

ISTITUTO INTERNAZIONALE DEL PAPIRO

---

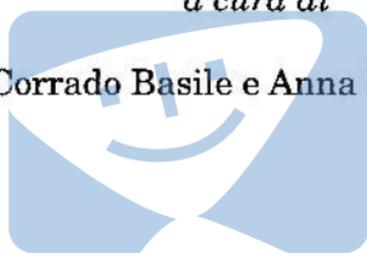
ISTITUTO ITALIANO PER LA CIVILTÀ EGIZIA

ATTI  
DEL IV CONVEGNO NAZIONALE  
DI  
EGITTOLOGIA E PAPIROLOGIA

SIRACUSA, 5-7 DICEMBRE 1997

*a cura di*

Corrado Basile e Anna Di Natale



Smile  
on my mac

QUADERNI DEL MUSEO DEL PAPIRO

IX

SIRACUSA 2000

## Egyptian as an African Language

Egyptian is usually seen against the background of the Semitic languages, although the Afroasiatic macrophylum comprises several more sub-families. No doubt that this is due to the fact that Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic etc. are more familiar to Egyptological scholars than, e.g., Berber, Hausa or Somali, not to mention the several hundreds of further Chadic, Cushitic and Omotic languages. But this does not justify disregarding the African evidence. It is true that Egyptian has much in common with Semitic (in many cases, also with other sub-families, esp. Berber). Let us mention structural features like the particular role of the consonants for the root and for morphology; the prevalence of triconsonantal roots; morphological features like the "suffix conjugation" (in Egyptian: the Old Perfective); syntactic features, like the clause of circumstance (the Arabic *ḥāl*). But there are also important features that Egyptian shares with some or other African branch(es), though not with Semitic. These are not necessarily inherited, going back to Afroasiatic, but also areal, typological features, and it comes as no surprise that we find them also in languages of a different pedigree, in particular, in Nilo-Saharan languages, but also in West African branches of the Niger-Kordofanian macrophylum.

I have already dealt with the present issue on a previous occasion<sup>1</sup>. In particular, I have demonstrated that nominal/pronominal concord (in respect to gender [= class] and number) in Egyptian can be compared with that of the class languages (like Bantu and Westatlantic). Furthermore, I have pointed out that in Egyptian nominal and adverbial predication are different things, as in most African languages, though not in Semitic (nor in European languages, except for the extreme West of the continent). I have also adduced parallels of the Egyptian progressive construction (*iwf hr sdm*) both in Africa and in Western Europe. Another feature well-worth mentioning seemed to be the existence of particular clausal conjugations (*that*-forms and relative forms) and their

---

<sup>1</sup> H. SATZINGER, *Ancient Egyptian in the Context of African Languages*, in *Acts of the "9<sup>a</sup> Setmana de Estudis Africans"*, Barcelona, March 1996 (printing).

eventual developing into “second tenses”. I will here resume some of these points, viewing them from different angles and giving additional arguments<sup>2</sup>.

## 1. Structural opposition of nominal vs. adverbial predication

Whereas Semitic languages do not distinguish adverbial predicates from nominal predicates, African languages generally do (and so also some Western European languages; see below). Traditional Arabic grammar comprises in *al-ğumlatu l-ismiyyatu* (“nominal sentence”) all kinds of sentences that begin with a noun. This noun may be the subject of a nominal predicate (*Zaydun kātibun* “Z. is a scribe”), or the subject of an adverbial predicate (*Zaydun fī l-bayti* “Z. is in the house”), or the topicalized subject of a verbal predicate (*Zaydun yaktubu* “Z. writes/is writing”). These constructions share all kinds of modifications, such as *inna Zaydan kātibun* “behold, Z. is a scribe”, *anna Zaydan kātibun* “that Z. is a scribe”, *innama Zaydun kātibun* “Z., however, is a scribe”, *kāna Zaydun kātiban* “Z. was a scribe”, etc.: in each of these instances one might substitute *fī l-bayti* or *yaktubu* for *kātibun* (or *kātiban*, in the last case)<sup>3</sup>. Egyptian, however, has three basic types of sentence constructions, depending on the nature of the predicative element<sup>4</sup>: Nomi-

<sup>2</sup> At the conference at Siracusa, I raised an additional topic, viz. reduplication and gemination of root consonants. On the lexical level, reduplication (unfortunately called “gemination” in Egyptology) is a means for modifying roots by generating root variants with intensive or repetitive (pluralic) meaning. On the morphological level, reduplication yields a base for conjugations with a similar semantic character. Examples can be quoted from all Afroasiatic sub-families, including Semitic, but also from the Nilo-Saharan languages. On the other hand, gemination (i. e., the lengthening of a root consonant) is a typical Semitic device that is also found, however, in Berber and Egyptian.

<sup>3</sup> This and several other uses of the *nasb* or Accusative must be seen as residues of an Absolute Case. See: H.J. SASSE, *Case in Cushitic, Semitic and Berber*, in *Current Progress in Afroasiatic Linguistics*, Papers of the Third International Hamito-Semitic Congress, 1984, 111-126.

<sup>4</sup> H.J. POLOTSKY, *Grundlagen des koptischen Satzbaus* [I], «American Studies in Papyrology» 28 (1987), 1-8. Also cf. W. SCHENKEL, *Grundformen mittellägyptischer Sätze*, «Münchener Ägyptologische Studien» 7 (1965); SATZINGER, *op. cit.* (see n. 1); ID., *Egyptian in the Afroasiatic Frame: Recent Egyptological Issues with an Impact on Comparative Studies*, in A. BAUSI & M. TOSCO (eds.), *Afroasiatica Neapolitana. Contributi presentati all'8° Incontro di Linguistica Afroasiatica (Camito-Semitica)*, «Studi Africanistici», Serie Etiopica 6, Napoli 1997, 40-42.

nal Sentence, Adverbial Sentence and Verbal Sentence, there being a fundamental difference between nominal and adverbial predicates.

Campbell's recently published survey of the languages of the world<sup>5</sup> has short descriptions of some 300 languages; each is followed by a short sample text, and wherever available, the beginning of the Gospel of St. John is chosen. The first verse of this passage is an excellent means to give an impression as to whether a given language treats nominal and adverbial predicates in the same way or not:

1) Examples of languages that do not distinguish nominal predication from adverbial predication:

... καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν,	καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος (Ancient Greek)
... et verbum <b>erat</b> apud Deum,	et Deus <b>erat</b> Verbum (Latin)
... y lo verb <b>era</b> ab Deu,	y lo Verb <b>era</b> Deu (Catalan)
... and thæt Word <b>wæs</b> mid Gode,	and God <b>wæs</b> thæt Word (Old English)

2) Examples of languages that distinguish nominal predication from adverbial predication:

... y la Palabra <b>estaba</b> con Dios,	y la Palabra <b>era</b> Dios (Castilian Spanish)
... y a Palavra <b>estava</b> junto de Deos,	e a Palavra <b>era</b> Deos (Portuguese)
... agus <b>bha</b> am Focal maille ri Dia,	agus <b>b'e</b> am Focal Dia (Scottish Gaelic)

As a matter of fact, nearly all African languages appear to belong to the second group. Those for which Campbell quotes the verse mentioned are here systematically grouped according to Ruhlen<sup>6</sup>:

1 Khoisan

III Southern Africa  
B Nama (p. 982)

2 Niger-Kordofanian

II Niger-Congo  
A Mande

1 a v β Bambara (p. 162)

1 b Mende (p. 916), Kpelle (p. 762)

<sup>5</sup> G.L. CAMPBELL, *Compendium of the World's Languages*, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> M. RUHLEN, *A Guide to the World's Languages*, vol. I, 1987.

## B Niger-Congo Proper

1 West Atlantic **Fulani** (p. 480), **Wolof** (p. 1457)

2 Central Niger-Congo

a North Central Niger-Congo

iii Gur **Gurenne** (p. 550)

b South Central Niger-Congo

ii Western **Akan = Twi** (p. 31), **Ewe** (p. 450)

iii Eastern

β **Yoruba** (p. 1478)δ **Igbo** (p. 603)η **Efik** (p. 399)

ι II B 2 Bantoid

c Narrow Bantu **Sotho, Lingala, Shona** (all on p. 171),  
**Swahili** (p. 1288)

## 3 Nilo-Saharan

V Eastern Sudanic

A Eastern

1 **Nubian** (p. 1047)

B Western

a i **Shilluk** (p. 1230)b ii **Dinka** (p. 386)

C Nilotic

2 Eastern **Maasai** (p. 833)

## 4 Afroasiatic

I Egyptian **Coptic** (p. 342)II Berber **Berber (Kabyl)** (p. 205)

III Chadic

C 1 b i α II **Margi** (p. 901)<sup>7</sup>D 1 α **Hausa** (p. 560)

V Cushitic

B Cushitic Proper

2 Eastern Cushitic

<sup>7</sup> Pace Campbell who regards Margi as Niger-Congo, rather than Chadic.

## c Lowland

ii  $\gamma$  I **Somali** (p. 1263)iii **Oromo** (p. 1068)

## VI Semitic

## B West

## 1 Central

a Aramaic **Syriac** (p. 1298)

b Arabo-Canaanite

i Canaanite **Hebrew** (p. 570)ii Arabic (**Classical Arabic** (p. 84), **Maltese** (p. 863))

## 2 South

a Ethiopic

i North **Ethiopic (Ge'ez)** (p. 432), **Tigre** (p. 1357),  
**Tigrinya** (p. 1361)

ii South

 $\alpha$  I **Amharic** (p. 60)

In most of these languages the rendition of John 1,1 has for the adverbial predicative '(was) with God' a construction differing from that of the nominal predicative '(was) God'. The exceptions are:

- some Bantu languages, viz. Lingala, Shona and Swahili<sup>9</sup> (though not Sotho)<sup>9</sup>
- some Mande languages, viz. Mende<sup>10</sup> and Kpelle<sup>11</sup> (though not Bambara)<sup>12</sup>
- Berber (Kabyl, but this is a special story<sup>13</sup>)

<sup>9</sup> E.g., ... *na-ye Neno a-li-kuwa-ko kwa Mungu, na-ye Neno a-li-kuwa Mungu* (Swahili).

<sup>9</sup> ... *mme Lentswe le ne le le ho Modimo, mme Lentswe e ne e le Modimo.*

<sup>10</sup> ... *ke Njièi ta Ngéwo yelè, ke Njièi Ngéwo yelè.*

<sup>11</sup> ... *Nóoi nyari e kè Gàla kòle Nyari Nóoi e kè a Gàla.*

<sup>12</sup> Written in Arabic characters in language-specific conventions; something like *Kuma i 'Alla fi, Kuma 'Alla-l.*

<sup>13</sup> Kabyl substitutes some sort of prepositional phrase for the nominal predicate: *Aoual illa ror Rebbi, Aoual illa 'd' Rebbi*; cf. A. BASSET, *La langue berbère, Handbook of African Languages I*, 38: «une particule *d* qui, dialectalement, apparaît fréquemment devant nom ou pronom en attribut ... ainsi en Kabylie après les verbes *ili* 'être', *uǧal* 'devenir' ...». Consequently, it uses here the same auxiliary (*yllā*) as with the normal adverbial predicative (*yllā gər Rebbi* '(he) was with God'). Other dialects, however, di-

- virtually all Semitic languages<sup>14</sup>; e.g.:

... *wə-had-dābār hāyā 'ešl hā'elohim, w-elohim hāyā had-dābār*  
(Hebrew)

... *u l-Kelma kienet ma' Alla, u l-Kelma kienet Alla* (Maltese)

||a llbb ... *qal-īm bā'əgzi'əbher zänd nābārā, qal-īm 'əgzi'əbher nābārā*  
(Amharic)

|e lmu ... *Qal dāma 'āb 'əgzi'əbhir nābārā, 'əti Qal kā'ā 'əgzi'əbhir*  
*nābārā* (Tigrinya)

## 2. The Progressive Tense

The Egyptian progressive construction is based upon the Adverbial Sentence. Its predicate is the preposition *hr* 'on' + infinitive. In the course of time the preposition disappeared; nevertheless, the infinitive retained an adverbial status, *i.e.* it became a gerund<sup>15</sup>. It is assumed that the English progressive form has the same origin (*\*he is on speaking > he is a-speaking > he is speaking*)<sup>16</sup>. It is probably mere coincidence that at about the time when the preposition *hr* disappeared in Egyptian, the construction lost its specific progressive meaning and became a normal present.

stinguish the nominal predicative from the adverbial predicative by using the Nominal Sentence (without auxiliary); cf. Nefūsi *tūha thādém t n errébbi* 'this is the she-ass of the rabbi'; *nečcent tbušūlīn* 'we (fem.) are children' (quoted from F. BEGUINOT, *Il berbero nefūsi di Fassāto*, 65).

Of course the Kabyl usage may be compared with the Egyptian "m of predication": *iw.f m zšw* 'he is a scribe'; but in this case the adverbial phrase is the expression of an accidental rôle, not of an inherent quality. This cannot be said, however, of the rare Hebrew "beth existentiae" (*hū b'ehād* 'he (= God) is unique' [Job 23,13]) and the pertinent use of Arabic *bi-*, as in *'anna llāha bi-qādirin 'alā 'an yuhyiya* 'that God is able to bring the dead to life' (WRIGHT, *Arabic Grammar* II, 158C/D–159A [§ 56 (a)]).

<sup>14</sup> The only exception is Tigre: ... *wäläQal go Rābi 'ülä, wäläQal Rätš tu*.

<sup>15</sup> In Coptic, this is the form found in the Present Tense system, in paradigmatic relation with the Qualitative, the "instans" (NΔ- + Infinitive), and prepositional phrases and adverbs.

<sup>16</sup> The progressive construction is an innovation in English; it is not yet attested for Shakespeare's time.

Thus, the characteristics of the Egyptian progressive form are two-fold: its predicative element is a locative expression ('on speaking'), and since this is an adverb phrase, the form is made up of an Adverbial Sentence. We may compare with this form those of other languages which fulfill both of these conditions, or at least one of them.

Ewe and Yoruba meet with both conditions (see below): like Old and Middle Egyptian, they have a particular construction for predicative adverbials ('is my brother' is a different construction from 'is here'), and the locative element (postposition *mè* and preposition *ní*, respectively) is still discernable. The same is true of the Celtic languages, in particular Gaelic and Welsh: a preposition with locative meaning (*ag* and *yn*, respectively)<sup>17</sup> is expanded by a verbal noun; the auxiliary verb used is different from the one that is adequate for nominal predication.

There are other languages that do use the pattern of the adverbial predication for the progressive tense; however, a locative element is not (any more!?) discernable. This is the situation of Demotic and Coptic, but also of Hausa and Fulani, as well as of Spanish/Portuguese and Basque.

On the other hand, there are progressive constructions in languages that do not differentiate between nominal and adverbial predication, but do show a locative element with the verb. This is the case of the assumed origin of the English construction (*\*he is on speaking*), but also of languages like Mende: *táa pié·ma* 'he is doing it'; the marker *-ma* which is added to the present continuous stem *pié* is identical with the postposition *ma* 'on, at'<sup>18</sup>.

Furthermore, there are progressive forms that do not have a discernible locative element in languages that do not differentiate between nominal and adverbial predication. In this case there seems to be no safe way to compare them with the Egyptian progressive form unless internal reconstruction of the respective languages yields pertinent arguments. Swahili can serve as an example for this. Its Progressive Form *ni·na·sema* 'I am speaking' appears to be of the same structure as the Present Tense, *n·a·sema* 'I speak', the Past Tense, *ni·li·sema* 'I spoke', etc., and the tense marker *na* does not overtly appear to be a locative expression in its origin.

<sup>17</sup> Note that the preposition tends to vanish in both cases, just like in Late Egyptian.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. CAMPBELL, *op. cit.*, 915.

	nominal predication 'he is <b>my brother</b> '	adverbial predication 'he is <b>here</b> '	Progressive Tense 'he is <b>speaking</b> '
Egyptian	<i>sn-j pw</i>	<i>jw-f '3</i>	<i>jw-f hr mdu</i>
Ewe	<i>é-nye nɔvi-nyè</i>	<i>é-lè aft</i>	<i>é-lè ɔɔɔ-m</i>
Yoruba	<i>ó jé àbúrò mi</i>	<i>ó wa n-ihín</i>	<i>ó n-sòrò</i>
Hausa	<i>d'an'uwā-na nē</i>	<i>ya-nā nan</i>	<i>ya-nā màgánà</i>
Fulani	<i>kariɔ minirɔwɔ am</i>	<i>o don tɔ</i>	<i>o don yeca</i>
<i>In Europe:</i>			
Irish Gaelic	<i>is é mo dheartháir é</i>	<i>tá sé anseo</i>	<i>tá sé ag labhairt</i>
Welsh	<i>fy mrawd yw</i>	<i>mae e yma</i>	<i>mae e 'n siarad</i>
Basque	<i>nire anaia d-a</i>	<i>hemen d-ago</i>	<i>mintzaten d-ago</i>
Spanish	<i>es mi hermano</i>	<i>está aquí</i>	<i>está hablando</i>

#### THE "SECOND TENSES" AND THEIR USE IN CLEFT SENTENCES:

##### Focalization and topicalization by means of subordinating conjugations

According to the Polotskyan scheme, the forms of the core of the Egyptian tense system appear in two syntactic statuses: circumstantial and nominal forms; the latter are differentiated into substantival and adjectival forms. In particular when taking Old Egyptian into account it will appear that the non-nominal forms are basically autonomous (initial), though they are more and more used circumstantially:

tense	autonomous and/or circumstantial forms:	substantival forms:	adjectival (relative) forms (e.g., fem. sing.)
preterite	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>m·f (mrj·f)</i>	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>m·f (mrj·f)</i>	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>mt·f (mrjt·f)</i>
perfect tense	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>m·n·f</i>	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>m·n·f</i>	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>mt·n·f</i>
present tense	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>m·f (mrj·f)</i>	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>m·f (mrr·f)</i>	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>mt·f (mrrt·f)</i>
prospective tense	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>mw·f (mrjw·f)</i>	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>m·w·f (mrj·w·f)</i>	<i>s<math>\overline{d}</math>mt·j·f (mrt·j·f)</i>

The nominal forms are characteristically used in emphasizing constructions like the following<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> This topic is covered in SATZINGER, *op. cit.* (see n. 1); ID., *Relativformen, emphatische Formen und Zweite Tempora: Gliedsatzformen im Ägyptischen und im Tschadischen*, in [Studies ... H. Jungraithmayr], printing; also cf. ID., *Egyptian in the Afroasiatic Frame...* (see n. 4), 27-48.

## Substantival forms in the so-called emphasizing construction

*gm·n·f s jm ḥ' hr mryt* 'he found a man there standing on the landing place' (*Peasant*, R 38-39)

*gmm·f jrj-'3f ḥ' m šl ... m-'f* 'he finds its gate-keeper standing with a satchel ... in his hand' (*CT V* 184 g)

*gm(-w)·j S3ḥ ḥ' hr w3t·j* 'may I find Orion standing on my way' (*CT V* 390 b = 399 i).

## Adjectival forms in Cleft Sentences

*jnk pw dd·n n·f Šw hn' (Tfnt)* ... 'it is I to whom Shu and Tefnet said ...' (*CT IV*, 92 k)

*jnk pw mrrw ntr s'nh·f wj* 'it is I whom the god wants to make live' (P. Ebers 1, 10)

*pw-tr jrtj·n* 'what are we to do?' (*Admonitions* 3, 7)

In many African languages, particularly in the West of the continent, there are two parallel verbal paradigms of which one is used in focalizing constructions like the ones above, but also freely in relative and other clauses. A typical example is the conjugation of Fulani (a Niger-Congo language of the Westatlantic subfamily) in its prefix and suffix variants:

Fulani<sup>20</sup>

	prefix conjugation ("First Tense") (autonomous forms)	suffix conjugation ("Second Tense") (subordinating forms)
singular		
1	<i>mi</i>	<i>-mi</i>
2	<i>'a</i>	<i>-'da, -ta, -a</i>
3 (class of persons only)	<i>'o</i>	<i>-'do</i>
plural		
1 inclusive	<i>'en</i>	<i>-'den, -'en</i>
1 exclusive	<i>men</i>	—
2	<i>'on</i>	<i>-'don, -'ton, -'on</i>
3 (class of persons only)	<i>'be</i>	<i>-'be</i>

*ngam 'dume mba'd'da 'dum* "why did you say (*mba'd'da*) this?"

*mi fiyi suka 'on* "I spanked (*mi fiyi*) this child", but *suka 'on mo pi'ūmi* "this child I spanked (*pi'ūmi*)"<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See H.G. MUKAROVSKY, *Die Suffixkonjugation im Ful*, «WZKM» 53 (1957), 161-180.

<sup>21</sup> *Mo* is an object pronoun that has *suka 'on* "this child" as a referent.

## Substantival forms in the so-called emphasizing construction

*gm-n-f s jm h' hr mryt* 'he found a man there standing on the landing place' (*Peasant*, R 38-39)

*gmm-f jrj-ʿf h' m št ... m-ʿf* 'he finds its gate-keeper standing with a satchel ... in his hand' (*CT V* 184 g)

*gm(-w)-j Ssh h' hr wxt-j* 'may I find Orion standing on my way' (*CT V* 390 b = 399 i).

## Adjectival forms in Cleft Sentences

*jnk pw dd-n n-f Šw hn' (Tfnt) ...* 'it is I to whom Shu and Tefnet said ...' (*CT IV*, 92 k)

*jnk pw mrrw ntr s'nh-f wj* 'it is I whom the god wants to make live' (P. Ebers 1, 10)

*pw-tr jrtj-n* 'what are we to do?' (*Admonitions* 3, 7)

In many African languages, particularly in the West of the continent, there are two parallel verbal paradigms of which one is used in focalizing constructions like the ones above, but also freely in relative and other clauses. A typical example is the conjugation of Fulani (a Niger-Congo language of the Westatlantic subfamily) in its prefix and suffix variants:

Fulani<sup>20</sup>

	prefix conjugation ("First Tense") (autonomous forms)	suffix conjugation ("Second Tense") (subordinating forms)
singular		
1	<i>mi</i>	<i>-mi</i>
2	<i>'a</i>	<i>'da, -ta, -a</i>
3 (class of persons only)	<i>'o</i>	<i>'do</i>
plural		
1 inclusive	<i>'en</i>	<i>'den, -'en</i>
1 exclusive	<i>men</i>	—
2	<i>'on</i>	<i>'don, -'ton, -'on</i>
3 (class of persons only)	<i>'be</i>	<i>'be</i>

*ngam 'dume mba'd'da 'dum* "why did you say (*mba'd'da*) this?"

*mi fiyi suka 'on* "I spanked (*mi fiyi*) this child", but *suka 'on mo pi'ūmi* "this child I spanked (*pi'ūmi*)"<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See H.G. MUKAROVSKY, *Die Suffixkonjugation im Ful.*, «WZKM» 53 (1957), 161-180.

<sup>21</sup> *Mo* is an object pronoun that has *suka 'on* "this child" as a referent.

Cf. Middle Egyptian and Coptic, same meaning:

*iw jnj-n NN. j3 'n hmt-f*; Δ-NN N̄ OΥΔΚΗC NTEΦCΩIME

1) Focalization of subject: *'Awdù nee ya kaawoowà màatársà zanèe* "it is Audu who brought his wife a kilt". Cf. Middle Egyptian and Coptic: NN. *pw jnj j3 'n hmt-f*, NN ΠΕΝΤΑΦN̄ OΥΔΚΗC N̄TEΦCΩIME

2) Focalization of first object: *màatársà cee 'Awdù ya kaawoowà zanèe* "it is his wife whom Audu brought a kilt". Cf. Middle Egyptian and Coptic: (a) *hmt-f pw jn-n n-s NN j3'*; TEΦCΩIME TΕΝΤΔ-NN N̄ OΥΔΚΗC NΔC ("it is his wife to whom ..."); (b) *jn-n NN. j3 'n hmt-f*, ΕΝΤΔ-NN N̄ OΥΔΚΗC NTEΦCΩIME ("it is to his wife that he...").

3) Focalization of second object: *zanèe nee 'Awdù ya kaawoowà màatársà* "it is a kilt Audu brought his wife". Cf. Middle Egyptian and Coptic: *j3' pw jn-n NN. n hmt-f*; OΥΔΚΗC ΠΕΝΤΔ-NN N̄TĀ N̄TEΦCΩIME

There seem to be more African languages that either show a similar distinction between autonomous and clausal verb forms and that employ them for the forming of "emphasizing" constructions (like Middle Egyptian)<sup>24</sup>, or preserve the residues of such a system.

\* \* \*

The languages of Africa show a great typological variety in all aspects of grammar, as phonetics, formation of words, morphology, and syntax. Some features seem distinctly African, like the click sounds of South Africa or the "kp" type labiovelar occlusives. An extremely widespread – and therefore very typical – phonetic feature are tones, though one can find them on other continents too (e.g., in China and Indochina). It is important to note that none of these features is restricted to genetically defined groups, i.e., to particular families or sub-families.

On the other hand, certain structures are characteristic of particular families. Nominal multi-class systems are peculiar to many sub-families of Niger-Kordofanian (e.g., to Bantu, West-Atlantic, Kordofanian), whereas gender classes are typical of Afroasiatic (though not restricted to

<sup>24</sup> For Mubi, Bidiya and Dangaleat, three other Chadic languages, see JUNGRAITH-MAYR, *op. cit.*; ID., *Ablaut im Verbalsystem osttschadischer Sprachen*, in *Humanism, Culture, and Language in the Near East. Studies in Honor of Georg Krotkoff*, 345-353, 1997.

it). Case plays a significant role in Nilo-Saharan, more than in Afroasiatic; and so on.

Most of the features that were touched upon in this paper are probably of a non-genetic character. Their distribution may be significant.

1. A distinction between nominal and adverbial predication is very wide-spread in Africa.

2. Phrases of locative character or origin, used for expressing progressive utterances, are found in fewer languages; those identified above belong to the West-Atlantic (Niger-Congo), to the Kwa (id.) and Chadic (Afroasiatic) families.

3. In about the same extent, though not in the Kwa group, clausal conjugations were found to be used in emphasizing constructions<sup>25</sup>.

When comparing Ancient Egyptian directly with modern languages, an important aspect is neglected, viz. the dimension of time. The testimony for Middle Egyptian is about 4000 years ahead of the attestation of nearly all other languages of Africa. In fact, Egyptian in its long history of attestation may teach us a good lesson about the effect that time may have on language. We can witness a shift from predominant VSO to SVO word-order, due to the expansion of the Adverbial Sentence at the expense of the Verbal Sentence (achieved in Late Egyptian already), on the one hand<sup>26</sup>, and the use of auxiliary verbs and their eventual re-interpretation as tense markers in the Verbal Sentence proper, on the other<sup>27</sup>. A general feature of the development of Egyptian is a splitting up of synthetic forms with the effect of separating their morphological functions from the lexemic<sup>28</sup>.

For language families that are only recently attested, the only means to gain a historical dimension is internal reconstruction. A good example for this is the Bantu group<sup>29</sup>. It is, however, impossible, to reach

<sup>25</sup> Of course, this is a very cursory account, not based on a systematic investigation but rather on chance findings. It cannot be claimed to be representative.

<sup>26</sup> This affects in particular the present and future tenses; cf. Coptic 4-CWTM̄, 4-BHK, 4-NA-CWTM̄, etc.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Coptic λ-4-CWTM̄, ωλ-4-CWTM̄, etc.

<sup>28</sup> Old/Middle Egyptian *sn* > π-CON/OY-CON; *sn.i* > πλ-CON; (*iw*) *sdm.n.f* > λ-4-CWTM̄ etc.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. W.J.G. MÖHLIG, in B. HEINE - TH.C. SCHADEBERG - E. WOLFF, EKKEHARD (eds.), *Die Sprachen Afrikas* (1981), 103-114; L. GERHARDT, *ib.*, 384-395.

in this way reliable results of a historical depth of several thousand years, even in the most favourable situation. Nevertheless, it seems advisable to introduce a historical perspective when comparing modern languages with Egyptian.

*Wien*



Smile  
on my mac