

Yaghnobi Copular Clauses

There are two copulas in the Yaghnobi language. The first, *xæst* 'be', is used in sentences describing location, equation, proper inclusion, and attribution. The other, *æst* 'be, have', is used for possession and existence.

The basic sequence of elements in copular clauses is subject followed by predicate. By subject, I mean the noun phrase that is being described, and by predicate I mean the description. I use the term subject in the sense of a grammatical relation.

1 Morphology

1.1 Contraction

The copula *xæst* 'be' is commonly contracted to *-x* as shown in the following sentences

if kata koyaz safed -x
this big paper white **-be**
'This big paper **is** white.'

1.2 Plural form

The third person plural form of *xæst* 'be' in the present tense is *or* 'they are' as shown in the copular clause expressing proper inclusion below¹. The plural form of the copula agrees with the subject.

if -tit man -ik or
this -3P I -3S.Poss **3P.be**
'These **are** mine.'

For the copula *æst* 'have, be', there is no plural form. This can be seen in the example below where the subject is plural but the form of the copula is still *æst*.

awtiti avd yov -i æst

¹ No data is available for 1st and 2nd person present plural forms of *xæst* 'be'.

they seven cow -QTY **have**
'They **have** seven cows.'

1.3 Past tense

The past tense conjugation of *xæst* 'be' and *æst* 'be, have' is shown in the table below.
The distinction in the forms of the two copulas disappears in the past tense.

<i>1s:</i>	<i>oĵim</i>	<i>1p:</i>	<i>iġm</i>
<i>2s:</i>	<i>oĵi:</i>	<i>2p:</i>	<i>iġt</i>
<i>3s:</i>	<i>xoĵ</i>	<i>3p:</i>	<i>iġr</i>

ax nihedok -i xoĵ
he right.here -LOC was
'He was right here.' (location)

man i sutur oĵ
I a sheep was
'I had one sheep.' (possession)

karim -i kad past xoĵ
Karim -GEN height short was
'Karim's height was short.' (attribution)

mox panj -tit piġm
we five -3S were
'There were five of us.' (existence)

ax -tit panj -tit iġr
1Per -3P five -3P be.3P.PST
'there were five people.' (existence)

1.4 Negation

Negative copular clauses are formed by prefixing the copula with *na-* ‘not’ as shown in the examples below.

malim kat -i na xast

teacher house -LOC not be

The teacher isn't in the house. (location)

if odam piḡn kat -i na -xoj

this person yesterday house -LOC not - was

‘This man wasn't in the house yesterday.’ (location)

it dajro -i mohi: na -æst

This river -LOC fish not - have

‘This river doesn't have fish.’ (possession)

2 Semantic functions

2.1 Equation

The copula *xæst* ‘be’ is used in clauses expressing equation. It is important to distinguish equation from proper inclusion. The sentence “He is a father” is an example of proper inclusion, since ‘he’ belongs to the set of all fathers; while the sentence below is an example of equation since it equates ‘he’ with one particular father.

ax man dodo xæst

he I father **be**

‘He **is** my father.’

2.2 Proper Inclusion

The copula *xæst* ‘be’ is used to indicate proper inclusion as shown in the sentence below. The function of the copula in this sentence is not to identify Karim, but describe him according to a category to which he belongs.

karim malim xæst

Karim teacher **be**

‘Karim **is** a teacher.’

The next sentence shows the plural form:

if sank -t dajro -i lap -ik or
this stone -P river -GEN bank -3S.Poss **3P.are**

These rocks are at the edge of the river. (literally: 'These stones **are** the river bank's')

2.3 Attribution

The copula *xæst* 'be' is used to indicate attribution, as shown in the sentence below. The sentence describes a characteristic, length, of someone's beard.

av -i ri:fa van xæst
he -GEN beard long **be**

'His beard **is** long.'

The next example shows the plural form:

if sank -t darkor or
this stone -P Necessary they.are
'These rocks are necessary.'

2.4 Location

The copula *xæst* 'be' is used in clauses expressing location as shown in the two examples below:

man kat awoka xæst
I house there **be**
'My house **is** there.'

av -i kat yar -i sar -i xæst
he -GEN house mountain -GEN top -LOC **be**
'His house **is** on top the mountain.'

Locations that are predicates of copulas always have an *-i* suffix. The *-i* suffix appeared in the first sentence in this section. It did not appear in the sentence above since there is no location stated in that sentence. It is shown in bold in this sentence below for clarity:

man kat i: kuhiston -i xæst
I house a mountain.place **-LOC** be
'My house is **in** a mountainous region.'

But, the suffix *-i* is never used with pronouns or proper nouns. An example is shown in the sentence below.

man kat jaynob xæst
I house Yaghnob be
'My house is in Yaghnob.'

The next example shows the plural form.

aw kat -i yaik -t or
that.GEN house -LOC daughter -P they.are
'There are girls in that house.'

Location expressed by possession

Another way of expressing location is as a possession of a place as can be seen in the following sentence. Notice that in this form of locative copular clause the possessor (location) comes first. Contrast this with the locative copular clauses above in which the person or thing being described precedes the location.

diræxt -i tæk -i tiloh æst
tree -GEN under -GEN gold **has**
There is gold under the tree. (literally: 'The underside of the tree **has** gold.')

The following question and answer give another pair of examples of location expressed as possession.

dəvar -i tfo tfizi -t -i æst
outside -GEN what thing -P -QTY **have**

‘What things are outside?’ (literally: ‘What does the outside **have**?’)

xur æst, mahtob æst, urk æst, xirs æst, yov æst, asp æst

sun is moon is wolf is bear is cow is horse is

‘there is the moon, there is the sun, there is the bear, there is the cow, there is the horse’

2.5 Existence

xudo æst

God is

‘God **exists**.’

2.6 Possession

av -i rifa æst

he -GEN beard **have**

‘He **has** a beard.’

karim -i i: farbeh sutur æst

Karim -NOM one fat sheep **have**

‘Karim **has** a fat sheep.’

man kitob æst

I book **have**

‘I **have** a book.’

Plural form of the copula in possessive clauses

man tiraj virot -i æst

I three younger.brother -QTY **have**

‘I **have** three younger brothers.’

Case marking in possessive copular clauses

Possessors in copular clauses are marked with the *-i* suffix:

Safar -i kat æst

Safar **-GEN** house have

‘Safar has a house.’

As in all other instances of case marking with the *-i* suffix, it does not appear on first and second person pronouns. This can be seen on the first example in this section