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ON THE SUBJECT OF THE SECOND TENSES IN EGYPTIAN AND COPTIC*

Sarah Israelit-Groll

In Memory of H.J. Polotsky

A *The Suffix Pronoun *tw* as a Possible Indicator Of the Borderline between the Noun and the Verb*

The suffix pronoun *tw* is most frequently encountered in texts dating from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. An examination of the manner of usage of this pronoun—in comparison with other suffix pronouns—has presented us with the following results:

- (1) The suffix pronoun *tw* cannot be employed with nouns in creating a genitival construction. In other words, the formation **pr.tw* “someone’s house” is non-existent.
- (2) The suffix pronoun *tw* cannot be employed with the infinitive. In other words, the formation **...hr sdm.tw* “...when he hears someone” is nonexistent.
- (3) The suffix pronoun *tw* cannot be employed with prepositions. In other words, **hr.tw* “because of someone” is non-existent.

In spite of the inability of the suffix pronoun *tw* to function within the abovementioned formations (1-3), it can represent the actor expression within the verbal system with no limitation whatsoever. This phenomenon is already apparent in the El-Amarna texts.

The suffix pronoun *tw* cannot represent the owner of a noun in the formation **pr.tw*, on the one hand, and can represent the actor expression in the verbal formation *sdm.tw* or in the conjugation base *iw.tw hr sdm* on the other. This difference in the function of *tw* points to a discrepancy of format between the noun and the verb. Thus, the term “nominal verb” does not indicate a total identity of format between a verb showing some nominal characteristics and the noun. We may therefore conclude that there are different levels of nominality, and more than one nominal category.

B *The Suffix Pronoun *tw* as an Indicator of Tense in the Geminated Emphatic Formations of the El-Amarna Period*

The formation *h‘‘.tw* is a conjugated verb. This verb is an intransitive weak *tertiaefirmae* verb, and is the type of verb in which the second radical may be geminated. In our opinion, the formation *h‘‘.tw* in the El-Amarna texts always expresses the general present tense. To us, this indicates a connection between the use of the suffix pronoun *tw* and the specific use of an intransitive verb in the emphatic formation.

Ex. (1) A. Sandman, *Texts from the Time of Akhenaten*, Brussels 1938, 59, 14

* See also: F. Junge, *Emphasis and Sentential Meaning in Middle Egyptian*, Wiesbaden, 1989.



$h''.tw n m3 nfrw.s$

"It is only in viewing her beauty that one is able to rejoice."

Ex. (2) *Ibid.*, 59, 14



$'nh.tw snb.tw n m3.k$

"It is only in viewing you that one is able to live in longevity and health."

Since the verb $h'i$ in (1) is an intransitive verb, it is not possible to grasp the morpheme tw in the formation $h''.tw$ as the identifying morpheme of the passive voice. Theoretically speaking, there is justification in classifying the tw in $h''.tw$ as the suffix pronoun indicating impersonality. In (2), $'nh.tw$ may not be immediately categorized as an emphatic formation identical with $h''.tw$ of (1), since it is a strong three-radical verb which does not show gemination. Even so, and basing ourselves upon syntactic and philological analogy, we would tend to assume that $'nh.tw$ and $h''.tw$ are on equal footing. Both are emphatic formations consisting of intransitive verbs, and therefore the tw appearing within them represents impersonality.

From all that has been stated above, it may be possible to construct a grammatical rule which states that all formations consisting of intransitive verbs and in which tw represents the actor expression indicate the general present tense¹ in El-Amarna.

C *The Identical Levels of Cohesion between the Morpheme tw of the Passive Voice and the Suffix Pronoun tw*

The development of the morpheme tw from its function as an indicator of the passive voice in the formation $sdm.tw.f$ of Middle Egyptian to its function as a suffix pronoun indicating impersonality is apparently due to the fact that the level of cohesion between the morpheme tw , marker of the passive voice, and the verb is similar to that between the suffix pronouns and the verb, and varies from that between the nominal unit indicating the actor expression and the verb. This fact may be examined in light of the following examples²:

Ex. (3) pWestcar II, 21-23



$tm.tw ms in.t hnw hr-m$

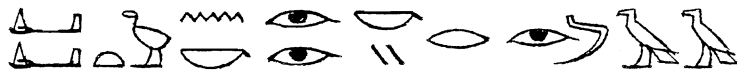
1 2 3 4 5 - position

"Why haven't the beer jugs been brought yet?"

- 1 H.J. Polotsky, "Egyptian Tenses," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 11. Jerusalem 1968, 75ff.
- 2 See also: H.J. Polotsky, "Les transpositions du verbe en égyptien classique," *IOS* 6 (1976), 1-50; S.I. Groll, *Non-Verbal Sentence Patterns in Late Egyptian*, Oxford 1967, 58-65.

In (3), the particle *ms* fills the second position after *tm.tw*, whereas the infinitive *in.t* fills the third position. The fact that the order of wording in this example is not **tm.tw in.t ms* or **tm ms tw in.t* bears testimony to the fact that the level of cohesion between *tw* and *tm* is greater than that between *tw* and *in.t*. In other words, *tw* displays a level of cohesion which is identical to that of the suffix pronouns.

Ex. (4) *Urk. IV 114, 10*



didi.tw n.k irty.ky r m33

1 2 3 4 - position

“It is in order that you should be able to see that your eyes are given to you.”

The fact that the dative *n.k* separates between *irty.ky* and *didi.tw* indicates that the level of cohesion between the noun forming a part of the actor expression of the passive form and the verb is not identical to the that of the morpheme *tw*. *tw* cannot be separated from *didi*, whereas *irty.ky* can. The morpheme *tw* displays a level of cohesion to the verb which is stronger than that of *irty.ky*. The level of cohesion between *tw* and the verb directly preceding it is similar to that of the suffix pronouns. Morphosyntactically and numerically speaking, both the suffix pronouns and *tw* fill the first position after a verb.

The fact that the level of cohesion between the verb and *tw* is similar to that between the verb and the suffix pronouns had the effect of causing *tw* to function as a suffix pronoun in almost every manner. This occurred in the process of expanding the suffix pronoun paradigm, coupled with grammatical analogy. The discrepancy of the function of *tw* with regard to the noun is possibly due to the fact that *tw* is the identifying morpheme of the passive formations. Because the passive formation is structurally a verbal category, and not a nominal one, the employment of *tw* as a suffix pronoun within the verbal system is in total capacity, whereas within the nominal system it is non-existent. It may be said, then, that during the el-Amarna period *tw* functions as a suffix pronoun in almost every sense with regard to the verb, but not so with regard to the noun, a fact due to its historical past as the passive marker of passive formations. From this it may be concluded that a synchronic discrepancy may have its roots in the historical source of a grammatical unit.

D *Different Levels of Nominality: The Second Tense is an Abstract Nominal Verb*

The subject of the different levels of nominality of the verb is closely linked with the subject of the emphatic forms (or the second tenses) in Coptic and Egyptian. In Coptic there are two verbal systems which are almost totally functionally identical.

FORM	FIRST TENSE	FORM	SECOND TENSE	TENSE INDICATION
First Present	ϣϣωτ̄	Second Present	εϣϣωτ̄	Present
First Future	ϣⲛⲁϣωτ̄	Second Future	εϣⲛⲁϣωτ̄	Immediate Future
First Perfect	ⲁϣϣωτ̄	Second Perfect	ⲛⲧⲁϣϣωτ̄	Past
First Habitude	ωⲁϣϣωτ̄	Second Habitude	εωⲁϣϣωτ̄	General Present

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During many years of research on the Coptic language, this grammatical fact remained unexplained. In 1944, H.J. Polotsky published the book *Études de syntaxe copte* in Cairo. In this volume, Polotsky defined the second tense system as a system of abstract nominal verbal formations which are employed as subjects of adverbial expressions which follow the second tense. For example:

Ex. (5) *Ruth* 1, 11

ΔΥΩ ΕΤΕΤΝΔΕΙ ΝΜΜΔΙ ΕΤΒΕΟΥ ΝΩΩΒ
 – 1 2 3 – position

If we number the different elements appearing in (5), we will find that the first position is taken up by the Second Future. The second position is filled up by the preposition ΝΜΜΔΙ and in the third position we find the formation ΕΤΒΕΟΥ ΝΩΩΒ.

The expression ΕΤΒΕΟΥ in (5) represents the adverbial expression which functions in the interrogative sense (“because of what?”) and is without doubt the logical predicate of the syntactic unit presented in (5). This example may be classified as consisting of an adverbial predicate following a second tense (in this case ΕΤΕΤΝΔΕΙ). Here, the second tense is an abstract nominal form of the verb and is to be understood in the following sense: “The fact that you are about to return to me is due to what?”

It may be said, then, that the grammatical relation between positions 1 and 2 in (5) and position 3 is identical to the grammatical relation between a noun and an adverb within the first present formation. The difference between them lies in the fact that within the first present formation an undefined noun necessitates the use of the ΟΥΝ of existence, whereas within the second tense system an undefined noun excludes the use of the ΟΥΝ of existence. This difference indicates a pattern of behaviour for the verbal noun which is not identical to the pattern of behaviour set by the noun. In spite of the fact that the emphatic formation is an undefined nominal formation, it cannot serve as a virtual relative clause to an undefined nominal antecedent.

Ex. (6) *Mt.* 26, 53

ΟΥΝ ΓΑΡ ΝΙΜ ΕΝΤΑΥΔΙ Ø-CHϥ ΕΥΝΔΩΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΩΝΤCHϥ
 1 2 3 4

“Because every seizer of a sword, it is by *the* sword that he will fall.”

ΕΥΝΔΩΕ ΕΒΟΛ (position 4) is the second future formation, and not the circumstantial first present serving as a virtual relative clause. To interpret it as such would provide no meaning to the text.

E The Particles Ν-ΔΝ as Dominant Instigating Factors in Coptic

The negation Ν...ΔΝ negates the nexus between the logical subject and the logical predicate within the second tense system. The formations negated by Ν-ΔΝ are the the First present and its satellites. Every sentence negated by Ν-ΔΝ is a negative sentence. For example:

Ex. (7) B. Layton, *The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi*. Harvard Dissertations in Religion 12, 1979, 22.

ΕΙΩΠΕ ΝΕΚΩΟΟΠ ΝΓΑΡ ΕΝ ΨΝ CΑΡΞ

“It is not only in physical form that you exist.”

In this verse, the adverbial expression “in physical form” is negated, whereas the second tense verb ΕΚΩΟΟΠ remains affirmative. In (7) no ΠΕ appears. This indicates that the verbal formation is not the imperfect, but rather the second present. It is a probability, then, that the ΠΕ appearing with the imperfect is a marker which differentiates between emphatic formations and non-emphatic formations where their outward appearance seems to be the same.

There are certain types of interrogative sentences which cannot be negated because they are semantically and logically affirmative. These sentences do not form a part of the split sentence system, and form a new and independent system.

First model:

Ex. (8) *Ruth* 1, 11

ΔΥΩ ΕΤΕΤΝΔΕΙ ΝΜΜΔΙ ΕΤΒΕΟΥ ΝΩΩΒ

“The fact that you are about to return with me is due to what?”

The syntactic order in this sentence is: 1 – The Second Future form. 2 – The predicative adverbial expression “due to what?”

Second model:

Ex. (9) *Ruth* 1, 21

ΔΥΩ ΕΤΒΕΟΥ ΕΤΕΤΝΔΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟΙ ΔΕ ΝΟΕΜΙΝ

“And it is due to what that you call me Naomi?”

Here the expression “due to what” is placed before the verb, and the verb is in the Second Future.

Third model:

Ex. (10) W. Till, *Koptische Grammatik*, Leipzig 1966, 26

ΔΥΩ ΕΤΒΕΟΥ ΚΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟΥ ΔΕ ΑΠΑ

Interrogative adverb First Present

“And it is due to what that you call me father?”

The syntactic order in (10) is: 1 – “it is due to what?” 2 – First tense-First Present.

Fourth model:

Ex. (11) Layton, *op. cit.*, 47,4

ΕΤΒΕΕΥ ΝΚΝΔΔΙ ΕΝ ΝΤCΑΡΞ ΕΚΩΔΝ ΒΩΚ ΔΩΡΗΙ ΔΠΑΙΩΝ

Interrogative adverb negated First Future

“It is due to what that you will not take the physical form when you go to eternity?”

F Interrogative Sentences are Basically Affirmative Sentences

Interrogative sentences in which the interrogative particle is $\epsilon\tau\beta\epsilon\omicron\Upsilon$ or, to be more precise, sentences which are parallel to them—which until the development of Coptic belonged to the system of the second tenses since they are sentences in which the predicate is an adverbial expression which represents the polemic aspect and therefore the logical predicate—began to be excluded from the system of the second tenses in Coptic. As we have seen, in Coptic $\epsilon\tau\beta\epsilon\omicron\Upsilon$ may appear after a second tense according to the traditional model of interrogative sentences dating from Old Egyptian to Demotic. However, $\epsilon\tau\beta\epsilon\omicron\Upsilon$ may also appear in Coptic before all verbal forms, on condition that they are main and initial. The reason, in our opinion, lies in the fact that this type of interrogative sentence cannot by its very essence be negated by $\bar{N}-\lambda N$ since $\bar{N}-\lambda N$ negates the predicate. The inability of these sentences to be negated because of their affirmative nature makes them incompatible with the category of sentences which we term “the $\bar{N}-\lambda N$ Verbal System.” Therefore, these sentences found their way out of the $\bar{N}-\lambda N$ model. From all that has been stated above, it is apparent that the dominant classifying factor of the second tenses is $\bar{N}-\lambda N$. Models which cannot be included in the $\bar{N}-\lambda N$ system are expelled from the second tense system and it is in this manner that new systems with new models are created. For example, the dominant principle in the $\epsilon\tau\beta\epsilon\omicron\Upsilon$ interrogative sentence is the total freedom in the emplacement of the adverbial predicate and the verbal formation adjoined to it.

G Tense Expression in the Second Tenses in Middle and Ramesside Egyptian
In Coptic we find a special second tense for almost every tense. In Middle and Ramesside Egyptian, however, tense expression is less marked. In Middle Egyptian we encounter two typical forms: 1-The geminated conjugated forms. 2-The initial *sdm.n.f* form also typified by its inability to follow the morpheme *iw*.

In Non-Literary Ramesside Egyptian we also find two basic forms representing the emphatic form: 1-The analytical form³. 2-The synthetic form⁴. The synthetic form usually expresses the future tense. In addition to this, both in Middle and Ramesside Egyptian there are certain words which may appear either before or after the emphatic form, and they aid in identifying the tense of this form. In spite of this, the tense of the emphatic form in Ramesside Egyptian is often based on a philological analysis of the context.

H Particles Appearing before the Second Tenses which Indicate Tense

The expression *is bn*, which introduces rhetorical questions when preceding the form *i.iri.f sdm* in Non-Literary Ramesside, almost always indicates the past tense.

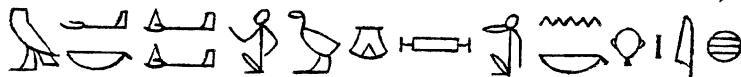
Ex. (12) pAnas. IX, 5 (in A.M. Bakir, *Egyptian Epistolography*, Cairo 1970).

3 See: J. Černý - S.I. Groll, *A Late Egyptian Grammar*, Rome 1984, Ex. 1056.
4 *Ibid.*, Exx. 1071, 1074.

hr ir p3y.k h3b n.i r dd bw iri.k hty is bn i.iri.i in.t n3 ihw 3bd 2 r n3 iw bw ir.t.k hn.w.w
 “In reference to your letter to me saying: ‘You are unable to plan things in advance,’ was it not two months ago, before you gave instructions, that I myself gathered the herd?”

Just as *is bn* may indicate the tense of the emphatic form following it, so may the particle *mk* occasionally serve as an indicator of the aspect and tense of obligation, viability, and habit both in Middle and Ramesside Egyptian.

Ex. (13) Hekanakht 1, vs. 15 (in T.G.H. James, *The Hekanakhte Papers and Other Early Middle Kingdom Documents*, New York 1962)



mk dd.i wg n.k hr ih

“Lo, it is due to what that I must make it unpleasant for you?”

In this example, the tense is the general future which expresses the semantic meaning of an obligatory action.

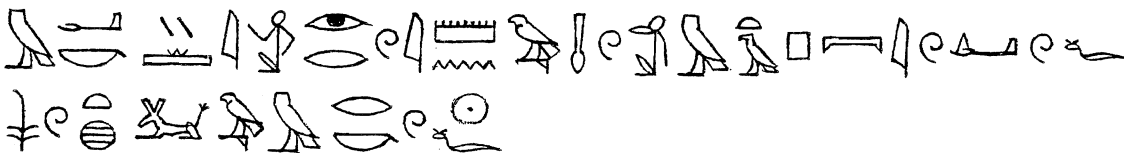
Ex. (14) *Ibid.*, Cairo 91061, 9-10



mk dd.k ib.k hft hrw nfr

“Lo, it is in accordance with the norms of a day of making love that you should guide your emotional life.”

Ex. (15) Wenamon 2, 19

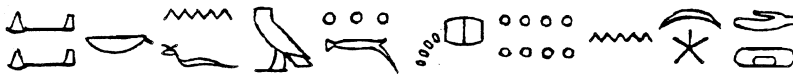


mk i.iri imn hrw m t3 pt iw di.f sth m rk.f

“Lo, it is only after Seth succeeds in urging Seth into his full strength that Amon raises his voice in the heavens.”

This passage describes the cooperation between Amon as the god of thunder and Seth as the god of lightning in the creation of storms. This cooperation finds expression in several stages. The god Amon urges Seth, the god of lightning into full force and it is only after the lightning appears, that Amon appears on the scene as the god of thunder. Seth’s action is represented by *iw di.f*, which usually indicates the pluperfect tense. Here, however, the particle *mk* serves as an indicator of aspect and tense since it is obvious that the entire construction indicates the general present and not the pluperfect tense. *mk* in this example places the tense of the sentence following it in the general present. In order to clarify this point, we have added the following example:

Ex. (16) Hekanakhte 1, rt. 17



(*mk=∅*) *didi.k n.f mh̄w hk3t 8 n-∅-3bd*

“It is monthly that you will be obliged to give him eight *hk3t* of barley.”

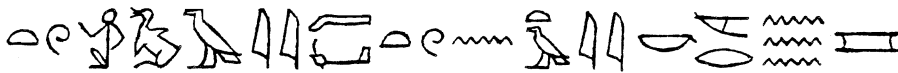
The adverbial expression “monthly” indicates a habitual and obligatory action, and therefore *mk* does not appear here. In other words, *n-∅-3bd* is an expression which can replace *mk*⁵. Thus, when *mk* is followed by emphatic formations, it is a specifier of time indication.

I Nouns which Can Function as Adverbs without Being Placed After Prepositions

The subject of the second tenses is also related to the classification of constructions represented by the emphatic form itself. It may be said that in Ramesside Egyptian there were two systems of adverbial expressions. In order to clarify this division, I shall attempt to define the phenomenon of omission of prepositions, outside the verbal system, in Wenamon.

(a) *Omission of the Preposition m (sometimes written as n) in the Sense of Being in a Place - Outside the Verbal System.* Compare (16) with (17):

Ex. (17) Wenamon 1, 13



tw.i t3y.tw n t3y.k-mr

“I was robbed on your beach.”

Ex. (18) Wenamon 1, 21-22

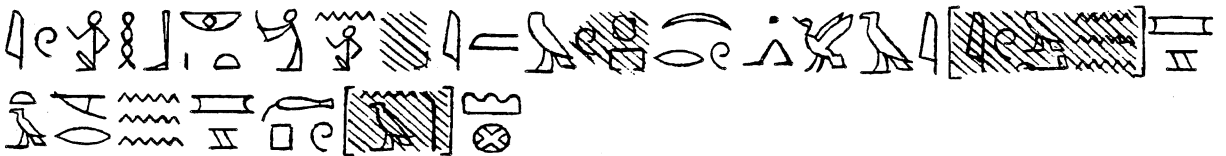


iw.i (hr) ir.t ∅-hrw 9 iw.i mni.tw (n=∅) t3y.f-mr

“And I spent nine days mooring in his harbor.”

In (18) the preposition *n* is omitted before *mr*, whereas in (17) it is apparent. Compare (19) with (20):

Ex. (19) Wenamon 3, 11



5 See also: K. Baer, “An Eleventh Dynasty Farmer’s Letters to his Family,” *JAOS* 83 (1963), 10; J. Johnson, “The Use of the Particle *mk* in Middle Kingdom Letters,” *Festschrift Westendorf*, Göttingen 1984, 72-85; M. Lichtheim, “On the Iterative Use of the Particle *mk*,” *JNES* 30 (1971), 70; M. Collier, “The Circumstantial *sdm(f)/sdm.n(f)* as Verbal Verb-Forms in Middle Egyptian,” *JEA* 76 (1990), 73-85.

iw.i (hr) hb n.i...imw (hr) sp.t p3-ym (m) t3-mr (n) kpny

“I celebrated...(in) a tent (on) the sea shore (on) the bank (of) Byblos.”

Ex. (20) Wenamon 1, 37



iw.i (hr) ir.t 29 hrw n t3y.f-mr

“I spent twenty nine days upon his bank.”

In (19) the preposition *m* is omitted before *t3-mr*, whereas in (20) the preposition *n* appears before *t3y.f-mr*. Also compare (19) with (21):

Ex. (21) Wenamon 1, 47-48



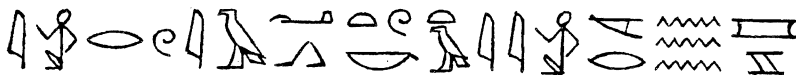
iw p3-ntr htp m p3-imw nty sw im.f (hr) sp.t p3-ym

“When the god rested in the tent in which he was (on) the sea shore.”

In (19) the preposition *m* is omitted before *imw*, whereas in (21) the preposition *m* appears before *p3-imw*.

(b) *Omission of the Preposition m in the Sense of “from.”*

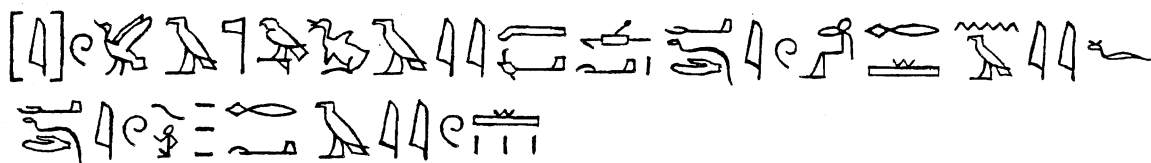
Ex. (22) Wenamon 1, 37-38



i.rwi tw.k (m) t3y.i-mr

“Remove yourself from my beach.”

Ex. (23) Wenamon 1, 38-39



iw p3-ntr hr t3y w' 'dd '3 (m) n3y.f-'ddw '3i.w

“And the god caught an elder youth (from amongst) the elder youths.”

(c) *Omission of the Preposition m Forming a Part of the Predicate*

Ex. (24) Wenamon 1, 39



iw.f hr dt.f (m) h3w

“And he placed himself as a crazy man.”

(d) *Omission of the n of the Dative*

Ex. (25) Wenamon 1, 38

*hr ir sw (hr) wdn (n) n3y.f-ntrw*

"When he sacrificed (to) his gods."

(e) *Omission of the Preposition Indicating Direction*

Ex. (26) Wenamon 2, 44

*iw.w (hr) ith.w (r) sp.t ym*

"They dragged them (to) the seashore."

(f) *Omission of Prepositions in Compound Prepositions*

1. (r)-k3i-n.f

Ex. (27) Wenamon 1, 21

*i.iri nh3y hrw dy (r) k3i n.i*

"Spend a few days here, with me." (See: Wenamon 1, 22; 2, 45; 2, 47)

2. (r)- š3'-(r)

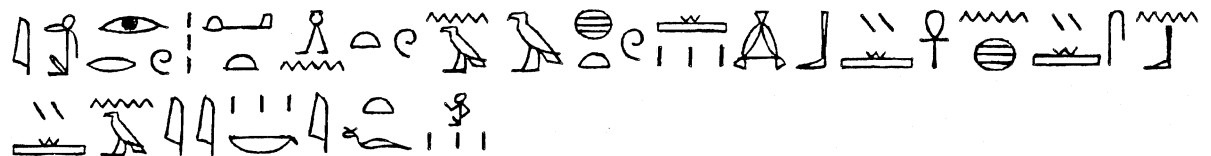
Ex. (28) Wenamon 1, 43

*smn tw (r) š3' (r) dw3*

"Stay until morning."

In view of the abovementioned examples, it may be said that in Ramesside Egyptian there were two systems of adverbial expressions. In the first system, the prepositions form a mandatory base in adverbial formations composed of a preposition directly followed by a noun. In the second system, the adverb is composed solely of a noun without a preposition. Both systems are identical in terms of function. From Wenamon we learn that the adverbial complement following emphatic forms can appear as a noun without a preposition. For example:

Ex. (29) Wenamon 2, 30



i.ir.w dt ini.tw n3-3ht (r=Ø) db3 'nh snb n3y.k it.w

“It is in return for the life and health of your fathers that they sent payment.”

Ex. (30) Wenamon 2, 52



i.ir.w mwt (m=Ø) st.w

“And it is precisely in their place that they died.”

st.w and *db3* – nouns not preceded by prepositions – can also serve as predicative adverbs within the system of the second tenses as early as Ramesside Egyptian.