

## CHAPTER VI COPULAR CLAUSES

The grammar of arguments of copulas does not correspond with the grammatical relations of other types of verbs. For example, one of the arguments is frequently an adjective rather than a full noun. In addition, the semantics of the arguments frequently do not correspond with those associated with S, A, and O. The arguments of copulas are traditionally referred to as subject and predicate, where subject is the thing being described and predicate is its description.

This is the terminology that will be used here just to facilitate description of the relationship between structure and semantics. There is actually no grammatical marking in Yaghnobi that distinguishes the categories of subject and predicate.<sup>1</sup>

There are two copulas, *xast* 'be' and *ast* 'be, have,' as discussed in Chapter III. The primary distinction between these two forms is apparent in the Tajik translation given by the language consultants. The copula *ast* is translated with either the Tajik verb *doftan* 'to have' or the Tajik copula *hast* 'be'. There is no other Yaghnobi verb meaning 'have'. The Yaghnobi copula *xast* is translated by either of the Tajik copulas *hast* 'be' or *ast* 'be'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A future research project would be to test the topicality of the arguments of copulas to see if there are constructions in which one argument is consistently more topical. This would give validity to designating one of the arguments as a subject.

<sup>2</sup> It appears that the Tajik copula *hast* 'be' is used for location and existence, while the Tajik copula *ast* is used for all other copular functions. More research needs to be done to verify this, such as investigating

According to Payne (1997), there are six potential functions for copular clauses cross linguistically: equation, proper inclusion, attribution, location, possession, and existence. The grammar of Yaghnobi does not make a distinction between equation and proper inclusion, but there are structural differences that distinguish the other five functions, as shown in Table 6.1.<sup>3</sup> These are explained in detail in the sections that follow.

Table 6.1. Correlation of syntax of copular clauses with semantic function

Semantic function	Subject	Predicate	Yaghnobi copula	Tajik copula
equation or proper inclusion	NP	NP	<i>xast</i> ‘be’	<i>ast</i> ‘be’
attribution	NP	ADJ	<i>xast</i> ‘be’	<i>ast</i> ‘be’
location	NP NP	NP -CS DEM <sub>Spatial</sub>	<i>xast</i> ‘be’	<i>ast</i> ‘be’
location	DEM <sub>Spatial</sub> NP -CS	NP NP	<i>ast</i> ‘be, have’	<i>hast</i> ‘be’
existence	NP		<i>ast</i> ‘be, have’	<i>hast</i> ‘be’
possession	NP -CS	NP	<i>ast</i> ‘be, have’	<i>doftan</i> ‘to have’

### 1. EQUATION AND PROPER INCLUSION

The copula *xast* ‘be’ is used in clauses expressing equation. In Yaghnobi, there is no morphosyntactic difference between clauses expressing equation and proper

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the use of verbs associated cross linguistically with existence, such as ‘see’ or ‘appear,’ with these copulas.

<sup>3</sup> Morphosyntactic structures were correlated to semantic functions of copulas in a database containing over 250 copular clauses.

inclusion.<sup>4</sup> Both types of clauses have the structural pattern of NP NP COP. It is not clear whether there is a morphosyntactic distinction between subject and predicate in equational copular clauses; although it appears (from a limited number of examples) that the first NP (subject) typically refers to a listener's concept of something and the second NP (predicate) equates a previously unknown concept with the first.

The sentence in 1 is an example of equation in which *ax* 'he,' presumably an entity known to the listener, is equated with *man dodo* 'my father', presumably a relationship unknown to the listener.

- (1) NP [NP ] COP  
*ax man dodo xast*  
 he I father be  
 'He is my father.'

The sentence in 2 is an example of proper inclusion since *if* 'this' is identified as belonging to the category *kobaz* 'paper'.

- (2) NP NP COP  
*if kobaz xast*  
 This paper be  
 'This is paper.'

The sentence in example 3 is another example of the copula *xast* 'be' being used to indicate proper inclusion. The function of the copula in this sentence is not to identify Karim but to describe him according to a category to which he belongs.

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<sup>4</sup> The conceptual difference between equation and proper inclusion is that equation is identification of one object or entity as being the same as another, while proper inclusion is identification of an object or entity as belonging to a category or group. The English sentence "He is a father" is an example of proper inclusion, since 'he' belongs to the set of all fathers; 'He is my father' is an example of equation since 'he' is being identified as 'my father.'

- (3) *karim malim xast*  
 Karim teacher be  
 'Karim is a teacher.'

While there do not seem to be any grammaticalized constructions that distinguish equation from proper inclusion, the two concepts are pragmatically distinguished in Yaghnobi when both the subject and predicate of the copula are specific, as illustrated by the equational clause in example 4, in which *if malim* 'this teacher' (definite) is equated with 'Karim'. Compare this with example 3, in which 'Karim' is identified as 'a teacher' (indefinite).

- (4) *if malim karim xast*  
 this teacher Karim be  
 'This teacher is Karim.'

The sentence in example 5 may appear to be possessive, but it is actually expressing the concept of proper inclusion, since it is not predicating that the river bank has rocks, but that the rocks are part of the group of things belonging to the river bank.

- (5) [NP           ]        [NP                           ]        COP  
*if sank -t        dajro -i        lap -ik        or*  
 this stone -P        river -GEN        bank -3S.Poss 3P.are  
 'These rocks are at the edge of the river.' (lit: 'These stones are the river bank's.')

## 2. ATTRIBUTION

Clauses with the copula *xast* 'be' and the structure NP ADJ COP are used to express attribution. The NP is the subject and the ADJ is the predicate. In sentence 6 the predicate, or characteristic described, is the length of someone's beard.

- (6) [NP                    ] ADJ COP  
*av -i                    ri:fa   van   xast*  
 he -CS                beard long be  
 (GEN)  
 ‘His beard **is** long.’

Sentence 7 shows another example of an attributive sentence with the plural form of the copula:

- (7) [NP                ] ADJ COP  
*if   sank -t   darkor   or*  
 this stone -P Necessary they.are  
 ‘These rocks are necessary.’

### 3. LOCATION

Both the copula *xast* ‘be’ and *ast* ‘be, have’ can be used to express location. The copula *xast* ‘be’ is used to express location in clauses with all of the following structures:

NP NP-CS COP  
 NP-CS NP COP  
 NP DEM<sub>Spatial</sub> COP  
 DEM<sub>Spatial</sub> NP COP

These structural patterns can be generalized by saying that the subject of the copula is the argument that is neither marked for case nor lexically locational, and the predicate is the argument that is either marked for case or is locationally lexical. In addition, the subject can either precede or follow the predicate. Examples of each of the four structural patterns are shown in sentences 8, 9, 10, and 11.



Sentence 13 shows a locational clause with the plural form of the copula.

- (13) [NP                    ]    NP  
*aw                    kat -i                    yajik -t                    or*  
 that.CS    house -CS    daughter -P    they.are  
           (GEN)            ( LOC)  
 ‘There are girls in that house.’

Location can also be expressed with the copula *ast* ‘be, have,’ rather than *xast* ‘be’. These clauses occur with the structures NP -CS NP COP, and DEM<sub>Spatial</sub> NP COP. The subject appears to be the marked NP (the location).<sup>5</sup> In these clauses there are two possible interpretations. The first is that the location of a thing is expressed grammatically as a possessor. An example that lends itself to either interpretation can be seen in sentence 14. Note that the only formal difference between this clause and a locational clause is the copula.

- (14) [NP                    ] -CS    NP    COP  
*diræxt -i    tæk -i                    tiloh    ast*  
 tree -CS    under -CS    gold    has  
           (LOC or GEN)    (GEN)  
 ‘There is gold under the tree.’ or ‘The underside of the tree has gold.’

Locational copular clauses with *ast* also occur with lexically locational subjects, as shown in example 15.

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<sup>5</sup> In all the examples the location is always the first argument. More data needs to be collected to see if the location is always the subject and if it is always the first argument.

- (15) DEM<sub>Spatial</sub> NP COP  
*idoki odam ast*  
 here -LOC person is  
 ‘There is a person here.’

#### 4. EXISTENCE

The structure of copular clauses expressing existence is NP COP, where the NP is the subject. There is no predicate. Sentence 16 is an example of a classic expression of existence.

- (16) *xudo ast*  
 God is  
 ‘God exists.’

The following question and answer in sentences 17 and 18 provide further examples of existence expressed with the copula *ast*. In sentence 17 the possessive/existential copula is used in asking a question; the same copula is used in the answer in 18.

- (17) *davar -i tfo tʃizi -t -i ast*  
 outside -CS what thing -P -CS have  
 (LOC) (QTY)

‘What things are outside?’

(lit: ‘What does the outside have?’ or ‘What exists outside?’)

- (18) *xur ast, mahtob ast, urk ast, xirs ast, yov ast, asp ast*  
 sun is moon is wolf is bear is cow is horse is  
 ‘There is the moon, there is the sun, there is the bear, there is the cow, there is the horse.’

## 5. POSSESSION

Possession is expressed in copular clauses with the structural pattern NP -CS NP COP with the copula *ast*. The case marked argument is the subject and the unmarked argument is the predicate. Examples are shown in 19 and 20.

- (19) NP -CS NP COP  
*av -i rifa ast*  
 he -CS beard have  
 (GEN)  
 'He has a beard.'

- (20) NP -CS [NP ] COP  
*karim -i i: farbeh sutur ast*  
 Karim -NOM one fat sheep have  
 'Karim has a fat sheep.'

The pronouns *man* 'I', *mox* 'we', and *fumox* 'you (pl.)' do not have marked case forms and do not take the marked case suffix *-i*, so although the sentence in 21 does not have a marked case subject, it is not an exception, since case marking is always absent on the pronoun *man*.

- (21) Sub Pred COP  
*man kitob ast*  
 I book have  
 'I have a book.'

The plural form of the copula in possessive clauses is shown in sentence 22.

- (22) *man tiraj virot -i ast*  
 I three younger.brother -CS have  
 (GEN)  
 'I have three younger brothers.'

Possessors represented by proper nouns in copular clauses are marked with the *-i* suffix, as shown in sentence 23.

- (23) *Safar -i kat ast*  
Safar **-CS** house have  
(GEN)  
'Safar has a house.'