1. INTRODUCTION

Distinction between verbal and non-verbal predicates: distribution, in particular, inflection.

What is conjugation?

• broadly: the ability to combine with those affixes that verbs combine with (TAM and φ)
• narrowly: person agreement

Is it true that nouns can do neither? If yes, why?

End result: nouns do not inflect for person. Tense, however, is a different matter.

1.1. Tense, aspect, mood, etc.

Received wisdom: An NP (predicate) cannot be inflected for TAM. In the presence of a non-default tense, aspect or mood there has to be a verb.

A non-explanatory syntactic answer: c-selection

➢ Saying that T (Asp, M) c-selects for a verb is just restating the problem

A non-explanatory semantic answer: eventualities

➢ What is the real difference between the verb “do” and the gerund “doing”, besides their distribution? “Death” is just as eventive as “dying” (starting, ending, lasting a long or a short time, etc.), and

Another semantic answer: sortals

Ni: The “referential index” of Baker 2003 might be another name for “sortality”.

➢ Perhaps a sort and an eventuality are semantic primitives corresponding to syntactic categories.


(1) a. Jarawara

Jarawara

Jarawara

fatii - tee - bu - ni - hi
wife - HAB - FUT - IMM.PST - [EV NON - EYE - WITNESS] - F - DEP
She was to become (his) wife.

b. Guarani

Guarani

Che - roga - ra - ta.
1 SG - house - FUTN - FUTV
It is my future house, it will be my future house.

Nominal and verbal tenses can have distinct morphology and stack on the predicate NP.

Mood and evidentiality can also be marked on an NP.

Nominal aspect is not attested (perhaps, truly something only compatible with eventualities). Nominal imperatives, infinitives and subjunctives also seem impossible.

Acknowledgments: Many thanks to Eddy Ruys for extremely helpful discussions.
b. ursu- irniar- pugut. Fortescue 1984:323
    blubber- sell- 1PL.INDIC
    We are selling blubber.

Sadock 1980: Noun incorporation is West Greenlandic corresponds to antipassive. Stranded object-modifying APs appear in the instrumental case, rather than in absolutive, the subject is marked absolutive and the verb agrees with it:

    beautiful- INSTR bead- get- INDIC-3SG
    We bought beautiful beads.

    Søren- ABS airplane- make- INDIC-3SG
    Søren made an airplane.

The differences between noun incorporation with the copula and with transitive verbs can be attributed to their different underlying syntax under the assumption that noun incorporation is only possible with non-specific (non-referential) NP complements.

3. PHONOLOGICAL CLITICIZATION

The predicate appears to be conjugated because the copula (a verb) cliticizes onto it.

3.1. Turkish

Turkish is the simplest case: in the present tense the copula (the root -i- plus agreement) can be phonologically attached to the preceding XP, be it the predicate, the interrogative particle or negation:

(8) a. Ev-de-yim. Lewis 1967:98
    house-LOC-1SG
    I am at home.

b. Ev-de mi-yim. Lewis 1967:105
    house-LOC INT-1SG
    Am I at home?

c. Ev-de değil-im. Lewis 1967:103
    house-LOC NEG-1SG
    I am not at home.

In the past tense, inferential and conditional the stem -i- precedes mood and tense marking (which in turn precede ϕ-feature agreement). These forms can be phonologically cliticized to the preceding predicate (Lewis 1967):

(9) a. Ev-de i-di-m. free form, Lewis 1967:99
    house-LOC be-PST-1SG
    I was at home.

b. Ev-de-y-di-m. cliticized form, Lewis 1967:99
    house-LOC-be-PST-1SG
    I was at home.

c. Türk mü-y-dü-m. cliticized form, Lewis 1967:105
    Turkish INT-be-PST-1SG
    I am Turkish?

For other tenses the verb ol- 'occur/become' is used as a supporting stem:

(10) Sen zengin ol-acak-s. Lees 1972
    you rich become-FUT-2SG
    You will be/become rich.

The enclitic copula is an independent syntactic node:

(11) Zengin ve ünlü-y-dü-m. Kabak 2007
    rich and famous-be-PAST-1SG
    I was rich and famous.

Conclusion: Turkish involves simple phonological enclitization.

3.2. Erzya (Turunen 2006)

In Erzya verbs and non-verbal predicates appear with nearly identical inflection:

(12) a. Kij-at ton?
    who-2SG you
    Who are you?

b. A ton meź-e t'ej-at?
    and you what do-2SG
    And what are you doing?

Differences:

- 3rd person marking is Ø for non-verbal predicates, but not for verbal ones
- in the past tenses non-verbal predicates contain the copular suffix -l' (a reduced form of the copula ul'ems 'be')
- a plural subject may be marked twice on the nominal predicate: the plurality is expressed first by the nominal suffix -l' and then by the predicative plural suffix
- the negation strategies of nominal and verbal predicates are partly the same in the present tense (a negation particle is used), but in the past tense verbal predicates use an inflected negation verb.

Also, this is not a verbalization process: the agreement marker attaches to the right of the entire non-verbal predicate rather to its head, and phonologically clitics to the last element of the predicate:

NB: DEF is clearly not (just) a definiteness marker.

(13) a. iś-t'akak b'eń-ań, iś-t'akak plohoj lomań-ań.
    such bad man-1 SG such wretched man-1 SG
    I am such a bad man, I am such a wretched man.

b. mon lomań-eś b'ereń-an, mon lomań-eś plohoj-an
    I man-DEF bad-1SG such wretched man-1SG
    I am a bad man, I am a wretched man.

Conclusion: “Conjugated non-verbal predicates” of Erzya involve phonological cliticization of the copula, whose root is zero in the present tense and -l' in the past. Despite the fact that the root is phonologically null, it can nonetheless take agreement morphology (cf. Zulu).

3.3. Sumerian (Gragg 1968)

Sumerian is an ergative language with case markers cliticizing onto the last element of an NP. The copula can appear as an independent (obligatorily prefixed) verb or as an enclitic on the NP predicate (exx. from Gragg 1968:89, see also Thomsen 1984):
The myth of conjugated nouns (February 6, 2010)

The meaning of some so-called conjugation prefixes has not been established. -í- is supposedly the default conjugation prefix, glossed as CNJ.

(14) a. Lahar Ašnan-bida nin ḫe-i-me-eš. independent copula
   Lahar Ašnan-and sisters OPT-CNJ-be-3PL
   May Lahar and Ašnan be sisters.
   b. gae ursag- me-en. enclitic copula
   I hero be-1 SG
   I am a hero.

The inflectional paradigm of the independent copula is identical to that of lexical verbs. The enclitic copula differs from it only in the 3 SG: while the independent copula verb form is -me (preceded by prefixes), the enclitic is ~am.

Gragg 1968: Transformation rule deleting the default verbal prefixes, thus forcing obligatory encliticization of the copula.

More likely: the copula is a phonological enclitic, and the “default conjugation prefix -í-” has some semantic input (e.g., verum focus) or the vowel is used for phonological support.

Adjectives only have the enclitic copula (Gragg 1968):

(15) a. zae mah-me-en. you mighty-be-2SG
   You are mighty.
   * b. *zae mah i-me-en. you mighty CNJ-be-2SG

Why?

Foxvog 2009:25: (most?) adjectives are really hamtu (perfective) participles.

Adjectives can appear with verbal prefixes (here the “neutral” prefix al-, excluding all other prefixes):

(16) giri.zal-bi al-dlug. Gragg 1968
delight-3SG-POS al-dlug. NEU-good
   Its delight is good.

It might be that the full copula was used for sortal rather than predicative copular statements (cf. Russian nominative vs. instrumental, Romance and Germanic article-drop).

4. AKKADIAN

A combination of two effects: absolute state (bare NP) and subject/copula cliticization

4.1. The “stative tense”

Huehnergard 1986 via Giano 1990, Buccellati 1968, 1997: There are three states of a noun:

• status rectus (governed state): the grammatical default, consists of a stem and a case affix
• status absolus (absolute state): the morphological default, bare stem
• status constructus (construct state): morphologically often (although not always) identical to absolute state

The absolute state is used in vocatives, in distributive repetitions, in certain space and time specifications, in some idiomatic expressions and in the so-called “stative tense” (Buccellati 1968, 1997, Satzinger 2007):

(17) a. šarr! vocative
   King
   b. ana māt māt-ma distributive repetitions
   for country country-FOC
   forever
   c. ana dār fixed expression (P0 usually takes GEN)
   for eternity

Satzinger 2007: absolute state corresponds to “bare nouns”.

Table 1: “Stative tense” (Buccellati 1968, 1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pronoun-NOM</th>
<th>adjective ‘wide’</th>
<th>participle ‘divided’</th>
<th>noun ‘king, queen’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>anāku</td>
<td>raps̼-åku</td>
<td>pars̼-åku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sg</td>
<td>atta</td>
<td>raps̼-åta</td>
<td>pars̼-åta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>atti</td>
<td>raps̼-åti</td>
<td>pars̼-åti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg</td>
<td>šū</td>
<td>raps̼-Ø</td>
<td>pars̼-Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>ši</td>
<td>raps̼-at</td>
<td>pars-Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>nītu</td>
<td>raps̼-ånu</td>
<td>pars-ånu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pl</td>
<td>attunū</td>
<td>raps̼-åtunu</td>
<td>pars-åtunu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>attinā</td>
<td>raps̼-ätina</td>
<td>pars-ätina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl</td>
<td>šunu</td>
<td>raps̼-ū</td>
<td>pars-ū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>šina</td>
<td>raps̼-ā</td>
<td>pars-ā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “inflection” on the stative tense strongly resembles personal pronouns (except for the 3rd person) and is very different from (prefixal) agreement elsewhere in the verbal paradigm.

Buccellati 1968, Goetze 1942, Huehnergard 1986, 1987 (but see Kouwenberg 2000, Kogan and Loesov 2009): the so-called “stative” corresponds not to a verbal tense, but to a complete copular sentence with a nominal (actually, non-verbal) predicate. The apparent “agreement marker” is actually a cliticized or phonologically reduced subject pronoun.

Under discussion is not the presence of the copula, but rather the (non-)verbal status of verbal statives.

4.2. Akkadian copula

Apart from the existential verb bašûm (which can also be dropped) and the demonstrative (or pronominal) copula šû (particularly in later stages of the language), the Akkadian copula is null and unspecified for tense, aspect or mood (Buccellati 1968):

(18) šalm-Ø-aku ina awal anaku. Deutscher 2000:29
    healthy-ABS-1SG in Awal 1SG
    I am well. I am in Awal.
An NP or AP predicate can appear in the absolute (predicative) or governed (cased) state:

(19) a. šarr-Ø-aku.
king-ABS-1SG
I am a/the king.

b. hammurapi šarr-um dann-um.
hammurapi king-NOM strong-NOM
Hammerapi is a strong king.

Buccellati 1968:5: “The stative -(19a) is regularly used in Akkadian whenever the predicate of a nominal sentence is not immediately followed by a complement or a qualification.”

Buccellati 1968: an NP consisting of more than just the noun or containing the focus marker -mu cannot appear in the absolute state:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pronoun (NOM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rectus</td>
<td>u/u</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>šarr-um dann-um</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutus</td>
<td>a/a</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>šarr-Ø-aku</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis: AP predicates usually appear without following modifiers or complements, and attested instances of non-predicative state reduce to APs followed by some overt material.

4.3. 3rd person

In 3rd person copular clauses the inflection does not correspond to pronouns:

Nō: the third person pronouns are actually demonstratives (that) and might be related to the relative pronoun (Gelb 1961).

Table 2: Gender and number marking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pronoun (NOM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rectus</td>
<td>u/u</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>šarr-um dann-um</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutus</td>
<td>a/a</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>šarr-Ø-aku</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: Masculine plural is thus -ś- and feminine plural -ni-.

Status rectus: -ś- is masculine, -ś- is feminine, -ś- is masculine plural, -ś- is feminine plural

Status absolutus: -ś- is masculine, -ś- is feminine, plural endings as before

NB: The additional -ś- in the feminine singular of the absolute state could be epenthesis word-finally, cf. the stative -(a) šarr-at-um 'queen-NOM' triggered by the geminated stem-final consonant.

The pattern in (25) suggests that the inflection is not the pronoun:

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.

Pronouns decompose into the deictic -ś- (third person), gender, -ni- (plural) and gender again, which is thus marked twice: u/ia (masculine) and i/a (feminine).

Nō: The object pronoun following the subject in (25a) is a clitic, not an agreement marker.

(22) a. šarr-ī
1 SG-FOC
It is I who will stomp them out (=destroy them).

(23) a. ina bābīlim šarr-Ø-aku.
in Babylon-GEN king-ABS-1SG
I am king in Babylon.

b. ina bābīlim anaku šarr-um.
in Babylon-GEN king-NOM strong-NOM
The matters are urgent.
Alternative: “stative suffixes” correspond to the encliticized conjugated copula be with a null root (cf. Zulu and Erzya). Third person marking is simple number/gender default, appearing in the absence of feature [participant]. The language would then be pro-drop in the first and second person (cf. Hebrew, Borer 1980, 1983, 1986, Shlonsky 1997), and be would be exceptional in taking agreement suffixes rather than prefixes. N: In other tenses it is pro-drop throughout. However, why are agreement suffixes homophonic to pronouns?

4.4. Summary

Akkadian nouns are not conjugated – if they had been, their distribution wouldn’t have been constrained by linear order (cf. (20)-(23)).

5. Conclusion

Phonological elision is detectable by sensitivity to linear order. Noun-incorporation leaves behind NP-dependents (modifiers and complements). What would a conjugated NP look like?

(27) a. I a talented student-am of linguistics = ‘I am a talented student of linguistics.’

b. She my friend-is and my teacher-is. = ”She is my friend and my teacher.’

NPs can contain tense, but can they agree for person?

6. References


