Dogon identificational 'it is X'
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Each Dogon language has an enclitic that is added to NPs (including pronouns) and adverbs, and sometimes to other non-verb elements such as PPs and clauses. The clitic functions as a copula, prototypically identifying or equating an understood but covert referent to a referent or nominal category. It is best compared to English *it* in *it's me* (e.g. the person knocking at the door is me, whose voice you should recognize), or in *it's a boy* (e.g. your wife has just given birth to a child who has male paraphernalia). This is referred to here as an **identificational** clitic or as the 'it is' clitic.

The basic identificational phrase *X=it.is* (where = indicates a clitic boundary) be elaborated by making the "subject" overt rather than covert. With a full NP subject Y, the structure is then *Y X=it.is*, meaning 'Y is (an) X'. With a pronominal subject, Dogon languages that usually mark pronominal-subject category with agreement suffixes (on verbs and other predicates) simply conjugate the 'it is' clitic, as in X=it.is-1Sg meaning 'I am (an) X'. Since the 3Sg agreement suffix is zero, there is no overt difference between 'it is X' with understood subject and 'he/she/it is X' with a regular 3Sg pronoun subject. Other Dogon languages have an independent pronoun as Y, as in *1Sg X=it.is* and *3Sg X=it.is* with the same meanings.

There is of course also a negative counterpart, which can be an enclitic or an independent word. In some languages a negative enclitic is added to the *X=it.is* phrase, resulting in *X=it.is=Neg*. In other languages, there is a suppletive 'it is not' clitic, hence *X=it.is.not* (cliticized) or *X it.is.not* (independent word).

Identificational 'it is' is totally distinct from locational-existential 'be', as in 'I am/the dog is in the house', though both correspond to English *be*. Locational 'be' is expressed by a conjugated stative quasi-verb, often in combination with an existential proclitic that is never used in the identificational construction. See the separate piece "Dogon active and stative verbs" for the forms and grammar of locational 'be'.

forms ('it is X' and 'it is not X')

The forms of the 'it is' and 'it is not' clitics in the various languages are given in (1), omitting some allomorphic detail. Plural forms are omitted, but inanimate forms are shown. Where no tones are marked, the clitic is atonal, i.e. it gets its tone by spreading from the word that hosts it. The clitic may have multiple variants, for example after a final vowel (V) and after a final consonant (C). In some of the languages, the positive clitic has variants including one with (segmental) zero, with or without some audible modification of a preceding vowel (floating L-tone and/or vowel-lengthening). This is

distinct structurally from, but could well be a stage in the historical development of, the absence of an identificational clitic. =L means a floating L-tone.

(1) language   *'it is'*   *'it is not'*

    eastern

      Toro Tegu   [none]   *jìní*

      Bankan Tey   *=m̀* (animate after V)   *=m̀=ndá:*
                               =L (elsewhere)   =L *=ndá:*

      Ben Tey   *=m̀* (animate after V)   *=m̀=dá*
                                 =L (elsewhere)   =L *=rá*

      Nanga   *=m* (1st/2nd)   *=ndŏ:*
                                   =ŋ (3Sg)   "
                                   =w (inanimate)   "

      Jamsay   *=i:* (after C)   *=i:=là:* (after C)
                                   =y (after V)   *=y=là:* (after V)

      Togo Kan   *=i:* (after C)   *=i:=là:* (after C)
                                   =y (after V)   *=y=là:* (after V)

      Tommo So   *=ɲ̀* (dialectally *=ŋ̀*)   *=lɛ*
      Donno So   *=ŋ*   *=lǎ:*
      Yorno So   *=i:* (after C)   *=i:=là:* (after C)
                                   =y (after V)   *=y=là:* (after V)

      Tomo Kan   *=:* (vowel lengthening) ??

    northwestern

      Najamba   *=i:* (after C)   *=lá*
                                     =y (after V)   "

      Tiranige   *=ẁⁿ* (common nouns)   *=là*
                                     =yò (i-final pronouns)   "
                                     =wò (other pronouns)   "

      Dogul Dom   *=y* (after V except *u*)
                                     =ì (after C except *ŋ*)
                                     =∅ (after u or *ŋ*)

      Tebul Ure   *=̀:*L   *=lǎ:* (*=lǎ-*)
      Yanda Dom   *=.:*   *=lǎ:* (*=lǎ-*)

    southwestern

      Bunoge   *=:*   *=là*
      Mombo   *bó:*   *=là*
      Ampari   *wò*   *=rà*
      Penange   *=yo* ~ *=(w)o*   *=là*
                                   =ye (with some WH-interrogatives)

In Ben Tey and Bankan Tey, an analytical problem is that $=m$ 'it is' is also the animate singular suffix on nouns and adjectives.

The endings $=:$L in Tebul Ure and $=.:$ (dying quail terminal intonation) in Yanda Dom both involve vowel-lengthening combined with falling pitch. Further study is needed to verify that the two are different. If so, the dying quail pattern would have a more variable duration than simple vowel length.

conjugated forms

Both positive 'it is X' and negative 'it is not X' enclitics can be conjugated for pronominal subject. The resulting paradigms (minimally 1Sg, 1Pl, 2Sg, 2Pl, 3Sg, 3Pl) have pronominal-subject endings identical or very similar to those used with regular inflected verbs. The basic form of the 'it is' clitic, for example $=m$ or $=y$, may be either followed by or replaced by a 1st/2nd person pronominal suffix, depending on the language.

'it is X' clitic in focalization

The 'it is' clitic is used in several Dogon languages in focalization constructions somewhat similar to English clefts. See the separate piece on "Dogon focalization."