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Edited by Leena Pietilä-Castrén and Marjaana Vesterinen

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# Everything is Relative. The Relative Clause Constructions of an Egyptian Scribe Writing Greek\*

Marja Vierros

This article presents some interesting linguistic features of the Greek language written by certain notaries of the Ptolemaic period in Egypt, especially of the language of Hermias, a notary in Pathyris from 109-98 BC. Hermias' language has drawn attention as strikingly erroneous, a verdict which I shall argue is somewhat simplistic. An example of the earlier comments on Hermias' language is the statement of B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt (the editors of some of these papyri in 1897) that the papyri written by Hermias "...all contain grammatical blunders in greater or less profusion, while the constructions are not infrequently so confused that the legal interpretation of the documents written by him, if they were ever used as evidence, must have been sometimes extremely difficult" (P. Grenf. II 25, see also P. Grenf. II 26 and 33). E. Mayser, in his *Grammatik der Griechischen Papyri*, says that some officials show a total lack of basic language skills with the result that official documents are full of mistakes. Hermias above all hardly brings one sentence to the end in a normal way and does not control congruence in cases at all.<sup>1</sup> The language of the notaries from the Pathyrite nome has not, however, been previously studied *per se*. I will attempt to illustrate that Hermias and other notaries had their own variety of Greek, which should not be judged simply as 'bad' language. There are linguistic and psychological explanations to be found for their variety of Greek. Their 'incorrect' grammar can partly be due to their working methods, partly to imperfect learning or second language attrition. Thus, the constructions from their first language (L1), Egyptian, come forward.

## The *agoranomoi* of the Pathyrite Nome

Quite a large number of Greek and Demotic Egyptian documents from the second and the first centuries BC have survived in Pathyris and in the other nearby towns and villages, for example, Krokodilopolis and Hermonthis. Pathyris was a village in Upper Egypt, not far from Thebes. The documents are traditionally divided into several family archives, but most of the Greek documents are sale and loan contracts which are written and confirmed by an *agoranomos*-official (ἀγορανόμος) or his representative. The

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\* This article is based on a paper given at the seminar 'Scribes, language and tradition of texts' of the Finnish Institute at Athens, which was partly the same paper as 'The Language of Hermias, an Egyptian Notary from Pathyris (c. 100 B.C.)' given at the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Congress of Papyrology, to be published in *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Wien, 22.-28. Juli 2001*. I would like to thank H. Halla-aho, M. Leiwo, E. Salmenkivi and the referees for valuable suggestions and corrections for this article.

<sup>1</sup> Mayser 1934 §169c Anm. 1b.

*agoranomoi* acted as public notaries in Egypt. My material at this point consists of 46 documents written by Hermias and 70 written by other notaries in the area. The *agoranomos*-document was signed by the notary responsible for the document, and the name of the *agoranomos* was also mentioned inside the text.<sup>2</sup> These signatures offer very valuable information because, after comparing the handwriting and also taking into account the language situation in Pathyris, I think that it is highly probable that the notary who signed a document also wrote it in his own hand.<sup>3</sup> If some of these documents were written by an apprentice and signed by the *agoranomos*, the *agoranomos* was still in charge of the language. Thus, it can be considered his 'idioscript'.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the signature provides us with a quite secure identification of the actual writer of a certain text. This kind of information is quite exceptional and rarely found in the Greek papyri.

Previous studies on the *agoranomoi* in the Pathyrite area have shown quite clearly that there existed a family of notaries, *agoranomoi*.<sup>5</sup> Hermias as well as his father, uncle and cousin were all notaries who wrote Greek documents. Hermias and his relatives used Greek and Hellenised names when functioning as *agoranomoi*, but they also had Egyptian names which were used in Demotic documents.<sup>6</sup> The Egyptian name of Hermias, however, has not survived in any Demotic document. His father was Patscous in Egyptian documents and Asklepiades in Greek documents. He was the *agoranomos* in Krokodilopolis in 127 and 126 BC. Hermias' uncle Areios, Pelaias in Egyptian documents, was a representative of the *agoranomos* in Pathyris from 132 to 123. Hermias' cousin Ammonios, Pakoibis in Egyptian, was a representative of the *agoranomos* and *agoranomos* in Pathyris before Hermias, between 114 and 109, and possibly two years after Hermias, between 98 and 97 (I will return to this below). Hermias, then, acted as a representative of the *agoranomos* in Pathyris from 109 to 98, a total of twelve years. The native language of this family was most likely Egyptian.<sup>7</sup>

As mentioned above, both Greek and Demotic documents have survived from Pathyris. Almost all the Greek documents are *agoranomos*-documents; there are very few letters or other private documents. Apparently Pathyris, where Hermias worked, was an Egyptian-speaking environment, where there were only a few people apart from Hermias' family who were able to write Greek. Two testaments written in Greek tell us

<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the document, the *agoranomos* could be indicated, e.g.: ἐν Παθύρει ἐφ' Ἡλιοδώρου ἀγορανόμου and his representative, e.g.: ἐν Παθύρει ἐφ' Ἑρμίου τοῦ παρὰ Πανίσκου ἀγορανόμου (in fact, the name of the representative was not necessarily mentioned at the beginning of the document, this practise was used mainly by Hermias and his cousin Ammonios and it could imply that the power of the office of Pathyris was increasing in the time of Hermias and Ammonios, see Pestman 1985, 11). At the end of the document, the signature of the *agoranomos* was, e.g., Πάνισκος χειρ(ι)σταυ(ρ) and the signature of the representative, e.g., Ἑρμίας ὁ παρὰ Πανίσκου χειρ(ι)σταυ(ρ).

<sup>3</sup> This statement is based on the photographs included in the editions; this is by no means a comprehensive sampling.

<sup>4</sup> I assume that idiolect is not a valid term here since we are dealing only with written material.

<sup>5</sup> See Pestman 1978 and Pestman 1989, 148.

<sup>6</sup> W. Clarysse has discussed the question of double names of officials and it seems that whether an official used a Greek or a Hellenised name depended on the nature of the office he held: if the office was considered to be Greek in character, the official used his Greek name and if Egyptian, he used his Egyptian name, no matter what his ethnic origin. See Clarysse 1985, 57-66. Hermias' father and uncle had the title 'scribe' (*sh*) also in Egyptian documents (Pestman 1978, 208).

<sup>7</sup> Pestman 1985, 16-23 has a synoptic table of all the *agoranomos*-documents. Pestman 1978, 208 and Pestman 1989, 148 give the family tree.

about the language situation in Pathyris. The testaments have witness-statements, but in the first testament from 126 BC, only one witness was able to write his statement in Greek, four others wrote their statements in Demotic. The scribe comments that “these four persons write in native Egyptian letters (τοῖς ἐγχωρίοις γράμμασιν) because there are not enough persons able to write Greek in the vicinity”. The fifth witness, who did write in Greek, was Ammonios, son of Areios, the cousin of Hermias mentioned above and a notary himself. In 123 there was no longer need for Egyptian statements. Five persons wrote their witness-statements in Greek: one was again Ammonios, the other was Hermias, the third was Esthladas, son of Dryton, who was a Greek from Ptolemais, and the fourth was Ptolemaios, son of Asklepiades, probably the brother of Hermias. The name of the fifth witness has not survived.<sup>8</sup> All this gives us a picture of Pathyris as a place where very few had skills in Greek, even if they had a Hellenised status.<sup>9</sup>

These testaments mention the ages of Hermias and Ammonios, allowing us to estimate that they were in their forties when they started to work as notaries. That they both have a title referring to a military background (Πέρσης τῶν μισθοφόρων ἱππέων) opens the possibility that they had learned their Greek in the army. Since we know, however, that their fathers had been functioning as notaries writing Greek, it is equally likely that they had learned Greek at home or as apprentices in their fathers’ offices. It must have been very convenient for the Ptolemaic bureaucracy that officials were able to use both Greek and Egyptian because then they could act as interpreters and officials at the same time.

### Language Attrition?

An important question is, when and how perfectly had Hermias and the others learned Greek? It is, however, very difficult to answer this question and one can only put forth ‘educated guesses’. In studies of language attrition, it is usually essential to first define the level which the object of study has reached in learning his/her second language. Has s/he been fully competent in the second language? Roger W. Andersen has defined some methodological and terminological points concerning language attrition. He uses the term LA for the “\*attriter”, i.e., “a person whose competence in language has eroded as a result of language attrition” and the term LC meaning a “linguistically-competent” person, “one who is fully fluent and competent in language X, whether as a native or a non-native speaker”.<sup>10</sup> Andersen also emphasises that, for each linguistic feature, we need to know how normal LCs use that feature, and how the LA who is the subject of the study used that feature prior to language attrition. In other words, we need to have a base-line comparison. If we do not have data of the subject’s prior use of language as an LC, we

<sup>8</sup> Pap. Lugd. Bat. XIX 4 is a copy of the testament from 126 BC, the signatures have survived only in the copy. Lines 18-21: οὗτοι δὲ τ[έ]σσερες . . . τοῖς ἐγχωρίοις [ ] γράμμασιν διὰ τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἐπὶ τῶν τόπων τοῦς ἱστούς “Ελλήνων”. The latter testament is SB XVIII 13168 (= P. Caire 10388, AfP 1, 62-5 (1901)). See also Pestman 1978, 206-7.

<sup>9</sup> A person who handled his businesses in Greek *agoranomos*-documents in Pathyris often had the status designation Πέρσης τῆς ἐπιγονῆς: see Oates 1963 (esp. 109-111) and, for a slightly different conclusion, Pestman 1963a - 1963b and Boswinkel and Pestman 1982, 56-63. In the Ptolemaic period, the designation seems to have indicated a lower Hellenised status. See also Lada 1997 about ‘those of the *Epigone*’, though he excludes the designation Πέρσης τῆς ἐπιγονῆς.

<sup>10</sup> Andersen 1982, 83-4.

can use data from other LCs for comparison. It would be important to know if Hermias had been linguistically competent in the first place, i.e., to be able "to distinguish true attrition from a failure to acquire language" as Andersen puts it. It is also possible that an LA has never been an LC. For example, in certain immigrant communities some second or third generation members of a community know something of the original language of the community, but have never learned it properly or used it outside the family circumstances. In that case, we could speak of attrition of community language.<sup>11</sup> These aspects must be kept in mind when studying the language of the *agoranomoi* of the Pathyrite nome. We have extremely limited data. We know only how the *agoranomoi* used Greek when writing *agoranomos*-documents and can use their texts as comparisons to each other and do some estimate on their language skills based on limited historical information. We can perhaps suggest that the family of *agoranomoi* formed a kind of community who were passing on the Greek language in an otherwise Egyptian village. Hermias, who makes more 'mistakes' than the others, is also one of the last ones of the line of *agoranomoi* known to us. Perhaps the younger generation has not acquired the language as well as the elder and their situation could be interpreted as community or family language attrition.

### The Relative Constructions

There are certain linguistic features that give us a hint that the L1 of the writer was Egyptian. The easiest way of identifying scribes whose L1 is Egyptian is the uninflected use of personal names when writing Greek.<sup>12</sup> This is also true in Hermias' Greek. He often leaves the personal names in the nominative case when they should be inflected and sometimes inflects them incorrectly. However, sometimes the names are inflected correctly. I give only one example here though these instances are numerous.<sup>13</sup>

Ε 1: τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς Πετεσοῦχος καὶ Φαγῶνις καὶ Ψεννήσις (P. Grenf. II 25, 103 BC).  
'To the brothers Petesouchos and Phagonis and Psennesis.'

Example 1 has the dative in the defining word: 'to the brothers' but the names are left in the nominative. The idea in all instances where names and their definitions are in question seems to be that the first word matters and the rest are parenthetic. If the intended case was visible in one word, there was no need to inflect the rest of the words of the same semantic unit.

Relative clause constructions form their own interesting group in the language of Hermias and other notaries. Since the documents are simple contracts, their contents and formulae do not vary much. Relative clauses are used mainly in one certain formula, the one I call a 'warranty formula' at the end of the document. The basic outline of the formula with singular masculine subjects should go as follows:

προπωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῆς ὀνῆς N.N. ὁ ἀποδόμενος, ὃν ἐδέξατο N.N. ὁ πριάμενος. 'Negotiator and warrantor of the sale is N.N. the seller, whom the buyer N.N.

<sup>11</sup> Andersen 1982, 85.

<sup>12</sup> See Pestman 1978, 205 and 1989, 150-1.

<sup>13</sup> I deal with features other than relative clause constructions in Vierros (forthcoming).



accepts (i.e., as negotiator and warrantor)’ or sometimes with a longer beginning: Πρωπωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνην ταύτην πάντων Ν.Ν. ὁ ἀποδόμενος... ‘Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is N.N. the seller...’

The writers of this formula are liable to make mistakes because the subject changes in gender and in number from document to document: the seller or the sellers are male or female as well as the buyer or the buyers. Mistakes occur in the number and gender of the relative pronoun and in the number of the verb *δέχομαι*. It should be noted that the relative pronoun is always correctly in the accusative case. The definitions ‘seller’ and ‘buyer’ are in most instances in the right gender and number as well. The following examples present the confusions in the relative pronoun. E2-E7 are by Hermias, E8 is from a document signed by Heliodoros.

E 2: προπωλήτρια καὶ βεβαιώτρια τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνην ταύτην Θαίβις ἡ ἀποδόμενη, οὗς ἐδέξαντο Φίβις καὶ Ὡρος οἱ πριάμενοι (P. Mil. I 2, 104 BC). ‘Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Thaibis the seller (f.sg.), whom (m.pl.) Phibis and Horos, the buyers (m.pl.), accept.’

The relative pronoun οὗς (m. pl.) should be ἥν, (f. sing.) correlating with the seller, a woman named Thaibis. But Hermias already has in mind the following persons, the two buyers, Fibis and Horos, since the pronoun is the masculine plural.

E 3: προπωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνην ταύτην πάντων Πετεαρσεμθεῦς ὁ ἀποδόμενος, (vac.) οὗς ἐδέξαντο Ἑτπεσοῦχος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ ὄνουμενοι οἱ πριάμενοι (SB XX 14393, 100 BC). ‘Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Petcharsemtheus the seller (m.sg.), whom (m.pl.) the buyers, Hetpesouchos and the buyers with him (m.pl.), accepts.’

Example 3 has a similar mistake with the relative pronoun as E2. The pronoun should be singular ὃν instead of plural οὗς. But also the verb is in the wrong number, it should be in the plural: ἐδέξαντο, since the subject has clearly been understood as plural as the word οἱ πριάμενοι shows. However, earlier in the same document the verb ἐπρίατο is also in the singular with the same subject as here: Ἑτπεσοῦχος καὶ οἱ τοῦτου ἀδελφοί (Hetpesouchos and his brothers). There is also a mistake in the participle ὄνουμενοι, which should either be in the nominative, ὀνούμενοι, as are the following οἱ πριάμενοι, or in the dative: σὺν αὐτῷ ὀνουμενῶ. Another document from the previous year deals with same persons. Petcharsemtheus sells land to Hetpesouchos and his brothers. There is a mistake again in the pronoun, but the verb is correct, in the plural:

E 4: προπωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνην ταύτην πάντων Πετεαρσεμθεῦς ὁ ἀποδόμενος, οὗς ἐδέξαντο Ἑτπεσοῦχος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ ὄνουμενοι οἱ πριάμενοι (P. Grenf. II 32, 101 BC). ‘Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Petcharsemtheus the seller (m.sg.), whom (m.pl.) the buyers, Hetpesouchos and the buyers with him (m.pl.), accept.’

E 4 is actually word-for-word the same as E3, except for the number of the verb. The complete documents are similar too, but the piece of land is different. This means that the long definition of the location of the land, i.e., the list of the neighbours, was



different. Thus at least that part was not suitable for direct copying, if ever that was the method used by the notaries. There are also a few other discrepancies between the texts: the patronymic of the buyer Hetpesouchos is Νεχθανούφιος in SB XX 14393 (E3), whereas in P. Grenf. II 32 (E4) it is Νεχθανούπιος.<sup>14</sup> The verb ἐπρίατο is in the singular in SB, actually in accordance with the warranty formula, where the buyers are also referred to with a singular verbform. The signature in SB is Ἐρμίας ὁ παρὰ Πάνισκος κεχρη(μάτικα), in P. Grenf. Ἐρμίας ὁ παρὰ Πανίσκου κεχρη(μάτικα).

E 5: προπωλήτρια καὶ βεβαιώτρια τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνῃν ταύτην [πάν]των Θαΐβις ἡ ἀποδομένη, ὃν ἐδέξατο Πανοβχοῦνις ὁ πριάμενος (P. Adler G8, 104 BC). 'Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Thaibis the seller (f.sg.), whom (m.sg.) Panobchounis the buyer (m.sg.) accepts.'

E 6: προπωλητής καὶ βεβαιωτής τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνῃν ταύτην πάντων Πετσαρσεμθεῦς ὁ ἀποδόμενος, ὃν ἐδέξατο Σεννήσις ἡ πριάμενη (P. Lips. I 104 BC). 'Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Peteharsemtheus the seller (m.sg.), whom (f.sg.) Sennesis the buyer (f.sg.) accepts.'

E 7: προπωλήτρια καὶ βεβαιώτρια τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνῃν ταύτην πάντων Τίτως ἡ ἀποδομένη, ὃν ἐδέξατο Πετσαρσεμθεῦς ὁ πριάμενος (P. Lips. II 99 BC). 'Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Titos the seller (f.sg.), whom (m.sg.) Petcharsemtheus the buyer (m.sg.) accepts.'

E 8: προπωληταὶ καὶ βεβαιωταὶ τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνῃν ταύτην πάντων Σαλῆς καὶ Τανεμίου οἱ ἀποδόμενοι, ὃν ἐδέξατο [Ν]ημεσῆσις ἡ πριάμενη (BGU III 996, 107 BC). 'Negotiators and warrantors of everything that is connected to this sale are Sales and Tanemius the sellers (m.pl.), whom (f.sg.) Nemesesis the buyer (f.sg.) accepts.'

Examples 2-8 all follow the same pattern consistently. The number and gender for the relative pronoun has been selected as if it referred to the subject of the subordinate clause. This, of course, is not the correct way to form relative clauses in Greek. The relative pronoun should follow the number and gender of its antecedent which in these cases is the subject of the main clause, i.e., the seller(s). Since this is not the way relative clauses were formed in examples 2-8, we can try to find an explanation from Demotic, the L1 of the writers. In Demotic, leaving out situations where the subject of the main clause and the relative clause are co-referential, the most common way to form relative clauses is to use a relative converter (RC) *nt* + a morpheme *iw* which is called a circumstantial form (CF) among Egyptologists + a suffix pronoun which indicates, or actually is, the subject of the relative clause. Then follows a verbal phrase, which is called adverbial, which includes the predicate and the referent to the antecedent of the relative clause. Therefore, the person, number and gender of the subject of the relative clause are expressed in the suffix pronoun.<sup>15</sup> The suffix pronoun

<sup>14</sup> The graphic interchange of aspirated and voiced plosives with their voiceless counterparts was one characteristic feature of Egyptian Koine Greek (Horrocks 1997, 62).

<sup>15</sup> Johnson 2000, 64-7.

is always tightly connected to *iw* (and thus, in a way, it can be understood as a kind of inflectional ending to the ‘relative pronoun’ formed by RC+CF). An example of this is from Johnson (Johnson 2000, 67 E155):

|                              |                   |                             |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>n<sub>3</sub> mt.w(t)</i> | <i>nt iw iw=k</i> | <i>d n-im=w</i>             |
| ‘the words                   | which <b>you</b>  | are saying (them)’          |
| (pl.)                        | (RC+CF 2 m. s.)   | (inf.+oblique object (pl.)) |

A rough, caricatured, example of the demotic construction in English sentence would be something like “The house who the girls bought it is red” meaning “The house which the girls bought is red”.

This seems to be the key to a greater understanding of Hermias’ structures. If the suffix pronoun refers to the subject of the relative clause in Demotic, it can be reasonably confused, if the Greek relative pronoun is understood to be in similar position and function. Inevitably then, the Greek pronoun ‘must’ be inflected in order to correlate with the subject of the relative clause. The construction of Demotic replaces the Greek construction.

In example 9, though, Hermias does not follow the logic of E2-E8; the number (plural) for the pronoun has been selected according to the subject of the subordinate clause (four persons), but the feminine gender according to the right antecedent, the seller Siepmous.

E 9: ... Σιεπμοῦς ἡ ἀποδομένη, ἧς ἐδέξαντο Πετεαρσεμθεὺς καὶ Πετεσοῦχος καὶ Φαγώνιος καὶ Ψέννησις. (P. Stras. II 88, 105 BC) ‘...Siepmous the seller (f.sg.), whom (f.pl.) Petcharsemtheus and Petesouchos and Phagonis and Psennesis (m.pl.) accept.’

Only in instances like E10 did Hermias write the warranty formula correctly. In fact they are cases where his typical mistake cannot be detected since both the seller and the buyer are males each acting singly. The relative pronoun *ὃν* can correlate both with the seller and with the buyer, with the result that it is necessarily correct.

E 10: προπωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνῃν ταύτην πάντων Πανοβχοῦνις ὁ ἀποδόμενος, ὃν ἐδέξατο Πετεαρσεμθεὺς ὁ πριάμενος (P. Köln I 50, 99 BC). ‘Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Panobchounis the seller (m.sg.), whom (m.sg.) Petcharsemtheus the buyer (m.sg.) accepts.’

In the next two examples, from 113 and 119 BC, Hermias’ cousin Ammonios was able to produce correct Greek relative constructions.

E 11: προπωλήτρια καὶ βεβαιώτρια Ταθῶτις ἡ ἀποδομένη, ἣν ἐδέξαντο Ταελολοῦς καὶ Πετεαρσεμθεὺς οἱ πριάμενοι (BGU III 994, 113 BC). ‘Negotiator and warrantor is Tathotis the seller (f.sg.), whom (f.sg.) Taelolous and Petcharsemtheus the buyers (f.+m.pl.) accept.’

E 12: βεβαιωτῆς Ἀρκοννήσις ὁ ἀποδόμενος, ὃν ἐδέξατο Ναομῆσις ἡ πριάμενη (BGU III 995 col. III. 9, 110 BC). ‘Warrantor is Harkonnesis the seller (m.sg.), whom (m.sg.) Naomsesis the buyer (f.sg.) accepts.’

It is surprising, then, to find Hermias-like constructions from documents signed by Ammonios a few years later.

E 13: π[ροπ]ωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνην ταύτην πάντων Ἑτπεῖς ἢ ἁποδομένη, ὃν ἐδ[έξ]ατο Ὁρος ὁ πριάμενος (P. Adler G21, 98 BC). ‘Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Hetpees is the seller (f.sg.), whom (m.sg.) Horos the buyer (m.sg.) accepts.’

E 14: προπωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνην ταύτην πάντων Πατοῦς ὁ ἁποδόμενος, ὃν ἐδέξατο Τακοῖβις ἢ πριάμενη (P. Lond. III 1208, p. 19, 97 BC). ‘Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Patous the seller (m.sg.), whom (f.sg.) Takoibis the buyer (f.sg.) accepts.’

Should we interpret this ‘progress’ as attrition? That would be tempting, but a more likely explanation is that the Ammonios who acted as a representative of *agoranomos* Paniskos in year 98 and as an *agoranomos* in year 97 in Pathyris is not the same Ammonios who acted as a notary in Pathyris between 114 and 109 (first a representative of *agoranomos* Heliodoros and then of *agoranomos* Sosos and sometimes calls himself *agoranomos*). Pestman mentions, only incidentally, that this is presumably the same Ammonios.<sup>16</sup> In documents from 114-109, Ammonios wrote the warranty formula six times correctly and not once did he make mistakes in it.<sup>17</sup> Four documents written by Ammonios survive from 98 and 97. Two of them have the erroneous formula (E13 and E14), and one has the formula written correctly, but the pronoun is read with uncertain letters: ρυς (P. Adler 11<sup>18</sup>), the fourth does not have the formula. In the introduction of P. Lond. III 1208 (E14), it is stated that this papyrus introduces us to a new *agoranomos* at Pathyris. His writing is small, in thick strokes, somewhat blurred. One document by Ammonios from 113 is in the same volume (no. 1204, p. 10), and it is said to be written in a rather thick cursive hand. That document was written under the supervision of *agoranomos* Heliodoros, but there is a signature Ἀμμό(νος) κεχρη(μάτι-κα) at the end. Perhaps the comment in the introduction of 1208 means that these two documents were written by different persons or, it can refer only to the person who is the actual *agoranomos*. In 1208 Ammonios is the *agoranomos*.

I am inclined to believe that the Ammonios who worked as a notary in Pathyris between 114 and 109, the cousin of Hermias, is different from the Ammonios who worked as a notary in the years 98–97, whose Greek relative constructions reflect the relative construction of Demotic. If I am right, we have both Ammonios I and Ammonios II in Pathyris, as we also have Hermias I (109-98) and Hermias II (89-88), separated from each other on the grounds of writing and grammar.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Pestman 1978, 205, see also Pestman 1985, 13.

<sup>17</sup> The correct formulae are in P. Strass II 84, BGU III 994, P. Lond. III 1204, P. Strass. II 86, P.L. Bat XIX 6, BGU III 995. In P. Adler 3 the formula is restored. Other documents written by Ammonios in that period do not use the formula.

<sup>18</sup> On the date, see Pestman 1985, 22 and 27.

<sup>19</sup> Pestman 1985, 13. In *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* III (*Studia Hellenistica* 11) Hermias I is under no. 7689, and Hermias II, who was the *agoranomos* in Pathyris in 89-8, is no. 7668 (=7689?). Ammonios is no. 7650.

We have only three documents by Hermias II. He seems to take the confusion with the relative pronoun one step further. The 'logic' of Hermias I is not there.

E 15: προπωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνην ταύτην πάντων Νεχούθης ὁ ἀποδόμενος, ἣν ἐδέξατο Πετεαρσεμθεὺς ὁ πριάμενος (P. Lond. III 1209, p. 20, 89 BC). 'Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Nechouthes the seller (m.sg.), whom (f.sg.) Petcharsemtheus the buyer (m.sg.) accepts.'

E 16: προπωλητῆς καὶ βεβαιωτῆς τῶν κατὰ τὴν ὥνην ταύτην πάντων Πετεαρσεμθεὺς Ἀλμάφιος ὁ ἀποδόμενος, ἣν ἐδέξατο Πετεαρσεμθεὺς Πανεβχούνιος ὁ πριάμενος (P. Lond. III 883, p. 21, 88 BC). 'Negotiator and warrantor of everything that is connected to this sale is Petcharsemtheus, son of Almaphis, the seller (m.sg.), whom (f.sg.) Petcharsemtheus, son of Panebchounis, the buyer (m.sg.) accepts.'

In E 15 and E 16 neither the subject of the main clause nor the subject of the relative clause is feminine, but Hermias II uses a feminine singular relative pronoun. In his third document, the relative pronoun is correctly *ὣν*, the subject in both clauses being one male person (P. Amh. II 51, 88 BC). One possible explanation could be that in E 15 and 16 the sale, *ἡ ὥνή*, has been thought of as the antecedent. That explanation is not supported by the correct instance, though. Has Hermias II been corrected in the meantime by a colleague of his or has he noted his mistake by himself?

Some other relative constructions also occur in *agoranomos*-documents. The mistakes in them seem to confirm the idea which emerged from the examples 2-8. In the following examples, the antecedent for the relative pronoun is a feminine word 'land', *ἡ γῆ*, or a part of the land, *ἡ μερίς* or *ἡ σφαργίς* (in singular or plural). The relative pronoun, however, seems to take the case of the immediately following word, the subject of the relative clause, which in these examples is the masculine 'self', *αὐτός*. Examples 17-20 are all from Hermias I.

E 17: ἀπέδοτο Πατῆς Ποῦριος ... τὴν ἑπάρχουσιν αὐτῷ γῆν ἡπειρον σιτοφόρον ἀδιαιρέτου τῆς οὐσης ἐν τῷ ἀπὸ βορρᾶ πεδίῳ Παθύρεως σφαργίδων τρεῶν, ὣν κ(αὶ) αὐτός ἐωνήσατο παρὰ Πανᾶτος τοῦ Πατῆτος, μιᾶς μὲν γείτονες... (P. Adler G16, 99 BC). 'Pates, son of Poeris, sold ... the undivided grainland (f.sg.) above inundation level belonging to him in the northern plain of Pathyris, consisting of three lots (f.pl.) which (m.sg.) he himself had bought from Panas, son of Pates, of one of which the adjacent areas are...'

The relative pronoun *ὣν* should be *ἣν* correlating with *γῆν*, or *ἧς* if it is thought to correlate with *σφαργίδων*. The word *μιᾶς* is correctly feminine.

E 18: ... τὰς ὑπάρχουσας (pro τὴν ὑπάρχουσιν) αὐτῷ μερίδα γῆς ἡπειρου σιτοφόρου ... ὣν καὶ αὐτός ἐωνήσατο... (P. Lond. III 1206 p. 15, 99 BC). '... the part (f.sg.) of grainland above inundation level belonging to him ... which (m.sg.) he himself had bought...'

E 19: ... τὴν ὑπάρχουσιν αὐτῷ μερίδα γῆς σιτοφόρου ἐν τῷ περὶ Παθύρειν πεδίῳ σφαργίδων τεσσάρων, ὣν καὶ αὐτός ἐωνήσατο ... (P. Stras. II 89, 99 BC). '... the part (f.sg.) of grainland belonging to him in the plain of Pathyris consisting of four lots which (m.sg.) he himself had bought...'



The signature in this document, however, seems to be by a second hand. But on the verso, by the second hand, the same mistake occurs: γῆ σφραγίδων δ, ὃν ἡγόρα(σεν) παρὰ Πετεαρσεμέως.

E 20: ἀπέδοτο ... τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν αὐτῷ μερίδα γῆς ... σφραγίδων τεσσάρων ..., ὃν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐωρήσατο... (P.Köln I 50, 99 BC). 'sold ... the part (f.sg.) of land belonging to him ... consisting of four lots ... which (m.sg.) he himself had bought...'

## Concluding Remarks

The thesis that the native language of these notaries was Egyptian receives more support from the results of this article, and helps us in the interpretation of the examples. Hermias, the representative of an *agoranomos*, has a clear pattern in his relative clauses. He always chooses the gender and number for the relative pronoun as if its antecedent were the subject of the relative clause. This pattern is easily explained by the relative construction of Demotic where the subject of the relative clause is the suffix pronoun. It is in a similar position as the relative pronoun in the Greek constructions studied here. The Greek relative pronoun has been understood, then, to be somehow fulfilling the same function as the suffix pronoun in Demotic. It is also possible to speculate about the working methods of these notaries/scribes. They possibly had some old contracts as models. If they did not understand the Greek relative construction, the relative pronoun differed in gender and number in an incomprehensible way in these models. Or perhaps (but less likely) they had only one model, e.g., with masculine singular forms, which did not provide any help for them in understanding the construction. Therefore they tried to make some sense out of the construction from the point of view of their L1. Sometimes they did not manage this and occasionally just used some accusative form of the relative pronoun. This could explain the mistakes which do not follow the pattern of each scribe.

The relative clause constructions of these notaries also offer information about the notaries themselves: who was who? The fact that a person called Ammonios has written perfect Greek relative constructions in certain years but makes mistakes in similar constructions in later years can only point in one direction; there are two persons with the same name. The possibility that the person is the same and has suffered from language attrition is unlikely. If a person has learned the construction of Greek relative clauses so thoroughly that he does not make mistakes with it in several years, how could he totally forget the cognitive pattern of the construction later? It is in the usage of relative pronouns where Hermias I and Hermias II also differ from each other.

The notaries of Pathyris and Krokodilopolis who were earlier than Hermias I, Ammonios II and Hermias II rarely made mistakes in the relative clauses. Therefore, a trend can be seen. The Greek language used by the later notaries in Pathyris shows the impact of their L1. Whether the cause of this impact is a failure to acquire the second language, in other words imperfect learning, or attrition of L2 in the community remains an open question.

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