CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TRIPARTITE NOMINAL CLAUSES

18.1 INTRODUCTION

The tripartite NC contains three members, one of which is an enclitic personal pronoun (Ep). As to its syntactic analysis there are basically two views:

1. The tripartite NC is an extension of the bipartite NC by the addition of the pronoun. The bipartite patterns Su–Pr and Pr–Su are expanded to four types, namely Su–Pr–Ep, Su–Ep–Pr, Pr–Su–Ep and Pr–Ep–Su. This view is represented by T. Muraoka in various publications.¹

2. The tripartite NC is an extension of a bipartite clause core of the pattern Pr–s. The subject is added in fronted or rear extraposition. The Ep is the lesser subject in the clause core. It always follows the Pr. Accordingly, there are only two patterns of tripartite NCs: Su || Pr–s and Pr–s || Su. The main representative of this approach is G. Goldenberg.²

Elsewhere we have argued that the difference between these two approaches concerns not so much the interpretation of Syriac NCs as such, but rather the model employed to describe them and the termi-

¹ Muraoka, Classical Syriac for Hebraists, § 103. In his description of patterns Muraoka uses a lower case s (for ‘lesser subject’), e.g. Pr–s–Su, but apparently he considers it equivalent to ē (for ‘enclitic’), because he adds in a footnote (p. 62 n. 124): ‘Goldenber’s uses lower cases [read: lower case s?] for our E, which stands for Enclitic’. In his Basic Grammar he used both s (§ 105) and E (§ 108) in the first edition, but has corrected s to E in the second edition. Recently Muraoka has changed his view. He no longer recognizes the pattern Su–Ep–Pr (see the discussion in § 18.2 [C]), but the controversial pattern Pr–Su–Ep is still a hallmark of his model (see § 18.2 [D]). See Muraoka, ‘Response to Wido van Peursen’, 189; Van Peursen, ‘Response to Responses’, 202–203.

² In this approach the term ‘tripartite nominal clause’ is imprecise, because the construction as a whole is regarded as a clause + an element in extraposition; cf. Goldenberg, ‘Comments on “Three Approaches” by Wido van Peursen’, 177 n. 3.
nology used. Thus in the first model a clause such as אֶֽהָּמִית מְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ וּמְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ ‘I am Abraham’ is an identificatory clause of the type Su–Ep–Pr; in the second approach it is a Pr–s || Su clause, in which מְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ is the new information and hence the Pr. In both interpretations מְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ is the most important or salient information of the clause, be it as a rhematized subject (the first approach) or as the ‘rHEME/comment = predicate’ (the second approach).

In our computer-assisted analysis we have used the labels <Su> and <Pr> on the basis of the criteria of definiteness given in § 16.3. As a consequence of our form-to-function approach, we considered this preferable to a psychological definition of Su and Pr. For the Ep we have introduced the label <Ep>. We use this encoding only for the formal registration of the data, but this does not imply an a priori preference for the first approach. The computer programs allow for a reanalysis of the data in terms of extraposition if our analysis gives us reason to do so.

18.2 BASIC PATTERNS

On the basis of two formal criteria, namely the relative order of Su and Pr and the position of the Ep, four basic patterns of NCs can be distinguished.

A. Type 1: Su–Pr–Ep

This pattern is attested about forty times. The subject is most often a noun and sometimes an independent relative clause or a relative clause with a ‘dummy antecedent’. Two times the subject is a personal pronoun of the 3rd person singular:

1:1 אֶֽהָָ֮֊מִית מְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ וּמְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ ‘And she is with Him from eternity’.

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3 Cf. Goldenberg, ‘Syriac Sentence Structure’, 104–105: ‘Analysing Pattern-C sentences such as אֶֽהָָ֮֊מִית מְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ or מְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ מְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ as if their initial مְֽשַׁלְתָּהּ should be the subject and the enclitic pronoun a “copula” (Nöldeke § 312C-D, Duval § 375d-e) is totally wrong’; see also Goldenberg, ‘Niceties’, 337. For more details see Van Peursen, ‘Three Approaches’, 166–172 (= § 4 ‘Syntactic Analysis of the Enclitic’).
5 This was a new category to be added to the wiru system (§§ 8.1–2).
6 Cf. § 17.1 (E).