

### Where has the copula gone (and why)? The fate of the copula in periphrastic verb forms of Kina Rutul

One may expect that similar and, even more so, identical source structures will undergo parallel development in the course of grammaticalization process. Thus, if the source construction is a periphrastic verb form, i.e. a combination of a lexical verb and an auxiliary, one may expect that different periphrastic constructions with the same auxiliary will follow the same path of development towards tighter constructions, with the morphologization and maybe even the loss of the auxiliary. However, the parallelism in the development of different grammatical forms, even going back to the same source structure, is not always observed. In the talk, I will show the different ways in which the periphrastic structure “non-finite verb form + copula” developed in a single language variety, namely Kina Rutul.

Kina Rutul is a dialect of Rutul, a Nakh-Daghestanian language of the Lezgian branch spoken in a few villages of southern Daghestan (Russia) and northern Azerbaijan. The variety of Kina Rutul is spoken in the village of Kina located in Rutulsky District of Daghestan; the data for the present talk come from the author’s fieldwork during recent years (Kina Rutul has never been described in any detail in the previous literature on Rutul).

The indicative paradigm of Kina Rutul is totally periphrastic in origin: all the forms are combinations of converbs, participles or the infinitive and a postposed auxiliary, namely the identificational copula *i* or the locative copula *a* (see Table 1 with a partial paradigm). For example, the main present tense is the combination of the imperfective converb and the auxiliary *a* (cf. *haʔa-r=a* [do.IPFV-CVB=be] ‘is doing’). The focus of the present paper is on the verb forms which employ the identificational copula as the auxiliary. Their source structure is one and the same: “lexical verb (converb, participle or infinitive) + copula *i*”. The copula can take the present tense form or the past tense form, it can be positive or negative, and in polar interrogatives the auxiliary attaches the interrogative suffix *-ma*. Ideally, for any periphrastic form we can expect to see a paradigm like the one shown in Table 2, and we indeed find such paradigms in some dialects of Rutul (according to Ibragimov 1978/2004 or Makhmudova 2001) and in some closely related languages (e.g. Agul).

However, in Kina Rutul complications begin when we look at how positive, non-interrogative forms with the present-tense copula look like. In the Future, which is a combination of the infinitive and the copula, the copula remains, although it surfaces as *-i* instead of *-i* (*haʔa-s-i* [do-INF-COP] ‘will do’). In the Aorist, i.e. perfective past, which is a combination of the perfective converb and the copula, the copula is never present (thus, the finite form *hiʔi-r* [do.PFV-CVB] ‘did’ is syncretic with the converb ‘having done’), although it is present, also in the form *-i*, before the interrogative suffix (*hiʔi-r-i-ma* [do.PFV-CVB-COP-Q] ‘did s/he do?’). Finally, the Habitual, which is a combination of the imperfective converb and the copula, seems not to exist at all in the positive non-interrogative cell (*\*haʔar-i*, *\*haʔar-i*, *\*haʔa-r*), although it does exist in the interrogative (*haʔa-r-i-ma* [do.IPFV-CVB-COP-Q] ‘does s/he do?’) and in the negative (*haʔa-r-diš* [do.IPFV-CVB-COP.NEG] ‘does not do’)<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that my description of the morphological structure of Kina Rutul interrogative verb forms is different from the one suggested by Alekseev (1994: 233–234) for Luchek Rutul, spoken in the Luchek village located very close to Kina. Alekseev suggests that *-im* is the allomorph of the interrogative marker after consonants (while *-m* is used after vowels), thus for him forms like *hagurim* ‘did s/he see?’ have the structure *hagu-r-im* [see.PFV-CVB-Q], while for me *-ima* in Kina Rutul is a combination of two morphemes, [-COP-Q], and not simply an allomorph of the interrogative *-ma*.

The question to be discussed during the talk is, why do we observe such a heavy asymmetry here? Why the forms which follow one and the same source structure with one and the same auxiliary do not behave similarly in the “positive, non-interrogative, present-tense auxiliary” cell (by either keeping or dropping the copula in a unified way)?

Probably, no single explanatory principle can be suggested. Rather, a number of factors can be involved here, including frequency effects (e.g. the Aorist is by far the most frequent past tense in the language, so its reduction is not very unexpected) and systemic considerations (e.g. the Present expresses the habitual meaning as well, so the Present and the Habitual could have partly “merged” in one form).

Table 1. Periphrastic forms of Kina Rutul (verb *haʔas* ‘do’, gender 4)

Form	Positive	Negative
(perfective converb + <i>i</i> )		
Aorist	<i>hiʔir</i>	<i>hiʔir-diš</i>
Past Aorist	<i>hiʔir-ij</i>	<i>hiʔir-dišij</i>
(perfective converb + <i>a</i> )		
Perfect	<i>hiʔir=a</i>	<i>hiʔir=adiš</i>
Pluperfect	<i>hiʔir=aj</i>	<i>hiʔir=adišij</i>
(imperfective converb + <i>i</i> )		
Present Habitual	–	<i>haʔar-diš</i>
Past Habitual	<i>haʔar-ij</i>	<i>haʔar-dišij</i>
(imperfective converb + <i>a</i> )		
Present	<i>haʔar=a</i>	<i>haʔar=adiš</i>
Imperfect	<i>haʔar=aj</i>	<i>haʔar=adišij</i>
(infinitive + <i>i</i> )		
Future	<i>haʔas-i</i>	<i>haʔas-diš</i>
Irrealis	<i>haʔas-ij</i>	<i>haʔas-dišij</i>

Table 2. “Ideal” structure of periphrastic forms with a copula

Form	Positive	Negative
Affirmative	[lexical verb]-COP	[lexical verb]-COP.NEG
Interrogative	[lexical verb]-COP-Q	[lexical verb]-COP.NEG-Q

## References

- Alekseev, Mikhail E. 1994. Rutul. In Rieks Smeets (ed.), *The Indigenous languages of the Caucasus. Vol. 3. North East Caucasian languages. Part 2*, 213–258. Delmar N.Y.: Caravan.
- Ibragimov, Garun X. 1978. *Rutul'skij jazyk* [Rutul]. Moscow: Nauka.
- Ibragimov, Garun X. 2004. *Rutul'skij jazyk: Sinxronija i diaxronija* [Rutul: Synchrony and diachrony]. Makhachkala: Narody Dagestana.
- Makhmudova, Svetlana M. 2001. *Morfologija rutul'skogo jazyka* [Morphology of the Rutul language]. Moscow: Sovetskij pisatel'.