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OBSERVATIONS IN THE FIELD OF THE AFROASIATIC SUFFIX CONJUGATION

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The object of this account are some aspects of the Afroasiatic Suffix Conjugation as it is represented in the Stative of Akkadian (*damq-āku*, *damq-āta*, *damq-āti*, etc.), the West Semitic Perfect (e.g., Arabic *qatal-tu*, *qatal-ta*, *qatal-ti*, etc.; cf. South Semitic *-kū*, *-ka*, *-ki*, etc.), and the Egyptian Old Perfective (Pseudo-participle, Stative; *sdm-kw*, *sdm-tj*, etc.). For the present purpose, we will take into account neither the Kabyle suffix conjugation of the verbs of quality (*hnin-eġ*, *hnin-eġ*, etc.), nor the suffixal elements of the normal Berber conjugation (*lammed-eġ*, *telammed-eġ*, etc.), neither the Bedauye stative conjugation¹ nor that of East Cushitic languages,² and we will not consider any Chadic suffix conjugations.³

The most recent investigation into the suffix conjugation in Semitic has been made by J. Tropper (1995). He first focusses on Akkadian, reaching the conclusion that the suffix conjugation was originally the conjugation of the adjective. In his view, adjectives did not originally have a prefix conjugation, the derivation of adjective verbs (verbs of quality) from the adjectives being a later feature.⁴ On the other hand, the verbs proper did not originally have the suffix conjugation. The "pseudo-conjugation" of the adjectives is the origin of the other applications of the suffix conjugation:

- conjugation of nouns (*zikkarāku* 'I am the man') and numerals (*wēdēnu* 'we are alone'),
- conjugation of adjectives (*rēmēnēta* 'you are merciful') and participles (*wāšibāku* 'I am staying'),

1 Cf. Rössler (1950:493-494).

2 Cf. Banti (1987).

3 Cf., e.g., Jungraithmayr (1994 and 1997).

4 This is the reason why the Prefix Conjugation of the verbs of quality is formed after a uniform vocalisation pattern: in Akkadian, *-CaCCiC*, *-CCiC* (and *-CtaCiC*); in Ancient West Semitic *-CCaC*, but in Arabic and South Semitic both *-CCaC* (for verbs with *CaCaCa* perfect) and *-CCuC* (for verbs with *CaCuCa* perfect). On the other hand, it is the Suffix Conjugation that is uniform with other verbs: Akkadian *CaCiC*, West Semitic *CaCaCa*.

- the Stative conjugation of the verbs,
intransitives (mainly those of resultative *aktionsart*; not, e. g., of *alāku* 'to go', *rapādu* 'to run', *damāmu* 'to lament');
transitives, with passive meaning (*aḥiz* 'he has been seized')
transitives, with active meaning (partly of the same verbs, e.g. *aḥiz* 'he has seized'); this is regarded as a secondary development by influence of the intransitives.

Whereas the base of the suffix conjugation of adjective verbs is the adjective, of vocalisation patterns *CaCuC*, *CaCiC*, or *CaCaC*, the base of the verbs proper is the uniform "verbal adjective", *CaCiC*.

Both Huehnergard (1987:221–222) and Tropper (1995:493) emphasize the fact that the delocutive forms (third person) are different in structure from the interlocutive forms (first and second persons). Whereas the latter are conjugated adjectives (the conjugation endings ultimately deriving from former personal pronouns), the former are declined like nouns (for gender and number, though not for case). It is certainly no coincidence that the peculiar *-ā-* vowel can be found in the interlocutive forms only.

interlocutive:	delocutive:
conjugation	declension
pronominal ending	gender/number ending
(<i>-ā-ku</i> , <i>-ā-ta</i> , <i>-ā-ti</i> ; <i>-ā-nū/ā</i> , <i>-ā-kumū</i>)	(Ø/ <i>a</i> , <i>at</i> ; <i>ū</i> , <i>ā</i>)
presence of <i>-ā-</i> in Stative paradigm	absence of <i>-ā-</i> in Stative paradigm

In contrast to the Akkadian Stative, the West Semitic Perfect is fully integrated into the verbal system, what is mainly due to the lack in West Semitic of a perfect conjugation of the Akk. *iptarV's* type. Nevertheless, Tropper does not see a rigid contrast in meaning and use between the Akkadian Stative and the West Semitic Perfect, but rather a gradual transition. He claims that the origin of the latter is likewise in a "pseudo-conjugation" of the adjective. The emerging of the fientic meaning had occurred only gradually, there being still many static instances, especially in Biblical Hebrew. Important morphological innovations as against Akkadian are the general use of *CaCaCa* for the verbs proper (conversely, the verbs of quality have become restricted to types *CaCuCa* and *CaCiCa*), and the differentiation into active and passive forms (Arabic *'aḥada* and *'uḥida*, respectively, against uniform *aḥiz* in Akk.). Other important differences are:

- suffix conjugation of nouns is found in Akkadian only,
- the first and second person forms of Akkadian display a vowel *-ā-* between the stem and the ending; there is no trace of this in other Semitic languages.

Some arguments can be raised, not against Tropper's analysis as such, but against his assumption of a Proto-Semitic date for the developments described. Rather, it must be assumed that the origin of the Suffix conjugation is much

earlier. Important evidence comes from Egyptian where active diathesis of transitives and dynamic meaning can be found in the earliest phases of the language. If the origin is in a "pseudo-conjugation" of the adjective, as Tropper has made plausible, there must be a rather long way from this to the oldest Egyptian evidence. When comparing Egyptian and Semitic, their conformity in respect to the Suffix Conjugation is rather exceptional. Otherwise, there is – beyond the apparent signs of relationship – a broad gap between the two sub-families, whether in basic vocabulary, phonetics, morphology, or syntax. Although Egyptian and some Semitic languages are attested since several thousands of years, their genetic link must antedate their oldest texts for at least as long a time span as that that has elapsed since then. The origin of the Suffix Conjugation is neither Semitic nor Proto-Semitic, but rather beyond the point where the ancestors of Proto-Egyptian and Proto-Semitic separated.

Recent research has shown that there must be more than one paradigm of the Egyptian Old Perfective. They are distinguished by their vocalisation patterns, whereas the consonantal skeleton is the same. These are the forms found in the Pyramid Texts⁵ and in the Middle Kingdom (disregarding the forms of the dual):

	Pyramid Texts:	Middle Kingdom:
singular: 3m	<i>sḏm</i> -(j)	<i>sḏm</i> -(w)
f	<i>sḏm</i> -t(j)	<i>sḏm</i> -t(j)
2m	<i>sḏm</i> -t(j)	<i>sḏm</i> -t(j)
f	<i>sḏm</i> -t(j)	<i>sḏm</i> -t(j)
1c	<i>sḏm</i> -k(j)	<i>sḏm</i> -k(w)
plural: 3m	<i>sḏm</i> -w(j)	<i>sḏm</i> -(w)
f	* <i>sḏm</i> -t(j)	<i>sḏm</i> -t(j)
2c	<i>sḏm</i> -twn(j)	<i>sḏm</i> -twn(j)
1c	<i>sḏm</i> -nw(j) (?), ⁶ -w(j)n	<i>sḏm</i> -w(j)n

As is normal in hieroglyphic writing, particularly of the Old Kingdom, final *j* and *w* are but rarely written. It has, however, been made plausible by Kammerzell (1990, 1991a and 1991b)⁷ that there is a significant ratio of writing or omitting them in the Old Perfective endings. Schenkel's investigation (cf. Schenkel 1994) has reached a similar issue for the Coffin Texts (First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom). He analysed the writings of the ending *-tj* (2 m. f. sing., 3 f. sing., 3 f. plur.), distinguishing between verbs with an inherent dynamic meaning (like the intransitive verbs of motion) and verbs with an

⁵ Cf. Edel (1955/1964: §§ 572–576) and Allen (1984: § 564).

⁶ Allen (1984: 385, § 564 D).

⁷ See also the critical remarks of Karl Jansen-Winkel (1991).

inherent static meaning (like the verbs of quality). The statistics which his investigation yielded are obviously significant:

	verbs liable to be dynamic		verbs liable to be static	
spelling:	<·tj>	<·t>	<·tj>	<·t>
2 m. sing.	5%	95% (!)	36%	64%
2 f. sing.	0%	100% (!)	52%	48%
3 f. sing.	1%	99% (!)	14%	86% (!)
3 f. plur.	0%	100% (!)	50%	50%

It can be clearly seen that inherently dynamic verbs hardly ever display the spelling <·tj>. Inherently static verbs have both the <·tj> and the <·t> spelling, in a virtually equal ratio. But there is one exception to this: the 3 f. sing. form is rarely spelt <·tj>, that is, we find <·tj> with inherently static verbs nearly as seldom as with inherently dynamic verbs.

This is a remarkable result indeed. But the question is, what does it mean in terms of phonetics and morphology? Schenkel has discovered a significant parallel, viz. the spelling of the nisba adjectives derived from nouns or prepositions ending in *t*, in the same corpus (Coffin Texts). The penult syllable of these is necessarily accented. It may be either closed (...C \check{V} C *tij*) or open (...C \check{V} *tij*). In the spelling of nisba adjectives whose vocalisation can be inferred, there is a ratio of distribution of <·tj> and <·t> spellings that is virtually identical with that for the endings of the 2 sing. and 3 fem. plur. of the Old Perfective endings:

nisba adjectives,	C \check{V} C <i>tij</i>		C \check{V} <i>tij</i>	
spelling:	<·tj>	<·t>	<·tj>	<·t>
	7%	93% (!)	53%	43%.

This shows that the scribes of the Coffin Texts used to write <·t> for *tVj*# after a consonant, but either <·t> or <·tj> in a case of $\check{V}tVj$ #. It must be concluded that the Old Perfective forms that are exclusively written <·t> had a consonant before the ending, whereas those written partly <·t>, partly <·tj> had a long accented vowel inserted between the verbal stem and the ending. The forms written <·t> are, as we have seen, those of dynamic verbs plus the 3 pers. fem. sing. of the static verbs. Those written <·tj> are those of the 2 pers. sing. and the 3 pers. plur. of static verbs.

However, the evidence of the spelling of the Old Perfective ending *tj* in the Coffin Texts needs a critical revision from the statistic viewpoint. The total of cases of 2 pers. masc. sing. is 336, that of 3 pers. fem. sing. is 291. These numbers are sufficiently big to yield reliable results. Of the 2 pers. fem. sing., there are 32 cases; as the distributions 11:0 and 11:12 are very distinct, this num-

ber may suffice. But the six cases of 3 pers. fem. plur.,⁸ in the distributions 4 : 0 and 1 : 1, are probably not enough to be significant. We may conclude from Schenkel's results that there were different forms for the second person singular, *CV CVC tVj and *CVC Cā tVj. We will, on the other hand, hesitate to assume the same for the third person feminine singular as the relation of ⟨t⟩ and the ⟨tj⟩ spellings is not so dissimilar with static and dynamic verbs (209 : 3 versus 68 : 11). But the evidence is inconclusive as to the situation of the third feminine plural. It is, then, not improbable that the third person forms did not distinguish between "Perfect" and "Stative" in Egyptian. In other words, the Egyptian Perfect would very much resemble the West Semitic Perfect, and in the same time the Egyptian "Stative" would have the same peculiarity as the Akkadian Stative in so far as the long stressed vowel -ā- between the stem and the ending is found in the second (and first) person forms, though not in those of the third person.

dynamic Old Perfective ("perfect"): static Old Perfective ("stative"):

2 m. sing.	*CV CVC tVj	*CVC Cā tVj
2 f. sing.	*CV CVC tVj	*CVC Cā tVj
3 f. sing.	*CV CVC tVj	*CV CVC tVj
3 f. plur.	*CVC CV tVj ?	*CVC CV tVj ?

Actually, numerous vocalized forms of the Egyptian Old Perfective are preserved, mostly in Coptic (the "qualitative"), but also in Greek and cuneiform transcriptions of Egyptian names, etc. All these forms are, however, of the third person. In general it is the third person masc. singular form that is preserved.

3rad. verbs: the Coptic forms are CoCC, the form to be reconstructed is *CāC CVw (i.e., CaCVC + Vw).

2rad. verbs, including many that were originally 3rad.: Coptic has CēC what has to go back to CīC CVw (i.e., CuC + Vw).⁹

4rad. verbs: the Coptic forms are CCCōC, the form to be reconstructed is *CaC Cā CVw; 5rad. verbs have CCCCōC, to be reconstructed as *CV CaC Cā CVw.

4rad. week verbs (IVae infirmae): the Coptic forms are CCōC (e.g., ϣⲟⲩⲟⲩ 'is dry' < *šawājVw¹⁰), what may be reconstructed as *Ca Cā

⁸ The 3 fem. plur. form was substituted by the 3 masc. plur. form in the Middle Kingdom. It is only in a very conservative (and in parts early) corpus like the Coffin Texts that we may expect to find it at all attested.

⁹ Coptic *h* may also go back to **ī*, but this sound change is based on certain conditions (see Peust 1992), whereas the vocalisation CēC is uniform for all 2rad. verbs (whether original or shortened from 3rad. verbs), whatever their radical consonants are.

¹⁰ Also the infinitive of this verb, ϣⲟⲩⲟⲩⲉ, has the structure of the week 4rad. verbs.

CVw; but also *CCēC* (e.g., **τοϣητ** 'is united' < **tawūitVw*), to be reconstructed as **Ca C ī CVw*.¹¹

There are, however, several qualitatives that originate in the third person fem. singular:

3rad.: Coptic forms like **ϣκα/οειτ** < **ha kīr tVj*, or perhaps < **ha kār tVj*, **χρα/οειτ** < **da rīj tVj*, or **da ráj tVj*, the template being **Ca CīC tVj*, or perhaps **Ca CāC tVj*

2rad.: Coptic forms like **οειτ** < **gūr tVj*, **εειτ** < **jūr tVj* < **ja wūr tVj*; template **C ūC tVj*

4rad. verbs: the Coptic forms are of the pattern *CCCoCt*, to be reconstructed as **CaC CāC tVj*; 5rad. verbs have *CCCCoCt*, to be reconstructed as **Ca CVC CāC tVj*.

4rad. week verbs (IVae infirmae): Coptic *CCoCt* (e.g., **σροϣτ** 'is at leisure' < **sarāftVj*), to be reconstructed as **Ca CāC tVj*.¹²

Other Coptic qualitative forms are thought to be secondary, that is, to be formed in analogy. Among them, there are a few that may, however, be old, viz. forms of the third masc. plural:

CCCōu < **CaC Cā wVj* (?): **πρρε** 'to come forth': **πρειωϣ** < **par jā wVj* (besides **πορε** < **pār jVw*, 3 m. sg.); **τρρε** 'to be afraid': **τρειωϣ** < **tar jā wVj*; **ααι** 'to become light': **α(ει)ωϣ** < **jas jā wVj*

*CCCēu(t)*¹³ < **CaC C ī wVj* (?): **σββε** 'to circumcise': **σββηϣ(τ)** < **sab jū wVj*; **σσειλε** 'to dwell': **σλαηϣ(τ)** < **qVC lū wVj* (besides **σλωϣ** < **qVC lā wVj*)

All these are week 3rad. (IIIae infirmae) verbs.

Note that none of the singular forms (masc. and fem.) show traces of a vowel *-ā-* between the stem and the ending, just as in Akkadian (*damiq*, *damqat*). The long stress-bearing vowel of the assumed plural forms is rather part of the ending. All this concerns the third person; for the first and second persons, however, we have to reckon with stative forms with a vowel *ā* between the stem and the end-

11 The Egyptian forms are the result of a syncopation of the two final syllables (which led to the disappearance of the final week radical) and subsequent lengthening of the vowel of the open accented syllable: **CaCīCījVj* > **CaCīCīVj* > **CaCīCVw*; cf. feminine nisba forms like **mī'swātiyat* > **mī'sjātit* > *B ηεσιω†*. The vocalisation may have been **CaCaCīC-*.

12 Again, the forms are the result of a syncopation of the two final syllables: **CīCīCījVj* > **CīCīCīVj*; here, too, the final week vowel has disappeared, but no lengthening of the accented vowel was necessary as it came to stand in a closed syllable. Cf. nisba forms of a structure like **hāntijāt* > **hāntit* > *-χοντ*. The vocalisation may again have been **CaCaCīC-*.

13 With intrusive *-t*.

ing, as in the Akkadian Stative, alongside with perfect tense forms without such a vowel, as in the West and South Semitic Perfect.

dynamic Old Perfective ("Perfect"): static Old Perfective ("Stative"):

1 c. sing.	*CV CV̇C kVj	*CVC Cā kVj
1 c. plur.	*CV CV̇C nVj	*CVC Cā nVj
2 m. sing.	*CV CV̇C tVj	*CVC Cā tVj
2 f. sing.	*CV CV̇C tVj	*CVC Cā tVj
2 c. (?) plur.	*CV CVC tūnVj	*CVC Ca tūnVj
3 m. sing.	*CV̇C CV̇j (< *CV̇CVCV̇j)	*CV̇C CV̇j (< *CV̇CVCV̇j)
3 m. plur.	*CVC CV̇wVj	*CVC CV̇wVj
3 f. sing.	*CV CV̇C tVj	*CV CV̇C tVj
3 f. plur.	*CVC CV̇tVj ?	*CVC CV̇tVj ?

Usually, the interlocutive Stative forms of Akkadian are analysed as consisting of a predicative element (verbal noun, or noun in general) plus an ending of pronominal character, viz. *-āku*, *-āta*, etc. The *-ā-* vowel is thought to be part of the ending. This is motivated on the one hand by the delocutive forms which do not have the *-ā-*, on the other hand by the absolute pronoun *anāku* (with its Hebrew cognate *'anōkī*) which does have it, and which is also analysed as *an-āku*, on account of the forms of the second person (**an-ta*, **an-ti* etc.). The newly discovered Egyptian facts reveal a completely different perspective. If there is a Stative **saḏmā-kuw* 'I have been heard', 'I having been heard' alongside with a Perfect **saḏVm-kuw* 'I heard', 'I have heard', the *-ā-* cannot be regarded as part of the pronominal element; it is rather – in the interlocutive forms – a tense marker of the Stative, in contrast to the Perfect:

	base	tense marker	subject
Stative:	(verbal) noun	<i>-ā-</i>	<i>ku, ta</i> , etc.
Perfect:	(verbal) noun	Ø	<i>ku, ta</i> , etc.

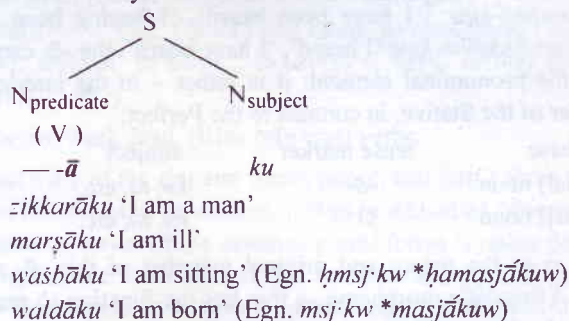
The question arises as to the nature and original meaning of this *-ā-* vowel. Actually, there is an Afroasiatic morpheme *-a* that has the function to mark the Absolute Case. The *absolutus* is the case of the predicate (predicative), of the address (vocative), of isolated words, etc. Sasse (1984) has shown that the Semitic Accusative (Akkadian, Arabic [*al-naṣb*], Ge'ez) originated in the Absolute Case in *-a*, and he has shown vestiges of it in Berber and in Cushitic. In Egyptian, residues of the Absolute Case can perhaps be found with all morphological types of the Absolute Pronoun (**jan-ā-k*, **jan-ā-n* [the endings are not the suffix pronouns, but rather resemble the Old Perfective endings]; **tuw-ā-t*, **jim-ā-t*, **suw-ā-t*, **sit-ā-t* [enclitic pronoun + **āt*]; **jant-ā-k(t)l(f)l(n)l(n)l(n)*, furthermore with some prepositions (**jam-ā-f* 'in him', **jar-ā-f* 'to him'), and with the subjunctive form of the suffix pronoun conjugation (**'anḥ-ā-f* '(in order) that he may live'), cf. Satzinger (1991).

Note that the Egyptian absolute pronoun is characteristically used as a predicate and in extrapositions (more or less like French *moi*); its use as a subject in the nominal sentence (interlocutive persons only) is probably secondary. Semitic has only one of these pronominal predicative forms with stressed *-a*, viz. Akk. *anāku*, cf. Heb. *'anōkī* (which has to compete with *'anī*); but on the other hand, the absolute pronoun of Semitic is more characteristically used as subject (cf. Rosén 1984).

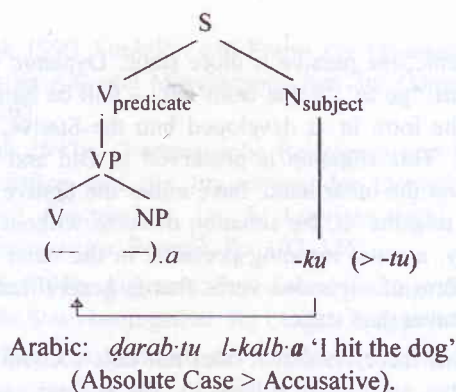
My hypothesis is that the original structure of the Stative (of Akkadian and Egyptian) is – at least in the interlocutive forms – a sentence consisting of a verbal noun (or – in Akkadian – a general noun) in the Absolute Case, with a free pronoun being added as subject. Accordingly, the language in which the Suffix Conjugation came into existence was quite different from Egyptian and the Semitic languages as they are actually attested.

- It had an Absolute Case system (in contrast to the Semitic Accusative Case system).
- It had a paradigm of freely used personal pronouns *ku*, *ta*, *ti* etc. that could function as subject pronouns.

Actually, the *-ā-* morpheme did not, in principle, mark the predicate (in a narrow sense) but rather the whole predicative phrase. If the predicate consisted of one element only it was this that was marked:

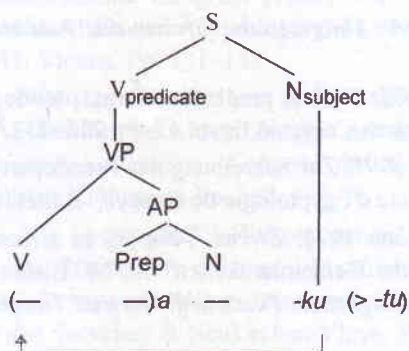


If, however, the predicate phrase consisted of more than one element the predicate marker was attached to the last element. With transitive verbs, the predicative phrase consists of the verb and a nominal (direct) complement, or object. In languages with an Accusative Case system, like Akkadian, Arabic and Ge'ez, the object is in the accusative. In the languages mentioned, the pertinent marker is in the singular an ending *-a*. Our model can show how the Absolute Case marker of the old system became an accusative marker in the new.



This concerns the active voice. If, however, a transitive verb is used in the passive voice it has no nominal expansion. In this case it behaves like a verb of quality, or any other univalent verb; see above, *waldāku* 'I am born'.

Also intransitive verbs may be bivalent, like the transitives; in this case they are in need of an indirect (or adverbial) complement as expansion. The predicative phrase consists of the verb and an adverb or a preposition with its complement. If we look for traces of the original Absolute Case marker *ā* we may think of several Arabic adverbs that end in *-a*, like *hunā* 'here', *hamā* 'there', *tumma* 'then', *baynā* 'in between'; *'ayna* 'where?', *matā* 'when?', *kayfa* 'how?', but also of several Arabic and Egyptian prepositions with the same characteristic: Arabic *'ilā*, *'alā*, *ladā*, *hattā*, *ma'a*; *fawqa*, *taḥta*, *ba'da*, etc.; Egyptian **jamā-* 'in', **jarā-* 'to'. Note that in the prepositional phrase it is not the final element (the complement) that receives the marker, but rather the nuclear element (the preposition).



Middle Egyptian: *jw.j h3j.kw jr jnt* (**jara-jānat*), same meaning.

Transitive verbs in the active voice will not – according to the model presented here – receive the *-a* morpheme; those in the passive voice will. By nature, the

active is more dynamic, the passive is more static. Dynamic verbs of motion – with local expansions: 'go to', 'come from' etc. – will be bare, verbs of quality will have the *-a*. The form in *-a* developed into the Stative, the form without became the Perfect. This situation is preserved in Old and Middle Egyptian. Semitic languages, on the other hand, have either the Stative or the Perfect. In Akkadian all verbs take the *-a*, the situation of verbs without expansion is thus generalized; anyway, a static meaning prevails. In the other languages, the *-a* gets lost, it is the form of expanded verbs that is generalized. The meaning is typically dynamic, rather than static.

The main flaw in this theory is that it does not take account of the delocutive forms. Obviously, they are formed differently: the endings can be related to, or are identical with, the gender/number markers of the noun, that is to say, they have declension; on the other hand, no pronominal elements, no conjugation. Solutions to link them with the model developed above can be thought of, but must be left for another occasion as they would imply elaborate discussions.

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