EGYPTIAN AND
SEMITO-HAMITIC
(AFRO-ASIATIC) STUDIES
IN MEMORIAM W. VYCICHL

EDITED BY

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BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON
2004
STATUSES AND CASES OF THE AFROASIATIC PERSONAL PRONOUN

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It is typical of Afroasiatic languages to have three sets of personal pronouns:

A. an absolute pronoun
B. an "object pronoun"
C. a "possessive pronoun" (or suffix pronoun)

We may take examples from Egyptian, as the Afroasiatic language of most ancient attestation, in particular as compared to the Berber, Cushitic and Chadic idioms (we will here and in the following restrict ourselves to the singular forms):

A. Absolute pronoun
   \( i n k \quad t u t / i n k \quad t u t / i n t \quad s w / i n t f \quad s w / i n t e \)

B. Dependent pronoun
   \( u j \ (< u) \quad k e, \ i w \quad t m, \ t n \quad s w \quad g \)

C. Suffix pronoun
   \( -t \quad -k \quad -f \quad -s \quad -l \quad -i \quad -a \quad -u \)

It is true, some languages have more than three sets; but usually they can be reduced to a reconstruction of three; cf. the indirect object pronoun of Berber which is, by and large, analysable as *a + suffix pronouns, e.g. *a-k, a-m, a-s, etc. (Kossmann 1997: 77, with reference to Galand 1966). However, in many presentations and analyses of the Afroasiatic pronoun system, the three pronominal sets are reduced to but two: absolute pronoun, and suffix pronoun. If the individual language or language group has forms for the pronominal object that are distinct from the suffix pronouns they are more or less treated as their variants. This is normal in Semitic (where object pronoun and possessive pronoun are distinguished in the first person singular only); *ni vs. *ni, for Afroasiatic in general, cf., e.g., as an example the analysis of Blažek (1995).
We must be strict in keeping apart the level of the forms and the level of the functions. In many languages we can distinguish the three paradigms mentioned, termed absolute, object, and possessive pronoun, or similar. But on closer inspection we will find that each may have additional functions that do not correspond to the respective terms used. The absolute pronoun may also serve for the subject of a nominal sentence. In some languages the object pronoun may express a subject in certain non-verbal sentences. The suffix pronoun will in many languages also be the form of the complement of prepositions (both uses may be summarized as “genitive”), but in some languages—not only Egyptian—it is also used as subject in verbal sentences.

• Absolute pronoun used for the subject of the nominal sentence: Normal in Semitic; in Egyptian restricted to the first and second persons. Hausa makes use of a demonstrative dummy subject: ni ni farke ‘I am a merchant’, originally: ‘it is I, a merchant’, or with topicalized subject pronoun, ni farke ni ‘as for me, I’m a merchant’ (very much like Egyptian ink šeš [pau], originally: ‘as for me, a merchant it is’.

• “Object pronoun” used for the subject:
In Egyptian, it serves as subject of adjectival predicates, as in ngm yj ‘she is pleasant’. In Berber, it is used for the subject of certain non-verbal predicates: deictic, or existential predicates, like ho-t ‘he is here’, lui wi-ci; ula-dit ‘he is not there’; ans-t wherefrom is he ?; with deictic (?) d: d ir-it ‘it is good’; etali-t ‘it is good’; etc.; cf. Alkhenevald 1995.

• “Possessive pronoun” used as subject of verbs
Normal in Egyptian. Berber: in the Ayt Ziyane dialect, the Kabyle stative conjugation (representative of the Afroasiatic suffix conjugation) is replaced by the stative form of the adjective, with the suffix pronoun as subject expression: Ait Ziyane zgagg-i, zgagg-ik, zgagg-ilm, etc., ‘I am red, etc.’, as compared with Great Kabyle zgagg-ag zgagg-ed, etc. (Galand 1990: 129; cf. Alkhenevald 1995: 51–52). Semitic: In Ge’ez, verbal nouns in the adverbial accusative (as qatt-a ‘while/when killing’, or the like) may be conjugated by means of the suffix

1 Egyptian does the same (the demonstrative is pau) if the subject is not a personal pronoun: ngal-pa ‘This is an intact garment’ PyrTexts 7:0 (the wordorder is predicate pau subject).
pronoun: qalô (< *qalîl-a-hû) 'when he killed'. A further comparable feature are the circumstantial expressions formed by adjectives that are in concord with their referent: ‘you [nominative], or your, or of you [genitive] . . .’ ukûz-e-ka ‘being sad’, ‘you [accusative] . . .’ ukûz-a-ka ‘being sad’); cf. Satzinger (1968); Kapeliuk (1996).

It may be assumed that such discrepancies are the result of a long development, from the ancient proto system to the individual branches, groups and languages. In consequence of this we shall not, in the following, use the terms mentioned, but rather the abstract symbols A, B, C. Furthermore, we shall distinguish the A, B, C functions from the A, B, C forms.

A function: isolated use (naming or quotation form), nominal predicates, focalization (further, secondary usages: subject of nominal predicate, topicalization).

A forms: the forms used by the individual languages for the A function.

B function: (direct) object of transitive verbs. NB. In a hypothetical ergative system, as it is assumed for proto Afroasiatic (cf. below), the function corresponding to the B function is the absolute case of the pronoun, viz. the subject of intransitive verbs, and the patient of transitive verbs. This implies, by the way, that the B pronoun is an unmarked form.

B forms: Mostly the forms used in the individual languages for the B function, unless they are identical with the C forms. In particular, those forms will be regarded as B forms that are obviously derived from the following set of proto Afroasiatic B forms:

1sc. *yV (*yu ?) (cf. Egyptian *îw > wi, Berber -în)
2sm. *ku (?) (cf. Egyptian ku, Berber -l, -lk, Proto Cushitic *kl, or *kV)
2sf. *kîn (and *kî ?) (cf. Egyptian *kn, Berber *-kân; comparable forms in some Chadic languages, cf. Blažek 1995)
3sm. *sî (cf. Egyptian sv, also cf. the A forms, Semitic šûya, East Cushitic *sîn)
3sf. *sî (cf. Egyptian sj, also cf. the A forms, Semitic sîya, East Cushitic *sîn)

C function: genitival expansion of nouns ("possessive") and prepositions; directly attached to nouns, as in Arabic ba yat-ka, Egyptian r-\k, or indirectly, as in Berber (Nefusi) taddatt-än-ëk, Hausa gida-n-ka,
or attached to a demonstrative pronoun, as in Egyptian/Coptic ḫy-k-pr, ḫe-k-n, all meaning 'your house'; with prepositions, Arabic ‘inda-
ka, Egyptian ḫr-k, Berber ġer-ek 'with you, at your place' (but Hausa
garē shi has the B form, see below).

C forms; those used in C function; in particular, suffixed forms.
If there is a discrepancy between possessive and prepositional forms,
a decision which is a C form and which not can be made (a) on
account of the suffixal character, and (b) any identity with the B
forms. Thus, the possessive form in Hausa gidā-n-a, gidā-n-ka, gidā-n-
ki, gida-n-sa, gida-n-tn is the C pronoun, whereas the form expanding
the preposition ge, gire- 'to, for, with, at someone’s place’ is the C
pronoun: gire ni / ka / kī / shi / ta; cf. yaa gan ni / ka / kī / shi /
ta 'he saw me / you, etc.’ In the case of the indirect object pro-
noun, composed of ma- (mi-) plus pronoun, the decision is not so
clear: we find variant forms such as (3sm.) ma-se (like the C pro-
noun) and mi-shi (like the B pronoun).2

In the following we will suggest to regard the dichotomy of the
Afroasiatic “object pronoun” and “possessive pronoun” not as a sec-
ondary feature, restricted to some branches, but rather as a basic
feature of the original system.
On the other hand it shall be shown that the forms of the absolute
pronoun, as attested in the individual languages and language groups,
are of secondary origin: in many cases they are derived from those
forms that are regarded as the “object pronoun”.

1. The B and C pronoun form sets are not identical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1sc.</th>
<th>2sm.</th>
<th>2sf.</th>
<th>3sm.</th>
<th>3sf.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>*nī</td>
<td>*kā</td>
<td>*kī</td>
<td>*sū</td>
<td>*sā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>*-ī</td>
<td>*-kā</td>
<td>*-kī</td>
<td>*-sū</td>
<td>*-sā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 ma- may originally have been a verb (to give), naturally taking B forms for
its complement, and only later have been partly interpreted as a preposition, thus
introducing C form complements.
STATUSES OF THE AFROASIATIC PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Berber
B. -ki
   -km
   -(km
   -l
   -it/*i
   -it
   -itt/*-it
   (cf. Koßmann 1997)
C. -i
   -k
   -m
   -s
   -s

Chadic: in most idioms, the B and the C set are different in one, two
or all three persons. Cf. (reconstructed forms quoted from Blažek 1995):

Hausa,
B forms:
ni   ka
   ki
   shi
   ta
C forms:
-a, -wa
   -ka
   -ki
   -sa
   -ta

Ron,
B forms:
*i/*ni
   *ka
   *ki
   *si
   *ii
C forms:
*i
   *-aka
   *-aki
   *-ii
   *-it

Cushitic
No old B forms in North Cushitic (Recluyse). For East Cushitic, cf.
Somali,
B forms:
i
   kū
   /.
   i
   /.
C forms:
-ay
   -ă
   /.
   -s
   -i

For South Cushitic, cf. Iraq
B forms:
i
   u
   /.
   g-u
   g-a
C forms:
e
   -ok
   /.
   -as
   /.

Generally speaking, the C forms appear shorter than the B forms.
But this is the effect of their suffixal character which implies a pho-
etic reduction. In the first person, some languages have a B form
*nt (-Semitic, Chadic languages, where this form has even intruded
into the C set here and there: Jungraithmayr 1999). In the second
person, Berber and some Chadic languages and groups (Southern
Buchi, Bade-Ngizim, Kotoko, Musgu, Lai, Mokilko) have a femi-
nine form ending in -m in both B and C, whereas Egyptian has it
in B only. In the third person, Chadic languages display -ta for the
feminine forms, both B and C. In Berber, an element -t- is found in the third person B forms, whereas the C forms have -s, in agreement with the Afroasiatic proto form (cf. Kossmann 1997). Apart from these divergences, both sets have the same stem consonants: first person y-, second person k-, third person i-. Comparing tentative reconstruction forms like,

B.  
*ți : *nt (-V?)  *
ku  *
*kin  *
*ța  *

C.  
*ți: tar. ya  *
*ka  *
*ki(m)  *
*țu  *
*ți

it appears that the two sets are basically distinguished by vocalic endings which can hardly be anything but case markers.

2. There is no original set of A pronoun forms

The forms of the A pronoun, as actually attested in the Afroasiatic languages, are obviously of four types:

1. B pronouns, unmodified (except for not being phonetically reduced, due to their bearing full stress in the A function, whereas the B function implies a reduction of stress; perhaps they were marked by a vocalic ending, as in Semitic *ṣawa < *ṣu-a, *ṣyə < *ṣi-a).
2. B pronouns with additions; in the main, a stressbearing ending *-Sam.
3. A base *an-, to which stative endings or other pronominal elements are attached.
4. Nominal bases with a C pronoun added; this is obviously a late feature.

First person singular commans

1. (a) *yi
Several Cushitic and Chadic languages (Lamberti, Blažek)
(b) *ni
Several Chadic languages (unless from 3 (b), *en-i)
2. *yiV(-u)-uV
Akkadian: yâši < *yisâti (indir. Object in extraposition: yâša; absolute genitive: yâšum/ínâm)
3. (a) *en-âku
Akkadian; Biblical Hebrew; Egyptian; Berber
(b) *en-i, *en-a
Semitic (except Akkadian), many Cushitic languages; also cf. above, 1 (b), for Chadic
Second person masculine
1. *kn and varr. Several Cushitic languages (Lamberti 1999: *kəw); Berber, Hausa (kay) and other Chadic languages
2. *ku-ātV Akkadian: kuāti, kāti (for kāsim, yāunīmī mī an cf. above; Egyptian (tut, perhaps [k'w'at])
3. *'an-la Semitic; many Cushitic languages
4. Aliter North Cushitic (barū-k, batū-k); most West Cushitic languages; Egyptian, later set (int-k [Pan'tak])

Second person masculine (NB. In Cushitic and in several Chadic languages not distinguished from the masculine)
1. *kinV Berber; several Chadic languages (*kV is not attested in A fonction)
   (a) *kim-ātV Egyptian (tut, perhaps [kim'at])
   (b) *ki-ātV Akkadian: kišti, etc. (cf. above)
2. *'an-ti Semitic
3. Aliter Egyptian, later set (int-t [Pan'tak])

Third person masculine
1. suV Semitic; several Cushitic (including West Cushitic) and Chadic languages
2. su-ātV Semitic (Akkadian suāti, etc. (cf. above); Ge'ez we'eu < *hu'at-hu; cf. also *suwat as a variant of *swa (above, 1) in North-West and South Semitic languages; Egyptian (swt, perhaps [su/wat])
4. Aliter North Cushitic (barū-s, batū-s); Egyptian, later set (int-[Pan'taf]); the Berber form *entā should perhaps be mentioned here and not under 3, and the same is true of some Chadic forms, like Kotoko *nta-a, etc.

Third person feminine
1. sīV Semitic; several Cushitic (including West Cushitic) and Chadic languages
2. (a) sī-ātV Semitic (Akkadian siāti, etc. (cf. above); Ge'ez ye'iti < *kī'at-hi; cf. also *uyat as a variant of
In formation 3, two layers may be discerned. The form *\textasciitilde an-d\textasciitilde ku is found in rather ancient Semitic idioms, but also in Egyptian and Berber. It has the same ending as the Akkadian (and Egyptian) stative, par(i)s-\textasciitilde ku. It is not, in this respect, in a formation paradigm with \textasciitilde an-\textasciitilde i / \textasciitilde an-\textasciitilde ti for these forms (as also the plural and dual forms) have the endings of the Semitic perfect (Arabic \textasciitilde fa\textasciitilde l-\textasciitilde ta, \textasciitilde fa\textasciitilde l-\textasciitilde ti, etc.). *\textasciitilde an-\textasciitilde i seems to be formed, not with a conjugational ending, but rather with the C pronoun. The variant form *\textasciitilde an-\textasciitilde ā is sometimes thought to display the conjugational prefix of the prefix conjugation, \textasciitilde a-. (Another possibility is that both \textasciitilde i and \textasciitilde ā are most ancient variant forms of the conjugational suffix -\textasciitilde ku, perhaps not of the stative conjugation proper (-\textasciitilde a-\textasciitilde ku, -\textasciitilde a-\textasciitilde ta, -\textasciitilde a-\textasciitilde ti, etc.), but rather of a proto form of the perfect (*\textasciitilde i/*\textasciitilde ā, -\textasciitilde ta, -\textasciitilde ti, etc.). This, however, appears rather speculative.) Of the two layers of the *\textasciitilde an- formation, the more ancient has but one representative, viz. *\textasciitilde an-\textasciitilde ku. The other forms, viz. *\textasciitilde an-\textasciitilde i/-\textasciitilde ā, *\textasciitilde an-\textasciitilde ta, *\textasciitilde an-\textasciitilde ti, etc., restricted to Semitic and Cushitic, are seemingly of a later date of origin.

The most ancient feature of the A pronoun forms is the use of B forms in A function (above, no. 1). A further step is their modification by an ending *\textasciitilde i\textasciitilde V (above, no. 2). The two layers of the *\textasciitilde an- formations are probably still later (above, no. 3).

The function of the absolute pronoun covers grosse modo those of the absolute state of the noun, as we know it from Akkadian, but also from Berber and Cushitic (see Sasse 1984). Apart from the absolute status, Akkadian has a proper accusative case, in the main for the object of the transitive verb. In Berber and Cushitic, however, the absolute status covers also this latter field: it is also the form of the object. The lack of a proper accusative form in these languages could be accounted for by a somewhat later origin of this category, under the assumption that originally Afroasiatic had not a nominative—accusative morpho-syntactic system (short: accusative system), as it is found in all attested languages, but rather an absolute—ergative system (short: ergative system); a theory propagated

The main syntactic functions of the noun are:

Nominal predicate

The arguments of the verb, in the ergative system:

(a) subject of intransitive verbs, and patient of transitive verbs (absolutive case), and

(b) agent of intransitive verbs (ergative case).

Functions below the sentence level, such as genitival functions and the complement of prepositions, are mentioned for the sake of completeness, though they do not concern us here.

In the following, we want to sketch the system (1.) of ergative and accusative type languages, and (2.) of languages that have the category of the absolute status, and those that do not.

Absolute status, ergative system (assumed for Afroasiatic; of attested languages, cf. Basque, which has, however, not the structure nominal sentence but rather uses an auxiliary verb)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominal sentence</th>
<th>Intransitive verb</th>
<th>Transitive verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predicate:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*absolute status</td>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Patient:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>*absolutive case</td>
<td>*absolutive case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*absolutive case</td>
<td>*absolutive case</td>
<td>Agent:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*ergative case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Absolute status, accusative system, no accusative case (Berber, Cushitic)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominal sentence</th>
<th>Intransitive verb</th>
<th>Transitive verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predicate:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absolute status</td>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Subject:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>nominative case</td>
<td>nominative case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Object:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*absolute status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Absolute status, accusative system, accusative case
(Akkadian)
Nominal sentence : Intransitive verb Transitive verb
 Predicate:
 absolute status
 Subject: Subject: Subject:
nominative case nominative case nominative case
 Object:
 accusative case

No absolute status, accusative system, accusative case
(other Semitic languages)
Nominal sentence : Intransitive verb Transitive verb
 Predicate:
nominative case
 Subject: Subject: Subject:
nominative case nominative case nominative case
 Object:
 accusative case

In most attested Afroasiatic languages the pronominal subject is connoted by the conjugation, it is expressed by the conjugation prefix or suffix. Of the remaining functions, the nominal predicate is expressed by the A pronoun, the object by the B pronoun. The subject of a nominal predicate is partly also covered by the A pronoun but in some constructions by the B pronoun. If we project this situation back to the assumed ergative state of Afroasiatic we can see in the B pronoun the absolutive case of the pronoun, expressing the patient of transitive verbs and the subject of intransitive verbs, as also the subject of the nominal sentence. The A function—*inter alia* the nominal predicate—could be executed by the same B pronoun, though marked in this role for the absolute case (with the noun, the respective marker is -a).

When eventually the language switched to an accusative system the B pronoun was reinterpreted as the object form, and it could now normally not anymore function as a subject, neither in the verbal sentence nor in the nominal sentence. To be exact, the verbal sentence did not need any subject pronoun as its pronominal subject was expressed by the conjugation ending. But the nominal sentence did. It was now the A pronoun—a B pronoun in the absolute
status, probably marked by *-a—that took over, in addition to the A functions, this role. In fact, a pronominal subject is called for much more often than a nominal predicate (except in focalizing constructions: ‘I is I who . . . ’). Consequently, the need was felt to provide the pronoun of the A function with an additional marker, viz. the morpheme *-iV.

Ergative system:
B pronoun—for the absolutive case: X; for the A function: X-*a
Accusative system:
B pronoun—for the object: X; for the subject of the nominal sentence: X-*a; for the predicate of nominal sentence: X-*a-iV (e.g., *šā —*šā-*a/*šā-*a-iV).

The next step was to create entirely new forms. This processus started with the first person, and in many languages it remained at that: creation of the form *'anāku (attested in Egyptian, Berber, and some ancient Semitic languages).

In other languages, it was eventually extended to the second person: *anī/*ā, *antā/*antī, etc. (Semitic and Cushitic). In Egyptian, the *'anāku pronoun was supplemented by another formation for the second and third persons: intt, intī, intīf, intīs, etc.

In Bedayue, it was the *'anī pronoun that was supplemented by the new formations barūku/*batūku, barūs/*batūs, etc.

If these interpretations are right we must see the basic, unmarked pronoun in the ancestor of the Afroasian B pronouns, i.e., in a series like *i, *kū, *kim, *šū, *sī, etc. They could be raised to the absolute status if syntax asked for an absolute form. On the other hand, they could be marked for dependent function in order to yield the genitival form.

Bibliography


