

Helmut Satzinger

These strange, exotic Egyptian verbal formations

Caro Antonio,

Freund von historischen Cross-Roads, preside efficacissimo e meritevolissimo del Comitato Scientifico, Rector magnificus, polyglotter Weltmann (Perugia — Göttingen — Los Angeles — Basel, um nur die wichtigsten anzuführen): Ich hoffe, Du hast ein wenig Spaß mit diesem typologischen Spaziergang! Mit den allerbesten Wünschen!

Helmut

“... Thus, unlike verbal formations in other Afroasiatic languages (Arabic *yasmaʕu* ‘he hears,’ *yasmaʕu l-raġulu* ‘the man hears’), the Egyptian suffix conjugation does not display the pronominal affix of the third person in the presence of nominal subjects, a feature which is relevant for our understanding of the origin of this morphological pattern. [Endnote 106 refers to Schenkel *Sprachwissenschaft* 115–21]” (Loprieno 1995:73f.).

Indeed, typology of verbal inflexion is an interesting issue. It is advisable to distinguish the synthetic conjugations *stricto sensu*, as are typical of Indo-European languages and the prefix conjugations of Afro-Asiatic, on the one hand, and more or less free analytic formations, with or without an auxiliary verb, in the form of a nominal sentence (Ivrit, Neo-Arabic; new Slavic perfect); or compounds of verbal nouns or similar, the agent/subject being expressed in a possessive construction (Altaic languages, Hungarian...), or verbal nouns in prepositional phrases (progressive constructions in Celtic [*tá mé ag léamh*], Romanic [*sto leggendo*], English [*I’m reading*], and various African languages [like Hausa *inà karàntā*]).

In Egyptology, the typical Egyptian verbal construction is traditionally called by the misnomer “suffix conjugation.” It is worthwhile mentioning that it is neither this nor that: neither is it a conjugation in the sense just mentioned (the verbal element is invariable through the persons and numbers), and there is no suffix involved. (The Egyptological use of “suffix conjugation” is the more infelicitous, as the same term is used in Semitic language studies for those forms that are akin to the Egyptian Old Perfective, which stands in opposition to what is named “suffix conjugation.”) In the constructions in question, the subject assumes, if it happens to be pronominal, the form of the (common Afro-Asiatic) suffix pronoun; a feature that is only marginal and secondary in the other Afro-Asiatic branches.

If the subject is a noun, it takes the same place as a pronoun (apart from prosodic adaptations), or we may say it replaces the pronoun. But with the same right it could be stated that a pronominal subject will replace a noun.

In a “proper” Indo-European or Afro-Asiatic conjugation, there is no pronoun that could be “replaced” (namely by a nominal subject). Instead, the grammatical Person is expressed by specific markers; that may have a remote similarity with the personal pronoun in some cases, but are clearly distinct. They may also vary according to tense.

	Verb:	Cf. pronoun:
Present	<i>cad-ō</i>	<i>ego</i> ; accusative <i>me</i> , etc., possessive <i>meus</i>
Imperfect	<i>cadēba-m</i>	
Perfect	<i>cecid-ī</i>	

In some languages the conjugated verb with an implicit pronominal subject receives a personal pronoun, in addition to its person marker (like in *j'accuse!*). This is understandable in cases where the markers are largely reduced or have become completely levelled, so that person and number is not indicated anymore. In English, the only remainder of the ancient plethora of conjugation endings is the *-s* in the Third Person Singular of the present. In Swedish, with the endings reduced to *-r* in the singular and *-Ø* in the plural, the vernacular (which is by now standard) unified even this in a uniform ending *-r*. A levelling of this kind depends on the indication of person through an obligatory use of the personal pronouns, which are used in other languages only for a topicalising effect. There are, however, languages that make use of additional pronouns, although their conjugation is at least partly preserved, like German and French.

A. Conjugation intact. No pronoun used.	B. Conjugation reduced. Obligatory use of pronoun.	C. Conjugation outworn. Obligatory use of pronoun.
Modern Greek: <i>πέφτει</i> Russian: <i>падает</i> Italian: <i>cade</i>	German: <i>er fällt</i> French: <i>il tombe</i>	English, past: <i>he fell</i> Swedish: <i>han faller</i>
Nominal subject: <i>ἡ πέτρα πέφτει</i> <i>камень падает</i> <i>la pietra cade</i>	<i>der Stein fällt</i> <i>la pierre tombe</i>	<i>the stone fell</i> <i>stenen faller</i>

A nominal subject is added to the construction in the first case (A), and it replaces the pronoun in the second and third cases (B, C).

There are, however, languages with a rudimentarily preserved conjugation and an obligatory pronoun, in which the nominal subject will not suppress the pronoun (as if **the stone it falls*). This is a very typical feature of the Gallo-Italian languages of Northern Italy. Here is a poem by Giovanni Giovagnoli in the Romagnolo of Rimini. It is published in *Poesie nel dialetto romagnolo. Supplemento ai Quaderni di San Mauro n.1: 50° Anniversario della morte di Giulio Tognacci*, San Mauro Pascoli, giugno 1992, p. 48. The resistant pronouns are printed in bold.

Canzunèta

*T'e' cèr dla léuna
e gat **e** miòula s'e' tèt ad Pazàja.
M'a la finèstra véрта
la Claudia, mèza néuda,
la s'pètna i cavèll longh
m'un spicìn ròt.*

Canzonetta

*Nel chiaro della luna
il gatto miagola sul tetto di Pazzaglia.
Alla finestra aperta
la Claudia, mezza nuda,
se pettina i capelli lunghi
in uno specchietto rotto.*

*S'e' piòp de zardoin dal Sori
l'usignùl **u** s'spaca e pèt par cantè
la su bèla dserenèda d'amour
c'**la** vòula sòura al chèsi de paòis.*

*Sul pioppo del giardino delle Suore
l'usignolo si spacca il petto per cantare
la sua bella serenata d'amore
che vola sulle case del paese.*

(In the moonlight | the cat is miewing on the roof of P. | At the open window | Claudia, half naked | is combing her long hair | in a broken mirror. || On the poplar in the garden of the nons | the nightingale splits its chest to sing | her beautiful love-serenade | that flies over the houses of the country.)

The last line, with a relative clause, in which the subject is implicit elsewhere but expressed here by *la* 'she,' shows clearly that we are properly not dealing with pronouns anymore, but rather with elements of a conjugation, which is realised as well by prefixes (the clitic subject pronouns) as also the traditional suffixes: *e-miòula*, *la-s'pètna* (with insertion of the reflexive pronoun *s*), *u-s'spaca* (ditto), *la-vòula*.

If we leave now the synthetic constructions, we may turn to the most transparent of the analytic constructions, which are certainly the nominal sentences with the normal independent pronouns as subject and an active participle as predicate. A good example is Neo-Arabic (Cairo variety): *huwwa mask-* (construct form of *māsik*) *il-qalam* ‘he has seized the pen(cil) (κάλαμος),’ or Ivrit *hu holex* ‘he goes,’ ‘he is going.’ In both cases the participles have of course no verbal inflexion, but the full nominal inflexion for gender and number, as in *hiyya maska* (= *māsika*) *l-qalam*, *humma maskin* (= *māsikīn*) *il-aqlām*; *hi holéxet*, *hem holxim*, *hen holxot*.

Our point of departure was the question whether in a given language a nominal subject is added to the construction with pronominal subject (cf. Loprieno’s example, *yasma’u ‘l-raǧulu* ‘the man hears’, as compared to *yasma’u* ‘he hears’), or whether it merely takes the place of a pronominal expression, as in Egyptian *sḏm zj* ‘may the man hear!’ as compared with *sḏm=f* ‘may he hear!’ The closest parallel to the Egyptian *sḏm=f* is found in the Ethio-Semitic languages: In Ge‘ez, verbal nouns in the adverbial accusative (as *qatīl-a* “while/when killing,” or the like) may be conjugated by means of the suffix pronoun: *qatīl-ō* (< **qatīl-a-hū*) “when he killed.” A further comparable feature are the circumstantial expressions formed by adjectives that are in concord with their referent: “you (nominative or genitive) ... *tekūz-e-ka* being sad”; “you (accusative) ... *tekūz-a-ka* being sad” (Satzinger 1968; Kapeliuk 1998). In respect to the phenomenon that interests us here, however, the Ethio-Semitic languages behave differently: a nominal subject will not replace the pronoun; cf. Ge‘ez *wa-tawalīdō ʔīyasūs* “and when Jesus was born” Matth. 2.1, with the pronoun *-ō* retained before the nominal subject.

In the Arabic and Ivrit nominal sentence constructions mentioned, the nominal subject will of course replace the pronoun:

Huwwa mask-uh

he has taken hold of it

Hiyya maskâ-h

she has taken hold of it

Humma maskîn-uh

they have taken hold of it

Şahb-ī mask-uh (= *māsik+uh*)

My friend has taken hold of it

Şahbit-ī maskâ-h (= *māsika+uh*)

My girlfriend has taken hold of it

Aşhâb-ī maskîn-uh (= *māsikīn+uh*)

My friends have taken hold of it

A similar instance is the new past tense of the Slavic languages; in Russian in the form of a Nominal Sentence (i.e., without an auxiliary verb). Again, gender and number are reflected in the verb form: *он пришёл* ‘he came’, fem. *она пришла*, neutr. *оно пришло*, plur. *они пришли*. A nominal subject will of course take the place of the pronoun: *мой друг пришёл* ‘my friend came.’ Other Slavic languages, like Serbo-Croatian, will mostly use the verb ‘to be’ (it is the short forms that are used, which are clitic), and as the auxiliary verb is of type A (see above), no pronoun is present: *došao je, došla je, došlo je*; plur. *došli su, došle su, došla su*. Pronouns are only used (as in *on je došao*) for some topicalizing effect, like in an Italian *lui viene*. A nominal subject will of course be added to the simple construction: *moj prijatelj je došao* ‘my friend came,’ etc.

In others instances we can almost watch these constructions becoming grammaticalised, in particular how the pronouns change in shape and function, becoming mere conjugation affixes. Nice examples are provided by the conjugations of Neo-Aramaic which originated in the combination of the active participle and the independent pronoun.

Here is the Present Tense paradigm of an Eastern Aramaic idiom (Lipiński 2001:431 / 42.19; a paradigm from Urmia is found at Klingenberg 1956:254), with the participle *pātiḥ* ‘who opens’ (cf. Arabic *fātiḥ*), feminine *pātiḥa*, plural *pātiḥīn*; with a shortened form of the absolute pronoun in the First and Second Persons, developing into a suffix:

1sm/f	<i>pāthīn/pāthān</i>	= <i>pātiḥ/pāthā</i> + <i>-n</i> (< <i>ana</i> ‘I’; Hoberman 1988:561) ‘I open,’ etc.
2sm/f	<i>pāthit/pāthāt</i>	= <i>pātiḥ/pāthā</i> + <i>-t</i> (< <i>at</i> ‘you’: communis!)
3sm/f	<i>pātiḥ/pāthā</i>	
1pc	<i>pāthax</i>	= <i>pāthī</i> + <i>-ax</i> (< <i>axnan, axniy</i> ‘we’)
2pc	<i>pāthītūn</i>	= <i>pāthī</i> + <i>-tūn</i> (< <i>axtun</i> ‘you’)
3pc	<i>pāthī</i>	

The sequence of the elements is inverse in Western Aramaic, notably in the idiom of Maʿlūla, where the pronoun developed into a prefix. The following paradigm (Klingenberg 1956:253) deploys the participle *ʔōḥel* (<ʔāḳel; cf. Arabic *ʔākil-*), ‘eating,’ plural *ʔōḥlin*; fem. *ʔōḥla*, plural *ʔōḥlan*.

Singular:	Cf. the pronoun:	Plural:	
1sm/f <i>nōḥel/nōḥla</i>	(<i>ʔenā</i>)	1pm/f <i>nōḥlin/nōḥlan</i>	‘I eat,’ etc.
2sm/f <i>čōḥel/šōḥla</i>	(<i>hač/haš</i>)	2pm/f <i>čōḥlin/ čōḥlan</i>	
3sm/f <i>ʔōḥel/ʔōḥla</i>		3pm/f <i>ʔōḥlin/ʔōḥlan</i>	

In my opinion, the personal prefixes are not to be identified with the prefixes of the “imperfect,” as e.g. Bergsträßer thought (Bergsträßer 1928; reprint 1963:82). Rather they are shortened forms of the independent pronoun of the singular.

The forms of the Third Person are structurally distinguished from those of the other persons in that they do not contain a pronominal element. Only the First and Second Person forms are properly verbal, in being inflected for person, whereas the forms of the Third Person display a purely nominal inflexion, for gender and number. This is reminiscent of a much older form that has obviously originated in the combination of a “verbal adjective” (*paris*) and the personal pronoun, namely the Akkadian Stative (Buccellati 1968; Huehnergard 1987; Tropper 1995; Satzinger 1999). It is true, the verbal base of the Stative does not receive nominal inflexion for gender and number in the First and Second Persons: singular *pars-ā-ku* ‘I have been taken care of, etc.’, *pars-ā-ta*, fem. *pars-ā-ti*; plural *pars-ā-nu*, *pars-ā-tun*, fem. *pars-ā-tin*; Third Person, singular *paris*, *parsat*; Plural *parsū*, fem. *parsā*; Dual *parsā*, fem. *paristā*. But also here the forms of the Third Person display nominal inflexion only, and are not expressly marked for the Third Person. They are properly forms of a noun in the Absolute State.

The feature of Third Person forms that are not conjugated, but show at best nominal inflexion is not restricted to forms that originated in participles; it can also be met with in constructions that originate probably in verbal nouns, the subject expression being possessive.

Turkish: verb *düşmek* ‘to fall’

	Singular:	Plural:	Cf. ‘my house,’ etc.	
1	<i>düşerim</i>	<i>düşeriz</i>	<i>evim</i>	<i>evimiz</i>
2	<i>düşersin</i>	<i>düşersiniz</i>	<i>evin</i>	<i>eviniz</i>
3	<i>düşer</i>	<i>düşerler</i>	<i>evi</i>	<i>evi</i>

Düşerler: the morpheme of the Third Person Plural, *-lar/-ler* (in vowel harmony), is also the plural marker of the noun.

With nominal subject: *taş düşer* ‘the stone falls.’

Navajo (Hale 1970:33):

	adverbial prefix	subject person marker	classifier	stem
Sing. 1 st person:	<i>na-</i>	<i>-sh-</i>	<i>-l-</i>	<i>-nish</i>
2 nd person:	<i>na-</i>	<i>-ni-</i>	<i>-l-</i>	<i>-nish</i>
3 rd person:	<i>na-</i>	-----	<i>-l-</i>	<i>-nish</i>
Plur. 1 st person:	<i>na-</i>	<i>-ii-</i>	<i>-l-</i>	<i>-nish</i>
2 nd person:	<i>na-</i>	<i>-oh-</i>	<i>-l-</i>	<i>-nish</i>
3 rd person:	<i>na-</i>	-----	<i>-l-</i>	<i>-nish</i>

Nominal subject: *ʔashkii naalnish* ‘a boy is working.’

Another parallel is offered by the Cushitic conjugation that has been compared with the Akkadian (and Egyptian) stative, namely the rarer type of suffix conjugation. Whereas the generally used suffix conjugations can be traced back to a verbal noun plus auxiliary ‘to be’ in prefix conjugation (e.g. Saho, past of *faak-* ‘to open’: *faak-e* ‘I opened’ [**faak+ʔe*], *fakte* [**faak+te*], *faak-e* [**faak+ye*], *fak-te*, *fak-ne* [**faak+ne*], *fak-ten* [**faak+te-n*], *faak-en* [**faak+ye-n*]; Vergari/Vergari 2003:17), that type cannot; it is a construction that is mainly used of stative or adjective verbs. Its set of suffixes can be best seen in Saho and Somali, both Lowland East Cushitic languages (Banti 2001:8; note that the acute sign marks a high tone):

	Saho <i>ʔusub-á</i> ‘be new’		Somali <i>cusub</i> [ʔusub], ‘be new’		Reconstruction (Banti)	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1c	<i>ʔusub-iyó</i>	<i>ʔusub-inó</i>	<i>cúsb-i</i>	<i>cúsb-in</i>	<i>*-i-yi/u</i>	<i>*-i-nu</i>
2m/f	<i>ʔusub-itó</i>	<i>ʔusub-itín</i>	<i>cúsb-id</i>	<i>cusb-idín</i>	<i>*-i-tu</i>	<i>*-i-tin</i>
3m/f	<i>ʔusub-á</i>	<i>ʔusub-ón</i>	<i>cusúb-Ø</i>	<i>cusúb-Ø</i>	<i>*-Ø?</i>	<i>*-Ø?</i>

A nominal subject precedes the conjugated verb, as is general in a typical Cushitic SOV language; Saho: *ta ʔari ʔusuba* ‘this house is new’ (Vergari/Vergari 2003:18).

Banti (2001:14–15) argues that the endings *-a*, *-on* of the Saho third person are secondary, he regards the zero ending of Somali as the original feature. This is to say that also in these Lowland East Cushitic conjugations the forms of the Third Person do not contain a pronominal or personal

element, they do not display a verbal inflexion, just like the Aramaic forms that go back to active participles, and the Akkadian stative. Banti (1987:123–168) originally followed Sasse’s (1981:140) suggestion to compare it with the Akkadian stative, the Egyptian stative and the Kabyle present perfect of quality verbs. Later, though, he brought forward arguments for comparing it with the Egyptian suffix pronoun conjugation. On the other hand he sees now the Afro-Asiatic suffix conjugation in the rarer Cushitic suffix conjugation adduced above (Banti 2001:14–21).

The Kabyle stative conjugation mentioned is this: *-y*, *-d*, *-Ø*, *-et* (singular forms only; the plural is uniform *-it*; Rössler 1951:481/ § 41). Again, the forms of the Third Person (singular only, in this case), having no conjugational elements, display nominal inflexion only.

	Akkadian	Egyptian	Kabyle	East Cushitic
1sc	<i>-ku</i>	<i>-k, -kw</i>	<i>-y (*-ku)</i>	<i>*-i-yi/u</i>
2sm/f	<i>-ta/-ti</i>	<i>-t, -tj</i>	<i>-d (*tV)</i>	<i>*-i-tu</i>
3sm	<i>-Ø</i>	<i>-Ø, -w</i>	<i>-Ø</i>	<i>*-Ø?</i>
3sf	<i>-at</i>	<i>-t, -tj</i>	<i>-et</i>	<i>*-Ø?</i>

Another language that seems to allow to witness the process of grammaticalisation of the verbal conjugation is Old Nubian. For a long time the systematics of these conjugations could not be clearly seen; e.g., Present and Preterite II (*doll-* ‘to love, to want’, for the Old Nubian forms see Browne 2002:50 ff.):

	Present		Preterite II	
	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive	Indicativ
1s	<i>dolliri</i>	<i>dollire</i>	<i>dollisi</i>	<i>dollise</i>
2/3s	<i>dollin</i>	<i>dollina</i>	<i>dollisin</i>	<i>dollisina</i>
1/2p	<i>dolliru</i>	<i>dolliro</i>	<i>dollisu</i>	<i>dolliso</i>
3p	<i>dolliran</i>	<i>dollirana</i>	<i>dollisan</i>	<i>dollisana</i>

It was eventually Gerald M. Browne (1988) who discerned the system of consonant assimilations and vowel contractions that yielded these conjugations, from the basic material, viz. the verbal roots, the tense markers (*-Ø*, *-a*, *-s*, *-ad/r*), the gerund marker (*-r*), and the pronominal element (*-i*, *-n*, *-n*; *-u*, *-u*, *-an*).

The gerund (Browne’s term is “verbid”) can function as a verbal adjective (participle) or a verbal noun (infinitive). It may receive a tense marker, hence belong to one of the four tenses: Present **doll-r* realised as *dollil* (word-final *r* is realised as *l*), Preterite I **doll-a-r* realised as *dollol*, Preterite II **doll-s-r* realised as *dollisil*, Future **doll-ad/r-r* realised as *dolladil*.

Each of these tense forms can receive the personal endings, obviously ancient personal pronouns, a procedure that will yield the “subjunctive,” a conjugated gerund:

Subjunctive

	Present	Preterit I
1s	* <i>dollir + i > dolliri</i>	* <i>dollar + i > dollari</i>
2/3s	* <i>dollir + n > dollin</i>	* <i>dollar + n > dollon</i>
1/2p	* <i>dollir + u > dolliru</i>	* <i>dollar + u > dollaru</i>
3p	* <i>dollir + an > dolliran</i>	* <i>dollar + an > dollaran</i>
	Preterit II	Future
1s	* <i>dollisr + i > dollisi</i>	* <i>dollarr + i > dollarri</i>
2/3s	* <i>dollisr + n > dollisin</i>	* <i>dollarr + n > dollan</i>
1/2p	* <i>dollisr + u > dollisu</i>	* <i>dollarr + u > dollarru</i>
3p	* <i>dollisr + an > dollisan</i>	* <i>dollarr + an > dollarran</i>

The “ancient pronouns” that serve as conjugation endings have hardly any resemblance with the personal pronouns actually used. Nevertheless they must have originally been pronominal.

	Conjugation	Subject pron. (main clause)	Object pron. (suffix <i>-ka</i>)	Genitival pron. (suffixes <i>-n, -n+a</i>)
1s	<i>-i</i>	<i>ai-</i>	<i>aika</i>	<i>an, anna</i>
2s	<i>-n</i>	<i>ir-</i>	<i>ikka</i>	<i>in, inna</i>
3s	<i>-n</i>	<i>tar-</i>	<i>takka</i>	<i>tan, tanna</i>
1p	<i>-u</i>	(excl.): <i>u-</i> (incl.): <i>er-</i>	<i>uka</i> <i>ekka</i>	<i>un, unna</i> <i>en, enna</i>
2p	<i>-u</i>	<i>ur-</i>	<i>ukka</i>	<i>un, unna</i>
3p	<i>-an</i>	<i>ter-</i>	<i>tekka</i>	<i>ten, tenna</i>

This means we have to do with true conjugational endings, and not anymore with personal pronouns. The two of them can be used together: *ai dollisi, er dollisin, ter dollisin*, etc., like Italian *io voglio, tu vuoi*, etc.

The gerund is not a main clause form; it is the nucleus of some kind of part clause: attributive, gerundive. The same is true of the conjugated gerunds, the paradigms labelled subjunctive. But any of these forms, the gerunds and the tenses of the subjunctive likewise, can be raised to rhematic or predicative status. The marker of this is an ending *-a* (this was already seen by Vycichl 1958:173, chapter “The Origin of the Emphatic Conjugation”), identical with the predicative marker of noun phrases (*pap-a* ‘is the father’). The predicative gerunds are simply called “predicatives”: Present *dollira*, Preterite I *dollara*, Preterite II *dollisira* (or *dollisa*), Future *dollarra* (or *dolladira*).

The subjunctive, when raised to rhematic status, will become the Indicative:

	Present	Preterit I
1s	<i>dolliri + a > dollire</i>	<i>dollari + a > dollare</i>
2/3s	<i>dollin + a > dollina</i>	<i>dollon + a > dollona</i>
1/2p	<i>dolliru + a > dolliro</i>	<i>dollaru + a > dollaro</i>
3p	<i>dolliran + a > dollirana</i>	<i>dollaran + a > dollarana</i>
	Preterit II	Future
1s	<i>dollisi + a > dollise</i>	<i>dollarri + a > dollarre</i>
2/3s	<i>dollisin + a > dollisina</i>	<i>dollan + a > dollanna</i>
1/2p	<i>dollisu + a > dolliso</i>	<i>dollarri + a > dollarro</i>
3p	<i>dollisan + a > dollisana</i>	<i>dollarri + a > dollarrana</i>

We have to return to our initial issue, as to whether in a given language a nominal subject is added to the construction with pronominal subject, or whether it takes the place of a pronominal expression, as in Egyptian *sḏm zj* ‘may the man hear!’ as compared to *sḏm=f* ‘may he hear!’ In the Old Nubian morpho-syntax we meet with a peculiar situation. If the subject of a verb is nominal, none of the conjugations is found, but rather the respective form with its tense marker, though without the personal elements; in other words, the predicatives (in main clauses) and the gerunds (in part clauses). In contrast to the constructions shown above, from Afro-Asiatic languages, a

pronominal subject of the Third Person is expressed by the ending (in all probability an ancient pronoun). If the subject is nominal, however, an unconjugated form is used.

Just two more examples from Africa, arbitrarily chosen, of languages with an invariable verbal core element.

Sara Na (Nilo-Saharan — Central Sudanic — West — Sara-Bagirmi — Sara — Western — Kaba — Na; Southern Chad), after Keegan/Koutou 2014:xii–xvii. High tone, mīd tone, lōw tone:

Subject pronouns		Present of <i>isō</i> ‘to fall’
1s	<i>mí</i>	<i>m(i)-īsō</i>
2s	<i>í</i>	<i>(i)-īsō</i>
3s	<i>nè</i>	<i>nè isō</i>
1p (excl.)	<i>dí</i>	<i>d(i)-īsō</i>
	(incl.) <i>jì</i>	<i>jé-gè j-īsō</i>
2p	<i>sé-gè</i>	<i>sé-gè isō</i>
3p	<i>né-gè</i>	<i>né-gè isō</i>

Nè òpī néè. ‘He hit them.’
 he hit them.

Kàjī rúsū káy. ‘The elephant crushed the house.’
 elephant crushed house.

Kanuri (Nilo-Saharan — Saharan — Western; North-Eastern Nigeria)

The conjugation is intransparent unless a linguistic analysis is made. As in Aramaic and with the Akkadian stative, the Third Person forms are of a different structure, though not without a person marker. Rather, the latter precedes the verb (or the auxiliary, if there is one), whereas the markers of the First and Second Person follow it.

Typical Kanuri conjugations (Cyffer 1998:34):

Class 1: *lad* ‘sell’

	subj. 3	verb	subj. 1, 2	tense	(<i>á</i> with high tone, <i>â</i> with falling tone)
1s	—	<i>lad</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>in</i>	> <i>ladákin</i> ‘I am selling’
2s	—	<i>lad</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>in</i>	> <i>ladámin</i> ‘you are selling’
3s	<i>s</i>	<i>lad</i>	—	<i>in</i>	> <i>səladîn</i> ‘he, she is selling’

1p	—	<i>lad</i>	<i>ye</i>	<i>in</i>	> <i>ladíyin</i> ‘we are selling’
2p	—	<i>lad</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>in</i>	> <i>ladúwin</i> ‘you (pl.) are selling’
3s	<i>s a</i>	<i>lad</i>	—	<i>in</i>	> <i>saladîn</i> ‘they are selling’

Class 2 (with auxiliary): *le-n* ‘go’

	verb	sj. 3	aux	sj. 1, 2	tense	
1s	<i>le</i>	—	<i>n</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>in</i>	> <i>lengîn</i> ‘I am going’
2s	<i>le</i>	—	<i>n</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>in</i>	> <i>lenámin</i> ‘you are going’
3s	<i>le</i>	<i>s</i>	—	—	<i>in</i>	> <i>lejîn</i> ‘he, she is going’
1p	<i>le</i>	—	<i>n</i>	<i>ye</i>	<i>in</i>	> <i>lenyên</i> ‘we are going’
2p	<i>le</i>	—	<i>n</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>in</i>	> <i>lenúwin</i> ‘you (pl.) are going’
3s	<i>le</i>	<i>s a</i>	—	—	<i>in</i>	> <i>lezâin</i> ‘they are going’

A nominal subject precedes the verb form of the Third Person.

<i>báli</i>	<i>Músa</i>	<i>Káno-ro</i>	<i>lejîn</i>
tomorrow	M.	Kano-to	go.3s.IMPF

‘Tomorrow Musa will travel to Kano.’

<i>wanéé</i>	<i>Músa</i>	<i>kû</i>	<i>silemân</i>	<i>cúro</i>
maybe	M.	today	Film (<i>cinéma</i>)	see.3s.FUT

‘Maybe Musa will see a Film today.’

Among the languages in Africa and elsewhere can many more varieties be found, and phenomena that have not even been touched here; like the question of direct and indirect object pronouns. Just a tiny example for a 2-Person pronominal; though not from Africa. If you want to say ‘I love you’ in Hungarian, you may first look for the equivalent of ‘I love.’ Having the choice of definite and indefinite conjugation, you would select the definite form (for loving someone or something, not just “loving along,” for passing the time this way), which would be *szeretem*. Then you would probably look for the direct object form of the pronoun ‘you’ (singular), and text books will tell you it is *tégedet* or just *téged* (*-et* is the form of the accusative suffix *-t* after a word ending in a consonant and having vowels of the front vowel set, like *e*). But to your great disappointment the person thus addressed would claim that this is not the proper thing to say, but rather a simple *szeretlek*. A good text book will give you the necessary information. “When the subject is 1st Person Singular (*én*) and the object is 2nd Person Singular or Plural (*téged* or *tégedet*, *titeket* or *benneteket*) a special verb form is used: *-lak*, *-lek* ... These personal suffixes express the subject ‘I’ and the object ‘you’ or ‘thee’ without using the pronouns” (Bánhidi/Jókay/Szabó 1965:194). Note

that the verb is not inflected otherwise; its bare form thus resembles the Third Person Singular, like *szeret* ‘he/she/it loves’ (indefinit conjugation). As for *-lak / -lek* (vowel harmony!), *-l-* is otherwise the subject pronoun ‘you’ (sing.), as in *szeretel* ‘you love (indefinit)’, and *-k-* is the subject pronoun ‘I,’ as in *szeretek* ‘I love.’ Logical?

Conclusion

What can we learn about the Egyptian pseudo-conjugation from this furtive overview? Our point of departure were the classical conjugations of Indo-European or Afro-Asiatic languages. This is seemingly not of relevance for our question, as the Egyptian construction is certainly not of this type. As for the analytic constructions, we found the interesting feature of non-verbal Third Person forms, in the normal present of Neo-Aramaic, and in the whole family of stative verbal constructions, from Akkadian to East Cushitic, from Egyptian to Kabyle. But this is not our case: in the constructions *sḏm=f*, *sḏm.n=f*, *sḏm.jn=f*, etc., a definite pronominal subject is always expressed. The suffix pronouns are no conjugational endings, they are pronominal subjects. They have no function when the subject is nominal, and are therefore replaced. Nevertheless, in the Ethio-Semitic gerund constructions with suffix pronoun this will be retained — there is no easy general rule!

There is the heretic idea of our late friend and colleague Andrzej Zaborski that the suffix pronoun conjugation is not an Egyptian innovation, but rather a Proto-Afro-Asiatic alternative (Zaborski 2005a:24; Zaborski 2005b:205). Well, well ... I favour an idea — though I cannot yet really support it — that it is rather, as an Egyptian innovation, a calque of the conjugation of some Nilo-Saharan language: cf. Old Nubian. A verbal noun, or gerund, with a possessive construction for the agent; and, in addition, a morphological device to raise it to rhematic status, like an absolutive or predicative case, where desirable.

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