

Remarks on the category of copula in Gorani dialects

Masoud Mohammadirad, Cambridge University

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Gorani dialects show considerable variation in the formation and derivation of the present copula paradigm. This paper examines these variations across 10 Gorani dialects. The material was gathered from available grammatical descriptions, and a recent questionnaire developed for studying morphosyntactic and phonological variation within Kurdish. Unlike most modern Iranian languages, the copula paradigm in Gorani consists of the element *(a)n-* to which person forms are added. This element can be reconstructed as an erstwhile 3SG *-n* preceded by the stem *ha-*. It will be argued that the paradigm of the enclitic copula in modern dialects is the result of the reanalysis of morphologically coded 3SG inflection as part of the stem, in line with the trend in historical change cross-linguistically (Watkins 1962; Koch 1995). This paradigm is generally attested in modern dialects, except for Gawrajui which has replicated the Kurdish pattern of enclitic copula.

(1)	Orthotone copula		
		Before	After reanalysis
	1SG.	* <i>ha-ā</i>	<i>han-ā</i>
	2SG.	* <i>ha-ī</i>	<i>han-ī</i>
	3SG.M	* <i>ha-n</i>	<i>han-∅</i>
	3SG.F	* <i>ha-n-a</i>	<i>han-a</i>
	1PL.	* <i>ha-mē</i>	<i>han-mē</i>
	2PL.	* <i>ha-dē</i>	<i>han-dē</i>
	3PL.	* <i>ha-ē</i>	<i>han-ē</i>

Another source of variation concerns the derivation of the copula paradigm. Most Gorani dialects are characterised by deriving certain cells of the copula paradigm, most notably third person and 1SG, from the demonstrative pronouns, a profile which was probably developed under long-standing contact with Semitic languages, e.g., Neo-Aramaic (Khan 2022). In some dialects 1PL and 2PL are derived from the paradigm of oblique clitics.

Yet another source of variation is the assimilation of the enclitic copula paradigm to that of the verbal person suffixes of present tense verbs. Here, the dialects are distributed on a continuum, where one end is characterised by a four-way distinction of person forms in the two paradigms (attested in Kandulai), whereas the other end is distinguished by the complete verbalization of the copula paradigm (attested in Gawrajui).

3rd person and 1st person > 3rd person and 1SG > 3rd person only > 3SG and 2PL > no distinction

References

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