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Avestan

Morphosyntactic structures – Part 1: Noun phrase, adpositional phrase, preverbs



MUYA —
The Multimedia Yasna Project

Roadmap

- Noun phrase
- Adpositional structures – local particles
- Preverbs

Linearization

- No systematic study available. Common constellations in pragmatically neutral contexts:
determiner (- adjective) - noun (- adjective)
quantifier - noun
noun - attributive genitive
- Combinations of more than two of these elements rare.
- The default order of adjective + noun is curiously uncertain - cf. the contradicting evidence of fixed terms such as

aŋra- mainiiu-
“Evil Spirit”

daēnā- zāraθuštri-
“Zoroastrian Vision/Religion”

Agreement

- Nouns and attributes agree in number, case and gender. Occasional deviations.
- YAv.: nom.-acc. pl. of neuter *n-* (and *r/n-*) with attributes in the ins.:

yim ***vīspāiš*** *paitišmarənte* ***yāiš*** *spəntahe*
REL.ACC.SG all.INS.PL recall.PRS.3PL REL.INS.PL beneficent.GEN.SG

mainiiəuš ***dāmən***
spirit.GEN.SG creature.NOM.PL

“whom all creatures of the Beneficent Spirit recall” (YAv., Yt 8.48)

Gender assignment

- Grammatical gender (m., f., n.) is largely determined morphologically by the type of stem formation:

<i>a</i> -stems	masculine, neutre
<i>ā</i> -stems, <i>ī</i> -stems	feminine
<i>ah</i> -stems	neutre (rarely and with deviating inflection m./f.)

- Some non-derived nouns and nouns derived with suffixes that are unspecific with regard to gender receive their gender based on semantic criteria:

gāu- 'cow' → f.
nar- 'man' → m.

uxš-an- 'bull' → m.

Gender motion and resolution

- Where required, natural gender is marked by means of a stem class shift:
aspa- ‘(male) horse’ → *aspā-* ‘mare’, *driyu-* m. ‘poor’ → f. *drīuuī-* */*driguī-*/
- With animals, natural gender may also be made explicit by adding the appositions such as *aršan-* ‘male animal’ and *daēnu-* ‘female animal’
- When accompanying two nouns of different gender, an attribute seems to agree with the noun to which it is more closely situated (evidence weak):

driyūm=ca

poor.ACC.SG.M=and

drīuuīm=ca

poor.ACC.SG.F=and

araθβiiō.barāte

unjustly

baramne

treated.ACC.DU.F

“the poor man and poor woman, unjustly treated” (YAv., P 25)

Adpositions and other forms of local particles

- Few “exclusive” adpositions, e.g.

maṭ + ins. ‘with’ (preposition)

hacā + abl. ‘from’ (preposition), ‘according to’ (postposition)

- Boundaries between adpositions, preverbs, local adverbs otherwise blurred - convenient collective term “local particles” (LPs)

mərəždātā

mōi ādāi

kahiiācīṭ

paitī

have.mercy.PRS.IMP.2PL I.GEN offering.LOC.SG.F each.LOC.SG.F at/back

“Have mercy on me **at** every offering” or “Be merciful **in return** for each offering of mine” (OAv., Y 33.11)

→ adposition or adverb?

Adpositions and other forms of local particles (cont.)

another example:

<i>upa</i>	<i>tqm</i>	<i>vanqm</i>	<i>aēiti</i>
to	DEM.ACC.SG.F	tree.ACC.SG.F	go.PRS.3SG

“he goes to that tree” or “he approaches that tree” (V 5.2)

→ adposition or preverb in “tmesis” (on which see below)?

Grammaticalization of adpositions

- YAv.; Contradictory evidence for the extent of grammaticalization of LPs to adpositions:

<i>bune</i>	vs.	<i>raiθe</i>	<i>paiti</i>
bottom.LOC		chariot.LOC	on
“on the bottom (of the lake)”		“on the chariot”	

- Yet other examples even suggest interchangeability of the case form:

<i>zqm</i>	<i>paiti</i>	<i>ahuraδātqm</i>
earth.ACC.SG.F	on	created.by.Ahura.ACC.SG.F
“on the earth which is created by Ahura (Mazdā)”		

Preverbs

- Exclusive preverbs:

vi- ‘apart’ *ni-* ‘down’ *fra-* ‘forth’ *ham-* ‘together’ etc.

- Use of LPs as preverbs (besides use as adpositions and adverbs):

paiti ‘towards, on, in turn’ *pairi* ‘around’
aṅtarə ‘between, inside’ *ā* ‘to, at, towards, from’

- Double preverbs are rare, e.g. *paiti.auua.aii-* ‘to go down towards’ (Yt 8.20)

Preverb-verb combinations: lexicalization

- In many cases the combination of preverb + verb results in a non-compositional meaning:

vī- ‘apart’ (exclusive) + *ci-* ‘to pile up’ → OAv. *vī-ci-* ‘to discern’

- This also applies to non-exclusive preverbs:

aṇtarǎ ‘inside, between’ (also adposition) + *mrū-* ‘to speak’ → OAv.
aṇtarǎ.mrū- ‘to banish’

Tmesis (fronting of preverbs)

- Frequently affects preverbs of either type
- Equivalent to the fronting of the entire verb
- Pragmatic function often plausible, though difficult to verify

(a) fronting to clause-initial (or hemistich-initial) position

aṇtarə *vīspāṅg* *drəguuatō* *haxmāṅg* ***[aṇtarə.]mruiiē***
between all.ACC.PL deceitful.ACC.PL community.ABL.SG speak.PRS.1SG.MID

“I banish all adherents of the Deceit from the community” (OAv., Y 49.6)

Tmesis (cont.)

(b) if the clause-initial position is blocked by a relative, interrogative or complementizer (+ adjacent enclitics) the fronted preverb follows that element:

yezi=ca hē hqm tafnō jasat
if=and dem.DAT.SG together fever.NOM.SG come.PRS.INJ.3SG
“and if a fever has afflicted (*come together with) her” (YAv., V 7.70)

(c) enclitics intervene between preverb and verb

yō ... trāfiiāt vā apa vā yāsāiti
REL.NOM.SG steal.PRS.SUBJ.3SG or away or take.PRS.SUBJ.3SG
“who ... either steals (it), or takes (it) away.” (YAv., Y 11.5)

Tmesis (cont.)

(d) shift to clause-final position (rare)

yaθā vā ... stauuas aienī paitī
so.that you.PL.ACC praise.PRS.PTCP.NOM.SG.M go.PRS.SUBJ.1SG towards
“so that I ... will go towards you, praising” (OAv., Y 34.6)

Preverbs: gapping of the verb when repeated

- Gapping of the verb when a verb with preverb is repeated:

fārā vā rāhī... yasnəm=cā vahməm=cā
forth you.PL.DAT give.AOR.INJ.1SG.M sacrifice.ACC=and eulogy.ACC=and

fārā mananḥā fārā vacanḥā fārā śiiaoθanā
forth thinking.INS forth speaking.INS forth action.INS

“I offer both sacrifice and eulogy to you, I offer (them) through thought, I offer (them) through speech, I offer (them) through action” (MAv., Y 11.18)