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Reflections on Old Nubian Grammar

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Recent approaches to the Old Nubian language try to go beyond the analysis of classical biblical texts. Instead they divert their attention to judicial documents to find out more about everyday life in medieval Nubia.[1] The potential of these texts is great, our means to understand them, however, is still quite limited due to wide ignorance of Old Nubian's linguistic structure. Our contribution will analyze the problems in our approaches so far and provide suggestions for a comprehensible and comparable analysis that hopefully proves easier to grasp.

Earlier works from Francis Ll. Griffith,[2] Fritz Hintze,[3] or Gerald M. Browne[4] try to provide a comparative analysis based on different texts. Among those works the editions of Browne have the highest impact on our approaches to the texts today. Even though Browne did an impressive job dealing with Old Nubian texts, his work can only be a starting point for the work to come. Yet even as a starting point several issues must be addressed, issues concerning Browne's terminology. First of all, Browne's revelations are scattered around in several different publications with differing content while indices are mostly missing. Even if you find your way through the jungle of publications, Browne changed his terminology for some phenomena or often does not even give an exact definition of his terms. The meaning of these terms is simply not inherent in the terms itself; consider, for example the 'predicative copulative.'[5] Furthermore one term might encompass several different phenomena, as it is the case with the term 'predicative.'[6] Especially when new to the field of

1   Cf. for example RUFFINI, *Medieval Nubia*.
2   GRIFFITH, *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period*.
3   HINTZE, "Beobachtungen zur altnubischen Grammatik I & II."
4   BROWNE, *Introduction to Old Nubian*. In the following we will refer to Browne's revised edition *Old Nubian Grammar*.
5   Ibid., *Old Nubian Grammar*, 62.
6   To illustrate our point we refer to ibid., *Old Nubian Grammar*, 36f.

Old Nubian studies one has to cope with a seemingly unmanageable mess of single facts, cross references and abbreviations. This shall be illustrated here by a discussion of a translation taken from the Miracle of St. Mena.

The text was purchased by the British Museum in 1908 and photographs were published by Budge already in the following year. In 1909 a first grammatical analysis was published by Griffith, who re-edited it in 1913. Further analysis was presented by Browne in the 1980s and recently by Vincent van Gerven Oei. The text deals with a miracle performed by St. Mena, who was and is one of the major saints of the Coptic Church. In our text a childless woman hears about the miracles of St. Mena and promises to adopt the Christian faith when this results in her motherhood.

The following sentence can be found on page 1, lines 8-10 of the manuscript:

M. 1.8–10   ⲦⲀⲢⲞⲚ ⲘⲒⲢⲀ ⲀⲄⲈⲚⲀⲈ ⲞⲨⲚⲚⲀⲢⲀ ⲘⲈⲚⲚⲀⲖⲰ· ⲄⲀⲔⲈⲚⲀⲈ ⲀⳠⲔⲈⲚⲀⲈ·

We want to discuss the syntactical analyses and translations by Browne[7] and Van Gerven Oei.[8]

Browne gives the translation:

ⲦⲀⲢ-ⲞⲚ ⲘⲒⲢ-Ⲁ ⲀⲄ(Ⲁ)-ⲈⲚⲀⲈ ⲞⲨⲚⲚ-ⲀⲢⲀ ⲘⲈⲚⲚ-Ⲁ-ⲖⲰ·
ⲄⲀ-Ⲕ-ⲈⲚⲀⲈ ⲀⳠ-Ⲕ-ⲈⲚⲀⲈ·
'And she, being barren, did not bear either son or daughter.'

Browne's grammatical analysis can only be constructed from his commentary:

mir-a 'being barren,' adjunctive of *mir-*. [...] *ag-(a)* adjunctive (for the elision § 2.5.1b) of *ag-*, *ak-* 'to sit,' here used to indicate habitual action, [...] similarly in modern Dongolese Nubian (Armbruster 1960, §§ 3831–3843) as well as in Nobiin (Khalil 1999, 103); *-ende...ounnara mennalo* 'she did not bear,' the negative element *-ende* reinforces the negative verb *men-* (§ 3.9.5a) [...] *ounnara* is the predicative of the preterite I verbid [...] joined with *men* in the predicative periphrastic construction. *men-nalo*: present indicative, reinforced with emphatic *-lo*; (§ 3.10; it is here topicalizing, according to Satzinger 1990, § 22); here presumably the preterite notion is conveyed by the tense of *ounnara,* though with the negative verb *men-* we frequently find the present when the preterite is expected [...] In all the ex-

7   Browne, *The Old Nubian Miracle of St. Menas,* pp. 5, 24f.
8   El-Guzuuli & Van Gerven Oei, *The Miracle of Saint Mina,* pp. 21; 64–7.

amples now known, the emphasizing postposition -lo is attached to the verb. (§ 3.9.7c): see e.g. 2.1–2 *konmennalo* 'she did not have.'

In contrast to this at the first glace rather eclectic analysis, Vincent van Gerven Oei presents a new approach. His interlinear glossing enables the reader to follow the analysis. You find the following morphological parsing[9]:

ⲧⲁⲡ-ⲟⲛ	ⲙⲓⲣ-ⲁ	ⲁⲅ-ⲉⲛⲇⲉ	ⲟⲩⲛⲛ-ⲁⲣⲁ
3SG-C	be.barren-PRED	remain-NEG	bear-PT1.PRED

ⲙⲉⲛⲛ-ⲁ-ⲗⲱ	ⲅⲁ-ⲕ-ⲉⲛⲇⲉ	ⲁⲥ-ⲕ-ⲉⲛⲇⲉ
NEG-PRED-FOC	son-ACC-NEG	daughter-ACC-NEG

Van Gerven Oei translates: 'And she bore neither son nor daughter, remaining barren.'

His further commentary states:

> *ag-* 'to remain': with negative suffix *-ende,* dependent on the negation *men-*. The construction *mir-a ag-* is a common 'light verb' or 'adjunctive' construction, in which *ag-* supports the semantic content of *mir-*. Following Browne, *ag-* should be interpreted here as a habitual [...] In Dongolawi and Nobiin, the adjunctive usage of this verb has developed into a habitual prefix *aag-* (Werner 1987, § 6.2.4; Bechhaus-Gerst 2011, p. 163); [...] It seems that *men-* is always marked with *-lo* (ONG § 3.9.7c); [...].

While the last example is far more comprehensible, the comparison of the two approaches reveals differences in the applied terminology which again further complicates the understanding of the analysis.

To illustrate that point, we get into further detail by turning to some specific grammatical questions that derive from the two approaches. In his commentary from 1994, Browne analyses *mira* and *ag-(a)-ende* as two adjunctives and further specifies the use of *ag-* 'to sit' indicating a habitual action like in modern Nubian languages. The negative suffix *-ende* connects the expression with the negative verb *mennalo*. The preterite I predicative *ounnara* and the present

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9   Glossing abbreviations: 1 – first person; 2 – second person; 3 – third person; ADJC – adjunctive; ALL – allative; ATTR – attributive; CONJ – conjunction; DEM – demonstrative; DIR – directive; EMPH – emphatic; JV – juncture vowel; LOC – locative; MC – main clause; NEG – negative; P – plural (verbal forms and pronouns); PART – partitive; PL – plural; PLOBJ – plural object; POSS – possessive; PRED – predicative; PRS – present; PST – past/preterite; PTCP – participle; REFL – reflexive; REL – relative marker; S – singular (verbal forms and pronouns); SC – subordinate clause; SUBJ – subject. Additional abbreviations employed by Browne and/ or Van Gerven Oei: ACC – accusative; C – conjunction; FOC – focus marker; IND – indicative; PT – preterite; SG – singular.

indicative *mennalo* form a 'predicative periphrastic,' topicalized by the suffix *-lo*.

Like Browne, Van Gerven Oei sees *ag-* with the negative suffix *-ende* depending on the negative verb *men-*. He identifies *mira agende* as a 'common light verb' or 'adjunctive construction.'

Even though Van Gerven Oei glosses *mir-a* as a predicative he nevertheless identifies it as an adjunctive, following Browne's commentary. The morphological analysis of *agende* identified by Browne as a second adjunctive is not addressed. Browne, even though identifying both forms as adjunctives, translates them as 'predicative periphrastic.' This shows on the one hand a rather uncommon generalization of the term 'predicative.' On the other hand it demonstrates how grammatical phenomena are applied more and more precisely until their meaning is no longer understandable without further study of the term itself. To understand it, one needs a background in specialized linguistics. For someone who just started to get into the language it is mostly impossible to understand how the translator worked out his translation.

To solve this problem we want to propose several steps. The first one is that we start to discuss a universally valid terminology. To be able to do so the analytical tool of glossing as introduced by Van Gerven Oei is promising. But to be sure that we are talking about the same grammatical phenomena we should refer to the same consistent glossing tool. The Leipzig Glossing Rules developed by the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and the Leipzig University Department of Linguistics are already an internationally accepted standard. They provide rules for interlinear glosses and a standardized list of glossing abbreviations of category labels that we could further develop according to our requirements.[10] Which requirements these exactly are and what category labels need to be added to the list, we should all discuss together. As a platform for this discussion we suggest the medieval Nubia website of Giovanni Ruffini and Grzegorz Ochała.[11]

Our second point addresses the issue of terminology. As stated before Browne's term 'predicative' clearly encompasses very different phenomena. It incorporates nominal phrases, converbs[12] or adjunctives as well as 'verbal nouns.'[13] Under the label 'verbal nouns'

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10 Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Department of Linguistics: The Leipzig Glossing Rules – Conventions for interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. <http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php> (Accessed May 2013).

11 The Medieval Nubia Homepage. <http://www.medievalnubia.info/dev/index.php/Main_Page> (Accessed December 2013).

12 A converb is a not fully marked finite verb. In the sentence 'He stepped out of his house, walked down the road and met his friend.,' the verb 'he stepped out' is fully marked, while the converbs 'walked down' and 'met' are lacking the pronominal subject.

13 Cf. Weber & Weschenfelder, "The polyvalent –a."

Browne again includes not only the 'predicative' but also something he calls the 'verbid.'

Further analyzing the use of both forms our research group in Berlin proposes the 'predicative' form to apply to the main statement of the sentence. The verbid would thereby apply to the participle of the subordinate clause. Based on this idea we propose a simplified synopsis of the Old Nubian verbal system (see table 1 overleaf[14]). For the moment we suggest giving up the term predicative and to address the forms subsumed as main clause participles in different tempora instead. This of course needs to be further tested against comparative morphological analysis of all available Old Nubian texts.

We would like to demonstrate the positive side effects of this approach in analyzing another part of the Menas text, a sentence that encompasses several different aspects of a complex structure:

ⲟⲩⲕⲣⲓⲅⲟⲩⲗⲱ ⲟⲩⲉⲗⲗⲟⲉⲓⲟⲛ ⲙⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲧⲗ̄ ⲭⲣⲓⲥⲧⲁ̄ⲛⲟⲥ[ⲓ]ⲅⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲓⲗⲏⲩⲅⲟⲩⲗ ⲡⲉⲥⲣⲁⲛ   *M. 2.10–3.1*
ⲟⲩⲗⲅⲣⲁ· ⲧⲱ̄ⲉ̄ⲕⲁⲅⲟⲩⲉ̄ⲥⲛ̄ ⲅ̄ⲥ̄ⲥⲟⲩ ⲙⲏⲛⲁⲛⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲱ̄ⲧⲛ̄ ⲕⲥ̄ⲥⲉⲗⲁ ⲁⲩⲇⲗ̄ⲅⲟⲩⲕⲁ
ⲧⲁⲣⲓⲁ̄ ⲡⲉⲥⲥⲛⲁ

At first the structure of the sentence appears to be rather complex. Yet by structuring it in the proposed way according to main and subordinate clause structure it becomes easier to grasp.

ⲟⲩⲕⲣ-ⲓ-ⲅⲟⲩ-ⲗⲱ	ⲟⲩⲉⲗ-ⲗⲟ-ⲉⲓⲟⲛ	ⲙⲁⲛ	ⲉⲧ̄ⲧ-ⲗ̄
day-JV-PL-PART	one-LOC-CONJ	DEM	woman-SUBJ

ⲭⲣⲓⲥⲧⲁ̄ⲛⲟⲥ[-ⲓ]-ⲅⲟⲩ-ⲛ	
Christian-(JV)-PL-POSS[15]	

ⲉⲓⲗⲏⲩ-ⲅⲟⲩ-ⲗ	ⲡⲉⲥ-ⲣⲁⲛ
marshland inhabitants[16]-PL-SUBJ	talk-3P.PRS

ⲟⲩⲗⲅⲣ-ⲁ·	ⲧⲱ̄ⲉ̄ⲕⲁ-ⲅⲟⲩ-ⲉ̄-ⲥⲛ̄
hear-ADJC	miracle-PL-PRED-REL

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14 This table is a tentative result of the work in the Old Nubian research group in Berlin (2003–7) and is based on an idea of Frank Kammerzell.

15 The gloss corresponds to Browne's 'genitive.' To avoid a mix-up with Indo-European case-endings we prefer the term 'possessive.' We keep 'directive' instead of 'accusative' as well.

16 This translation follows Khalil, "ⲉⲓⲗⲏⲩ." He argued against Zylahrz, *Grundzüge der nubischen Grammatik im christlichen Frühmittelalter*, 133. Zylarz translated ⲉⲓⲗⲏⲩⲅⲟⲩⲗ as 'women' and proposed a root *il* for 'woman' referring to supposed modern Nubian parallels *el-de*, pl. *wede* and *édu*, pl. *ēlí* by arguing for the same relation as the word ⲉⲧ̄ⲧⲓ. Khalil argues instead that the word ⲉⲓⲗⲏⲩⲅⲟⲩⲗ derives from the Greek loanword οἱ ἐλεῖοι that refers to the people of the coastal strip between the Meroitic and the Serbonidic Lake. In the form it is used in the text it refers to the inhabitants of this marshland. Since this is the setting of the Menas legend we consider this a fitting translation of the term.

Table 1 Synopsis of the Old Nubian verbal system

	Participle	1 S	2 S	3 S	1 P	2 P	3 P
Present SC	-ⲓⲁ*	-ⲓⲡⲓ	-ⲓⲛ	-ⲓⲛ		-ⲓⲡⲟⲩ	-ⲓⲣⲁⲛ
Present MC	-ⲓⲣⲁ	-ⲓⲡⲉ	-ⲓⲛⲁ	-ⲓⲛⲁ		-ⲓⲡⲟ	-ⲓⲣⲁⲛⲁ
Preterite 1 SC	-ⲟⲗ	-ⲁⲡⲓ	-ⲁⲛ	-ⲁⲛ		-ⲁⲡⲟⲩ	-ⲟⲩⲁⲛ
Preterite 1 MC	-ⲁⲣⲁ	-ⲁⲡⲉ	-ⲁⲛⲁ	-ⲁⲛⲁ		-ⲁⲡⲟ	-ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲁ
Preterite 2 SC	-ⲓⲥⲗ	-ⲓⲥⲓ	-ⲓⲥⲓⲛ	-ⲓⲥⲓⲛ		-ⲓⲥⲟⲩ	-ⲓⲥⲁⲛ
Preterite 2 MC	(-ⲓⲥ[ⲓⲣ]ⲁ)†	-ⲓⲥⲉ	-ⲓⲥⲓⲛⲁ	-ⲓⲥⲓⲛⲁ		-ⲓⲥⲟ	-ⲓⲥⲁⲛⲁ
Future SC	-ⲁⲇⲓⲗ / -ⲇⲗ	-ⲁⲡⲡⲓ / -ⲁⲡⲡⲉ	-ⲁⲛ / -ⲇⲓⲛ	-ⲁⲛ / -ⲇⲓⲛ		-ⲁⲡⲡⲟⲩ / -ⲇⲓⲡⲟⲩ	-ⲁⲡⲡⲁⲛ / -ⲇⲓⲣⲁⲛ
Future MC	-ⲁⲡⲡⲁ / -ⲇⲓⲣⲁ	-ⲇⲓⲡⲓ / -ⲇⲓⲡⲉ	-ⲁⲛⲛⲁ / -ⲇⲓⲛⲁ	-ⲁⲛⲛⲁ / -ⲇⲓⲛⲁ		-ⲁⲡⲡⲟ / -ⲇⲓⲡⲟ	-ⲁⲡⲡⲁⲛⲁ / -ⲇⲓⲣⲁⲛⲁ
Admirative Present		-ⲓ̄ⲙⲉ	-ⲓ̄ⲙⲁ	-ⲓ̄ⲙⲁ	-ⲓ̄ⲙⲟ		-ⲓ̄ⲙⲁⲛⲁ
Admirative Future		-ⲁⲇⲓ̄ⲙⲉ	-ⲁⲇⲓ̄ⲙⲁ	-ⲁⲇⲓ̄ⲙⲁ	-ⲁⲇⲓ̄ⲙⲟ		-ⲁⲇⲓ̄ⲙⲁⲛⲁ
Finalis		-ⲓⲕⲟⲩⲟ̄ⲁ̇	-ⲓⲕⲟⲛⲛⲟⲁ̇	-ⲓⲕⲟⲛⲛⲟⲁ̇		-ⲓⲕⲟⲩⲟ̄ⲁ̇	-ⲓⲕⲟⲁⲛⲛⲟⲁ̇
Conditional		-ⲓⲕⲟⲩⲟ̄	-ⲓⲕⲟⲛⲛⲟ	-ⲓⲕⲟⲛⲛⲟ		-ⲓⲕⲟⲩⲟ̄	-ⲓⲕⲟⲁⲛⲛⲟ
Imperative			-ⲉ(ⲥⲱ)	-ⲁⲙⲥⲱ		-ⲁⲛⲁ(ⲥⲱ)	-ⲁⲛⲁ(ⲥⲱ)
Vetitive			-ⲁⲧⲁⲙ(ⲏ)	-ⲁⲧⲁⲙ(ⲏ)		-ⲁⲧⲁⲛⲕⲉ(ⲥⲱ)	
Jussive Present			-ⲁⲙ(ⲏ)				
Jussive Preterite 1			-ⲁⲛⲁⲥⲱ				-ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲁⲥⲱ
Jussive Preterite 2							-ⲓⲥⲁⲛⲁⲙⲏ

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* Note the frequent replacement of /i/ by /e/ and of /o/ by /a/.

† -isira is not demonstrably attested and the short form -isa appears only in attributive constructions as BROWNE stated in Old Nubian Grammar, p. 50 n. 49.

ⲅ̄ⲥ̄ⲥ-ⲟⲩ	ⲙⲏⲛⲁ-ⲛⲁ	ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲱ̄ⲧ-ⲛ̄	ⲕ̄ⲥ̄ⲥⲉ-ⲗⲁ
holy-ATTR	Mena-POSS	Mareotis-POSS	church-LOC

ⲁⲩ-ⲟ̄-ⲗ̄-ⲅⲟⲩ-ⲕⲁ		ⲧⲁⲣ-ⲗⲁ̄	ⲡⲉⲥ-ⲥⲛⲁ
make-PLOBJ-PTCP.PRS-PL-DIR		3S-ALL	say-3S.PST2.MC

The analysis reveals that the main clause is 'that woman while hearing said to herself,' with 'that woman' marked by a subject marker. Yet there is a second subject marker denoting 'Christian marshlanders.' The verbal structure associated with that subject by the plural form, however, shows that it should be analyzed as the subject of the subordinate clause, thereby revealing the object of 'that women hearing.' The next analytical step thus produces: 'That woman, while hearing Christian marshlanders talk, said to herself.' The remaining information of the text provides further detail on the subject of the Christian marshlanders talk – 'the miracles St. Mena performed in the church of Mareotis' – which is marked by a directive clause marker. Thereby the whole sentence is to be translated as:

> 'On one of those days that woman, while hearing Christian marshlanders talk about the miracles which St. Mena performed in the church of Mareotis, said to herself:'

What is marked here as subordinate forms Browne also called subjunctive, yet in the current state of the art we simply do not know enough to presume any modal qualities of this form and should not use such a pre-judgmental philological term. Without further systematical analysis of all records to clarify the distinction between the forms we should not use terms that transfer further interpretive meanings. Our proposal uses more neutral terms referring to the sentence structure instead. Thereby we get a simpler verbal system of main and subordinate clauses free from preconceived opinions. Of course this verbal system can and should be improved by further analysis.

Bearing this in mind we want to return back to our initial Menas sentence and provide a new analysis for the verbal forms. For better comparison we reconstruct glosses for Browne's analysis based on his commentaries.

Browne:

ⲧⲁⲣ-ⲟⲛ	ⲙⲓⲣ-ⲁ	ⲁⲅ(-ⲁ)-ⲉⲛⲇⲉ	ⲟⲩⲛⲛ-ⲁⲣⲁ
3SG-CONJ	be.barren-ADJC	sit-ADJC-NEG	bear-PT1.PRED
		(hab. action)	(pred. periphras.)

ⲘⲈⲚ-ⲚⲀ-ⲗⲱ		ⲄⲀ-ⲕ-ⲈⲚⲆⲈ	ⲀⳠ-ⲕ-ⲈⲚⲆⲈ
NEG-3SG.PRS.IND-EMPH		son-DIR-NEG	daughter-DIR-NEG

'And she, being barren, did not bear either son or daughter.'

Van Gerven Oei:

ⲦⲀⲢ-ⲟⲛ	ⲘⲒⲢ-Ⲁ	ⲀⲄ-ⲈⲚⲆⲈ	ⲞⲨⲚⲚ-ⲀⲡⲀ
3SG-C	be.barren-PRED	remain-NEG	bear-PT1.PRED

ⲘⲈⲚⲚ-Ⲁ-ⲗⲱ		ⲄⲀ-ⲕ-ⲈⲚⲆⲈ	ⲀⳠ-ⲕ-ⲈⲚⲆⲈ
NEG-PRED-FOC		son-ACC-NEG	daughter-ACC-NEG

'And she bore neither son nor daughter, remaining barren.'

Taking the aforementioned *mira agende,* with Browne, as an adjunctive form standing in ellipse means separating both complexes with regard to the content. Further parallels in the text illustrate that construction.

On page 12 of the Menas text (*M.* 12.3–7), for instance, a sequence of adjunctives is translated by: '[the egg – this one which he had eaten –] suddenly became a living fowl, came out from under him, stood up and immediately squawked.'

Bearing this in mind one would have to translate our problematic passage as: 'And she, barren and staying (so).' Nevertheless, Browne translates it a composite verb and thereby analyses it as a periphrastic construction. However, his own previous analysis of verbal structures stated that such periphrastic forms are constructed by a verbid, predicative or indicative preceding *ein-* or its equivalents.[17] Yet in this case two adjunctives are reconstructed to form a periphrastic construction and moreover, the last of the adjunctives again should be linked to the following periphrastic construction.

Instead of supposing an elided adjunctive our approach considers the *-en* in *agende* as part of the verbal ending of a subordinate clause verbal form and not, contra Browne and Van Gerven Oei, as a negative suffix *-ende* referring to *mennalo*:

ⲦⲀⲢ-ⲟⲛ	ⲘⲒⲢ-Ⲁ	ⲀⲄ-ⲈⲚ-ⲆⲈ
3S-CONJ	be.barren-ADJC	remain-3S.PRS-CONJ

ⲞⲨⲚⲚ-ⲀⲡⲀ	ⲘⲈⲚ-ⲚⲀ-ⲗⲱ
bear-PTCP.PST1.MC	NEG-3S.PST1.MC-EMPH

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17 Browne, *Old Nubian Grammar*, pp. 59–62.

ⲅⲁ(ⲗ)-ⲕ(ⲁ)-ⲉⲛⲇⲉ   ⲁⲥ-ⲕ(ⲁ)-ⲉⲛⲇⲉ
son-DIR-CONJ.NEG   daughter-DIR-CONJ.NEG

Furthermore, unlike van Gerven Oei, we do not see the -*a*- in *mennalo* as a predicative but like Browne as a finite verbal form constructed with a suffix -*na* since the second -*n*- would otherwise remain unanalyzed. Even though our analysis implies a reconstruction of a finite preterite form, we also acknowledge the possibility of a present form. The elided initial vowel of the verbal ending prevents a final decision. This is however another topic which needs to be examined by comparative studies.

Since we identify *ounnara mennalo* as a main clause construction, the main statement of the sentence is now 'She did not bear, neither son nor daughter,' and is further supported by the subordinate statement 'while she remained barren.' The whole sentence is thereby reconstructed as

> 'And she, while she remained barren, she did not bear, neither son nor daughter.'

Thanks to the internet and initiatives like the development of the Medieval Nubia homepage we are now able to immediately discuss and exchange ideas. Yet as already stated this is only productive if we understand what we are talking about. To illustrate our point we want to refer to Plisch's comparison of the major linguistic approaches to Sahidic-Coptic grammar[18] according to which what Till called Optative was referred to by Shisha-Halevy as Causative Imperative while what Shisha-Halevy called Optative was referred to by Till as Futur III. Since our analytic approaches to Old Nubian grammar are just beginning, we still have the opportunity to avoid such confusion and we should take it.

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18 PLISCH, *Einführung in die koptische Sprache*, p. 113.

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