Predicate-centered focus in Coptic:
A synchronic lay of the land and a diachronic puzzle
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1. Introduction

For many languages, matters of information structure are among the last topics to be treated in grammatical descriptions, and in some cases, little information about, e.g., topic and focus is to be found. The same cannot be said about Ancient Egyptian, especially its latest stage, Coptic.[1] Due to the particular history of Egyptian-Coptic linguistics, information structure has been discussed in great detail – and at times, debated with some heat – for most phases of the language.

In the context of the Berlin project (Güldemann and Fiedler 2010), the study of information structure in Coptic has particular advantages and disadvantages. First the disadvantages. Coptic is a dead language, and its corpus cannot be extended by fieldwork with speakers. Linguists' intuitions about nuances of meaning are often subjective and open to argument. Finally, we know next to nothing about the kind of prosodic structures that often play a crucial role in information structure. However, there are also advantages and particular points of interest. For one thing, Coptic is definitely an African language, from a geographical point of view, and is known to have been in contact with several other African languages, e.g., Old Nubian, and to have influenced both the Greek and Arabic spoken and written in Egypt. Coptic also shares non-inherited areal features with other languages of north-east Africa, including the presence of converbs and the 'no case before the verb, obligatory case after the verb' feature discussed by König (2008, 2009).

More importantly, Coptic is documented in a vast text corpus, with multiple genres, translated and untranslated texts, both literary and non-literary, and in numerous literary dialects and local varieties. Furthermore, Egyptian-Coptic has an actual attested diachrony of some four thousand years, so hypotheses about the role of language change in explaining the distribution of language structures can be evaluated against actual documentation, allowing of course for the contingencies of preservation and the problems inherent to the study of change based on a corpus or written language.

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[1] For an overview of Egyptian-Coptic, see Grossman & Richter (2014+). Briefly: Coptic is the latest stage of the Ancient Egyptian (Afroasiatic) language, whose main stages are generally called, in chronological order, Old Egyptian, Middle Egyptian, Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic. Coptic is attested in a dozen or so literary dialects, some of which are referred to here: Sahidic, Bohairic, Fayyumic, Mesokemic, Akhmimic, and Lycopolitan. Glosses are in accordance with the Leipzig Glossing Rules (http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php), and abbreviations are standard except for the following: ADD – additive focus marker, ANT – anterior, AOR – aorist, APUD – apudlocative, CIRC – circumstantial, CONJ – conjunctive, CONTR – contrast particle, EXIST – existential marker, JUSS – jussive, MOD – modifier marker, PRES – presentative marker, PSTR – posterior, RQM – rhetorical question marker. Examples are transliterated rather than given in phonological representations; the transliteration is according to the Leipzig-Jerusalem proposal (Grossman & Haspelmath 2014).

The aim of the present talk is to provide **a descriptive lay of the land for predicate focus in Coptic**, **in order to provide useful data for the Berlin project**. As such, the data presented here are framed in the terms and concepts of descriptive linguistics, in as theory-neutral a way as possible, in order to make the data maximally accessible.

The paper is structured as follows:
1. An overview of Coptic and brief description of Coptic clause structure, highlighting verbal clauses (§2).
2. The main constructions associated with verb focus (§3).
3. A brief sketch of the diachrony the various constructions (§4).
4. A diachronic puzzle found in the later stages of the language (§5).

The term 'focus,' as used here, is used in a broad sense, taking Dik's (1997) definition as a point of departure: 'that information which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by S[peaker] to be the most essential for A[ddressee] to integrate into his pragmatic information.' While this definition suffers from vagueness, it is compatible with Common Ground-based views, and overlaps to an extent with perspectives that take focus to deal essentially with 'the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions' (Rooth 1992, Krifka and Musan 2012). In practical terms, 'focus' will usually be taken here in Lambrecht's definition: 'That component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the pragmatic assertion differs from the presupposition' (2001: 474). However, the point of this talk is not to evaluate different theories of focus, but rather to provide data for the Berlin project, so I will happily leave it to the audience to see how different theories might deal with the data presented here in different ways.

Furthermore, I adopt here the framework used by the Berlin project, which distinguishes between term focus and predicate-centered focus, which in turn is divided into State of Affairs (esp. verb lexemes) focus and Operator focus (TAM or polarity/verum). Polarity/verum focus has often been discussed in Egyptian-Coptic linguistics as 'nexus focus,' following a line of thought originating with Jespersen (1924).
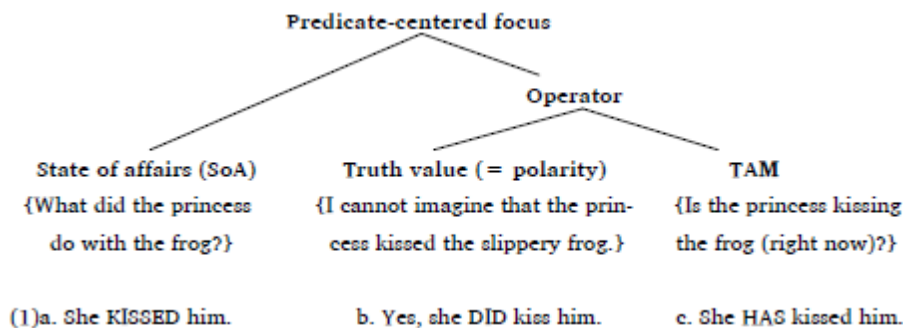
Güldemann and Fiedler (2010)

2. Coptic clause structure: a brief outline

[This section can be skipped if the reader has already read Haspelmath (2014+).]
Coptic verbal clauses have mixed accusative-neutral alignment for both person indexing and case marking, although its case system is of a cross-linguistically rare type, since it has both A/S and P incorporation, as well as overt nominative and accusative markers, which would make it a marked A/S vs. marked P system (Creissels 2009). Coptic can be described as having both differential subject marking and differential object marking (Grossman 2014+). While the matter hasn't been studied explicitly, Coptic verbal structure is usually said to be agglutinative or polysynthetic.

Coptic clauses can be characterized to an extent by the type of predicate. The following is intended as a sketch, to give you a feel for the language, without pretending to be exhaustive.

2.1 Clauses with noun phrase predicates

- Clauses with noun phrase predicates do not require verbal copulas. Clauses with speech-act participant subjects (i.e., 1st-2nd person) are typically subject-initial, with bound person indexes ('pronouns') preceding the predicate (ex. 1).
- Clauses with non-speech act participant subjects are typically predicate-initial; a pronominal clitic representing the subject follows the predicate (ex. 2).
- Such 'kernel' clauses can occur with both left- and right-dislocated lexical NP subjects as topics or antitopics (exx. 3-4).

(1)   *ntk-ou-šêre*
         2SGM-ART.INDEF-son
         'You are a son' (Sahidic, Galatians 4:7).

(2)   *pen-noute=pe*
         POSS.MSG.1PL-god=SBJ.MSG
         'He is our God' (Sahidic, John 8:54).

(3)   *nei-rôme*   *hen-ioudai=ne*
         DEM.PL-man   ART.INDEF.PL-Jew=SBJ.PL
         'These men are Jews,' 'These men, they are Jews' (Sahidic, Acts 16:20).

(4)   *hen-ou=ne*   *nen-ši*
         ART.INDEF.PL-what=SBJ.PL   POSS.PL.1PL-capacity
         'What are our capacities?' 'What are they, our capacities?' (Sahidic, Shenoute LIII 107:24)

2.2 Dedicated property-denoting constructions

The previous construction is generally used for many property-denoting predicates as well as entity-denoting predicates (ex. 5).

(5)   *ou-me=pe*   *p-noute*
         ART.INDEF-truth=SBJ.MSG   ART.DEF-God
         'God is true,' 'God is a true one' (Sahidic, John 3:33)

However, there is also a small paradigm of finite constructions that comprise a distinctive prefix *na-* or *ne-*, a property-denoting bound root, and a subject expression, whether a bound person form or a full lexical NP (ex. 6).

(6)   *pa-nahb=gar*   *nahlôc-f*
        POSS.MSG.1SG-yoke=for   pleasant-3SGM
        'For my yoke is pleasant/easy' (Sahidic, Matthew 11:30)

2.3 Clauses with locative predicates

- Clauses with locative predicates have the order subject-predicate. Subjects must be definite, broadly speaking, and may be either full lexical NPs or bound person markers. The predicate slot of the construction permits adverbial phrases of various sorts, most typically locative adverbs or prepositional phrases, as well as verbal forms (ex. 7-8).

(7) t^i-*nmma-f*
        1SG-with-3SGM
        'I am with him' (Sahidic, Psalms 90(91): 15)

(8)   *petros   mmau*
        Peter   there
        'Peter is (was) there' (Sahidic, Acts 9:38)

Verbal forms in this construction - basically, converbs - will be dealt with in §2.6.

2.4 Existential and presentative clauses

Existential clauses have a dedicated existential marker *oun-*, for affirmative clauses (ex. 9), or *(m)mn-* for negative clauses (ex. 10). While simple existential clauses are attested, most examples also have a locative expression.

(9)   *ešče-oun-sôma m-p^{s}uk^{h}ikon*
        if-EXIST-body   MOD-physical
        'If there is a physical body...' (Sahidic, 1 Corinthians 15:44)

(10)   *a-u-nau*   *če-mmn-ce-čoi*   *mmau*
        PST-3PL-see   COMP-EXIST.NEG-other-ship   there
        'They saw that there was no other ship there' (Sahidic, John 6:22).

Coptic also has distinctive presentative constructions (cf. French *voici/voilà*, Hebrew *hinne*):

(11)   *eis-pe-k^h[risto]s*
        PRES-ART.DEF-Ch[ris]t
        'Behold the Christ' (Sahidic, John 1:36).

2.5 Possessive clauses

Coptic has a wide range of possessive clause types, including an intransitive existential-based construction undergoing 'have-drift':

(12) *ounta-i*   *mmau* *n-ou-hre*   *e-uom-s*
      POSS-1SG   there   ACC-ART.INDEF-food   to-eat-3SGF
      'I have food to eat' (Sahidic, John 4:32).

2.6 Verbal clauses (Polotsky 1960, Layton 2004)

Structurally distinct from the clause constructions outlined above, clause constructions whose predicates are verb lexemes fall into two broad types, traditionally known as (a) Bipartite and (b) Tripartite constructions.

2.6.1 The **Bipartite** construction is formally identical to the construction of clauses with locative predicates (§2.3 above). This is historically explicable, since the verbs in this construction were converbs, some of which were marked for TAM categories by locative prepositions (e.g., *ḥr* ('on')/*m* (LOC) > PROGRESSIVE > PRESENT).

    Synchronically, two main types of verb form occur in this construction: a form known as the Durative Infinitive (ex. 13) and a form known as the Stative (ex. 14). The values of these forms are not directly relevant for this paper.

(13) *ti-šine*   *erô-tn*
      1SG-greet   to-2PL
      'I greet you' (Sahidic, Romans 16:22)

(14) *ti-onh*
      1SG-live
      'I am alive' (Sahidic)

2.6.2 The **Tripartite** construction involves three elements:

1. A bound auxiliary or TAM marker, most of which were grammaticalized from verbal auxiliaries and which also mark polarity.
2. A subject expression, whether a bound person index or a full lexical NP. In previous work (Grossman 2014+), I have treated this as a case of subject incorporation.
3. A verbal root, which occurs in a form usually called the Infinitive in Coptic linguistics.

(15) *a-f-či*   *n-ou-oik*
      PST-3SGM-take ACC-ART.INDEF-bread
      'He took break' (Sahidic, Mark 14: 22)

(16) *a-ke-aggelos*   *ei*   *ebol*
      PST-other-angel   come   out
      'Another angel came out' (Revelations 14:17)

These TAM markers also indicate the polarity and syntactic status of the clause.

| | AFFIRMATIVE | | NEGATIVE | |
	PERSON INDEX	LEXICAL NP	PERSON INDEX	LEXICAL NP
PAST	*a-*	*a-*	*mp-*	*mpe-*
PERFECT	*-*		*mpat-*	*mpate-*
AORIST	*ša-*	*šare-*	*me-*	*mere-*
OPTATIVE	*e- … -e*	*ere-*	*nne-*	*nne-*
JUSSIVE	*mar-*	*mare-*	*mprtre-*	*mprtre-*

TABLE 1: MAIN CLAUSE FORMS

Subordinate clause constructions include the following:

	PERSON INDEX	LEXICAL NP
TEMPORAL	*nter-*	*ntere-*
CONDITIONAL	*e-.. šan-*	*eršan-*
LIMITATIVE	*šant-*	*šante-*
CONJUNCTIVE	*n-*	*nte-*

TABLE 2: SUBORDINATE CLAUSE FORMS

Such forms are negated by an infixed negator *-tm-*, e.g.,

(17)　　*n-g-tm-čô*
　　　　CONJ-2SFM-NEG-say
　　　　'and you will not say…'

3. Focus marking in Coptic
3.1 Research questions proposed in the Berlin project
- Which language-specific means are used in languages of the African continent to express predicate-centered focus?
- How are these distinguished from other focus types with scope on nominal constituents ('term focus')?

In Africa	In Coptic
verbal reduplication	√
focus particles	√
prosody	impossible to verify
tense-aspect-mood morphology	√
clefts	√ (but very rare)
cognate objects	√

TABLE 3: STRUCTURAL MEANS ASSOCIATED WITH PRED-CENTERED FOCUS IN COPTIC

Qi: Is predicate-centered focus expressed only by the absence of term focus structures?
Ai: No.
Ai+: Predicate-centered focus can be expressed by multiple explicit means.

Qii: Which special means for predicate-centered focus are attested?
Aii: Possibly two, one dedicated to operator focus and the other to SoA focus. All others are mainly used for other kinds of focus (adjunct, argument).
Aii+: In some constructions, predicate-centered focus develops diachronically very late, and only in those dialects of Coptic in which arguments (as opposed to adjuncts) can be in focus.

Qiii: How to classify these means with respect to their structure? Which classes of structures occur more often and which rather seldom? What is the actual distribution of 'predicate clefts'?
Aiii: Cross-linguistic questions, Coptic can only provide data.

Qiv: Is it possible to establish a correlation between the structures found with typological parameters, such as word order or serial verb constructions?
Aiv: Cross-linguistic questions, Coptic can only provide data.

3.2 Constructions associated with predicate-centered focus in Coptic
3.2.1. Focus particles
Focus particles have not been extensively researched in Coptic, with several exceptions, e.g., Shisha-Halevy (1986, 1990). The following section presents one focus particle, the enclitic =*rô*.

3.2.1.1 Argument focus
(18)   *mê   a-n-meuet-rôme=**rô***
         RQM   PST-1PL-kill-man=**FOC**
         'Did we kill *a man*?' 'Is it a man we killed?' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Amél. 1:283).

(19)   *šare-tbnê=**rô***   *rnobe*
         AOR-animal=**FOC**   sin
         'Does *an animal* sin?' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Amél. 1: 283).

(20)   *ntof=**rô***   *pet-sumbouleue=na-u*
         3SGM=**FOC**   REL-counsel=to-3PL
         'It is *he* that counsels them' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Amél. 1:283).

(21)   *ten-ti-sbô*   *n-hah*   *n-tn-ti*   *na-n=**rô**=an=anon*
         1PL-give-instruction   to-many   CIRC.NEG-1PL-give   to-1PL=**FOC**=NEG=1PL
         'We give instruction to many, while not giving instruction *to ourselves*' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Amél. 2:38).

3.2.1.2 Predicate-centered (verum/auxiliary/nexus) focus
Typically, the verb lexeme is introduced in a first clause, then resumed in the second clause with the particle =*ro*. Also typical is a difference in TAM between the two clauses, which makes TAM focus a possibility, but examples often seem open to 'verum' focus readings as well.

(22) *tcaeio-ei=ce*   *hiousop …*   *ebolče-ti-tcaeiêu=**rô***
      condemn-1SG=then   together …   for-1SG-condemned=**FOC**
      'So condemn me, all together … for I *am* (or: *already*?) condemned' (Sahidic,
      Shenoute, Amél. 1:70)

(23) *če-e-u-e-mou*   *ê=**rô***   *a-u-mou*
      COMP-OPT1-3PL-OPT2-die   or=**FOC**   PST-3PL-die
      'That they may die …. or they have (indeed/already) died' (Sahidic, Shenoute,
      Amél. 1:132)

(24) *f-na-si=gar*   *ê*   *a-f-si=**rô***
      3SGM-FUT-be.sated=for   or   PST-3SGM-be.sated=**FOC**
      'For he will be sated, or he *has* been sated' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Amél. 1:135:6).

(25) *a-pai*   *asai*   *ê*   *f-na-asai=**rô***
      PST-DEM.MSG be.relieved   or   3SGM-FUT-be.relieved=**FOC**
      'He has been relieved or he *will* be relieved' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Amél. 1:150).

In fact, Depuydt (2001) has argued that *rô* has the consistent function of marking
operator focus, specifically, verum/polarity focus ('*rô* contrasts a thought, as expressed
by a sentence or a clause, with its negation'); he does not explore the possibility of TAM
focus. In his view, exx. (18-22) should be translated:

(18′)   *Did* we (really) kill a man?
(19′)   *Do* animals (really) sin?
(20′)   It *is* (really) him that counsels them.
(21′)   We give counsel to many, while *not* giving counsel to ourselves.

Under this analysis, which is adopted here, *rô* is a dedicated operator focus particle.
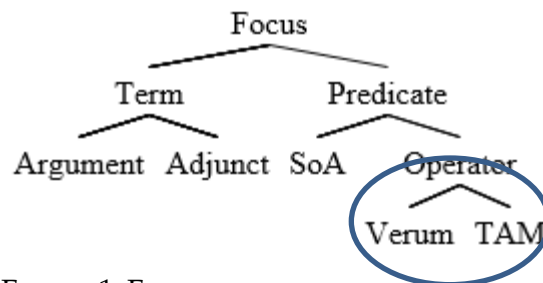
FIGURE 1: FOCUS TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH *RÔ*

3.2.2. Cleft Sentences
Coptic has a range of cleft sentence constructions, which are generally limited to
nominal/argument focus.

(26)   *aš=gar*   *pet-motn*
       which=for   REL-easy
       'For which is easier?' (Sahidic, Matthew 9:5)

In some dialects, e.g., Bohairic, adjuncts/manner adverbs can be the focus of a cleft sentence (Shisha-Halevy 2007). Very rare examples can be found of verb lexemes as focus in cleft sentence constructions.

(27)   *ôms=de*   *pet-hoou*
         sinking=but   REL-bad
         'But it is sinking that is bad.' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Leipoldt 4:174)

(28)   *ê*   *hise=an*   *hi-mokhs*   *pet-sêh*
         or   tribulation=NEG   on-suffering   REL-written
         'Or is it not tribulation and suffering that are written?' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Amel. 1:1)
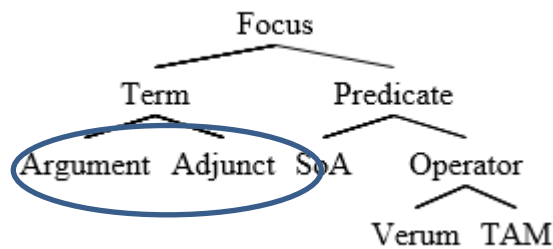
FIGURE 2: FOCUS TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CLEFT SENTENCE

3.2.3. Verb doubling ("tautological infinitive," Shisha-Halevy 1990)
In this construction, a form of the verbal lexeme is preposed to the main clause, and prefixed by a locative preposition + an indefinite article:

Verbal noun – typically for Greek loan verbs
(29)   *hn-ou-epithumia*   *a-i-epithumei*
         in-ART.INDEF-desire   PST-1SG-desire
         'With desire I have desired…' (Luke 22:15)

Infinitive – for native verbs
(30)   *hn-ou-šlêl*   *a-f-šlêl*
         in-ART.INDEF-pray   PST-3SGM-pray
         'With prayer he prayed…' (James 5:17)

This construction appears to be a syntactic calque from Biblical Greek, itself in turn a calque of classical Hebrew. However, Shisha-Halevy (1990) proposes that this construction has earlier Egyptian antecedents:

(31)   *ꜥnḫ-i*   *ꜥnḫt*
         live-1sg   living
         'It is living that I shall live' (Coffin Texts IV 180f, Shisha-Halevy 1990)
         'I *shall* live' (?)

Shisha-Halevy (1990) cites many examples from Coptic, but the information structure analysis is not clear, and must remain for future research. However, one thing is striking: this construction is generally not used for contrastive focus ('high degree of Communicative Dynamism; in other words, it is of very low context-boundedness' Shisha-Halevy 1990: 121). In simpler terms, the verb lexeme is almost never presupposed/given, unlike the other construction types discussed here (however, see 3.4 below).

(32)   Anyone who curses their father or mother
        hn-ou-mou   *mare-f-mou*
        in-ART.INDEF-die   JUSS-3SGM-die
        'Let him *die*' (lit. 'in a dying let him die') (Sahidic, Leviticus 20:9).
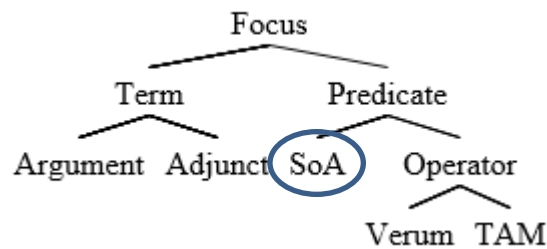
FIGURE 3: FOCUS TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH VERB-DOUBLING CONSTRUCTIONS

3.2.4. The 'Second Tenses'
Probably the Coptic construction with the most disputed analysis.

- Polotsky (1937, 1940, 1944) – Second Tenses are nominalizations, and effectively Cleft Sentence constructions (or at least, functionally analogous). Built on the model of the Bipartite construction (subject-predicate order, nominal subject and adverbial predicate).

(33)   *nt-a-u-r-šmmo*   *erô-tn   etbe-neu-hbêue*   *ethoou*
        FOC-PST-3PL-do-stranger   to-2PL because-POSS.PL.3PL-deeds   REL-evil
        'It is *because of their evil deeds* that they have become strangers to you.'

SUBJECT/TOPIC	PREDICATE/FOCUS
petros (Peter)	*mmau* (there)
nt-a-u-r-šmmo erô-tn	*etbe-neu-hbêue ethoou*
'that they became strangers to you'	'because of their evil deeds'

TABLE 4: POLOTSKY'S NOMINALIZATION ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND TENSES

- Shisha-Halevy (1986) – dubious about nominalization analysis, but not about the function (focus).
- Reintges (2000) – Second Tenses don't exist.
- Layton (2000) – Second Tenses redubbed as Focalizing Conversion, no mention of nominalization analysis.

- Reintges (2007) – Second Tenses are 'relative tenses,' the Second Tense marker is a relative clause marker.

Originally, at least from Late Egyptian onwards, a construction associated with adverbial/adjunct focus.

(34) *iir-k*   *gm-st*   *mi-iḥ*
     FOC-2SGM   find-3SGF   like-what
     '*In what state* did you find it?'

     iir-i   *gm-st*   *wn*   *ꜥn*
     FOC-1SG   find-3SGF   open   already
     'I found it *already open*.' (Late Egyptian, Tomb Robberies)

3.2.4.1 Morphosyntax of the Second Tenses in Coptic

	'First'	'Second'
Past	*a-f-sôtm* 'he heard'	**nt**-*a-f-sôtm*
Present	*f-sôtm* 'he hears'	**e**-*f-sôtm*
Future	*f-na-sôtm* 'he will hear'	**e**-*f-na-sôtm*
Aorist	*ša-f-sôtm* 'he hears' (habitual, ability)	**e**-*ša-f-sôtm*

TABLE 5: SAHIDIC DIALECT

In some dialects, there is some formal identity with other clause-level markers. In Sahidic, for example:
- the Second Past marker is (nearly) the same as the Relative Past
- the Second Present and Future are identical to the Circumstantial Present and Future.
- the Second Aorist is identical to the Circumstantial and Relative Aorist

This formal identity is the result of highly complex processes of language change that have never been studied in depth. In pre-Coptic stages of the language, as well as in other Coptic dialects, these constructions are more clearly distinct. In the Bohairic, Akhmimic, Fayyumic and Mesokemic dialects, for example, the Second Present and Future are distinct from the Circumstantial Present and Future.

	'First'	'Second'
Past	*a-f-sôtem* 'he heard'	**et**-*a-fsôtem*
Present	*f-sôtem* 'he hears'	**a**-*f-sôtem*
Future	*f-na-sôtem* 'he will hear'	**a**-*f-na-sôtem*
Aorist	*ša-f-sôtem* 'he hears' (habitual, ability)	**e**-*ša-f-sôtem*

TABLE 6: MORPHOSYNTAX OF THE SECOND TENSES IN BOHAIRIC COPTIC

	'First'	'Second'
Past	*ha-f-sotm*	*e-ha-f-sotm*
Present	*f-sotm*	*a-f-sotm*
Future	*f-ne-sotm*	*a-f-ne-sotm*
Aorist	*ša-f-sotm*	*e-ša-f-sotm*

TABLE 7: MORPHOSYNTAX OF THE SECOND TENSES IN MESOKEMIC COPTIC

3.2.4.2 The distribution of the Cleft Sentence vis-à-vis the Second Tenses: a vulgate

- Cleft Sentence – nominal/argument focus
- Second Tenses – adverbial/adjunct focus
(Polotsky 1944, Depuydt 2001)

(35)   **Second Tense – adverbial focus**
a-n-halate   *mn-n-tbt*   *ouôm*   *n-hen-kooue*
PST-ART.DEF.PL-birds with-ART.DEF.PL-fish eat   ACC-ART.INDEF.PL-others
'Birds and fish have eaten other (birds and fish)'

alla   *mnnsatre-u-ei*   *ebol*   *hn-netmmau*
but   CVB.PSTR-3PL-come   out   in-those
'But after they (the digested prey) come out of those (the predators)'

***nt**-a-u-kto-ou*   *e-p-kah*
FOC-PST-3PL-return-3PL   to-the-earth
'It is *to the earth* that they have returned.'

Cleft Sentence – nominal focus
Even when some are thrust into the fire and it destroys them:
p-kah=on   *pent-a-u-kto-ou*   *ero-f*
the-earth=still REL-PST-3PL-return-3PL   to-3SGM
'It is still the earth that they have returned to.'

Both are generally term focus constructions, but the picture is more complex in reality.

3.2.4.3 Types of focus: Adjunct focus
(36)   ***nt**-a-u-klêronomei=gar*   *m-p-kah*   *hn-teu-sêfe=an*
FOC-PST-3PL-inherit=for   ACC-ART.DEF-land   in-POSS.MSG.3PL-sword=NEG
'It is not *by means of their sword* that they inherited the land' (Sahidic, Psalms 44:4)

(37)   Jesus' disciples ask him where they should prepare the Passover. He instructs them to go to a certain man in the city and tell him:
***a**-i-ne-er-p-pask^{h}a*   *hatat-k*   *mn-na-mat^{h}êtês*
FOC-1SG-do-the-Passover   APUD-2SGM   with-POSS.PL.1SG-disciple
'It is *by you* that I'm going to spend Passover with my disciples' (Mesokemic, Matthew 26:18)

(38) Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent, knowing that:
etbe-ou-pʰtʰonos   e-ha-u-paradidou   mma-f
because-ART.INDEF-jealousy FOC-PST-3PL-hand.over   ACC-3SGM
'It's *because of jealousy* that he has been handed over (Mesokemic, Matthew 27:18)

(39) ***et**-a-u-têi-f*   *etʰbe-ou-pʰtʰonos*
FOC-PST-3PL-hand.over-3SGM because-ART.INDEF-jealousy
'It's *because of jealousy* that he was handed over' (Bohairic, Matthew 27:18)

(40) *epidê=gar*   ***a**-a-p-mou*   *šôpi*   *ebalhitn*   *ou-lômi*
since=for   **FOC**-PST-ART.DEF.MSG-death become   INSTR ART.INDEF-man
'Since it's *through/because of man* that death came into existence' (Fayyumic, 1 Corinthians 15:21)

3.2.4.4 Types of focus: Argument focus
Only incorporated arguments (?); in any event, incompatible with overt case-marking.
(41) ***are**-oueš-ou*   (Mesokemic)
***ere**-oueš-ou*   (Sahidic)
FOC:2SGF-want-what
You want *what*?' (Matthew 20:21)

(42) *ou*   *pete-ouaš-f*   (Bohairic)
what   REL-want-3SGM
'What is it that you want?' (Matthew 20:21)

(43) ***nt**-a-ou*   *šôpe=na-i*
FOC-PST-what   become=to-1SG
'What happened to me?' (Lycopolitan, Manichaean Psalm Book 210, 19)

(44) *mê*   ***ere**-pe-kʰous*   *na-eksomologei=na-k*
RQM   **FOC**-ART.DEF-dust   FUT-give.praise=to-2SGM
'Shall *the dust* give praise to Thee?' (Sahidic, Psalms 29(30): 9)

(45) Jesus' family thinks he's crazy, but the teachers of the Law have another take:
***ere**-beelzeboul*   *nmma-f*
FOC-Beelzebul   with-3SGM
'It is *Beelzebul* that afflicts him (lit. with him)' (Sahidic, Mark 3:22)

(46) Jesus holds forth on morality, saying 'He who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality,
***a**-f-ne-tre-u-er-naeik*   *era-s*
FOC-3SGM-FUT-CAUS-3PL-do-adultery   against-3SGF
'He will cause her to be the victim of adultery' (lit., 'he will cause her to be adultered against')

auô   *pet-ne-či*   *n-t-eth-a-u-apolu*   *mma-s*
and   REL-FUT-take   ACC-REL-PST-3PL-divorce   ACC-3SGF
'And he who will marry a divorced woman'

are-*p-kê*   *a*   *n-naeik*
FOC-the-other COP   MOD-adultery
'This too is adultery' (Mesokemic, Matthew 5:32)

Incorporated P argument focus might have paved the way for verb lexeme (SoA) focus
(see 4.4 below).

(47)   *sop=men*   ***e***-*ša-u-či-me*
        time=CONTR   **FOC**-AOR-3PL-say-truth
        'Sometimes they speak the truth'

        sop=de=on   ***e***-*ša-u-čei-col*
        time=CONTR=ADD   **FOC**-AOR-3PL-say-lie
        'Sometimes they speak lies'
        Or: 'Sometimes they truth-talk, sometimes they lie'
        (Sahidic, Shenoute, Amel. I 249: 2-3)

3.2.4.5 Predicate-centered focus
State of Affairs (SoA) focus
(48)   Jesus forgives some men their sins. Some teachers of the law, seeing this, say:
        are-*pei*   ***a***-*f-če-oua*
        FOC-this   FOC-3SGM-say-blasphemy
        'It is blasphemy that he's doing!', 'He's *blaspheming*!' (Mesokemic, Matthew 9:3)

(49)   The foolish virgins say to the wise: 'Give us some of your oil.'
        *če-**are**-nen-lampas*   *ne-ošm*
        COMP-**FOC**-our.PL-lamp   FUT-go.out
        'For our lamps are going to *go out*' (Mesokemic, Matthew 25:8).

(50)   Jesus heals a dead girl, and says to the crowd:
        *n-**e**-ha-s-mou=gar=en*   *nčê-t-alou*
        NEG1-**FOC**-PST-3SGF-die=for=NEG2   NOM-ART.DEF.FSG-youth

        alla   ***a***-*s-nkat*
        but.rather   FOC-3SGF-sleep
        'She hasn't *died*, but rather she's *sleeping*' (Mesokemic, Matthew 9:24).

(51)   *mpe-p-dikaios*   *mou*   *alla*   ***e***-*f-nkotk*
        PST.NEG-the-righteous die   but   **FOC**-3SGM-sleep
        'The righteous one didn't die, but he's rather *sleeping*' (Sahidic, Luke 8:52).

14

(52)   Thinking that
e-u-onh   e-u-moout
FOC-3PL-alive FOC-3PL-dead
'…they're *alive*, (when in fact) they're *dead*' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Ch. 69, 20-21).

        And thinking
e-u-hên   ehoun e-pnoute   e-u-ouêu   ebol   mmo-f
FOC-3PL-close in   to-God   FOC-3PL-far   out   of-3SGM
'that they're close to God, (when in fact) they are far from him.'

(53)   *anti-tre-u-pôrek   m-pei-entêc …*
        instead.of-CAUS-3PL-root.out   ACC-this-plant

        nt-a-u-tôce   mmo-f   ntof   auô   a-u-tso-f
        FOC-PST-3PL-plant   ACC-3SG   CONTR   and   PST-3PL-water-3SGM
        'Instead of rooting out this plant, they *planted* it and watered it' (Sahidic, L IV 157).

(54)   They who say:
        e-n-šône
        FOC-1PL-be.ill
        'We're *sick*' (Sahidic, Shenoute A 1 56)

(55)   'If everyone is speaking in tongues, and an outsider comes in, won't he say:
        e-tetn-lobe
        FOC-2PL-be.crazy
        'You're *crazy*!' (Sahidic, 1 Corinthians 14:23)

(56)   Peter says to Jesus about a fig tree that the latter had planted:
        nt-a-s-šooue
        FOC-PST-3SGF-dry
        'It has *dried up*!' (Sahidic, Mark 11:21)
Sentence-focus/thetic? (Lambrecht 1994; Ewa Zakrzewska's talk?)

3.2.4.6 Non-verbal predicate focus
(57)   'Where is Judas now?'
        e-f-hn-amnte
        FOC-3SGM-in-hell
        'It's *in Hell* that he is (and nowhere else)' (Sahidic, Shenoute, A 2 53)

(58)   *t-mntero=gar   m-pnoute   n-e-s-hn-šače=an*
        ART.DEF-kingdom=for   of-God   NEG1-FOC-3SGF-in-talk=NEG2

        alla   hn-ou-com
        but.rather   in-ART.INDEF-power
        'For the kingdom of God is *not in talk* but rather in power.'

(59)   The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit is:
        e-s-mmau   *nci-t-mntrmhe*
        FOC-3SGF-there   NOM-ART.DEF-freedom
        'For it is there that freedom resides' (2 Corinthians 3:17)

3.2.4.7 Operator focus: verum/TAM

(60)   Jesus chastises a violent companion.
        a-k-mêoue ...
        FOC-2SGM-think
        'Do you *really* think...?' (Mesokemic, Matthew 26:53)

(61)   *hôs*   *ešče-**nt**-a-u-pôšs*   *nhêt*   ***nt**-a-u-pôšs=gar*
        as   if-FOC-PST-3PL-be.dazed   in.heart   **FOC**-PST-3PL-be.dazed=for
        'As if they had *become dazed* – which in fact they *had*' (Sahidic, Shenoute, Leipoldt 3:96).
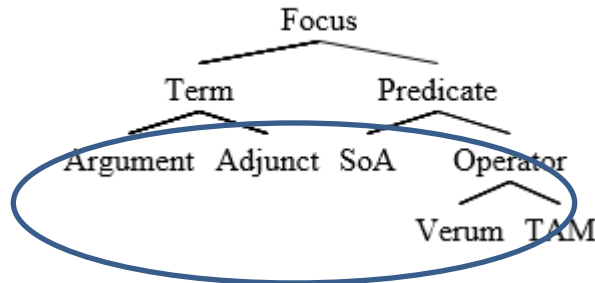
FIGURE 4: FOCUS TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SECOND TENSES

The Coptic Second Tenses are extremely labile in terms of what can occur as focus, including both adjunct and argument focus, as well as predicate-centered focus. However, the different dialects differ in terms of this lability. While Sahidic and Mesokemic allow nominal arguments, as well as predicate-centered focus, Bohairic, like the earlier Egyptian antecedent of this construction, restricts this construction to focal adverbials/adjuncts. It is therefore likely that we might propose a pathway of development from adjunct focus to argument focus, perhaps initially in interrogative clauses (e.g., ex. 41), and from there to predicate-centered focus.

3.3 A predicate-centered focus paradigm (Shisha-Halevy 1990, Depuydt 2001)

(a)   *rô*   Operator focus (ex. 62)
(b)   Second Tense   SoA (lexeme, generally contrastive?) (ex. 63)
(c)   Verb-doubling   SoA (lexeme, generally non-contrastive?) (ex. 64)

(62)   Jesus heals a dead girl, and says to the crowd:
        *n-**e**-ha-s-mou=gar=en*   *nčê-t-alou*
        NEG1-**FOC**-PST-3SGF-die=for=NEG2   NOM-ART.DEF.FSG-youth

        alla   *a-s-nkat*
        but.rather   **FOC**-3SGF-sleep
        'She hasn't *died*, but rather she's *sleeping*' (Mesokemic, Matthew 9:24).

16

(63)   Why has one of the thieves crucified with Jesus died?
         ebolče   *f-moout=**rô***
         because   3SGM-dead=**FOC**
         'Because he is (really/already) dead.'

(64)   Anyone who curses their father or mother
         hn-ou-mou   *mare-f-mou*
         in-ART.INDEF-die   JUSS-3SGM-die
         'Let him *die*' (lit. 'in a dying let him die') (Sahidic, Leviticus 20:9).

Recapitulation:

In Coptic, different construction types/formal means are associated with predicate-centered focus.

There seems to be a fairly straightforward division of labor, with areas of structural opposition/overlap.
- *rô* is associated with operator focus, but whether it is consistently polarity/verum focus (as opposed to TAM) remains to be studied.
- Verb-doubling constructions are not contrastive, and seem to be limited to SoA focus.
- The Cleft Sentence is almost entirely limited to term focus, typically arguments but also occasionally adjuncts in some dialects, and *very* rarely, verb lexemes (= predicate-centered focus).
- The Second Tenses are typically associated with adjunct focus, the diachronically original function. In some dialects, they are also associated with argument focus, probably beginning with incorporated subject and object interrogatives and only afterwards (and rarely) other incorporated arguments. Whether they are also associated with operator focus is still an open question – Ewa Zakrzewska's talk will probably shed light on this.

An interesting feature of Coptic – morphosyntactic marking of focus on verbal clauses has TAM-sensitive allomorphy. Diachronically explicable.
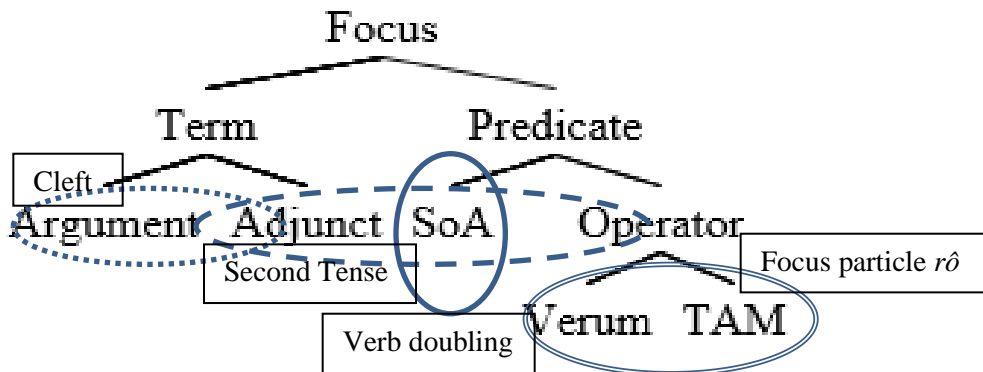

FIGURE 5: A SYNCHRONIC MAP OF FOCUS STRATEGIES IN COPTIC

3.4 Negation

- The focus particle *rô* and the Second Tenses occur in both affirmative and negative contexts. Negation of Second Tenses differs from that of morphosyntactically unmarked verb forms.
- The Cleft Sentence with verb lexeme focus is very rare, no negative examples known to me.
- The verb-doubling construction occurs only very rarely with negation. Interestingly, in these rare examples, the construction does seem to be contrastive, involving presuppositions:

(65)   When the Israelites grew stronger, they subjected the Canaanites to forced labor.
         hn-ou-fôte=de   *mp-ou-fot-ou*
         in-ART.INDEF-expel=but   PST.NEG-3PL-expel-3PL
         'But they did not expel them completely' (Sahidic, Joshua 17:13).

3.5 Subordination

- The focus particle *rô* occurs in both main and subordinate clauses.
- The Second Tenses can occur in both main and subordinate clauses.
- The Cleft Sentence construction is too marginally attested to say anything useful.
- The verb doubling construction occurs mainly in main clauses, but is also documented in conditionals, which are not unambiguously subordinate in Coptic.

3.6 Polyfunctionalities

- Only the Second Tenses have an interesting polyfunctionality, at least from the point of view of information structure. They occur, marginally, as subordinate forms following 'since,' possibly a reflection of earlier relative clause status.
- The Second Tense (or the relative) form of the past tense also occurs as an anterior converb 'Having done X' in a number of dialects, other than the well-studied Sahidic (Grossman 2007). See Güldemann et al. on forms that show polyfunctionality of forms, with both predicate-centered focus and 'sequential clauses in a type of 'co-subordination' uses.

(66)   *pi-hegêmôn=de*   *a-f-čônt*   *emašô*
         ART.DEF-hegemon=and   PST-3SGM-be.angry   very

         et-a-f-nau   *e-pi-agios*
         FOC/REL-PST-3SGM-see   to-ART.DEF-saint
         'The hegemon got very angry when he saw the saint' (Bohairic, *Les Actes* p.36).

This function might have developed in a complex 'breaking out of the noun phrase' type of scenario, and has functional antecedents in several previous phases of the language. However, it is difficult to analyze these forms conclusively as to whether they are relative forms or Second Tenses.

3.5 Focus-marking, the view from Coptic

The structural means associated with focus in Coptic appear to be indeterminate to an extent, especially the Second Tenses. While the pre-Coptic antecedents of the construction were restricted to adjunct focus, in some Coptic dialects, especially Sahidic and Mesokemic, pretty much all parts of a clause can be in focus in this construction, including adjuncts, subjects, objects, and operators (TAM, verum).

So perhaps the term 'focus-marking' is a bit overambitious. But this depends on one's theory of language, in a way. If one takes the view that linguistic constructions necessarily **code** meanings/functions, then it is hard to say what is coded in Coptic Second Tenses, as opposed to, say, the more articulated system of focus marking in Somali.

But if one takes a more inferential view of linguistic communication, then one could say that the Coptic Second Tenses constrain the types of inferences that the addressee can plausibly make.

All languages can constrain the interpretation of just about any functional domain, but most languages have developed obligatory grammatical marking that obligatorily constrains the interpretation in certain functional domains to some extent. Which domains the speakers of a language will chose to constrain, and how they constrain the interpretation, are the two major ways languages differ from each other. Just as societies differ as to what tools they use for a particular activity, for example using chopsticks as opposed to using the hands or a fork for eating, and these tools can vary in terms of specificity (for example, Chinese people traditionally use fewer specialised tools for eating than Westerners), the tool we think of as language can differ between cultures in terms of how specialised its structures are.

The point is that languages differ quite a lot in how much they constrain the search for the most relevant interpretation, and in what aspects they choose to constrain. As can be seen from these examples, while Rawang constrains the interpretation of the time frame more than English, it does not constrain the search for the referent of a pronoun as much as English does (and we saw Rawang does not have the cross-clause coreference constraint that English has). From this we can see that we can not talk about languages as being more or less grammaticalised or their interpretation more or less constrained, only particular functional domains being more or less grammaticalised or their interpretation more or less constrained in a certain language (LaPolla 2006).

In such a view, the Coptic Second Tenses do not 'mark' or 'code' a particular term, state of affairs, or operator as focus, but rather constrain, albeit broadly, an addressee's search for the most relevant interpretation. In a sense, this idea is found in traditional descriptions of Coptic:

'Many kinds of sentence element are eligible to be interpreted (decoded) as focal point [...] Eligible focal points range in complexity from a single lexeme to a complete clause. In choosing some particular element as the focal point, a reader is guided by overall rhetorical and grammatical structure, vocabulary, standard phraseology, larger context and its train of thought, reader's expectations, and any other relevant signals. Thus, the reader's choice, though subjective, is based upon real structural criteria' (Layton 2000: 353-354).

4. Diachronic pathways
4.1 Focus particle *rô*

The particle *rô* is thought to have developed from an additive focus construction *m-rꝫ-ꜥ* 'too.' In some Coptic dialects, e.g., Mesokemic, this is still its main/only function. Cf.

English 'refutational *too*,' (German *auch*, Spanish *tampoco*), Schwenter & Waltereit (2010), which could be analyzed as operator (truth-value/verum) focus.

4.2 Verb-doubling constructions
As mentioned above, verb-doubling constructions are thought to be a calque from Greek, which in turn are thought to be a calque from Biblical Hebrew. However, Shisha-Halevy proposes Early Egyptian antecedents. Andreas Stauder's talk?

4.3 Cleft Sentences
Cleft Sentences in Earlier Egyptian had verb-focus patterns (Andreas Stauder's talk?), but these were largely conventionalized as presentational constructions in narrative. Such constructions were lost by Coptic, and probably much earlier.

4.4 Second Tenses
The Second Tenses, at least from Late Egyptian on, were restricted to term focus, specifically adverbial/adjunct focus. In some dialects of Coptic, e.g., Bohairic, their use was extended to some types of argument focus (e.g., incorporated interrogative pronoun subjects and objects); in other dialects (e.g., Sahidic), to other kinds of argument focus (non-interrogative subjects) as well; in some dialects (e.g., Bohairic), SoA focus is very rare, while in others (e.g., Sahidic, Mesokemic) it is prominent. Operator focus is a possible function of the Second Tenses, but there is not yet a lot of data on this.

What seems certain are the following facts:
- Adverbial/adjunct focus develops earlier than nominal/argument focus and predicate-centered focus.
- Interrogative argument focus develops earlier than non-interrogative argument focus.
- Argument focus – on incorporated P – may have contributed to the extension of the construction to verbal SoA focus (say-lie ~ lie > non-incorporating verb lexemes). See Güldemann et al. (2010) on complex predicate structures and the consequences of 'structural factorization.'
- All develop earlier than operator focus.

However, it seems that SoA predicate-centered focus develops relatively early, already in Demotic, in constructions with *locative* predicates (Johnson 1976):

(66)   Demotic
        "Do you know where the houses of rest of PN and PN are?'
        ỉỉr   *nȝ-ꜥwy.w*   *n*   *ḥtp* [of PN and PN]
        FOC   ART.DEF.PL-houses.PL of   rest […]

        ḥr.twn   *pȝ-ḳḥ*   *rsy*   *n*   *pȝ-ꜥwy*
        at   ART.DEF-corner   southern   of   ART.DEF-house
        'The houses of rest of PN and PN are *at the southern corner of the house*…'
        (Setne 6: 13). See Quack (2006: 259) for further examples.

This may have been a contributing factor to the development of *verbal* predicate-centered focus.
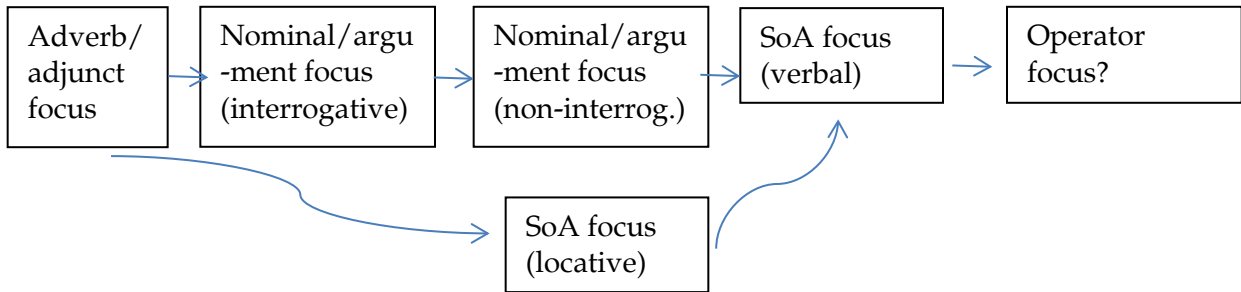

FIGURE 6: A POSSIBLE DIACHRONIC SCENARIO FOR THE SECOND TENSES

5. A diachronic puzzle: from focalizing future to deontic modality in late Coptic

The puzzle:
A form traditionally considered to be the Focalizing Future develops in later Coptic into a form associated with deontic modality. In previous discussions, it is called the 'jussive' use of the Second Future. However, it is probably better characterized as an *optative*, which expresses a wish which is typically outside the sphere of control of the speaker, and which is distinct from denotic modalities like jussive/imperative, which typically appeal to the hearer (Dobrushina et al. 2013).

How and why does a form associated with focus grammaticalize into a deontic modal construction?

Examples from 7th-8th century private legal documents from the town of Thebes (Richter 2008:85-86):

(67) *e-f-e-šôpe*   *ha-p-sahou*   *m-p-noute*
      OPT1-3SGM-OPT2-be   under-the.MSG-curse of-the-God
      'May he be under the curse of God' (KRU 87,29)

(68) *ere-p-sahou*   *n-ne-graphê*   *na-ei*   *ečô-f*
      FOC-the.msg-curse   of-the.PL-scripture FUT-come   upon-3SGM
      'May the curse of the Scriptures come upon him' (KRU 106, 194-195).

(69) *prot[on]=men* *nne-f-opʰulistʰai*   *n-laau*
      first=CONTR   OPT.NEG-3SGM-need   ACC-thing

      deuteron=de   *e-f-na-sôk*   *ehrai*
      second=CONTR   FOC-3SGM-FUT-draw   down

21

ha-p-krima   *mpnoute*
under-ART.DEF.MSG-judgment   of-ART.DEF.MSG-God
'Fir[st], may he need nothing. But second, may he submit to the judgment of God' (KRU 83,12-13).

(70)   *t^i-keleue*   *ntehê*   *etbe*   *pef-toou*   *n-termêseion*
        1SG-order   so   about   POSS.MSG.3SGM-four   of-trimesion

        ere-pa-hai   *na-bit-ou*
        FOC-my-husband   FUT-take-3PL

        ne-f-taa-u   *n-prosphora*   *haro-i*
        CONJ-3SGM-give-3PL   as-offering   for-1SG
        'I order the following about his four trimesion: may my husband take them and give them as offering for me' (KRU 69, 29-31).

(71)   *hôb*   *nim*   *nt-a-u-ei*   *ečô-i*   *ha-na-eiote …*
        thing   every   REL-PST-3PL-come   upon-1SG   from-my.PL-parents

        e-u-na-šôpe=na-k   *têr-ou*   *mn-nek-šêre*
        FOC-3PL-FUT-be=to-2SGM   all-3PL   and-your.PL-child
        'Everything that came to me from my parents … may they be yours and those of your children' (KRU 67,99).

Parts of a proposed answer:

a. Future tenses are known to grammaticalize into deontic modal constructions anyway.
b. Only documented in dialects with predicate-centered focus uses.
c. The verb-centered focus (as well as argument focus in e.g., interrogative utterances) associated with the construction acted as a bridging context, allowing the Second Tenses to be used without adverbs/adjuncts, thereby paving the way for what ends up as a case of insubordination, without the assumption that insubordination develops from earlier constructions with an explicit utterance matrix verb ("I say...").
c. However, there is probably more to be said about the relationship between operator focus and the grammaticalization of TAM forms….

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