

BENEDIKT PESCHL

Avestan

Morphosyntactic structures – Part 2: Predication



MUYA —
The Multimedia Yasna Project

Roadmap

- Argument realization
- Subject-verb agreement
- Voice and valency

Argument realization: canonical subjects and objects

- Nominative-accusative alignment - 1st argument (subject) marked by nominative case
- Direct object usually realized as accusative and indirect object as dative:

haōmō

Haōma.NOM

aēibiiō

DEM.DAT.PL

zāuuarə ...

force.ACC

baxšaiti

give.PRS.3SG

“Haōma gives them force” (YAv., Y 9.22)

Argument realization: non-canonical subjects

- Occasional accusative subjects in “late” YAv., correlating with intransitivity (low transitivity) and non-volitional events? (Danesi 2014)

paōirīm upa maγəm frā.nasuš narəm bauuaiti
free.of.nasu.NOM man.ACC become.PRS.3SG
“at the first hole **the man becomes free of *nasu***” (YAv., V 9.28)

- Genitive subjects, based on partitive use of gen.?

uruارانام ... paiti zəməδa uzuxšieinti
plant.GEN.PL on earth.ABL grow.PRS.3PL
“(certain kinds of) plants grow upwards from the earth” (YAv., Yt 7.4)

Argument realization: non-canonical objects

- Some verbs induce non-canonical forms of object marking
- “Genitive objects”

*yō ... irīrixšaite **gaēθanqm*** (GEN.PL)

“who wishes to abandon **the herds**” (YAv., Y 65.7, *ric-* ‘to abandon’)

fšūšā (GEN.SG) *carəkərəmahī*

“we celebrate **the cattle-winner**” (MAv., Y 58.4; *car-* ‘to celebrate’)

Argument realization: non-canonical objects

- “Double accusative construction”, e.g.:

zā- ‘to leave someone behind; to rob someone of something’

<i>yō</i>	<i>mqm</i>	<i>taṭ</i>	<i>draōnō</i>	<i>zināṭ</i>
REL.NOM.SG	I.ACC.SG	DEM.ACC.SG.N	share.ACC.SG.N	rob.PRS.3SG

“who robs me of this share” (MAv., Y 11.5)

*“who leaves me behind concerning this share”

The agent in passive clauses

- Commonly marked with the instrumental:

sax^vārā...

utterance(?).NOM.PL.N

yā

REL.NOM.PL.N

zī

PTCL

vā-uuəraz-ōi ...

PF-do-MID.3SG

daēuuāiš=cā

god.INS.PL=and

mašiiāiš=cā

man.INS.PL=and

“the utterances (?) which have been done by gods and men” (OAv., Y 29.4)

Subject-object alignment: incipient split ergativity?

- Evidence for incipient ergative-absolutive alignment in past tense?

aēm *mōi* *idā* *vistō*
this.NOM.SG.M I.GEN/DAT here found.NOM.SG.M

“this one has here been found by me” (OAv., Y 29.8)

or: “I found this one”?

Incipient split ergativity? (cont.)

yezi=ca hē *aniia* *aya* *šīiaōθna*
if=and DEM.GEN/DAT other.NOM.PL evil.NOM.PL deed.NOM.PL

frauaršta
committed.NOM.PL

“and if any other evil deeds have been committed by him” (YAv., V 3.12 etc.) - or: “if he committed ...” ?

- In most cases, a resultative (≠ simple past) reading is plausible
- Starting point for the development of split-ergativity as found in more recent Iranian languages

Agreement: predication of dual subjects

- Dual subject and verb:

hiiaṭ t̄ā *hām* *mainiū* *jasaētəm*
when DEM.NOM.DU.M together spirit.NOM.DU.M come.PRS.INJ.3DU
“and when the two spirits (the two kinds of mental impulse) come together”
(OAv., Y 30.4)

- Two coordinated singular nouns and dual verb:

maēyəm=ca *vārəm=ca* *yā* *tē* *kəhrpəm*
fog.NOM.SG=and rain.NOM.SG=and REL.NOM.DU you.GEN body.ACC.SG

vaxšaiiatō “fog and rain, which make your body grow” (YAv., Y 10.3)
make.grow.PRS.3DU

Agreement: number mismatches

- In YAv., dual subjects are also constructed with plural predicates:

duua

two.NOM.DU

nara

man.NOM.DU

us.zaiieṇti

be.born.PRS.3PL

“two men are born” (V 7.52)

Agreement: number mismatches (cont.)

- OAv.: neutre plural subjects take singular predicates:

sax^vārē ... *yā ...* *vāuuarəzōi* *daēuuāiš=cā mašiiāiš=cā*
 utterances(?).NOM.PL.N REL.NOM.PL.N be.done.PF.3SG.MID

“utterances which have been done by gods and men” (Y 29.4)

- YAv.: same phenomenon, but less regularly (plural predicates attested as well):

vərəziatqm=ca *iḍa vohu* *vāstriia*
 be.done.PRS.IMP.3SG.MID=and here GOOD.NOM.PL.N pasturage.NOM.PL.N

“and let good pastoral works be produced here!” (Vr 15.1)

Uses of the middle

	middle	example
opposition to active	passive	<i>vaēna-</i> A 'see' ~ M 'be seen'
	self-benefactive	<i>paca-</i> 'cook' ~ 'cook for oneself'
	reflexive	<i>frasnaiia-</i> 'wash' ~ 'wash (one's own hands)'
	reciprocal	<i>pərəsa-</i> 'ask' ~ 'take counsel with'
"media tantum"	intransitive	<i>ās-</i> 'sit'
	transitive ("deponents")	<i>yaza-</i> 'sacrifice to, worship (a deity)'

Passivization

- Use of the middle
- Passive *iia*-present besides other stem for transitive
 - middle inflection
 - YAv. occasionally active inflection
- Distinct passive ending */-i/* for 3rd sg. past:
 - aor. stem *sru-* ‘to hear’: *srāuu-ī* ‘has become renowned’
 - prs. stem *arənaō-* ‘to set in motion’: *arənāuu-i* ‘was set in motion’
 - pf. stem *ād-* ‘to say’: *āiδ-i* ‘was said’

Valency change by derivational means

Different stem formations of a given verb often vary in valency

- valency-decreasing: passive and anticausativ stems in *-iia-*
bara- ‘to carry’ → *ba’r-iia-* ‘to be carried’
- valency-increasing: causative stems in *-aiia-*
raōc-a- ‘to shine’ → *raōc-aiia-* ‘to make shine’
- Where available, causatives rely on the intransitive reading of the base verb
sru-naō- ‘to hear’ (root *sru-* A ‘to hear’ ~ M ‘to be heard’) → *srāuu-aiia-* ‘to make heard, to recite, sing’