Stephen H. Levinsohn and Anthony G. Pope  
SIL International

**Abstract**

Clausal and phrasal constituents in Koiné Greek are placed before the verb for two distinct reasons:

1. to emphasise a focal constituent
2. to provide a cohesive anchor ‘to something which is already in the context (i.e., to something accessible in the hearer’s mental representation)’.

This paper argues that the second of these reasons explains every instance in Luke-Acts in which the indefinite adjective τις precedes a head noun in the same case (N). Such preposing of τις cohesively anchors the referent of the phrase to the preceding context (e.g., to signal, in Ac 16.14, that Lydia is a member of ‘the group of women mentioned in the previous line’). When τις follows N, in contrast, the referent is unmarked for anchoring. Since N τις order is default, a positive claim that the referent is unanchored is not possible. Nevertheless, referents of N τις are typically not tied to anything in the preceding context (e.g., because they occur at the beginning of a parable or episode).

1. **Preliminaries**

It is common in Koiné Greek for subject-topics that are identified with a noun phrase to be placed after the verb in narratives. For example, in Acts 16.36a (ἀπήγγειλεν δὲ ὁ δεσμοφύλαξ τοῦ λόγους [τούτους] πρὸς τὸν Παῦλον), the subject as topic is the noun phrase ὁ δεσμοφύλαξ, and the subject follows the verb ἀπήγγειλεν.

Typologically, Koiné Greek shares a number of features with other languages that often locate the verb before subject-topics that are noun phrases in stories. One such feature is the potential to place clausal and phrasal constituents before the verb for two distinct reasons:

1. to emphasise a focal constituent
2. to provide a cohesive anchor ‘to something which is already in the context (i.e., to something accessible in the hearer’s mental representation).

We first illustrate a focal constituent placed before the verb to emphasise it. The topic of Lk 22.44b (ἐκενέστερον προσήυχετο) is ‘he’ and the proposition has ‘predicate focus’, which in this

---

3. ‘A referent is interpreted as the topic of a proposition if in a given situation the proposition is construed as being about this referent, i.e. as expressing information which is relevant to and which increases the addressee’s knowledge of this referent’—Lambrecht, Knud, 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representation of Discourse Referents* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 131.
4. See Levinsohn, Stephen H., *Language Types, Discourse Studies and Translation*. Paper presented at a public meeting at Handong Global University, Pohang, South Korea, in April 2008, sec. 1.1 (electronic copy available on request). As well as Ancient Hebrew, many N.W. Austronesian languages of the Philippines and Oto-Manguean languages of Mexico commonly place subject-topics that are noun phrases after the verb in narratives (ibid.).
5. The focus of a proposition is ‘what is relatively the most important … information in the given setting’—Dik, Simon, *Functional grammar* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1978), p. 42.
The rest of the paper concentrates on N τις versus τις N orders in references to animate participants in Luke-Acts (sec. 2). This is followed by short sections on N τις versus τις N ordering with references to times (sec. 3) and places (sec. 4).

2. N τις and τις N orders in references to animate participants

We start, then, with the assumption that the N τις order is default. Robertson states that τις ‘naturally follows the substantive or adjective’.11 Read-Heimerdinger writes, ‘Adjectival τις is more often than not placed after the noun’ and describes this as the ‘usual order’.12 Statistics confirm these claims; N τις order is found about 28 times in Luke and 39 times in Acts, whereas τις N order occurs 10 times in Luke and 28 times in Acts, sometimes with an intervening constituent (see discussion below).13

Since N τις order is default, it would be inappropriate to make a positive claim that the referent of such a noun phrase is unanchored. Nevertheless, it is true that referents of N τις are typically not tied to anything in the preceding context. This is particularly evident when the reference occurs at the beginning of a parable (10 times in Luke)14 or episode (at least 9 times in Luke and 14 times in

---

8 See, for example, Van Valin Jr., Robert D., Exploring the Syntax-Semantics Interface (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 15.
14 Lk 7.41, 10.30, 12.16, 14.16, 15.11, 16.1, 16.19 & 20, 18.2a, 19.12.
Acts).\(^{15}\) See, for example, the parable that begins in Lk 10.30 (Ἀνθρωπός τις κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλήμ εἰς Ἰεριχώ) and the episode that begins in Lk 1.5 (Ἐγένετο ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἰωάννη τοῦ βασιλέως τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἱερεὺς τις ὄνοματι Ζαχαρία). In contrast, placing τις before its HEAD noun is a marked order that cohesively anchors the referent of the noun phrase to the preceding context. In Ac 16.14, for instance, it anchors Lydia (καὶ τις γυνὴ ὄνοματι Λυδία) to the group of women mentioned at the end of v. 13 (ἐξαλούμεν ταῖς συνελθούσαις γυναιξίν). As Read-Heimerdinger observes, ‘Τις precedes γυνὴ in the introduction of Lydia when she is singled out from the group of women mentioned in the previous line.’\(^{16}\)

In Ac 20.9, τις N order anchors Eutychus (τις νεανίας ὄνοματι Εὐτυχος ἐπὶ τῆς θυρίδος) to the group in Troas that Paul was teaching (ὁ Παύλος διελέγετο οὐτοῖς—v. 7) and who had assembled in an upstairs room (ἐν τῷ ὕπερφῳ οὕτως ἦμεν συνηγμένοι—v. 8).

In Ac 9.43, τις N order anchors Simon the tanner (Ἐγένετο δὲ ἡμέρας ἣκαίνας μεῖνα ἐν ἱσόπη παρὰ τινὶ Σίμωνι βυρσεῖ) to the believers in Joppa (καὶ ἐπίστευσαν πολλοὶ ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον).\(^{17}\) In Ac 10.5-6 (below), the angel makes reference to two Simons. The first (Σίμωνι τις δὲ ἐπικαλεῖται Πέτρος) employs default N τις order, as no attempt is made to anchor Simon Peter to anything in the context.\(^{18}\) In contrast, the reference to the second Simon (παρὰ τινὶ Σίμωνι βυρσεῖ) employs τις N order, thus anchoring the reference to something in the earlier part of the speech, such as the town in which he lived.\(^{19}\)

(1) καὶ νῦν πέμψων ἄνδρας εἰς ἱσόπην καὶ μετάπεμψα Σίμωνα τινα δὲ ἐπικαλεῖται Πέτρος·

οὔτος ἐξετείνα τις παρὰ τινὶ Σίμωνι βυρσεῖ, ὥ ἐστιν οὐκ ἀλήθες παρὰ θάλασσαν. (Ac 10.5-6)

\(^{15}\) Lk 1.5, 7.2, 8.2, 8.27, 10.25, 10.38b, 14.2, 18.35, 23.26; Ac 5.1, 8.9, 9.33, 10.1, 13.6, 16.1, 16.9 (beginning the report of a vision), 16.16, 18.24, 19.24, 22.12, 24.1a & b, 25.14. See also Lk 11.37 (A C W Θ Ψ Byz and early versions; also D but reversing the order) and 20.9 (A W Θ al syr). An episode is ‘a group of events that belong together and are described in one or more paragraphs’—Levinsohn, Stephen H., Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek, 2nd edition. (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), p. 293. The Nestle-Aland text often marks the beginning of a new episode with paragraph indentation. In each instance cited here, the expression with τις occurs in the first or second sentence after the indentation.

\(^{16}\) Read-Heimerdinger, Bezan Text of Acts, p. 100. However, she describes the placement of τις before the noun more in terms of ‘focussing attention on the person it refers to’ (p. 99) than on its anchoring effect. In many languages, an adjective translated ‘one, a certain’ is used to indicate that the referent is ‘salient’ (Hopper, Paul J., and Sandra A. Thompson, The discourse basis for lexical categories in universal grammar. Language 60.703–52, 1984), p. 719. In other words, when a referent is introduced with an adjective like τις (either before or after the head noun), he or she continues to be topical in the following material, particularly if the referent becomes ‘uniquely identifiable’—Wallace, Daniel B., Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1995), p. 245.

\(^{17}\) When he says that Peter stayed with a tanner, it can be deduced from this the kind of people of which the church at Joppa consisted”—Calvin, John, The Acts of the Apostles, volume I, translated by W.J.G. McDonald (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 282. That Simon the tanner was a member of the church is also recognized by Zahn—Zahn, Theodor, Die Apostelgeschichte des Lucas (Leipzig: Deichert, 1919), p. 338.


\(^{19}\) Ac 18.2 (καὶ εὑρόν τινα Ἰουδαίαν ὄνοματι Ἀκύλαν) is similar. Placing τινα before Ἰουδαίαν probably anchors Aquila to the city of Corinth in which he is now resident, this being the location that has just been introduced.
In Lk 21.2 (below), τις Ν order is used to refer to the poor widow (τινα χήραν πενιχράν), thus anchoring her to the scene in which the wealthy are putting their gifts into the treasury.

(2) Αναβλέψας δὲ εἰδέν τοὺς βάλλοντας εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον τὰ δώρα αὐτῶν πλουσίους.

εἰδὲν δὲ τινα χήραν πενιχραν βάλλουσαν ἐκεὶ λεπτὰ δύο, (Lk 21.1-2)

In Ac 5.34 (ἀναστάς δὲ τις ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ Φαρισαίος ὀνόματι Γαμαλιήλ), τις is separated from its head noun Φαρισαίος by the locative ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ. However, the τις...Ν order still anchors the referent to the scene in which the council was deliberating over the case of the apostles.

Τις Ν ordering is particularly noteworthy when it is found at the beginning of what the Nestle-Aland text judges to be a new paragraph, as such an ordering anchors the referent to the previous episode. For example, the Nestle-Aland text begins a new paragraph at Ac 14.8 (below), but it is clear from v. 9 that the lame man in Lystra (τις ἄνηρ ἁδύνατος ἐν Λύστροις τοῖς ποιῶν) was one of the people to whom Paul and Barnabas were preaching the good news.

(3) συνιδόντες κατέφυγον εἰς τὰς πόλεις τῆς Λυκοανίας Λύστραν καὶ Δέρβην καὶ τὴν περίχωρον, κακέως εὐγγελιζόμενοι ἤσαν.

Καὶ τις ἄνηρ ἁδύνατος ἐν Λύστροις τοῖς ποιῶν ἐκάθητο, χωλὸς ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ ὅς οὐδέποτε περιπάτησεν. οὗτος ἤκουσεν τοῦ Ναύλου λαλοῦντος· (Ac 14.6-9)

The Nestle-Aland text also begins a new paragraph at Ac 9.10 (below). By referring to Ananias with τις Ν order, he is anchored to the context of the previous episode. The anchoring is in the first instance to the reference to Damascus in v. 8, but also links him to Saul’s planned persecution of the believers in Damascus (v. 2)—something he himself alludes to later (v. 13).

(4) χειρογογοῦντες δὲ αὐτῶν εἰσήγαγον εἰς Δαμασκόν. καὶ ἦν ἡμέρας τρεῖς ἡ ἑρώτει καὶ οὖν ἔφαγεν οὐδὲ ἐπιεν.

*Ἡν δὲ τις μαθητής ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὀνόματι Ἀνανίας, (Ac 9.8b-10a)

Ac 19.1 (below) is another instance of τις Ν ordering at the beginning of an episode. Such ordering anchors the disciples Paul found (τινὰς μαθητὰς) to Apollos (18.24-25).

(5) Ἰουδαῖος δὲ τις Ἀπολλώνιος ὀνόματι Ἀλεξάνδρεὺς τῷ γένει, ἄνηρ λόγιος, κατήντησαν εἰς Ἕφεσον, δύνατος ἐν τοῖς γραφαῖς. οὗτος ἦν κατηχημένος τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἔστων τοὺς πνεύματι ἐλάλησεν καὶ ἐδίδασκεν ἄκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἡσυχοῦ, ἐπιστάμενος μόνον τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου·

Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ τῶν Ἀπολλῶν ἐποίη ἐν Κορινθίω Παύλου διελθόντα τὰ ἀνωτερικὰ μέρη [κατέβηθι εἰς Ἕφεσον καὶ εὑρεῖν τινὰς μαθητὰς εἰπέν τε πρὸς αὐτοῦς. Εἰ πνεύμα ἄγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες; οὐ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν, Ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ εἰ πνεύμα ἄγιον ἔστων ἤκουσέμεν. (Ac 18.24-25, 19.1-2)

In a number of passages, an episode with τις Ν ordering at the beginning follows one with a related theme, so the τις Ν ordering provides an anchor to that episode. For example, consider the τις Ν

---

20 A variant reading is τινα καί χήραν πενιχράν (A W Θ Byz), in which case χήραν πενιχράν would be in apposition to τινα.
22 Alternatively, ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ Φαρισαίος ὀνόματι Γαμαλιήλ may be judged to be in apposition to τις.
23 Ac 28.21 (τι περί σοι πονηρόν) is similar. The τι Ν ordering anchors the referent to the context, in particular, Paul’s claim (v. 17), οὔδεν ἐναντίον ποιήσας τῷ λαῷ ἢ τοῖς θεοῦ τοῖς πατρόσοις.
ordering in Lk 18.9 (Εἴπεν δὲ καὶ πρός τινας τοὺς πεποιθότας ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι εἰσὶν δίκαιοι καὶ ἐξουθενοῦντας τοὺς λοιποὺς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην). Such ordering anchors ‘those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt’ to the parable of the unjust judge (18.1-8), both of which ‘ostensibly have to do with prayer—“ostensibly” since, in each case, much more is at stake than prayer when defined modestly as a “practice”’. In fact, the anchoring of the self-righteous to the context is confirmed by other surface features: the initial event-type verb (Εἴπεν), which suggests continuity with the context; the particle δέ, which indicates that the new episode builds on and develops from the previous one; and the additive καί, which draws a parallel between the parable told in this episode and the one told before.

A similar argument may be applied to Lk 13.31, in which the Τις ἄνδρας δεῖ καὶ Ἰωάννης ἄνεβαινον εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ὥραν τῆς προσευχῆς τῆς ἑνάτην. καὶ τις ἄνδρας ἄνεβαινον εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ὥραν τῆς προσευχῆς τῆς ἑνάτην. καὶ τις ἄνδρας ἄνεβαινον εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ὥραν τῆς προσευχῆς τῆς ἑνάτην.

Before leaving this section, we need to point out three examples which are residual, because it is not clear why τις and its HEAD noun have been separated by another constituent. They are Lk 11.27 (ἐπάροσα τις φωνῆν γυνή ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου), Lk 18.18 (Καὶ ἐπηρώτησέν τις αὐτὸν ὄρχων) and Ac 9.36 (Ἐν Ἰώσπη δὲ τις ην μαθήτρια ὄνοματι Ταβιθά).
In the case of Lk 11.27, not only is there a thematic link between the teaching of the two pericopes, but the rest of the phrase itself (γυν/κ το/χλον) anchors the woman to those who heard the teaching of the previous pericope.

In the case of Lk 18.18, the link with the previous episode (vv. 15-17) is thematic; both concern entry into the Kingdom of God. In particular, the reference to the ruler, who is rich (v. 23), may have been anchored to the children, who have nothing, to bring out the contrast between them.

As for Ac 9.36, the preposing of Ἄνω Ίαππη already anchors the episode to the previous one on the basis of a switch of place. So it is entirely appropriate that the reference to the disciple called Tabitha should be anchored to the previous episode, which also concerns a healing involving the apostle Peter.

We conclude that it seems safe to assert that τίς N order in Luke-Acts always has the effect of anchoring the referent to the context, whether within an episode or across episode boundaries.

### 3. N τίς and τις N orders in references to times

References to 'some days' with a plural form of τίς are found six times in Acts (none occur in Luke). Default order is used on three occasions when a comment about a topic includes ἡμέρας τινάς (e.g., Ἐγένετο δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἐν Δαμασκῷ μαθητῶν ἡμέρας τινάς—Ac 9.19; see also 10.48 and 16.12). Ac 18.23 is similar, except that the temporal expression is χρόνον τινά.

Ac 25.13 begins Ἡμερῶν δὲ διαγενομένων τινῶν, which again has default order, but this time the phrase is split. When this happens, the author usually wishes to emphasise one part of the phrase. In this instance, however, it is by no means certain that such is the case.

The other two references to times that include τίς are both pre-verbal and anchor the new proposition to something which is already in the context (sec. 1); viz., the time of the previous episode. We discuss them in turn.

In Ac 15.36 (below), τινας is placed before ἡμέρας. This has the effect of further anchoring the time to the period that Paul and Barnabas were staying in Antioch (v. 35).

(7) Παῦλος δὲ καὶ Βαρναβᾶς διέτριβον ἐν Αντιοχείᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελίζομενοι μετὰ καὶ ἐτέρων πολλῶν τῶν λόγων τοῦ κυρίου.

Μετὰ δὲ τινὰς ἡμέρας εἶπεν πρὸς Βαρναβᾶν Παῦλος, (Ac 15.35-36a)

---


33 ‘[True blessedness] belongs to those into whose hearts he has come with his message of salvation, so that there is no longer any place there for the ousted spirit of evil’—Wilcock, *Saviour of the World*, p. 128.

34 ‘The children, like the publican, are nearer the Kingdom than they could suppose themselves to be; the rich young man, like the Pharisee, is farther from it than he supposed himself to be’—Plummer, Alfred, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1896), p. 421. See also Zahn, Theodor, *Das Evangelium des Lucas*, (Leipzig: Deichert, 1913) p. 615. The same sequence of episodes occurs in Matthew and Mark.

35 Levinsohn, Discourse Features, p. 9.


37 See Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, p. 58.

4. N τις and τις N orders in references to places

Most references to places that include τις have default order. The examples with marked order are discussed below.

The first example of marked order is in Lk 17.12, which may be contrasted with Lk 10.38a, as both refer to ‘a certain village’. The Nestle-Aland text begins a new paragraph at 10.38 (‘Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτοῦ αὐτὸς εἰσῆλθεν εἰς κώμην τινά) and the context makes no reference to a location, so default order is to be expected.

In contrast, Lk 17.12 (below) follows a reference to ‘the region between Samaria and Galilee’ (v. 11), so placing τινα before κώμην has the effect of anchoring the village to these places.

(9) καὶ αὐτὸς διήρχετο διὰ μέσον Σαμαρείας καὶ Γαλιλαίας. καὶ εἰσέρχομένου αὐτοῦ εἰς τινὰ κώμην (Lk 17.11-12a)

In Lk 18.2 (Κριτής τις ἦν ἐν τινὶ πόλει), placing τινι before πόλει has the effect of anchoring the place to the judge, as he was judge in that city.

In Ac 8.36 (ὡς δὲ ἐπορεύοντο κατὰ τὴν ὅδον, ἦλθον ἐπὶ τῇ ὑδόρῳ), placing τινι before ὑδόρο has the effect of anchoring the water to the road along which the travellers were going.

Ac 27.27 (below) also places τινα before its head noun (χώραν), which suggests that the reference to the land is anchored to the place mentioned in the preceding clause (ἐν τῷ Αδρία). (The phrase is split by αὐτοῖς—see the comment about split phrases at the end of sec. 2.)

(10) Ὡς δὲ τεσσάρες εἰς διαφέροντα νῦν ἔγενετο διαφερομένων ἦμων ἐν τῷ Αδρία, κατὰ μέσον τῆς νυκτὸς ὑπενώσουν οἱ ναύται προσάγειν τινὰ αὐτοῖς χώραν. (Ac 27.27)

5. Conclusion

We have shown that, when the indefinite adjective τις precedes a head noun in the same case in Luke-Acts, such preposing of τις cohesively anchors the referent of the phrase to the context. Such an order is particularly significant when it occurs at the beginning of a new episode, as it indicates that the referent is to be anchored to something in the context of the previous episode.

We began this paper by pointing out that clausal and phrasal constituents in Koiné Greek are placed before the verb for two distinct reasons: to provide a cohesive anchor to something which is already in the context, or to emphasise a focal constituent. Preliminary studies of the order of constituents in

---

39 The variant ordering Μετὰ δὲ τινὰς ἡμέρας (A E Ψ ρ) would have the effect of anchoring the ‘some days’ of v. 24 to the implied period of v. 23 during which Paul was in the custody of the centurion (p74 reads ὀλίγας ἡμέρας).

40 Lk 10.38a, 11.1; Ac 27.8, 16, 26, 39.


42 ‘when the travellers reached a stream’—Marshall, Acts, p. 165.
noun phrases indicate that one or both of these factors explain not only the marked positioning of τις, but also the preposing of adjectives, numerals and other modifiers before their HEAD noun.