winand (1995).

[69] The epigraphic texts (most notably the Medinet Habu inscriptions) have been integrated in this study as they belong to a different genre, and make use of some registers that belong to "Égyptien de tradition."

	Present I	Sequential	Future III
Preposition present	126 (44,5%)	343 (33,6%)	62 (42%)
Preposition absent	157 (55,5%)	679 (66,4%)	85 (58%)

Table 8. The presence/absence of *ḥr* and *r* in the compound tenses in Late Egyptian
(Ramses III — Ramses V)

For the period considered here, the general trend (with some fluctuations) is to select the new pronoun (*=w*) and to omit the preposition in the compound tenses. This first impression must be immediately checked by considering the singularity of the individual texts. The texts can be distributed in three categories:

  – texts where *=sn* is always used, or where prepositions are always present,
  – texts where *=sn* is never used, or where prepositions are always absent,
  – texts where *=sn* and *=w* are both used, or where the prepositions are sometimes present.

Here are first the statistics for the suffix pronoun. The intermediate category has been split into three sub-categories, and texts where a form of the suf. pron. is used by a large majority (>85%) have been set apart for a better understanding of the discussion.

	nb of texts	%
=sn always used	13	10,5%
=sn used in ≥85% of the cases	3	2,5%
=sn and *=w* mixed	14	11,5%
=w used in ≥85% of the cases	6	0,5%
=w always used	86	70%

Table 9. The distribution of 3rd pl. suf. pron. by texts in Late Egyptian
(Ramses III — Ramses V)

Here are now the statistics for the presence/absence of the prepositions *ḥr* and *r* in the compound tenses.

	nb of texts	%
prep. always present used	60	26,6%
prep. present in ≥ 85% of the cases	31	13,7%
presence/absence mixed	31	13,7%
prep. absent in ≥85% of the cases	17	7,5%
prep. always absent	86	38,5%

Table 10. The presence/absence of *ḥr* and *r* in the compound tenses by texts in Late Egyptian
(Ramses III – Ramses V)

Before proceeding to the discussion, I present a last table selecting the texts where both criteria apply. I excluded from the list the texts where the statistics are definitely too low (≤ 2 for both criteria).[70]

	nb of texts	prep. always present	prep. present in ≥85%	presence/ absence mixed	prep. absent in ≥85%	prep. always absent
꞊sn always used	4	—	2	—	1	1
꞊sn used in ≥85% of the cases	3	—	—	1	1	1
꞊sn and *꞊w* mixed	10	2	4	2	—	2
꞊w used in ≥85% of the cases	5	—	1	1	1	2
꞊w always used	37	4	13	3	7	10

Table 11. Cross-table combining the data of Tab. 9 and 10

For both criteria, there are texts that always use one and only one form, or at least stick to one form with an overwhelming majority (≥ 85%). Although the genres of the texts can have an influence on the choices made by the scribes, texts belonging to the same genre can take opposite sides. One can for instance contrast O. Berlin P. 10633, O. Berlin P. 12630, O. BM EA 5624 and P. Ashm. Mus. 1945.97, with O. DeM 148, O. DeM 153, O. DeM 569, O. Gardiner 5, P. Turin 1875, and P. Turin 1882. All these texts deal with business or legal matters; in the first group, the prepositions used in compound patterns are *always present*,[71] in the second group, they are *always absent*.

The two criteria that have been selected here can, but only to a certain point, be combined. As shown in Tab. 11, the texts that always used the new form of the suf. pron. could in many cases keep the prepositions *r*/*ḥr*. But — and this is more anticipated — if one considers the data from another angle, the texts that always or nearly always (the last two columns) omitted the prepositions always or nearly always opted for the new form of the suf. pron. (20 occ. vs. 6 occ.). This nicely shows that linguistic evolution never proceeds regularly at the same pace: every domain — phonology, non-verbal and verbal morphology, syntax, lexicon — has its own rhythm; what is called, for instance, Late Egyptian (or a sub-phase within Late Egyptian) is a rough appreciation, statistically founded, based on a limited set of criteria, most often verbal morphology and syntax. A history of the language that would give precedence to the evolution of phonology or of the lexicon would probably give a different picture.

As it seems, the explanation for such variations must be sought outside grammar, strictly speaking, and outside any diatopic distribution as the selection has been restricted to the Theban area. It is thus reasonable to make the hypothesis that these variations can be related to some kind of social, maybe generational factor: scribes who were educated and trained during the 19th dynasty were probably more prone to stick to some "traditional" way of writing, that is by scrupulously noting the *r*'s and the *ḥr*'s, while junior scribes who began their career later would probably be more accustomed to (or more eager to adopt) innovative writings, closer to what was actually spoken. Of course, such a

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[70]   Only 83 texts have at least one of the compound tenses and use the 3rd plural suffix pronoun. Out of this, 24 must be excluded because of too low statistics.

[71]   As regards P. Ashm. Mus. 1945.97, in the last occurrence of the future III, the preposition is missing. This however is not actually a counter-example as the last section was written by another scribe, namely Hori.

claim remains difficult to prove as most documents are not authenticated by the scribe's signature.[72] The argument has of course a high degree of probability considering the results already achieved in sociolinguistics for other cultures.[73]

It is of course tempting to match texts with individual scribes. In this respect, the famous scribe Amunnakhte might appear as an exemplary case.[74] His signature stands on many texts, and regular progress is made in understanding his writing habits. But even in such a favourable case, one is left with many questions, with much uncertainty. Some texts that have been attributed to Amunnakhte were actually written by more than one hand,[75] some attributions that once seemed secure can now be disputed,[76] the variety of genres where Amunnakhte excelled is in itself another factor of dispersion, as these genres did not access the same linguistic registers.

The first impression when considering the data is that Amunnakhte, in his administrative duties, was rather on the conservative side. This is quite clear for the O. Louvre 696, O. Berlin P. 12630, O. Nash 5, O. DeM 828, and O. Turin 9611, where the prepositions *r*/*ḥr* are always present. This first appreciation is not really contradicted by P. Berlin P. 10496, where the preposition is regularly present (7 vs. 2 occ.). The discussion about who was actually in charge of writing O. Berlin P. 10645+10646 should not retain us for too long as this document cannot be properly used in this case study because of its very low statistics (one case) for the criterion considered here. Our analysis is also supported by the two documents of the Naunakhte affair relevant to our discussion (P. Ashm. Mus. 1945.97 and 1945.95) where the prepositions are always written, with one possible exception in the latter document (11 vs. 0[77], and 4 vs. 1[78] resp.).

The only major exception is the famous P. Turin 1880 (Strike papyrus), where the balance decidedly tilts towards the innovative side (11 vs. 32). This document seems to follow the same

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[72]   This is the case for O. Louvre 696 (last line of the text), which is a model letter, and must as such be considered with caution. Otherwise, the attribution to a given scribe is dependent on the mention of the scribe in the text, especially if he has been given some official function (cf. P. Turin 1880). When several scribes are mentioned in a single text, or when there is no name recorded, one is left with palaeography. Of course, a single document can also bear witness to different hands (cf. P. Berlin P. 10496).

[73]   Cf. Smith (1997) on the practices of scribes in medieval England.

[74]   Here I warmly thank Stéphane Polis for his help and his generous sharing of information.

[75]   This is the case of P. Berlin P. 10496 (probably three hands).

[76]   For instance, O. Berlin P. 10645+10646; on its attribution to Amunnakhte (v), see Eyre (1979: 91, n. 57), and Burkard (2013: 67). The case of O. Florence 2621 is difficult to handle (on his attribution to Amunnakhte (v), see Eyre 1979). This document whose beginning and end are unfortunately missing deals with a dispute about a tomb and tomb equipment. At one point in the procedure, one understands that the scribe Amunnakhte (v) was in charge of carrying an inspection (*smtr*): vº 4: *jw sš jmn-nḫt n pȝ ḥr ḥr dd n⸗f* "and the scribe of the Tomb, Amunnakhte, said to him". But he is not the only scribe mentioned in the text, as the scribe *ꜥḥ-p.t* appeared on the previous line with the administrators (*rwḏ.w*), also in relation with an inspection. In the absence of any (preserved) signature, the attribution to a particular scribe remains pending till a new palaeographical study of the original can be realized.

[77]   In the last section, *r* of the future III has been omitted (rº 5,11): *bn jw rmṯ-js.t nfr-ḥtp (r) pš jmꜣw* "the man of the crew Neferhotep will not share in them", but compare (rº 5,7): *bn jw⸗f r ꜥḳ r ḥmtj nb gr* "he shall not 'enter' into any copper either". For the presence of *jw* instead of *jrj* in the first ex., see *supra* (2.3.2.4). This counter-example should be excluded from the study, as the last section of the document must actually be attributed to Hori (see Černý 1945).

[78]   L. 7: *jw jw⸗f (r) jrj.t ꜥnḫ n nb ꜥ,w,s* "as he will give an oath by the lord l.p.h.". One will note that the preposition might be more easily omitted after circumstantial *jw*, since the pattern was in this case non-ambiguous, as is also the case with a negation. These are precisely the patterns where the remnant of the preposition *r* is missing in Coptic while it is normally present in affirmative autonomous sentences. On this, see Winand (1992: §785–793).

"orthographic" criteria found in two other long official documents that were written a bit later, namely P. Turin 1875 (Ramses IV) and P. Turin 1887 (Ramses V, y. 1), where the prepositions are very exceptionally written (118 vs. 0 for P. Turin 1875, and 80 vs. 3 for P. Turin 1887). But, in contrast to these two documents, which always (P. Turin 1875) or always but for one exception (P. Turin 1887) use the new pronoun *ꜣw*, P. Turin 1880 takes a more balanced attitude (14 occ. for *ꜣsn* vs. 23 occ. for *ꜣw*).[79] In P. Turin 1880, the preposition *ḥr* in the present I is most often missing. This occurs repeatedly in the first section where the workers responsible for various tasks are enumerated:

(20)   *ntj (ḥr) fꜣj mw n nꜣj(-n) pꜣ ḫr*

"(those) who carry water for those of the Tomb" (P. Turin 1880, vº 1,1)

This formulation occurs 11 times; the missing of the preposition can thus be accounted for by the formatting imposed by the administrative style.[80] For the rest, there seems to be no guide to predict the presence/absence of a preposition. Compare:

Future III

(21)   *r-ḏd jwꜣj r jn pꜣ ḥꜣtj-ꜥ n njw.t*

"I shall bring back the mayor of town" (P. Turin 1880, rº 1,9)

(22)   *jwꜣj (r) šm [r] njw.t r ḏd smj n pꜣ ḥm-nṯr tpj n jmn*

"I shall go to town to deliver a report to the high priest of Amun" (P. Turin 1880, vº 7,4–5)

Sequential

(23)   *jwꜣtw ḥr ḫꜣꜥ nꜣsn djw n ꜣbd 1 pr.t m pꜣ hrw*

"and one gave them the rations of the 1st month of peret, on this day" (P. Turin 1880, rº 4,22)

(24)   *jwꜣw (ḥr) ḏd nꜣsn*

"and they said to them" (P. Turin 1880, rº 2,2)

If one excepts the formulaic expressions (*nty [ḥr]* + inf.) that stand at the beginning of the text (see above), the preposition *ḥr* always shows up in the present I (2 occ.):

(25)   *ptr twj ḥr ḏd nꜣtn tꜣjꜣj wšb.t*

"Look, I am telling you my opinion" (P. Turin 1880, rº 4,20–21)[81]

The documents that can be attributed to Amunnakhte constitute a unique set. Although this extraordinary well-educated scribe can be rather put on the conservative side, P. Turin 1880 seems to be an exception, if its attribution to Amunnakhte must be unreservedly taken for granted. Even if the numbers must be reconsidered by taking into account the cumulative effect of some administrative formulae, like the *ntj (ḥr)* + inf. scheme that occurs 11 times in the beginning of the text, Amunnakhte

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[79]   The distribution is pretty clear: *ꜣsn* is used after a preposition (15 times), while *ꜣw* is used in other circumstances (after *jwꜣ*, a verb or a noun). This perfectly conforms to what is known about the progression of the new form (see Winand 1995).

[80]   One will also note the repeated omission of the definite article before the relative pronoun. The preposition is nonetheless present in the last group of this section (vº 4,6: *ntj ḥr jr.t ḳd* [...] "those who make plaster [...]"). The final reaction of a literate against the bureaucratic style? For this type of formulation, see Gabler (this volume), who suggests that vº 1,1sqq might be attributed to another hand.

[81]   Cf. rº 2,17, where the preposition is obviously the only way to fill in the short lacuna (*ḥr-jr twn [ḥr] šm r sḏm rꜣꜣw* "as we went to hear their words").

seems to have adopted here an unresolved attitude in his treatment of the prepositions. As already observed, P. Turin 1880 anticipates what will be found only some years later in two other long and elaborated similar texts, P. Turin 1875 and P. Turin 1887, where the prepositions are virtually absent.

3.1.2. Two papyrus for how many scribes?

P. BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A, two famous papyri recording the depositions of the defendants and witnesses during the Great Tomb Robberies judicial procedures, have long been considered as the product of one single scribe.[82] In a previous study, I drew attention to some disturbing facts that seem to point in another direction.[83] Leaving aside differences in phraseology,[84] I here briefly give a summary of the main results before adding some new evidence.

Ancient Egyptians seem to have invented persuasive means to elicit spontaneous declarations from the witnesses. One of the commonest devices was quite expectedly the stick. As regards lexicon, the following points should be stressed. During the beatings, the word *bḏl*, probably a Semitic loanword as suggested by the syllabic writing (Hoch 1994: #149), was used. It is found 70 times in both papyri, but with a clear-cut distribution of the spellings, as shown in the following table:[85]

	[glyphs] / [glyphs]	[glyphs]	[glyphs] / [glyphs]	[glyphs]
P. BM EA 10052	–	–	36	–
P. Mayer A	25/1	4	2	2

Table 12. The spellings of *bḏl* in P. BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A

Another device, maybe for twisting the limbs, also appears in support of the common stick. Called *mn(n)*, it comes in two groups of spellings as shown in the following table:

	[glyphs]	[glyphs]	[glyphs]
P. BM EA 10052	11	–	–
P. Mayer A	–	5	3

Table 13. The spellings of *mnn* in P. BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A

To these previous observations, one can now add the following. As regards verbal morphology, the two papyri unexpectedly part company for some very common forms. Consider for instance the distribution of the forms for the passive perfective of *ḏd* "say"; as shown in the following table,

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[82]   See Peet (1920: 135): "It (*i.e.* P.BM EA 10052) is written the way up on both sides by the same hand as Mayer A".

[83]   See Winand (2017b).

[84]   The two papyri have different expressions in formulaic statements like *j.wȝḥ, ḏd⸗j* "stop! I'll speak" (P. BM EA 10052 only), *wȝ r⸗j, wȝ r ḥᶜ.t⸗j* "far from me! far from myself!" (P. BM EA 10052 only), *jr smtr⸗f m bḏn* "he has been interrogated with a stick" (P. BM EA 10052 only), *sw smtr m bḏn* "he has been interrogated with a stick" (P. BM EA 10052 only), *sw smtr m ḵnḵn m bḏn* "he has been interrogated with a beating by a stick" (P. Mayer A only), *jrj⸗f sᶜḥᶜ⸗j* "so that he accuses me" (P. BM EA 10052 only), *mtw⸗f sᶜḥᶜ⸗j* "and he will accuse me" (P. BM EA 10052 only), *r sᶜḥᶜ⸗f* "to accuse him" (P. Mayer A only). For a detailed analysis, see Winand (2017b).

[85]   Another word [glyphs] *ḏnn* "stick" can also be found in the same kind of phraseology, but only in P. BM EA 10052 (11 times). In the corpus, there are several spellings of what might well be related to different words (*ḏnr, ḏnn, ḏnḏn* ?). I leave this for another study.

P. Mayer A uses only *ḏd.tw* (written 〰), never *ḏd(.w)*, which is preferred in P. BM EA 10052 (see Table 14):

(26) *ḏd(.w) n⸗f* (〰)
      "one said to him" (P. BM EA 10052, rᵒ 1,16)

(27) *ḏd.tw n⸗f* (〰)
      "one said to him" (P. BM EA 10052, rᵒ 11,4)

(28) *ḏd.tw n⸗f* (〰)
      "one said to him" (P. Mayer A, rᵒ 1,13)

	𓂋	𓂋𓏤𓏤	𓂋𓏛
P. BM EA 10052	8	4	–
P. Mayer A	–	3	31

Table 14. The spellings of the passive perfective of *ḏd* in P. BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A

A similar variation appears for *jnj* "fetch"; the difference in writing is admittedly minimal, but nonetheless significant as it is strongly supported by statistics:

	𓏌	𓏌𓏤𓏤
P. BM EA 10052	7	49
P. Mayer A	49	1

Table 15. The spellings of the passive perfective of *jnj* in P. BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A

The verb "take" can take two stems *jṯꜣj* and *ṯꜣj*.[86] In the two papyri, the distribution is as follows:

	imperative	infinitive	participle	passive	perfective	relative f.
P. BM EA 10052	*jṯꜣj*	*jṯꜣj* *ṯꜣj*	*ṯꜣj*		*ṯꜣj*	
P. Mayer A		*jṯꜣj*	*ṯꜣj*	*ṯꜣj*	*ṯꜣj*	*ṯꜣj*

Table 16. The distribution of *jṯꜣj* / *ṯꜣj* in P. BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A

Although the forms seem clearly distributed according to the grammatical tenses, the infinitive makes an exception: while *jṯꜣj* is only used in P. Mayer A, both forms are found in P. BM EA 10052 (*jṯꜣj*: 8 times vs. *ṯꜣj*: 6 times).

From a purely graphemic point of view, the two papyri have not taken the same options for the spellings of *ptr* "look":

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[86] A detailed study of the differences between the two stems (to which one should add *jṯj*, which is still sporadically attested) is beyond the scope of this paper. As is already evident in the table given here, any explanation based on a semantic opposition (for instance "take" vs. "rob, steal") seems to be ruled out. One should probably rather consider some morphologically conditioned complementary distribution of the two stems (like *jw-* and *jj-* for *jwj* "come", see Winand 1991), but other factors like literary genre or register differentiation, or some local (dialectal?) habits might also play a role. For instance, in P. Léopold II-Amherst, there is a preferred distribution in the infinitive between *ṯꜣw* (written 𓍿𓄿𓏤) in the status absolutus (9 times) and *jṯꜣ* (𓇋𓍿𓄿𓏤) in the status constructus (3 times), with one exception (𓍿𓄿𓏤).

	☟	☟ ℓ	𓂻	𓂻
P. BM EA 10052	25		11	5
P. Mayer A	21	2	3	2

Table 17. The spellings of *ptr* in P. BM EA 10052 and P. Mayer A

The distribution of the forms can be correlated, up to a certain point, with morphology: in P. Mayer A, while the fuller spelling is systematically used with participles and relative forms, the shorter spelling is found with the infinitive (with one exception)[87], the passive and the subjunctive. In P. BM EA 10052, both spellings can be found with all tenses.[88]

To sum up this discussion, the differences found in P. Mayer A and P. BM EA 10052 cannot be classified as systemic from a linguistic viewpoint. These are obviously (free) variations within a close community of speakers. I thus prefer to consider them as manifestations of distinct idiolects (including idiographs).

Such a study should ideally be extended to the whole corpus of the Great Tomb Robberies papyri. For instance, there are interesting variations in the spelling of the negative verb *bwpw* between a *bwp-* group and a *bp-* group, which match the chronological ordering of the manuscripts:

𓃀𓂝𓏤𓃒𓏲 (and var.)	P. Abbott (6)
𓃀𓂝𓏲𓏲	P. Léopold II-Amherst (1)
𓃀𓂝𓏲𓏲	P. BM EA 10053 (1)
𓃀𓂝𓏲𓏲	P. BM EA 10403 (1)
𓃀𓏤𓏲𓏲	P. BM EA 10052 (48)
	P. BM EA 10403 (6)
	P. Mayer A (24)
𓃀𓏤𓏲	P. Mayer A (1)

Table 18. The spellings of *bwpw* in the *GTR*

3.1.3. Slang in the Great Tomb Robberies Papyri

In any society, groups of individuals linked together by family ties and/or by their activities often develop a specific jargon. The reasons for doing so are manifold: for instance, some professions need a specific vocabulary. But very regularly, the use of specific linguistic habits reveals a desire for individuality, a wish to stay apart from the rest of society, which of course gives an extraordinary feeling of community appurtenance. This can happen everywhere: in family circles, there are invented words or expressions, or very common words that are given a (slightly) different meaning for whatever reason. As has been largely studied, some social groups are more likely to create their own language. Activities related to crime, sex, and (later) drugs are historically the first attested.

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[87] P. Mayer A, rº 3,26: *jrj.tw⸗f jḫ ptr* "what does it mean 'look'?", which is not actually a counter-example as *ptr* has pragmatically an emphatic force. For this construction, see (Winand, forthcoming a, 3.2.2.6).

[88] There is of course a marked preference for the shorter spelling with the infinitive, but the longer form is also found 9 times.

In Ancient Egypt, manifestations of slang are occasional.[89] As is most often the case, Egyptian slang is made of common words, easily recognisable.[90] What distinguishes them from their common, ordinary use, is an extra-meaning that has been added, by way of metaphorical or any other rhetorical means. From a socio-linguistic viewpoint, slang obviously qualifies as a sociolect. Our corpus offers a magnificent example of this in the records of the depositions made by the witnesses and defendants as consigned in the Great Tomb Robberies papyri of the late 20th dynasty. As I already touched upon this topic in another paper (Winand forthcoming a), I here limit myself to reproducing a list of the words or expressions that were in my view adapted for this particular purpose. The Egyptian word/expression stands in the first column, the literal translation in the second one, a possible equivalent in English slang in the third one, and the equivalent in French slang in the last one:

EGYPTIAN	LITERAL TRANSLATION	ENGLISH SLANG	FRENCH SLANG
jrj h3w (m)	to secure a possession	to do his business with something/someone	*faire son affaire de qqch./à qqu'un*
jrj	fellow	accomplice	*comparse*
ꜥnḫ-(n)-ꜥkw	provision of food	piece of dough	*blé, oseille, beurre, etc*
wnm	to eat	to gulp down	*s'en foutre plein la lampe*
pḥpḥ	to make a tempest	to storm	*passer en tornade*
rdj X r-bnr	to put X outside	to give someone away	*donner/vendre qqu'un*
ḥḏ	silver	pot of money, dough	*galette, magot*
ḫꜥ	to empty	to spit it out	*vider son sac, cracher le morceau*
sh3j	to make descend	to con/trick someone	*descendre qqu'un*
šsp n ꜥkw	income of food	some cake	*une occasion de se faire du blé*
ḳ3b X	to double	to swindle someone	*doubler qqu'un*
g3j	to lack	to tell fibs	*raconter des bobards, bourrer le mou*
3wj ḏr.t꞊f r X	to lay one's hand on something	to hook, to grab someone, to clutch at someone	*mettre le grappin sur qqch*

Table 19. Slang in the Great Tomb Robberies

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[89] Slang in Ancient Egyptian has only received occasional attention so far. As regards the corpus of the Great Tomb Robberies, there are some considerations in Vernus (1993), on words expressing more or less the notion of backsheesh. For French, Calvet (2007) is a good introduction to the topic; for English, see Coleman (2004–2008). The possible use of slang in the so-called *Reden und Rufe* will be dealt with by Aurore Motte in her forthcoming PhD.

[90] Egyptians did not apparently use special techniques to distort or transform words as would be much later the case with "verlan" and "louchebem" in French.

For the sake of completeness, one can add the expression *bw jr rd.wj⸗j pḥ⸗w*, which comes from the same corpus, although it does not probably belong to the same register:

(29) *ḥr bw rḫ⸗j pḥ(wj) n nꜣ md.wt ꜥꜣ.wt j.ḏd pꜣ ḥꜣtj-ꜥ n njw.t*
       ḏd st n⸗j nꜣ sš.w n pꜣ ḫr n ḫnw nty ꜥḥꜥ m-ḫnw nꜣ rmṯ
       yꜣ bw jr pꜣj⸗j rd.wj pḥ⸗w
       jw⸗j (ḥr) ḏd smj⸗w m-bꜣḥ pꜣj⸗j nb
       jr pꜣj⸗j nb jn pḥwj n nꜣ md.wt j.ḏd pꜣ ḥꜣtj-ꜥ n njw.t

   "for I do not know the bottom of the great declarations told by the mayor of the Town, that the scribes of the Tomb of restricted access who stood amidst the people told him (lit. me). Really I cannot have the final word of it (lit. my legs cannot reach it). My lord will go to the bottom of the declarations told by the mayor of the Town" (P. Abbott, rº 6,17–20)

In this passage, there is some play with the verb *pḥ* "reach the end" and the noun *pḥwj* "end, limit".[91] In the sentence introduced by *yꜣ*, which can be used to express some exasperation, the subject is unexpectedly *pꜣj⸗j rd.wj* "my two legs". It is probably part of some colloquial expression built, as often, on a noun referring to some body parts (cf. French "*mettre le doigt dessus*").

3.2. *Idiolects*

In this last section, I consider two small cases: some unusual spellings of the negative past (**3.2.1**), and the presence of an intrusive preposition in the conjunctive (**3.2.2**).

3.2.1. Unusual spellings of the negative past *bwpw⸗*

As regards graphemics, some spellings of the negative past, *bwpw*, are worth noting. In a chronologically close set of documents, the regular spelling [hieroglyphs] (with minor variants) has been replaced by [hieroglyphs] (and variants)[92] or [hieroglyphs] (and variants).[93] The texts where these spellings appear can be dated to a relatively narrow timespan, between Ramses III and V.[94] As often, it is impossible to attribute these documents to specific individuals, but it is tempting to analyse these non-standard spellings as the mark of a small set of individuals, maybe linked to one another by family ties.

3.2.2. Intrusive prepositions in the conjunctive

Among the continuative constructions (sequential, *ꜥḥꜥ.n*, *wn.jn*), the conjunctive stands apart as the only one where the infinitive is not introduced by a preposition (*mtw⸗f sḏm*).[95] By analogy with the sequential *jw⸗f ḥr sḏm*, the conjunctive is sometimes found with an intrusive *ḥr*, and by analogy with the future III, since the conjunctive is mainly used in future contexts, it is sometimes found with the preposition *r*. It has not been noted so far that the presence of these two prepositions is remarkably circumscribed to two groups of texts: *ḥr* is found only in three texts, which all belong to the reign of Seti II and were copied perhaps by the same scribe in the area of Memphis: P. Orbiney (8 times),

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91   On *pḥwj*, see Polis & Winand (2015).

92   O. IFAO 388, vº 4; O. Gardiner 137, rº 5 (Hori); P. Cairo 58092, rº 7 (twice), rº 9; O. BM EA 5625, rº 8; O. DeM 10248, 8.

93   O. Berlin P. 10628,4; P. 10655,4; O. DeM 618,4.

94   The date of one document, O. DeM 618, cannot be properly ascertained, mostly due to its lacunose state of preservation, and the total absence of any personal name.

95   On the etymology of this construction, see Gardiner (1928), Winand (1992: 457–473).

P. Anastasi IV and V. The preposition *r* is found many times in P. BM EA 75019, from the reign of Ramses IX, and on O. DeM 684 (written 𓇌𓎡𓀁), which cannot be dated precisely (20th dynasty?). These two groups of texts, which cannot of course be connected, could once more signal an idiosyncrasy of a particular scribe.

4. CONCLUSION

Variation was the main topic of this study. In Egyptology, variation has long been studied as a manifestation of the passing of time (diachrony). The first attempts to reconstruct the history of ancient Egyptian were mainly — if not only — preoccupied by the chronological ordering of (mainly) morphological constructions (Sethe 1924). The study of regional variations (diatopy) was first limited to Coptic. In pre-Coptic Egyptian, the indigenous, non-alphabetic writings, seemed to definitely defy any attempt at discovering regional varieties. Edgerton (1951) was the first to move in this direction by suggesting possible links between two non-continuous stages of Egyptian (Old and Late Egyptian), by-passing so to say the intermediary stage (Middle Egyptian). But still more time elapsed before one took an interest in dialectal varieties in synchrony. In the last two decades, occasional remarks and short studies occasionally pointed to variations that were explained as regional differences.

The present paper tried to build a case for the existence of dialects in Late Egyptian. It did not investigate the question of the regional, dialectal provenance of Late Egyptian before its accession to a national status, following up Edgerton's initial hypothesis.[96] A sample of facts coming from different domains (phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon) has been provided. When considered together, they all point to the same direction: under the decorum that formatted the written production in ancient Egypt, there was some degree of liberty allowing some regional, non-standard varieties to show up. This suggests that dialects were in all probability a living reality in the speaking communities across the country (as hinted at by some rare meta-discourses of the Egyptians themselves).

In the last decades, variation has also been quite successfully studied in relation with deliberate choices made by the scribes of a particular literary genre or of a linguistic register. In Late Egyptian in particular, J. Černý followed by S. Groll and her school put a particular emphasis on the distinction between literary and non-literary Late Egyptian.

Finally, variation can also be understood as the peculiarities or idiosyncrasies of a small set of individuals in a larger community. This new avenue of research could not of course be explored till one has reached a correct understanding of the general principles governing the Late Egyptian linguistic system. The access to a large collection of texts through modern databases has now enabled scholars to reach (at least for certain stages of Egyptian) a quasi exhaustiveness, to quite easily check their hypotheses, and to substantiate their claims by producing some statistics. Sociolinguistics in Egyptology is nevertheless still making its first steps. The community of Deir el-Medineh offers a unique opportunity to consider (nearly) individual cases by moving beyond the level of the group taken as a whole entity. Everything else (time, location, genres) being equal, variations can be found. Although it still remains exceptional to match a text with the name of a scribe, one senses that variation can be accounted for by family ties, by differences in education or culture, or, more simply, by differences of generations living in the same period and area. One cannot but hope that further evidence will turn up to support the so-far still limited body of evidence.

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[96]   This is discussed in another paper devoted to the general question of dialects in pre-Coptic (Winand 2016).

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COLLECTION
ÆGYPTIACA LEODIENSIA

La collection *Ægyptiaca Leodiensia* — dirigée par Dimitri Laboury, Stéphane Polis et Jean Winand — a pour vocation de publier des travaux d'égyptologie dans les domaines les plus divers. Elle accueille en son sein des monographies ainsi que des volumes collectifs thématiques.

This volume represents the outcome of the conference "Deir el-Medina and the Theban Necropolis in Contact: Describing the interactions within and outside the community of workmen" held in Liège in 2014 (27-29 October). The goal of this conference was to encourage a wider perspective on Deir el-Medina, bringing together scholars from all egyptological fields and disciplines who are interested in studying the many types of interactions that the ancient community of Deir el-Medina developed both internally and at the broader (supra-)regional level.

The title of the volume, "Outside the box," refers to two important dimensions touched on by the papers in this volume. First, it points to the fact that a vast quantity of documents from Deir el-Medina and, more broadly, from the Theban Necropolis has been available for a long time to some restricted academic circles, but are now to be taken *outside the box*: this holds true not only for the publication of papyri and ostraca preserved in many collections across the world, but also for archival material describing the excavations at the site itself, and more broadly for the monuments that remain there still, but are not available to scholars or the general public. Second, most of the papers collected in this volume share a common feature, namely their attempt to think *outside the box*, using new theoretical frameworks, cross-disciplinary approaches, or inno-

vative technological solutions. Accordingly, "Outside the box," can be read both as a plea for making the fascinating material from Deir el-Medina more broadly available, and as a shout of admiration regarding the creativity and tireless inventiveness of scholars working on the sources stemming from this exceptional socio-cultural setting.

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