Hommages à Fayza Haikal

Extrait

INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE
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Verbal Modality in Egyptian and Elsewhere

The topic of this paper are verbal expressions implying volition, obligation, permission, possibility, etc. We will not discuss epistemic modalities, that is those that concern the degree of certainty attributed to the event reported (cf. may in he may be coming by now).

Languages have, in the main, three different means to express this.

1. **Modal verb forms**; cf. the conjunctive and optative moods of the Latin verb.

2. **Modal auxiliary verbs**, like will, shall, must, can, may, to want, (to) need, to be (to), to have (to), etc., and in other languages- also non-verbal auxiliary elements.

3. **Rendering modality by means of adverbial expressions**, as in possibly, hopefully, of necessity, etc. (This latter phenomenon will not be discussed here.)

### 1. MODAL VERB FORMS

Modal verb forms quite often express partly a wish, partly an obligation. Closer inspection shows that the meaning typically depends on the grammatical person: if the form is the first person the meaning is volitive, whereas it is jussive for the second and third persons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old/Middle Egyptian. Subjunctive</th>
<th>Late Egyptian. Future</th>
<th>Coptic. Optative</th>
<th>Mod. Arabic. Imperfect without b(1)-</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sc</td>
<td>ḏḏ-ḏ</td>
<td>ḫw-ḏ ṭ ḏ</td>
<td>ẹ̀ẹ̀xọ̀</td>
<td>ḥq̣ḷ</td>
<td>I want to say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sm</td>
<td>ḏḏ-k</td>
<td>ḫw-k ṭ ḏ</td>
<td>ẹ̀ẹ̀xọ̀</td>
<td>ṭiq̣ḷ</td>
<td>You are to say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sf</td>
<td>ḏḏ-𝑡</td>
<td>ḫw-t ṭ ḏ</td>
<td>ẹ̀ẹ̀xọ̀</td>
<td>ṭiq̣ḷ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sm</td>
<td>ḏḏ-f</td>
<td>ḫw-f ṭ ḏ</td>
<td>ẹ̀ẹ̀xọ̀</td>
<td>yiq̣ḷ</td>
<td>He/she is to say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sf</td>
<td>ḏḏ-s</td>
<td>ḫw-s ṭ ḏ</td>
<td>ẹ̀ẹ̀xọ̀</td>
<td>yiq̣ḷ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See footnotes p. 2.
The explanation of this seeming inequity is that these forms are expressions of the will of the speaker. If the form is first person (speaker and agent are identical) the meaning is, "I want to...". If, however, the form is second or third person (speaker and agent are not identical) the meaning "I want you/him/her to" results in a jussive meaning: "you are to...", "he/she is to...".

This is true for statements. In questions, however, the situation is different. In this case it is the wish of the addressed that determines the meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old/Middle Egyptian. Subjunctive</th>
<th>Late Egyptian. Future</th>
<th>Modern Arabic. Imperfect without b(i).</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sc</td>
<td>jn dd+i</td>
<td>n jw=j r dd</td>
<td>(hal) 'aqul?</td>
<td>Am I to say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sm</td>
<td>jn dd+k</td>
<td>n jw=k r dd</td>
<td>(hal) tiqül?</td>
<td>Do you want to say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sf</td>
<td>jn dd+i</td>
<td>n jw=t r dd</td>
<td>(hal) tiqül?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sm</td>
<td>jn dd+j</td>
<td>n jw=j r dd</td>
<td>(hal) tiqül?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sf</td>
<td>jn dd+j</td>
<td>n jw=s r dd</td>
<td>(hal) tiqül?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possibility ("can"), permission ("may"), but also obligation ("must") may be expressed by the Middle Egyptian forms of the Aorist tense, viz. jw=sf sdm=sf (independent, sequential, or circumstantial), circumstantial sdm=sf, imperfective sdm=sf (nouns), imperfective participle and relative form (attributive clauses)\(^5\), and the contingent hr forms and constructions, viz. sdm/hr=, hr sf sdm=sf, and hr sdm=sf. Of the negative constructions, n sdm*n sf "he cannot hear" is a very typical case in question. But also the forms of the prospective tense may have potential connotation, as in ht nbt nfrt 'nhtj ntr jm "all kinds of god things on which a god may live".

The construction mk wj r sdm can probably have the meaning "I have to", or "I shall have to"; cf. mk wj r nhm 'j=k, shtj, hr wnm=j jtr-j; mk sw r hbt hr kn=, "Now I have to (?) seize your donkey, peasant, for eating my barley. It will have to tread out grain for its offense!" (Peasant B 1, 11).

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1 The form in question is most often what J.P. Allen (The Inflection of the Verb in the Pyramid Texts, BIAeg 2, Malibu, 1984) terms the "subjunctive sdm=sf" (as different from the "prospective sdm=sf") whereas P. Vernus (Future at Issue, YES 4, New Haven, 1990) calls the first "prospective sdm=sf" and the second "prospective sdmw=sf". From the Old Kingdom on already, the two forms have a tendency to merge (J.P. ALLEN, op. cit., §365). According to P. Vernus (op. cit., p. 15-16; p. 30-31) the prospective sdm=sf (i.e., his "prospective sdmw=sf") expresses originally an objective future, but assumes a modal colouring later. Also cf. L. DEFUYDT, "A History of Research on the Prospective Sdm=sf Forms in Middle Egyptian", JARCE 30, 1993, p. 11.

2 Cf. P. VERNUS, op. cit., p. 20-24. Note that all first person examples given can be conceived as meaning "I want to (...)".


As for Coptic, the optative ἔγε-σωτὶ (“third future”) has already been mentioned. Another form of frequent modal colouring is the aorist, ὥλῃ-σωτὶ, negative μὴ-σωτὶ. This is typically the case in non-literary texts: ἐπιάν ἐπεγωγῶς ἰαυχιτωῦ, “At the moment they want they shall be removed”; ἰνακίνησ εὐαίλος ἐ-ΝΝ, “The things which I will do/have to do for NN.”; μαίαυνο νάκ, “I will not sow them for you!”; ἔνεπ ἰαυχαὶ ἐλλα, “The judgement which they shall give us”; ἰαυχαὶ ηναγκα ὀταταρ ὀπετρὰς, “It shall be given to my hands and I shall give it him who is in need”; ἱακεςαὶ ὑψαλκ(ηπίον) ἰενω ἰμε, “You shall inscribe these amulets in genuine honey”.

2. MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS

If volition, obligation, permission, possibility, etc. is to be expressed explicitly language makes use of auxiliaries of the respective meaning: I want to say, I must say, I may say, I can say, etc. Languages show a lot of variation in constructions of such connotations. Cf. English I want you to tell me; French, je veux que tu me dises; Modern Arabic ‘ana ‘ayzak tiqul-li (fem. speaker, ‘ana ‘ayzak; fem. addressee, ‘ana ‘ayzik tiquli-li / ‘ayzāk-ītqu-li).

The auxiliary verb may be in a finite form, as above, I want, je veux, I can, I must, I may, etc., or impersonal: il faut que tu me dises; lazīm tiquli-li, especially as an expression of obligation or possibility. However, such an impersonal form may be expanded by a phrase that mentions the person involved: il me faut dire; lazīm-(t)-aqūl. In this way these constructions become secondarily personalized.

Similarly, we may distinguish between constructions where the main verb is in a finite form (as dīses in que tu me dīses, or tiqul in tiquli-li), and constructions with the main verb in an infinite form (such as to tell, or dire in je veux dire). In English, a few auxiliary verbs take the mere infinitive, viz. can, may, must, will, shall, do; partly dare, need: most of them defective verbs that do not have an infinitive themselves and they are all inflected in a peculiar conjugation: no -s in third person singular. The other auxiliaries take the infinitive with to: I want to, I wish to, I have to, I am obliged to, etc. In Aramaic and Post-biblical Hebrew the preposition lā, equivalent of English to, has even become part of the infinitive: Hebrew likōb, infinitive of kāb “to read”.

7 Ibid., p. 69, ex. 81.
8 Ibid., p. 72, ex. 91.
9 Ibid., p. 72, ex. 92.
10 Ibid., p. 73, ex. 94.
11 Ibid., p. 81, ex. 114.
12 Perhaps ἔρνιο was also used for other substances; also in Arabic, ‘asal may signify, in addition to “honey”, the sweet substance of the dates and other vegetal substances; “black honey” is the term for “treacle”, “molasses”.
13 It is an ancient perfect form (though referring mostly to the present tense); compare he will/shall, etc. with he went, he called, etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary in impersonal form:</th>
<th>il faut que tu me dise</th>
<th>il faut dire (an impersonal expression)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Id., secondarily personalized:</td>
<td>lazîmn(l)-aqûl, &quot;I have to say&quot;</td>
<td>il me faut dire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary in personal form:</td>
<td>je veux que tu me dise (the agent is not identical with the subject of the auxiliary verb)</td>
<td>I must say; I have to say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In expressions of volition there may be a distinction between utterances that involve one person only, such as I want to say, 'ana 'ayız aqûl, and those in which the agent of the main verb is different from the person to which the modal expression refers: I want you to say, 'ana 'ayzak tiqûl. French and German would have a different construction in either case: je veux dire, but je veux que tu dise; ich will sagen, but ich will dass du sagst. In Arabic, the main verb is in a subordinating construction; we may call this an analytic type of expression. French, German etc. are economic in not employing a subordinating construction unless it is inevitable: an economic type of expression. Latin and English have means to avoid a subordinating construction as they can embed the main verb and its agent in the accusative with infinitive pattern.

2.1. The analytic type

The main verb is in all cases in a finite subordinating form or construction, no matter whether it is coreferential ("identical") with the subject of the auxiliary ('ana 'ayız-arûh, "I want to go") or not ('ana 'ayz-u-yîrûh, "I want him to go"). It is a matter of the morphology and morpho-syntax of the individual language whether the subordinating construction consists of a verb form only (such as arûh, yirûh) or employs a conjunction "that" (as 'an in literary Arabic 'urîdu 'an(nahû) yaq̱adabahu). This type is found in Arabic and many other Near Eastern languages, like Turkish, Modern Persian (in distinction to Old Persian), and it has spread to South-Eastern Europe: Modern Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian, Albanian, Serbo-Croatian, and even the Hungarian vernacular of Transylvania (a phenomenon of the "Balkan Languages").

2.2. The economic type

In general, European languages save the effort of using a finite form for the embedded main verb if its agent is expressly mentioned in the auxiliary construction: je veux aller, voglio andare, ich will gehen, etc. If, however, the agent of the main verb is "new" a
2.3. The elegant type

The accusative with infinitive, a characteristic Latin construction, is a very versatile and elegant means for embedding a verbal phrase in constructions of various transitive verbs. The agent of the embedded phrase is made the object of the transitive (auxiliary) verb, the (main) verb following in the form of the infinitive. With verbs of perception (to see, to hear, etc.) this construction is found in other languages too, such as *eum ire video, je le vox aller, ich sehe ihn gehen; eum canere audio, je l'écoute chanter, ich höre ihn singen.* English can also use it for verbs of knowing, finding, volition, etc. Therefore English has *I want him to go* where most other languages have to use a *that* construction.

The question arises: Of what type is Egyptian? At any rate, Egyptian makes use of modal verb forms as much as possible and takes to modal auxiliary verbs (or constructions) as a last resort only. Also, the use of auxiliary verbs or constructions increases in the course of time: it is much more frequent in Coptic than in Middle Egyptian. In its use of modal auxiliary constructions Egyptian is clearly of the "economic type": the main verb is in the infinitive, wherever possible. If not, Old and Middle Egyptian employ the prospective *sdm: f* (or, as attested in some cases, the subjunctive *sdm:f*) as a finite substantival form, whereas Coptic uses for the same function the causative infinitive, *t̷pe4-cōto4*, which is the *that* form of Coptic.

2.4. 'To want to', 'to wish to' etc.

As we have seen, there may be a distinction between utterances that involve one person only (this will be signalled by A), and those in which the agent of the main verb is different from the person to which the modal expression refers (B).

*šb* "to wish" as an auxiliary verb: + infinitive (A): *mj šbb s m32 pr-sn*, "the way someone wants to see his house (again)" (Lebensm. 141); *šbn hml t jnt mnw n jtsf jmn m ḫpt-sw.t*, "My majesty wanted to make a monument for his father Amun in Karnak" (Urk. IV, 834).

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14 Maī jānā cāhātā hū, "I want to come (jānā)", but maī cāhātā hū ki vah jāc, "I want him to come" (lit. "that he comes", *ki vah jāc*); quoted from R. Snell, S. Weightman, *Hindi*, Kent, 1989, p. 112.

15 Cf. Modern Hebrew *ani voša* (fem.: *voša*) *lačékhet*, "I want to go".
"Can", "to be able to"

Late Egyptian ρή, "to know" + infinitive; Coptic ω- + infinitive: jyeterangan 2x pa-nity nḥ ǰusf (r) rḥ jusf n.w, "I will do, I will do whatever I might be able to do for them" (LRL 14, 16); bn tsw-j ḥr ḫr pr r bl, "I am unable to go out" ( Letters to the Dead, pl. VIII = pLeiden 371, v° 22). ωατ-ω p 2δερ, "he can work".

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16 Wb I, 60, 12; sim. Akkadian lābašū, see W. Von Soden, Grundriss der Akkadische Grammatik, AnOr 33, Rome, 1952, §160c.
20 Var. müh-: subjunctive ṣdm-k.
23 B. Layton, op. cit., § 171 (d).
25 W.E. Crum, p. 541b.
Coptic ἐ�能, "to find power" (or ἤ-�能, "to be able to find power") ἐ- infinitive, "to be able to".

Negative: n ὅμ. ὧ- + infinitive, "he cannot ...": n ὅμ. ὧ- dgg f n ὁ-ηราวεῖν, "he is not able to glance on his two shoulders" (pSmith 1, 25).

Coptic εἰμε, "to know" (a synonym of ῥῆ) ἐ- + infinitive, "to be able to".

Negative: μὴ-τε- + infinitive, "he cannot ...": μὴτε-κατε τ년-γγυχ, "his soul cannot be saved" (Pistis Sophia 270, 28); μὴτε-ἀλλα ἱμυστηρίαν κω ἤ.ActionBar, "No mystery can forgive him" (ibid., 269, 2).

2.5.1. Coptic impersonal auxiliaries

ἐξετί ἐ- + infinitive, "it is permitted, possible, proper to..."; neg. ὄγκ ἐξετί: ἐξεῖ ἡ ἐκεβατον ἐπετάνανον, "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good?" (Mark 3,4).

B ὁγον ῥή- + ἐ-, A ὁγ-ῥητ- ἧ- + infinitive, "it is possible to", "it can be"; neg. B ὅμον ῥή- + ἐ-, A ὅμ-ῥητ- ἧ-: A ἀγ-ΜΝ ῥήτ- ἧ- καβατον, "There was no possibility to have sabbath" (2 Macc. 6, 6).

2.5.2. Dto., secondarily personalized

้อย-ἈΘΜ ἐ-/ ἡμο- actor ἐ- + infinitive (lit. "there is power in"); neg. ἡμο-ϹΘΜ, etc.

Ὀγων ρή- can be personalized in a similar way, viz. by means of ἡμο-, "in him": Θογων ρή- ἡμοι εἰς, "I am unable to go" (S ἡν-ναν ἐκκ ἂν); personalized by means of the causative infinitive: Θογων ρή- ... ἐρημηθα, "it is ... possible that we take..."

2.6. "Must", "have to", "be forced to"

Coptic ἔν-, ἕν-, absolute form ἔν(ή) ἐ-36: ζηλας ἕνας ἔνιῃ ἐνομι, "Elijah will have to come first" (Mark 9,11). It may derive from the prenominal state of ἔνομι, "to bring forth", or rather from its etymon, ἄντε, ἄντε, "to cause to happen"; thus, ἐνε"Elijah will cause his coming to happen first" (?).

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26 B. Layton, op. cit., §94 (b).
29 K. Sethe, "μὴτε-κατε, et kann nicht hören", ZÄS 57, 1922, p. 138. W. Westendorf, op. cit., p. 93, s.v. μὴ-; cf. W.E. Crum, p. 167b. It is remarkable that "he has not to (...)" is probably also the original meaning of μὴ-τε-.
30 K. Sethe, op. cit.
31 B. Layton, op. cit., §467.
32 After B. Layton, op. cit., § 392.
34 B. Layton, op. cit., §394 (a).
35 All examples after W.E. Crum, p. 305b.
36 B. Layton, op. cit., §184 (d).
37 W.E. Crum, p. 778 a-b.
Coptic impersonal auxiliaries (all non-verbal)

Sf. B. F 2ω+, "necessity" (< ἴτι "obligation", "taxes"): 2ω+ (πε) + conjunctive: B 2ω+ περεχεμ βοι τομογ, "it is necessary that he take taste of death"; Sf 2ω+ πε ντεογαν πανα, "one (fem.) must please him"; B 2ω+ έρο ντεογον, "it is necessary for you (fem.) that you die"; B 2ω+ (πε) + infinitive: 2ω+ έρογ πε εερ κολαιν ομομο, "it is necessary for him to punish him".38

ἈΝΑΓΚΗ ɛ- + causative infinitive, "has to, of necessity": ἈΝΑΓΚΗ ετρεπνογ ἠ, "(Where there is a testament,) the death (of the testator) must come, by necessity" (Heb 9,16).

2ďες (< ἴτι șt, "it is law, or custom") ɛ- + causative infinitive (personalization at the main verb!), "it is necessary to...", "must": 2ďες ετερετωγογ εκοα ἐν πεκνηογογ τ, "It is necessary for Him to rise from the dead" (John 20,9)40.

(ε)ωγε ɛ- + infinitive, mostly causative infinitive, "it is right, fitting, necessary to...": άγε ɛν ... ετρε ναγ ɛονε βουε ντεινε, "This ... should not be so" (lit. "...happen this way") (James 3,10).42

Prepositional phrase: c-ερογ ɛ- + infinitive "it is obligatory for him"43 — an isogloss with Semitic; cf. classical Arabic ʿala'yhi 'an ʿa'mala ḥāda, "He has to do this"; cερογ ερ πνομος τηρ, "it is obligatory for him to keep the whole law" (Gal 5,3).44

38 All quoted from ibid., p. 722b.
39 B. Layton, op. cit., §487.
40 After B. Layton, op. cit., §392.
41 Ibid., §488.
42 After B. Layton, op. cit., §395.
43 Ibid., §486.
44 After B. Layton, op. cit., §392.