

Exercise 1.4

ΔΥΗΔΥΙC	
ΔΕΛΤΔ	
ΔΙΑΚΟΗOC	
ΔΙΔΟΥ	
ΔΗΜOC	

Θ θ Theeta

Theeta is usually pronounced as a soft ‘th’ as in ‘thin’, but is pronounced as ‘t’ if it comes after **ϣ**, **ϙ**, or **Τ**.

Old Bohairic variation: θ is always pronounced as ‘t’ in the old Bohairic pronunciation.

Examples:

ϣθελ	eshteh
θμαϣ	ethmav
θωϣ	thaush
ϣθορτερ	eshtorter
ματθεον	matteon

Exercise 1.5

ϣθονιτ	
θεoc	
ϙθoi	
ηθok	
βηθλεεμ	
θαμιο	

Ⲧ Ⲣ Ghama

Ghama has three separate pronunciations, which are as ‘gh’, ‘g’ and ‘n.’

If it is followed by **ⲱ**, **ⲟ** or **ⲁ**, it’s pronounced as ‘gh.’ There really isn’t a corresponding letter for this sound in English, but think of the pronunciation as being similar to the sound you make when you gargle your throat.

If it’s followed by **Ⲭ**, **ⲓ**, **ⲣ** or **Ⲏ**, it’s pronounced as a hard ‘g’, as in ‘get.’

If it’s followed by **Ⲛ**, **ⲕ**, **ⲗ** or **Ⲙ** it’s pronounced as ‘n.’

If it’s followed by any other consonant, it’s pronounced as ‘gh.’

I can hear you thinking from here: “how in the world am I going to remember all those?” In times like these it’s always useful to make up a mnemonic. It works for me.

Let’s first look at the first case where it’s pronounced as ‘gh.’

Now look at the letters **ⲱ** **ⲟ** **ⲁ**, if you pretend that the letters are English and that they’re forming a word, you’ll find that the word sounds like ‘woah’, as in the sound you’d make while falling down the slope of a roller coaster.

Similarly, if you look at the letters **Ⲭ** **ⲓ** **ⲣ** **Ⲏ**, you’d find that it looks like ‘hive’, as in ‘bee hive.’

The next trick is to remember which sound each of these sets makes. This isn’t so hard, all you need is an example that’s easy to remember. One of the really common words you’ll find is **ⲁⲚⲓⲟⲥ** (agios). Using this example you can see that the when the **Ⲣ** comes before an **ⲓ** it’s pronounced as ‘g.’ That way you know that it’s pronounced as ‘g’ after all the other **Ⲭ** **ⲓ** **ⲣ** **Ⲏ** letters and that therefore it’s the **ⲱ** **ⲟ** **ⲁ** letters that make it pronounced as ‘gh.’

So much for the vowels. Now you need a way to remember how to pronounce **Ⲣ** if followed by all other consonants.

You can remember the letters **Ⲛ** **ⲕ** **ⲗ** **Ⲙ** as ‘gkxx.’ As an example word, think of **ⲁⲚⲓⲟⲥⲁⲗⲟⲥ**, pronounced ‘angelos.’

All that is left to remember is that **Ⲣ** is pronounced the same way after consonants as it is after the **ⲱ** **ⲟ** **ⲁ** letters.

Some examples:

ᚥᚲᚱ	ghar
ᚲᚥᚱᚰᚥ	agios
ᚥᚺᚱᚱᚱᚥᚱᚥ	gennetis
ᚥᚱ	gee

Exercise 1.6

ᚥᚲᚱᚰᚥ	
ᚥᚰᚥᚥᚥᚱᚱ	
ᚥᚺᚱᚰᚥ	
ᚲᚥᚱᚲᚱᚱᚱ	

Old Bohairic variation: ᚥ is pronounced as g, gh or n.

ᚷ ᚷ Jenja

The good news about learning the ᚹ ᚰ ᚲ and ᚱ ᚱ ᚥ ᚺ mnemonics, is that they are also used for two other letters apart from ᚥ.

The first is for ᚷ:

When followed by the ᚹ ᚰ ᚲ letters, its pronounced as ‘g’ as in ‘get.’

When followed by the ᚱ ᚱ ᚥ ᚺ letters, it’s pronounced as ‘j’ as in jet.

Examples:

ᚷᚺ	je
ᚷᚲᚱᚱ	gamee
ᚷᚲᚱᚱ	gaji
ᚷᚱᚱᚱ	jimi

Exercise 1.7

ᚷᚲᚱᚰᚱᚱ	
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So, You want to learn Coptic?

ⲭⲏⲕ	
ⲡⲉⲭⲁϣ	
ⲡⲉⲭⲉ	
ⲕⲟⲩⲭⲓ	
ⲡⲉⲭⲱⲟⲩ	

Old Bohairic pronunciation: In the Old Bohairic pronunciation, **ⲭ** is pronounced as ‘dj’, as in ‘age.’

ⲭ ⲭ Key

Key is another one of those letters that has three pronunciations. This time the pronunciation depends on whether the word is of Greek or Coptic origin.

In words of Coptic origin, it’s always pronounced ‘k’ as in ‘kitchen.’

In words of Greek origin, it’s pronounced as ‘sh’ if followed by the ⲏ ⲓ ⲩ ⲉ letters, and ‘kh’ if followed by the ⲱ ⲟ ⲁ letters or a consonant.

A good example word to remember is **ⲭⲉⲣⲉ** which has the pronunciation of ‘shere’ as in **ⲭⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲉ Ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ**.

Examples:

ⲭⲏ (Coptic)	kee
ⲭⲣⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ (Greek)	ekhristos
ⲃⲉⲭⲉ (Coptic)	veke
ⲭⲟⲣⲟⲥ (Greek)	khoros
ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ (Greek)	arkhaun

Exercise 1.8

Ⲙⲓⲭⲁⲏⲗ (Greek)	
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Ⲭⲣⲱⲙ (Coptic)	
Ⲭⲁⲣⲓⲥⲙⲁ (Greek)	
Ⲭⲗⲟⲙ (Coptic)	
Ⲭⲏⲙⲓ (Coptic)	
Ⲭⲣⲓⲥⲧⲓⲁⲛⲟⲥ (Greek)	
Ⲭⲁⲣⲓⲛⲉⲥⲑⲉ (Greek)	

Old Bohairic: was usually pronounced as ‘k’, and may have been pronounced as ‘kh’ or ‘sh’ in Greek words.

You’ve now mastered the most common pronunciations in Coptic. Now just a few more details to polish off.

How do you know if a word is of Greek origin?

That’s an obvious question which many people ask. Basically, you eventually learn through experience. However, here are some basic rules of thumb:

The word will generally be of Greek origin if it contains one of the following letters:

Ⲛ ⲁ ⲛ ⲣ ⲛ ⲛ ⲛ (as a vowel)

The word is of Coptic origin if it contains one of the following letters:

ⲱ ⲣ ⲓ ⲛ ⲛ ⲛ

You may be wondering why I haven’t included the 7th letter of Demotic origin, the ⲛ in this list. There are in fact many Greek words that contain the ⲛ, even though it is a letter of Egyptian origin. The reason for this is that there is a little stroke in Greek that looks like this: ‘

As you can see, it looks like an apostrophe. It is called a ‘rough breathing’, and when it appears at the front of a word in Greek it’s pronounced as ‘h.’

Now when these words came to Coptic, they couldn’t find a rough breathing to take, so they borrowed the ⲛ instead. Hence some words of Greek origin use the ⲛ.

Another discriminating feature is that verbs ending with any of the following syllables are generally of Greek origin:

ⲛⲓⲛ ⲛⲉⲓⲛ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛⲑⲉ ⲛⲓⲧⲉ ⲛⲥⲟⲛ ⲛⲱⲙⲉⲛ ⲛⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲟⲓⲛ

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Back to ϯ and ϥ

It was previously mentioned that the pronunciation of ϯ and ϥ sometimes varies. This occurs in words of Greek origin.

In words of Greek origin, ϯ is pronounced ‘d’ as in ‘dog’ if it comes after a ϣ and ϥ is pronounced ‘z’ if it comes before ϣ.

Examples:

ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ	pandokrator
ΑΣΠΑΖΜΟΣ	aspazmos
ΠΛΑΣΜΑ	plazma
ΠΑΝΤΩΣ	pandaus

1.4. Some more vowel rules

At the beginning of a sentence

When the letter ⲓ begins a sentence and is followed by another vowel, it’s pronounced as ‘y.’

E.g. ⲓⲱⲧ is ‘yaut’

Double vowels

ⲱⲓ

When the two letters ⲱⲓ come together, the combination is pronounced as ‘oi’ as in ‘oil.’

E.g. ⲱⲓⲕ is pronounced ‘oik.’

The following three double vowel rules apply only to Greek words.

ⲁⲓ

This combination is pronounced as ‘e’ in words of Greek origin.

E.g. ⲁⲓⲙⲁ- ema

ⲉⲁⲓⲙⲟⲛ- themon

ⲕⲁⲓⲣⲟⲥ- keros

Ⲉⲓ

Ⲉⲓ is pronounced as ‘i’ in words of Greek origin.

ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲉⲛ- epithee

ⲉⲓⲣⲓⲛⲛ- irinee

Note that the Ⲉ is very commonly left out altogether.

Ⲑⲓ

Ⲑⲓ is pronounced as ‘i’ in words of Greek origin

ⲁⲣⲓⲛⲟⲓⲛ- arinin

ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ- metania

ⲗⲟⲓⲡⲟⲛ- lipon

Repeating vowels

If a vowel is repeated to appear twice in a row in a word, a stress is made on the second vowel.

E.g. ⲁⲃⲣⲁⲁⲙ is pronounced as ‘Abra-am’

You’ve done it! You’ve now learnt all the rules for pronouncing Coptic. You may still not be able to read it fluently, but this will come with time. Practice reading every word you come across, refer back to the rules if you’re unsure of a particular pronunciation. Eventually, you’ll start to recognise words as opposed to recognising letters. By that stage, reading Coptic will have become second nature.

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2. NOUNS

2.1. The Articles

Now that you've learnt to read, the next step is to understand what you're reading. Here is where grammar and vocabulary come in. Learning what different words mean is the first step, putting them together requires an understanding of grammar.

The first important thing to learn is that different words belong to different classifications. Some words are nouns, some are verbs, some are prepositions. In fact, there are many different categories to which words can belong. These categories are known as "parts of speech."

The first part of speech we'll look at is the *noun*. Nouns are basic naming words. E.g. 'cat', 'dog', 'aircraft carrier' etc.

In many cases, nouns are introduced by little words called 'articles.' These are little words which frequently come before the nouns. Learning these will be our first step in learning Coptic grammar.

2.1.i. The Definite article (saying 'The' in Coptic)

Singular nouns

Ever wondered what the difference between 'the' and 'a' is? I.e. what is the difference between saying "the bird is singing" as opposed to "a bird is singing"?

The difference is that when you use 'the', you're referring to a particular bird, and everyone knows which bird you're talking about. When you use 'a bird', you could be referring to any bird at all rather than a particular one.

For this reason, 'the' is referred to as the 'definite' article, and 'a' is referred to as the 'indefinite' article.

Like English, Coptic also has definite and indefinite articles. Unlike English however, Coptic has more than one way of saying 'the.'

The way you use 'the' depends on what is referred to as the *gender* of the noun. If you've studied French or German at school, or are familiar with Arabic, you'll realise that different nouns are defined as being either masculine or feminine. There's no reason why a particular object should be masculine or feminine, but that's just the way it is. The only way you can know the gender is by learning it for each noun.

Coptic actually has three different masculine definite articles and three different feminine definite articles.

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The masculine definite articles are: **ⲡⲓ** **ⲛ** **Ⲫ**

The feminine definite articles are: **ⲧ** **ⲧ̄** **Ⲉ**

Before we go further, some basic ground rules need to be laid down:

Rule 1:

ⲡⲓ is the exact equivalent of **ⲧ**

ⲛ is the exact equivalent of **ⲧ̄**

Ⲫ is the exact equivalent of **Ⲉ**

Rule 2:

Each set of articles can be divided into two groups. For the male set, the first group has **ⲡⲓ** on its own, and the second has **ⲛ** and **Ⲫ** together. Likewise, for the feminine set, **ⲧ** sits on its own, and **ⲧ̄** sits with **Ⲉ**.

Rule 3:

ⲛ is very closely related to **Ⲫ**, and they have almost exactly the same grammatical use. The only difference is that **Ⲫ** is used before nouns starting with **ⲃ** **ⲓ** **ⲗ** **ⲙ** **ⲟ** **ⲣ**, and **ⲛ** is used before all other nouns. The **ⲃ** **ⲓ** **ⲗ** **ⲙ** **ⲟ** **ⲣ** letters are affectionately known as the *vilminor letters*, which we'll find frequently effect the choice of letters for the spelling of words we'll come across throughout the book. A similar story applies to the feminine articles, here **Ⲉ** is used before the vilminor letters, and **ⲧ̄** is used before the non vilminor letters.

Now **ⲡⲓ** and **ⲧ** are referred to as strong articles, but **ⲛ**/ **Ⲫ** and **ⲧ̄** **Ⲉ** are referred to as a weak article. This is because **ⲡⲓ** and **ⲧ** are used in more specific situations than their counterparts. For example, if you're referring to a specific father, you would say **ⲡⲓⲱⲧ**, because you're making a special effort to point out a particular father. If on the other hand, you were to say **Ⲫⲓⲱⲧ**, you would be understood to be referring to the father who is already well known, or is already considered to be one of a

kind. Hence **ϥΙΩϥ** would be understood to refer to *God* the Father, and likewise **ⲡⲱⲙⲣⲓ** is understood to refer to the son Jesus Christ.

The use of these articles is summarised in the following table:

	Masculine	Female
strong	ⲡⲓ	ⲧ
weak- non vilminor	ⲡ	ⲧ̄
weak- vilminor	ϥ	ϥ̄

Don't worry too much if you don't quite understand the difference about the weak and strong articles. In the end, they all just translate as 'the'.

Plural nouns

This is all fine, except for one thing. And that is these articles only apply for the *singular* form of the noun. That is, one of those articles would be appropriate for saying 'the' in 'the dog', but it would not be appropriate for saying 'the' in 'the *dogs*.' The feature of the noun which describes whether it's in the singular or plural is called its *number*.

There are two definite articles for denoting the plural in Coptic. Unlike the singular definite articles, they are not dependent on the gender of the noun.

They are **ⲛⲓ** and **ⲛⲉⲛ**

ⲛⲓ is used in the vast majority of cases.

ⲛⲉⲛ is only used in sentences with constructions involving the word "of", the sentence taking the form of:

ⲛⲉⲛ (noun1) of (noun 2)

We shall will be formally introduced to the 'of' construction in **(2.4.i)**, and **(2.4.ii)** but for now we'll just take a brief example of its use to contrast the use of **ⲛⲓ** as opposed to **ⲛⲉⲛ**.

E.g. Saying "the hands" on its own would be **ⲛⲓⲭⲓⲭ**

However, "the hands of Aaron" is **ⲛⲉⲛⲭⲓⲭ ⲛ̅ⲁⲗⲁⲣⲱⲛ**

Most nouns can be expressed in the plural without any change to the actual form of the noun. E.g. while in English the plural form of 'hand' is 'hands', in Coptic

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the plural form of **ⲭⲓⲭ** is still ‘**ⲭⲓⲭ**.’ The only thing that tells you if it’s plural or not is the article in front.

The exceptions

Having said all that, there are actually a few nouns which take a different form in the plural than they do in the singular. Some of them are shown in the table below:

ⲧⲫⲉ	The Heaven	ⲛⲓⲫⲏⲟⲩ	The heavens
ⲛⲓⲁⲗⲟⲩ	The child	ⲛⲓⲁⲗⲟⲩ	The children
ⲛⲓⲥⲟⲛ	The brother	ⲛⲓⲥⲏⲏⲟⲩ	The brothers
ⲧⲥⲱⲛⲓ	The sister	ⲛⲓⲥⲱⲛⲓ	The sisters
ⲫⲓⲱⲧ	The father	ⲛⲓⲱⲧ	The fathers, parents
ⲧⲥⲉⲓⲱⲓ	The woman	ⲛⲓⲉⲓⲱⲓ	The women
ⲉⲱⲃ	thing, work	ⲉⲃⲏⲟⲩ	things, works
ⲛⲃⲱⲕ	The slave/servant	ⲛⲓⲉⲃⲓⲁⲓⲕ	The slaves/servants

The vocative

I remember looking through the criteria for a course I was trying to get into, and finding that they were looking for “a sense of vocation” in the applicant. I couldn't quite understand what they meant, till I was told that ‘vocation’ means ‘a calling.’ So they were looking for a ‘sense of calling.’ Now I don’t know if I had that sense of calling, but Coptic at least has a way of describing “a calling” which is called the ‘vocative.’ The vocative is used to call upon someone, usually in the context of asking for their help. Now here things become familiar, as the construction used for the definite article is also often used as the vocative.

For example, **Πⲃⲟⲓⲥ** doesn’t just mean “*the Lord*”, but in some cases it means “*O Lord*.” It’s usually easy to tell when the construction is being used for the definite article or for the vocative, as translating it as ‘the’ when it was intended for the vocative just doesn’t make sense.

If this paragraph in particular seems a little hard to understand, don’t worry. Just come back to it after you’ve gone a bit further into the book, by then you’ll have come across many examples where it’s clear that the definite article can only be translated as

the vocative. We will need to learn a bit more grammar though before we come to those examples.

To make things a little easier, there is a letter specifically used for the vocative which is **ⲱ**, this is conveniently translated as ‘O’ as in **ⲱ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ** “O’ Mary.”

2.1.ii. The indefinite article

Next we’ll look at saying ‘a.’ That is in saying ‘a bag’ instead of ‘the bag.’ Remember that this is called the ‘indefinite article’ whereas ‘the’ is called the ‘definite’ article. The Coptic word for ‘a’ is **ⲟⲩ**

Unlike the definite article, the indefinite article is independent of gender, so it doesn’t change regardless of whether the noun is masculine or feminine.
E.g.

‘A man’ = **ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲓ**

‘A woman’ = **ⲟⲩⲉⲁⲓⲙⲓ**

Coptic differs again from English in that it has a *plural* form of the indefinite article. There is no direct English translation for this, but the closest approximation is ‘some.’ The plural indefinite article is **ⲉⲁⲛ** which also attaches directly to the noun.
E.g.

(Some) men = **ⲉⲁⲛⲣⲱⲙⲓ**

(Some) women = **ⲉⲁⲛⲉⲁⲓⲙⲓ**

ⲉⲁⲛ is also combined with the word **ⲟⲩⲟⲛ** to give the special construction

ⲉⲁⲛⲟⲩⲟⲛ, which means ‘some’ as in ‘some people.’

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<i>Vocab</i>			
ⲓⲱⲧ	father (m)	ⲙⲏⲣⲓ	son (m)
ⲙⲁⲩ	mother (f)	ⲙⲉⲣⲓ	daughter (f)

Exercise 2.1

Translate the following into English:

- | | |
|----------|--------------|
| a) ⲫⲓⲱⲧ | d) ⲧⲙⲉⲣⲓ |
| b) ⲟⲩⲙⲁⲩ | e) ⲉⲗⲁⲛⲓⲟⲧ |
| c) ⲡⲙⲏⲣⲓ | f) ⲉⲗⲁⲛⲉⲛⲏⲟⲩ |

2.1.iii. Possessive articles- My, your and his

In the earlier sections, we talked about the definite and indefinite articles. Now we will do the *possessive* articles. These articles refer to people and are used to indicate possession. Like the definite and indefinite articles, they attach directly to the noun with no gap in between.

Masculine object	Feminine object	Plural object	
ⲡⲁ	ⲧⲁ	ⲛⲁ	My
ⲡⲉⲕ	ⲧⲉⲕ	ⲛⲉⲕ	Your (masculine)
ⲡⲉ	ⲧⲉ	ⲛⲉ	(feminine)
ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲛ	ⲧⲉⲧⲉⲛ	ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲛ	(plural)
ⲡⲉϥ	ⲧⲉϥ	ⲛⲉϥ	His
ⲡⲉϥ	ⲧⲉϥ	ⲛⲉϥ	Her
ⲡⲉⲛ	ⲧⲉⲛ	ⲛⲉⲛ	Our
ⲡⲟⲩ	ⲧⲟⲩ	ⲛⲟⲩ	Their

Note that whether the pronoun starts with a **ⲡ** or **ⲧ** for singular objects depends on the gender of the *object*, not the subject.

So for example if you were to say ‘his mother’, you would base the decision on the gender of ‘mother’, so it would be **ⲧⲉϥⲙⲁⲩ**.

People often get mixed up at this very point, so let's work through an example. Say you want to say "his mother."

Looking at the table above, you'd have three choices, **πεϚ** **τεϚ** **νεϚ**
νεϚ only applies to plural words, so you can strike that off the list.
That leaves **πεϚ** and **τεϚ**.

Your next step now is to think of the gender of the noun. **μἄτη** is a feminine word. So you pick the possessive article in the feminine object column which in this case is **τεϚ**.

Let's look at another example. Suppose you wanted to say "your father" while speaking to a feminine. To start with, we have a choice of **πεκ** **τεκ** **πε** and **τε**. (After scratching out the plural ones).

Now the first step is to look at the gender of the word for father, which is **πατήρ**. **πατήρ** is a masculine word, so you pick the possessive articles in the masculine object column which leaves you a choice of **πεκ** and **πε**.

Since you're speaking to a feminine, you pick the **πε**, leaving you with: **πειπατήρ**

Vocab			
σωμα	body (m)	ἐντολὴ	commandment (f)
ἔνοϚ	blood (m)	χρῶ	book (m)
ψοτήρ	censer (f)	ὥφῆρ	friend (m)
ωικ	bread (m)	ἄφοτ	cup, chalice (f)
ἄφε	head (f)	χιχ	hand (f)
σωτήρ	Saviour (m)	ὥφερι	friend (f)

Exercise 2.2

a) **πασωμα** (Luke 22:19)

c) **πενιωτ** (James 2:28)

b) **πεϚἔνοϚ** (Acts 20:28)

d) **πενσωτήρ** (2 Peter 3:2)

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e) **ⲧⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲫⲉ** (Acts 18:6)

f) **ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲛⲛⲁⲉⲓ** (1 Peter 1:7)

g) **ⲡⲉⲛⲁⲉⲓ** (Luke 7:50)

h) **ⲧⲉⲭⲓⲭ** (Acts 4:28)

Fill in the blanks:

i) **ⲙⲡⲓ** your son (speaking to a female)

j) **ⲓⲱⲧ** her father

k) **ⲙⲁⲩ** your mother (speaking to a group of people)

2.1.iv. ‘This and that’- The demonstrative articles

Two commonly used words for introducing nouns are ‘this’ and ‘that.’ They are used to ‘point’ to a particular noun, or to ‘demonstrate’ it. Hence they are called the ‘demonstrative.’ When we point at something relatively close, we would say ‘this’, so ‘this’ is called the ‘near demonstrative.’ When you point to something further away, you would say ‘that’, which is called the ‘far demonstrative.’

There are two broad groups of the ‘demonstrative’ in Coptic. The first which we shall look at here is the ‘demonstrative article’ and the second is the ‘demonstrative pronoun’, which we’ll take a look at in (2.2.ii).

Near demonstrative article

There are three near demonstrative articles in Coptic used as follows:

	masculine	feminine	plural
Demonstrative article	ⲡⲁⲓ	ⲧⲁⲓ	ⲛⲁⲓ

The demonstrative article comes straight before the noun in the same way that the other articles do.

So for example, let’s work through how you would write ‘this censer.’

The Coptic word for ‘censer’ is **ⲙⲟⲩⲣⲏ**.

As it is a feminine word, you would chose **ⲧⲁⲓ** as the demonstrative article. You would then place it before **ⲙⲟⲩⲣⲏ** to produce: **ⲧⲁⲓⲙⲟⲩⲣⲏ**

Far demonstrative article

The far demonstrative, or the word for ‘that’ is **ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙⲙⲁⲩ**. It’s different to the other articles we have learnt in that:

a) it comes after the noun

b) the noun still takes a definite article before it.

E.g. **ⲡⲓϭⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲓⲙⲁⲩ** (*Matthew 14:1*)
 “that time”

2.2. Substituting for nouns- pronouns

2.2.i. Personal pronouns

Occasionally, you may need to refer to a noun without mentioning its name. Instead of using the noun itself, you use what is called a ‘pronoun.’

Personal pronouns are words used to substitute for names of people. Say you were to describe an action that somebody is doing; you could either use their name as for example “Peter is walking” or you could indirectly refer to Peter by saying “He is walking.”

You would use the second case if it was already understood that Peter was the person being talked about. So here ‘He’ is the personal pronoun used to substitute for the noun ‘Peter.’ As ‘Peter’ is a person, ‘He’ becomes an example of a *personal* pronoun. Some other personal pronouns are: I, You, He/ She, they and we.

Coptic also has personal pronouns. The ones in the table below are called independent personal pronouns, because they can stand alone in the sentence. There are also *dependent* personal pronouns which we shall come across in (5.1.i.)

English	Coptic
I	ⲁⲛⲟⲕ
You (masculine)	ⲛⲑⲟⲕ
You (feminine)	ⲛⲑⲟ
You (plural)	ⲛⲑⲱⲧⲉⲛ
He	ⲛⲑⲟϥ
She	ⲛⲑⲟⲥ
We	ⲁⲛⲟⲛ
They	ⲛⲑⲱⲟⲩ

2.2.ii. *Demonstrative pronoun*

Compare the sentences ‘I saw this man’, with ‘I saw this.’

As discussed above, the word ‘this’ is referred to as the demonstrative. However, each of the two sentences in the line above illustrate a different type of demonstrative.

In the first case, the word ‘this’ comes before the word ‘man’ and hence as discussed in (2.1.iv) is the article.

In the second case, the word ‘this’ is not preceding a noun but is actually *replacing*, or substituting for the noun, so it is a pronoun. Hence in the second case it’s used as the *demonstrative pronoun*.

In English, the demonstrative pronoun and the demonstrative article are the same word, which is simply ‘this’, however in Coptic, they are a bit different as we can compare in the table below:

	masculine	feminine	plural
Demonstrative pronoun	Ⲫⲁⲓ	Ⲑⲁⲓ	ⲛⲁⲓ
Demonstrative article	ⲡⲁⲓ	ⲧⲁⲓ	ⲛⲁⲓ

As an example, consider the sentence below where the ‘this’ does not come directly before the noun and hence the demonstrative pronoun is used.

E.g. Ⲫⲁⲓ ⲡⲉ ⲛⲱⲙⲣⲓ ⲙⲉⲩⲧ

“this is the son of God”

Note, there is a special set construction in Coptic as below:

ⲡⲁⲓⲁⲫⲟⲧ Ⲫⲁⲓ

Here you can see the ⲡⲁⲓ before ⲁⲫⲟⲧ meaning ‘this’, but then there’s also the demonstrative pronoun following it (Ⲫⲁⲓ), if this were translated literally, it would mean: *“this chalice this”* which wouldn’t make sense.

However, in Coptic this construction has the sense of adding emphasis to the word ‘this’, so it actually means *“this very chalice”*.

Far demonstrative pronoun

In the above we have been dealing with the word ‘this.’ ‘This’ is actually called the ‘near demonstrative.’ In English, we also use a word for the *far* demonstrative. Any ideas what it could be?

It is actually the word ‘that.’ Coptic has three words for ‘that’ as shown below:

	masculine	feminine	plural
far demonstrative	ϥΗ	ϥΗ	ⲛⲛ

2.3. Writing abbreviations

There was no printing in the days of Coptic, manuscripts were copied by hand, which as you could imagine could be quite a time consuming process. To make things a little easier, some abbreviations were agreed upon, the most common of which are shown in the table below:

original	abbreviation	English
ⲓⲛϥⲟⲩϥ	ⲓⲛ̅ϥ	Jesus
ⲡⲓⲭⲣⲓϥⲧⲟϥ	ⲡⲭ̅ϥ	Christ
ϥⲛⲟⲩⲧ	ϥⲧ	God
ⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁ	ⲡⲛ̅ⲁ	spirit
ⲉϥⲟⲩⲁⲃ	ⲉϥ̅ⲩ	Holy
ⲡⲃⲟⲓϥ	ⲡⲟ̅ϥ	Lord
ⲓⲉⲣⲟϥⲁⲗⲛⲙ	ⲓⲗ̅ⲛⲙ	Jerusalem
ϥⲉⲟϥ	ϥ̅ϥ	God (Gk)
ϥⲓⲟϥ	ϥ̅ϥ	Son (Gk)
ⲁⲗⲗⲛⲗⲟⲩⲁ	ⲁⲗ̅ⲗ	Hallelujah (Heb)
ϥⲧⲁⲩⲣⲟϥ	ϥⲧ̅ϥ	Cross (Gk)
ⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲟϥ	ϥⲣ̅ⲁ	Martyr (Gk)
ⲓϥⲣⲁⲛⲗ	ⲓϥ̅ⲗ	Israel

The abbreviations for “Jesus” and “Christ” are the same in the New Testament Greek. In fact, they appear so often in early Greek manuscripts, that some people say there must have been a very early decision within the Church to use these abbreviations, perhaps even at the council of Jerusalem.

2.4. Describing nouns

How would you go about describing different types of nouns? For example, if you were to think about having bricks, we could have big bricks or small bricks, stone bricks or mud bricks, round bricks or square bricks. Some of the words we use to describe these different types of bricks are called *adjectives*, which are basically *describing* words, or words that qualify a noun or pronoun. You'll also notice that some nouns are used to describe other nouns. For example, in 'mud brick', both 'mud' and 'brick' are nouns, but here 'mud' is used to describe the brick.

There are two different constructions for describing nouns:

- a) the attributive construction
- b) the inflected adjectives

2.4.i. Attributive construction

An attribute is a characteristic you can give to something. There is a special construction in Coptic which is used to express an attribute.

Consider this example:

ⲡⲓⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲛⲁⲡⲁϥ

ⲡⲓⲣⲱⲙⲓ means 'the man'

ⲁⲡⲁϥ is an adjective meaning 'old.'

What then is the little letter **ⲛ** before **ⲁⲡⲁϥ**?

ⲛ is the 'attributive construction.' The **ⲛ** is used to tell you something about the "the man." In this case it's telling you that the man is old. Here **ⲁⲡⲁϥ** is an adjective.

However, the **ⲛ** can also be used in between two nouns, when one noun tells you something about the other.

E.g. **ⲧⲱⲟⲩⲣⲏ ⲛⲏⲟⲩⲃ**

"the golden censor"

Notice here that there are two nouns at either side of the **ⲛ**? This tells us that the second noun gives some characteristic to the first noun, which is that the censor is golden.

Now consider this example:

ⲡⲓⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲁⲃⲉⲣⲓ

"the new man"

You would probably guess that the **ὁ** here is the attributive construction, but why is it **ὁ** in this case and not **ἡ**?

Here a simple rule applies:

ὁ is used if the word it follows starts with one of the following letters:

α π β φ ψ

For any other word not starting with one of those letters, **ἡ** is used instead.

Things are slightly different for the adjective **νῦν** which means ‘great’. It likes to swap places with the noun in the attributive construction, so that the article which belongs to the noun actually comes before the **νῦν**, and the **ἡ/ὁ** comes before the noun.

E.g. **πινυν ἡ ἀρχηγὰς ἐλός**

“the great archangel”

2.4.ii. *The possessive construction*

Similar to the attributive construction is the possessive construction, which is used to state the idea of ‘possession’, that is when something belongs to someone. For example, consider this sentence: **τῆς οἰκίας τοῦ ἀνδρός**

Let’s look at each word.

τῆς is ‘the house’

ἀνδρός is ‘man’

Here the possessive construction is used to give the idea of possession, so the sentence means “the house belonging to the man” or “the house of the man.”

Also, another example:

ὁ βασις τῆς πόλεως means “the king of the city.”

Notice that the second noun in the attributive construction doesn’t take an article, whereas the second noun in the possessive construction does.

Now, when the possessive construction is used, an alternative to **ἡ / ὁ** can be used. This alternative is **ἡ / ὁ**.

ἡ / ὁ can be used in any case, but is especially used when the first noun is preceded by an indefinite article (‘a’)

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E.g. **ⲟⲩⲱⲉⲣⲓ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲛ̀ⲉⲗⲓⲱⲓ**

“a daughter of the woman”

Note that **ⲛⲧⲉ** can only be used as the possessive construction to describe possession, and cannot be used when describing an attribute.

<i>Vocab</i>			
ⲃⲉⲣⲓ	new (adjective)	Ⲅⲁⲃⲏ	wise (feminine)
ⲁⲡⲁⲥ	old (adjective)	ⲙ̀ⲣⲟⲛⲟⲥ	throne (m)
ⲉⲙⲟⲩ	salt (m)	ⲟⲩⲱⲛⲓ	light (m)
ⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ	world (m)	ⲓⲟⲩⲗⲁⲓ	Jew (m)
ⲉⲡⲁⲩⲩⲉⲗⲓⲁ	promise (f)	ⲛⲓⲱⲛⲧ	great (adj.)
Ⲅⲁⲃⲉ	wise (masculine)	ⲙⲏⲱ	multitude (m)
ⲃⲁⲕⲓ	city (f)		

Exercise 2.3

- a) **ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲙ̀ⲃⲉⲣⲓ** (*Colossians 3:10*)
- b) **ⲡⲓⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲛ̀ⲁⲡⲁⲥ** (*Colossians 3:9*)
- c) **ⲛ̀ⲛⲓⲱⲛⲧ ⲙ̀ⲃⲁⲕⲓ** (*Jonah 3:2*)
- d) **ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲛⲧ ⲛ̀ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲧ** (*Nicene Creed*)
- e) **ⲛ̀ⲙ̀ⲣⲟⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲧⲉ Ⲱⲧ** (*Matthew 23:22*)
- f) **ⲟⲩⲙⲏⲱ ⲛ̀ⲣⲱⲙⲓ ⲛ̀Ⲅⲁⲃⲉ ⲛⲉⲙ ⲟⲩⲙⲏⲱ ⲛ̀ⲉⲗⲓⲱⲓ ⲛ̀Ⲅⲁⲃⲏ** (*hom vatt ii pg.79*)

2.4.iii. Other ways of describing nouns

There are some special constructions which are able to describe nouns without using the attributive and possessive constructions:

Every

Firstly, there is a special adjective that simply comes after the noun and does not need the attributive construction.

This adjective is **НИБЕН** which means ‘every’. It always comes after the noun. So, for an example, we’ll use it with the word **ЗУБ**, which means ‘thing’

E.g. **ЗУБ НИБЕН**

“everything.”

НИБЕН is often combined with the word **ОТОН**. On its own, **ОТОН** means ‘someone’ or ‘something’, when combined with **НИБЕН**, you get

ОТОН НИБЕН

Which means ‘everyone.’

Inflected adjectives

The next type of adjectives which don’t use the attributive construction are called the *inflected* adjectives. These are shown in the following table:

These modifiers also have the special property of changing their ending, based on whether the noun is masculine or feminine, and whether it’s in the singular or plural. For this reason, they get the ‘inflected’ in their name, as the modifier changes its ending or ‘inflects’ depending on which noun comes before it.

Before we move on, we’ll need to talk a little more about grammar. If you look through an English grammar book, you’ll find all kinds of references to ‘first person’, ‘second person’ and ‘third person.’

What do all these refer to? Basically, the first person refers to the words ‘I’ and

УУАТАТ	only, alone
ТНР	all
ЗУ	also
УУИН УУО	own

‘we’, the second person refers to ‘you’, and the third refers to ‘he’, ‘she’ or ‘they.’ Another important term to know is ‘number.’ Now most people would know what a number is, but it has a special meaning when used grammatically. Number is used to indicate whether something is in the singular or the plural. So for example, the number of the word ‘dog’ is ‘singular’, whereas the number of the word ‘pencils’ is ‘plural.’

The table below summarises these two ideas:

	singular	plural
first person	I	we
second person	you (for both masculine and feminine)	you
third person	he, she	they

Therefore if a book is writing about a particular character, it's written in the third person. If someone is writing a book about himself, he's writing in the first person. Computer games have also borrowed these terms, so a shoot 'em up game where you can see the character you're controlling is described as having a third person perspective, whereas one where you can't see the character apart from his gun is called a 'first person' perspective shooter (because they're pretending the one holding the gun is you).

Taking an example from the table, 'he' would be described as 'third person singular masculine', and 'you' (m) as second person singular masculine. Now we'll return to our inflected modifiers in the table below:

ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲟ

This word means 'alone' or 'only.' It can also be used to give the meaning of "...self" as in 'himself' or 'herself.'

We'll borrow from the 'person' table above to create the table below:

ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲟ	first person singular
ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲕ	second person singular masculine
ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲓ	second person singular feminine
ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲓ	third person singular masculine
ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲓ	third person singular feminine
ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲉⲛ	first person plural
ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲉⲛ ⲑⲏⲛⲟⲩ	second person plural
ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲟⲩ	third person plural

ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲟ follows the noun it describes, with the suffix agreeing with the noun in gender, person, and number.

E.g. ⲛⲑⲟⲕ ⲙⲙⲁⲓⲁⲧⲧⲕ

"you only"

ΦΙΩΤ ΰΜΑΤΑΤΥ

“the father only”

ΤΗΡ//

ΤΗΡ// also comes after the word it’s describing, and has the meaning of ‘all.’ Its different forms are also shown below: Note that the second person plural form is the same as that of third person plural.

ΤΗΡΤ	first person singular
ΤΗΡΚ	second person singular masculine
ΤΗΡΙ	second person singular feminine
ΤΗΡΥ	third person singular masculine
ΤΗΡΕ	third person singular feminine
ΤΗΡΕΝ	first person plural
ΤΗΡΟΥ	second person plural
ΤΗΡΟΥ	third person plural

E.g. ΠΕΝΘΗΤ ΤΗΡΥ

“all our heart”

ΕΩ//

The third inflected modifier ΕΩ// means ‘also’, unlike ΰΜΑΤΑΤ// and ΤΗΡ// it doesn't have to come after a noun.

ΕΩ	first person singular
ΕΩΚ	second person singular masculine
ΕΩΙ	second person singular feminine
ΕΩΥ	third person singular masculine
ΕΩΕ	third person singular feminine

ⲉⲱⲛ	first person plural
ⲉⲱⲧⲉⲛ	second person plural
ⲉⲱⲟⲩ	third person plural

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲉⲱ

"I also"

ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲉⲱⲛ (*Acts 14:14*)

"we also"

ⲙⲙⲓⲛ ⲙⲙⲟⲩ

Our fourth inflected modifier is ⲙⲙⲓⲛ ⲙⲙⲟⲩ. It comes after a noun which is itself preceded by a possessive article, and agrees with the article in person and number.

E.g. ⲡⲉϣⲉⲛⲟϥ ⲙⲙⲓⲛ ⲙⲙⲟϥ (*Acts 20:28*)

"his own blood"

ⲡⲉⲕⲉⲑⲛⲟⲥ ⲙⲙⲓⲛ ⲙⲙⲟⲕ (*John 18:35*)

"Your own people"

Not another one...

A neat little article is ⲕⲉ which comes directly before the noun. It actually has two different meanings. In the first case, it can mean 'other' ;

E.g. ⲕⲉⲣⲱⲙⲓ

"another man"

"Other men" would be:

ⲉⲁⲛⲕⲉⲣⲱⲙⲓ

The word for "one" is ⲟⲩⲁⲓ, so to say "another one" is therefore:

ⲕⲉⲟⲩⲁⲓ

And in the second case, ⲕⲉ can take the meaning of "also."

E.g. ⲡⲓⲕⲉⲣⲱⲙⲓ

“also the man”

Vocab			
ἡ ΚΑΡΔΙΑ	heart (m)	ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΣ	resurrection (f)
ΙΟΥΔΑΙ	Jew (m)	ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ	John (prop.noun)
ΛΑΟΣ	people, nation (m)	ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ	Church (f)
ΙΟΥΔΕΑ	Judea (f)	ΕΘΝΟΣ	nation, people (Gk,f)

Exercise 2.4

- a) **Πᾶς** ἔσται *(1 Peter 2:21)*
- b) **ΝΙΟΤΑΙ** ἡ **ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ** *(Acts 11:19)*
- c) ἡ **ΘΕΟ** ἔσται *(Luke 2:35)*
- d) **ΛΑΟΣ** **ΝΙΒΕΝ** *(Revelation 11:9)*
- e) **ΤΙΟΥΔΕΑ** **ΤΗΡΕ** *(Acts 1:8)*
- f) **ΡΩΜΑ** **ΝΙΒΕΝ** *(Acts 22:15)*
- g) ἡ **ΘΩΤΕΝ** ἔσται *(Acts 7:51)*
- h) **ΤΕΝΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΣ** **ΤΗΡΕΝ** *(Litany of the Gospel, Divine Liturgy)*
- i) **ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ** ἡ **ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ** *(Acts 18:25)*
- j) **ΤΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ** **ΤΗΡΕ** *(Acts 5:11)*

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3. MAKING OUR FIRST SENTENCES

We now already have the tools for making very basic sentences. These sentences are called “nominal sentences” or “non verbal sentences.”

Before looking at these, we’ll have to learn some important English terms. The first of these are the *subject* and the *predicate*.

In general, sentences can be split into two parts. The first refers to what the sentence is all about, and is called the subject. The second part, which tells you something about the subject, is called the predicate. For an example, consider the sentence:

“They built a sandcastle.”

The subject of the sentence is ‘they.’ The rest of the sentence (the predicate) tells us something about ‘they’, which is that they built a sandcastle. This is summarised in the table below.

“they	built a sandcastle”
what the sentence is about	statement made about the subject
SUBJECT	PREDICATE

The next term we’ll learn is the *copula*. The copula is basically a word which is used as a connection between the subject and the predicate. In English, this is most often translated as ‘is.’ For example, in the sentence:

“Peter is a father”

The subject of the sentence is “Peter”, the predicate is “a father”, and the Copula is that little ‘is’ after Peter.

There are three types of Copula, each type used according to the gender of the subject and whether it’s in the singular or plural form.

ΠΕ	“is” or “am” for a masculine subject
ΤΕ	“is” or “am” for a feminine subject
ΝΕ	“are” for a subject which is in the plural

We will need these terms as we look at three different patterns of nominal sentences below. They are constructed as follows:

Subject + predicate

Subject + copula + predicate

Predicate + copula

3.1. Subject + Predicate

The first nominal sentences we'll look at are simply composed of a subject and a predicate. For an example, look at the sentence below:

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲟⲩⲛⲣⲟⲩⲛⲧⲏⲥ (*Revelation 2:20*)

"I am a prophet"

Note that the subject is **ⲁⲛⲟⲕ**, and the predicate is **ⲛⲣⲟⲩⲛⲧⲏⲥ**. Though a literal English translation would come out as only "I a prophet", in Coptic this structure is recognised as meaning "I *am* a prophet." That is, the "am" is understood by the context of the sentence.

Here is another example:

ⲏⲑⲟⲕ ⲛⲭⲥ̅ (*Matthew 16:16*)

"You are the Christ"

Here the word **ⲏⲑⲟⲕ**, is the *subject* of the sentence, since that's what the sentence is about. The predicate is the statement made about the subject, which is that He is **ⲛⲭⲥ̅** (the Christ).

Once again we see that no Coptic equivalent for 'are' is used.

3.2. Subject + Copula+ Predicate

We noted that no copulas were used for the subject + predicate constructions above, the fact is however that copulas can actually be used in between the subject and predicate.

Examples:

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲛⲉ ⲉⲁⲃⲣⲓⲛⲗ (*Luke 1:19*)

"I am Gabriel"

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲛⲉ ⲧⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ (*John 11:25*)

"I am the resurrection"

Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be any rule to tell us when the copula should be used.

Did you notice that in the above sentences, the order of the nouns and the verb is exactly the same as you'd see in English? This is the case when the definite article is used before the predicate. However, if an indefinite article comes before the noun, then the copula comes *after* the noun.