

The Dynamic-Statative Contrast in Early Semitic: a Preliminary Historical Overview

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Unlike the rest of Semitic, in Akkadian the dynamic-stative opposition is morphologically marked. To be more specific, two features make action verbs different from stative verbs:

- a) The way grammatical morphemes are attached to the verbal theme, that is, by prefixation or by suffixation, respectively.
- b) The (qualitative) nature of the “root-vowel” (i.e. the vowel occurring between the second and the third root-consonant).

On closer inspection, this morphological trait is somewhat fluctuating: some verbal themes show a certain degree of morpho-semantic overlapping, they still bringing along the inherent lexical meaning that causes a given verb to denote events or states. The present contribution will historically analyze the opposition between dynamic and stative verbs in Akkadian. In particular, it will be argued that this feature results from “paradigmatic grammaticalization” that two distinct elements underwent, that is /-prvs-/ and /parvs-/. The former, of nominal origin, surfaces as the basic themes of prefix conjugations (the imperfective *iparras*, the perfective *iprus*, the t-perfect *iptaras*), the latter, of adjectival origin, surfaces as the basic theme of the suffix conjugation (the so-called Akkadian stative *paris*). It thus emerges that the prefix and the suffix conjugations in Akkadian have two distinct backgrounds which gradually acquire specific verb-like properties, such as the tense/aspect one. This may help explaining the inconsistencies that the distribution of dynamic and state verbs in some cases performs and, most notably, reconstructing the pre-Semitic context from which the Akkadian verb developed its morphological structure as well as its temporal-aspectual system.

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