

PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
10<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF HAMITO-SEMITIC  
(AFROASIATIC) LINGUISTICS  
(FLORENCE, 18-20 APRIL 2001)

Edited by  
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2005  
DIPARTIMENTO DI LINGUISTICA  
UNIVERSITÀ DI FIRENZE

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Recently, claims have come from two sides that Berber has an ergative case system: Aikhenvald (1995) and Lipiński (1997). Obviously, the latter depends on the first, but this can not be verified as Lipiński never quotes his sources (see Zaborski 1998).

Aikhenvald compares the forms of the subjects (agents) of transitive and intransitive verbs with the subjects of "semi-verbs", viz., "existential predicates (including expressions for *being*), demonstrative, interrogative and negative predicates and some predicative adjectives (e.g., 'is good', 'is bad', etc.)" (Aikhenvald 1995: 42).<sup>1</sup> In fact, Berber uses for the latter the direct object pronoun, such as -t 'him/it', in *ansi-t* 'wherefrom is he?' (cf. Aikhenvald 1995: 48, ex. 22); *hat-t* 'he is here' (cf. *ibid.*, ex. 20) (Kabyle), and cf. *iuya-t* 'he brought him'. As the subject of a "semi-verb" (by nature not transitive) is in the same form as the object of a transitive verb she sees here a case of ergativity.

The nominal form that corresponds to this "direct object pronoun" - the form of the noun in direct object function - is the absolute state, or in the terminology used by Aikhenvald, the accusative case. She claims, however, that the subject of the "semi-verbs" appears in the nominative (i.e., the annexed state), at least in "Kabyle and most of its dialects" (Aikhenvald 1995: 48). So, according to Aikhenvald, a pronominal subject

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the deictic (?) element *d* is present in these latter cases: *d ir aȝrum-agi* (Irjen; Aikhenvald 1995: 49, ex. 31; *d ir-it wəȝrum-agi* 'This bread is bad' (Kabyle, *ibid.*, 48, ex. 23); *d elʔali-ten warras-agi* 'are good-they, these children' (Kabyle, *ibid.*, 48, ex. 25).

of a semi-verb appears in the accusative, whereas a nominal subject is in the nominative form (i.e., the annexed state), with "semi-verbs" as well as with true verbs. In Aikhenvald's eyes, this is a clear case of split ergativity: With transitive verbs (as well as with intransitive true verbs) the agent is expressed in the annexed state, or a case that is called *nominative*. This would correspond to an *ergative* case in an ergative system. The case of the patient - the absolute state - is the *accusative* case. This would correspond to an *absolutive* case in an ergative system. On the assumption of split ergativity the form of the subject of the "semi-verbs" must be seen - following Aikhenvald - as the *ergative* case (i.e., the annexed state) if nominal, and in the *absolutive case* (i.e., the absolute state) if pronominal. Hence, Berber must be attested to be a split ergative language - according to Aikhenvald.

In split ergative languages the selection of the nominative/accusative system instead of the ergative/absolutive system may depend on the tense and (or) aspect of the verb (cf., in respect to Afroasiatic, Satzinger 2001) or on the nature of the agent: if it is human and (or) defined and (or) personal, it tends to be marked by the nominative, in the opposite case by the ergative. According to this "nominal hierarchy" (Dixon 1994) it should rather be the pronominal subject of an intransitive verb that appears in the nominative, whereas the nominal subject might be in the absolutive case. But some Berber idioms, like Kabyle, "systematically contradict the Nominal Hierarchy" (Aikhenvald 1995: 40) - always according to Aikhenvald.

From the material presented by Aikhenvald it appears that this conclusion is not appropriate. In fact, the construction of the "semi-verbs" is basically uniform in all idioms that distinguish the two states, or cases, at all. If there is - grammatically speaking - a nominal subject it is always in the absolute state, i.e. in the form that is the nominal counterpart of the "direct object pronoun". In many cases, however, the subject is not immediately connected with the "semi-verb". Rather - and this is partly a matter of style, partly of the character of the idiom - a personal pronoun is used for the subject. This pronoun assumes, of course, the direct object form, whereas the noun - being an attribute - is in the form of the annexed state.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> All examples that are quoted in the following are from Aikhenvald 1995.

"Semi-verb"	Subject <i>Dir. obj. pron. / absolute state</i>	Apposition <i>Annexed state</i>	
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*Pronominal subject:*

ulaš	-itn		(27) 'They are not (here)' (Kabyle)
manza	-t		(29) 'Where is he?' (Irjen)
lah	-t		(33) [a] 'He is not here' (Shilh)
mani	-t		(34) [a] 'Where is he?' (South Beraber)
hak	-t		(35) [a] 'Here he is' (Tamazight)
aba	-t		(36) [a] 'He is not (any more) present' (Ahaggar)

*Nominal subject:*

ulaš	aman		(28) 'there is no water'
lah	taserdunt		(33) [b] 'the mule is not here' (Shilh)
mani	asrdun		(34) [b] 'Where is the mule?' (South Beraber)
hak	argaz		(35) [b] 'Here is the man' (Tamazight)
aba	iskan		(36) [b] 'There is no more grass' (Ahaggar).

*Nominal subject, expanding a personal pronoun:*

ansi	-t	wərgaz-agi	(22) 'wherefrom is this man?'
ha	-t	waqšiš	(7) 'Here is a boy' (Kabyle)
ha	-t	uməddakul	Aikhenvald 1995: 62, (1) 'Here is a friend' (Kabyle)
aka	-tnt	tmyarin	(26) 'old-women are like this' (Kabyle)
d ir	-it	wəyrum-agi	(23) 'This bread is bad' (Kabyle)
d elʿali	-ten	warras-agi	(25) 'These children are good' (Kabyle)
akka	-zent	zinn-ennegh	Aikhenvald 1995: 62, (1) (5) 'Here are ours (fem.)' (Rif)

This state of affairs looks, of course, not like a split ergative system, but rather like a fully-fledged one. The question is, however, (1) whether we may analyse the "semi-verbs" as verbal or not; and, (2) whether the pronoun used with them is really a "direct object pronoun" by nature, or whether the direct object function is just one of several, including the subject function in the constructions mentioned. (Cf. the Egn. dependent pronoun.) In the same way, the question must be answered whether the use of the absolute state (Aikhenvald's accusative case) may be identified with the absolutive case of an ergative system.

1. *Is there anything verbal about the "semi-verbs"?*

For judging the part-of-speech character of a word or a class of words, there are three main criteria: (a) morphology (number, gender, cases, etc. are characteristic of nouns; conjugation with formal tense/aspect/mood categories is characteristic of verbs) (b) semantics (nouns: denominations of objects, in the broadest sense; verbs: expression of an action or process; adverbs: expression of a position, in the most general sense), and (c) syntactic function.

- (a) "Semi-verbs" are invariable, i.e., they are not inflected, in contradistinction to all verbs proper, whether transitive or intransitive.
- (b) "Semi-verbs" do not express any action or process (as verbs do). Of course, they do not distinguish tenses, moods, or aspects. They are not denominations of objects (like nouns). They are *thetic*, or presentative, expression of existence or presence, whether positive ('is here') or negative ('is not here'), or interrogative ('where is...?'), or of conditions ('is like this'), etc.
- (c) The only syntactic function which "semi-verbs" can have is that of a predicate, in a purely technical sense, without necessarily being *rhetic*. Although predicate function seems to be a characteristic of verbs in modern Western languages, this is not so in Afroasiatic languages. Here, also nouns and adverbials may function as predicates.

To sum up: the "semi-verbs" show no characteristic feature of a verb, neither morphologically, nor semantically, nor syntactically. They are not even "pseudo-verbs". Therefore, the constructions in question (viz. "non-verb" plus "object pronoun" or noun in absolute state) have nothing to do with ergativity (nor with accusativity, at that).

NB. In Afroasiatic languages it is common to find non-verbal elements that are restricted to being used as (technical) predicates. (They are predicates, though, in a technical sense only. In particular, when the subject is indefinite they have no *rheticity* at all.) In Egyptian, several such non-verbal elements can be compared with Berber "semi-verbs", or rather pseudo-verbs, in respect to their meaning, but also to their syntax.

Archaic *m*, later mostly *m=k* / *m=l* / *m=n* is of *thetic* / *deictic* meaning; the traditional Egyptological translation is "behold", "voici".

*nn* is a negation of basically predicative function: "there is no ...", or similar.

In both cases mentioned, and in a few others, the dependent pronoun serves as a subject: *m=k sw* "here he is, before you"; *nn sw* "he does not exist", "he is not". This is the same personal series that serves as an object pronoun in verbal expressions.

Egyptian	Berber	
<i>m=k sw</i>	ha-t	"here he is"
<i>nn sw</i>	ulaš-t	"he is not"
VERB + <i>sw</i>	VERB + -t	VERB + "him"

There are, however, two structural features in Egyptian that impair this comparison.

- 1) Egyptian nouns have no case or status markers. In Berber (Kabyle, etc.) the "object" paradigm of the pronoun corresponds to the absolute state of the noun:

ha-t	"here he is"	ha argaz	"here is the man"
iuyat	"he brought him"	iuya ayiul	"he brought the donkey"

By necessity, this correspondence is lacking in Egyptian, as the noun does not possess any distinct form in these and other cases.

- 2) In Egyptian, the very same "object pronoun" (the enclitic pronoun) is used as subject expression with predicative adjectives:

in sw	"bring him!"	m=k sw	"here he is"	ndm sw	"he is pleasant"
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This holds for main clauses (and clauses of circumstance: "he being pleasant") in which no time reference is contained.

In the above, the question has been touched whether there is a paradigmatic correspondence between the Berber pronouns and the statuses of the noun. In fact, this is the case in a rather neat way, though not exactly in a one-to-one relationship. Whereas the annexed state corresponds to the suffix pronoun, the absolute state goes in some cases with the absolute pronoun, in others with the "object pronoun". Of course, there are cases in which the pronoun is excluded: A pronominal subject of a verb is connoted by the personal morphemes of the conjugation: iuya "he brought", tuya "she brought". A nominal subject would be in the annexed state: iuya wərgaz "the man brought". Furthermore, a pronoun cannot be head of a genitival expansion.

The absolute status of the noun corresponds to the absolute pronoun in "absolute use", in the address, in the function of a nominal predicate, of topicalisation and of focalisation.

d nəkk	"it is I"	d argaz	"it is a man"
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The absolute state of the noun corresponds, however, to the "object pronoun" in two functions: as object of a transitive verb, and as subject of a "non-verb".

iuya-t	"he brought him"	iuya ayiul	"he brought the donkey"
ha-t	"here he is"	ha argaz	"here is the man"

Three very recent studies are dealing with ergativity in Egyptian, and in Afroasiatic in general.

- (1) When the accusative system emerged the object of the verb assumed the absolute forms, both of noun and pronoun. Consequently the need was felt to extra-mark the absolute pronoun in its traditional main use, viz. for the pronominal predicate, etc. This led to the pronoun forms that are made up of the basic pronoun (from which has derived the object or enclitic pronoun) plus an ending *\*-at-*: Egn. *\*kw-t*, *\*km-t*, *sw-t*, *st-t*. Eventually, languages developed new forms for the absolute pronoun, like *'an-āku* (> Akk. *'anāku*, Bibl. Heb. *'anōkī*, Egn. *ianák*, Berber *nəkk*) / *'an-ālī*, *'an-ta*, *'an-ti*, etc. In Akkadian, the pronouns in *-at-* were preserved, though they became restricted in use for the focalised object: *yāti*, *kuwāti*, *kiyāti*, *kināti*, *suvāti*, *siyāti*, etc. (Satzinger, 2003 a).

Another view-point, concerning the personal pronoun:

"Another promising field for detecting traces of an older ergative system is the Egyptian personal pronoun. In historical Egyptian its paradigms do not correspond to distinct case functions. The absolute pronoun is both used as an absolute case (e.g., for nominal predicates) and (with restrictions) for the subject of the nominal sentence. The enclitic pronoun expresses both the object of transitive verbs and the subject of the adjectival sentence ... The function of the suffix pronoun is similar to the genitive function of its Semitic counterpart, but in addition it expresses the pronominal subject in the suffix pronoun conjugation. It seems that we have here a testimony of an older case system:

- Absolute pronoun - absolute case (predicates, etc.)
- Enclitic pronoun - absolute case (originally, subject of intransitives [?], patient of transitives)
- Suffix pronoun - genitive and ergative (originally, agent expression with transitive verbs [?])" (Satzinger 2001: 180).

- (2) The assumption that Proto-Afroasiatic was of an ergative system can yield a plausible model for the origin of the Egyptian *sdm=f* conjugations. This presupposes, though, that its use was originally restricted to transitive verbs: *he throws the stone* < *\*the stone (experiences) his throwing* (Satzinger, 1999; 2001; 2003 b). Although the shift from the ergative system to the accusative system was a complete one, in Egyptian as well as in Afroasiatic in general, a trace or relic of the ergative system can be seen in the Egyptian "adjectival sentence" (i.e., the sentence with adjectival predicate) which was mentioned above. For

achieving the accusative system, sentences with transitive verbs could remain as they were. The ergative case was reinterpreted as nominative, and the absolutive case as accusative. However, the form of the subject of intransitive verbs had to change: it could not any more be identical with the patient expression of the transitive verb (viz., the accusative < absolutive), but rather with its agent (viz., the nominative < ergative).

	Transitive	Intransitive
Perfective:	<i>hɛzj f sw</i> 'he praised him'	(aliter, viz. Old Perfective)
Imperfective:	<i>hɛzz(j) f sw</i> 'he praises him'	* <i>hɛpp(j) sw</i> > <i>hɛpp(j) f</i> 'he walks'

This change was not triggered when the predicate was non-verbal. Therefore, the original construction was preserved in this case: *m=k sw, nn sw, ndm sw* (for which see above).

Before this background it may be assumed that also the Berber language has residues of the ancient Afroasiatic ergative system. The very same set of the cases in which the object of a verb appears is found with the subject expression of certain non-verbal "technical" predicates, mostly ofthetic or presentative character. A. Aikhenvald has the great merit to have drawn our attention to this fact. It is, however, necessary to specify that the phenomenon in question does not attest to any ergativity of Berber, but rather one of Proto-Afroasiatic.

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