Recent developments in Semitic and Afroasiatic linguistics
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2. The finite–infinite dichotomy in a comparative Semitic perspective
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Abstract

A clear-cut dichotomy between the categories "finite" and "infinite" in the verbal realm is problematic in linguistics in general (cf. Nikolaeva 2007) and in Semitic linguistics in particular – notably in connection with the Akkadian stative/verbal adjective and the conjugated noun in predicative position as well as the Ethio-Semitic converb/gerund. Already the term "verbal noun" (in Arabic: *maṣdar*) points to this inherent categorial ambiguity. What is more, in many (Semitic and other) languages, verbal nouns and infinitives can pragmatically adopt a "finite" function, notably as imperatives. Last but not least, the first element in serial verb constructions tends to lose the morphological features associated with finiteness and to be grammaticalized as an adverb. The same holds for Amharic converbs that are frozen in the third person singular masculine and function synchronically as adverbs. All this will be considered in a comparative Semitic perspective, taking into account data mainly from Akkadian, Arabic, and Ethio-Semitic.

1 Introduction

A clear-cut dichotomy between the categories "finite" and "infinite" in the verbal realm is problematic in linguistics in general (cf. NIKOLAEVA 2007) and in Semitic linguistics in particular. The grammatical terminology in Semitic linguistics bears testimony to this circumstance. What traditionally has been referred to as the "stative" (or: "permansive") paradigm in Akkadian grammar has been more recently called the "[conjugated] verbal adjective" and even the "conjugated noun" in predicative position, notably in the scholarship of J. HUEHNERGARD. The very term "verbal noun" (in Arabic: *maṣdar*, literally meaning "origin") points to this inherent categorial ambiguity as well. The Ethio-Semitic converb/gerund[1], which diachronically is related to a verbal noun, is a central point in case here. Functional opaqueness in this context is not restricted to the morphological surface of the respective verb forms but is also found on a semantic and especially pragmatic level. In many (Semitic and other) languages, infinitives can pragmatically adopt a "finite" function, notably when functioning as imperatives, e.g., Modern Hebrew *li-sgor ʾet ha-delet* (to-close:INF ACC DEF-door 'to close the door' (i.e. 'close the door!') or

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1   For a thorough discussion of this term, cf. SHISHA-HALEVY 2009.

German *rechts stehen, links gehen* (right stand:INF, left stand:INF) 'stand on the right side, go on the left side!' on many escalators. Incidentally, one also finds far-reaching morphological overlap throughout the *biyanim* (verbal diatheses) between the unmarked form of the imperative (2SG.M) and the infinitive in the Hebrew verbal system.

As an especially interesting feature, one can observe a transition from finiteness to infiniteness, or "de-finitization" ("deranking" in the linguistic literature)of verb forms in certain syntactic contexts. Amharic converbs can be frozen in the third person singular masculine and then function synchronically as adverbs. In other branches of Semitic, the first element in serial verb constructions tends to lose the morphological features associated with finiteness and to be grammaticalized as an adverb.

This paper will consider these features in a comparative Semitic and (at least marginally in an) Afroasiatic perspective, taking into account data mainly from Akkadian, Northwest Semitic, Arabic, and Ethio-Semitic, but also from Cushitic and Omotic languages.

2   Comparative Semitic data (conjugated verbal nouns)

In a historical perspective, the Akkadian stative is the most obvious case of obfuscation between the poles infinite and finite. The term "verbal adjective", as used by J. HUEHNERGARD, underscores this opacity. Indeed, HUEHNERGARD (2005: 614) subsumes the "Vbl. Adj. [vernal adjecive] + Pron. Subj. [pronominal subject]" under the category "Non-Finite Forms". As is well known, not only (verbal) adjectives, but also common nouns can undergo inflection, e.g., *šarrāku* 'I am king' from *šarru(m)* 'king' (comparable to a regular stative as, e.g., *marṣāku* 'I am ill'). Here is the paradigm, based on synchronically underlying /paris/ ("he is in the state of deviding"), belonging to the root √p-r-s 'to divide' (1):

(1) Paradigm of the verbal adjective / stative in Akkadian

3SG.M	*paris*
3SG.F	*parsat*
2SG.M	*parsāta*
2SG.F	*parsāti*
1SG.C	*parsāku*

3PL.M   *parsū*

3PL.F   *parsā*

2PL.M   *parsātunu*

2PL.F   *parsātina*

1PL.C   *parsānu*

Not only infinitives, but also participles, have emerged as the base of finite conjugations. The best-known examples are found in the history of Aramaic. In modern North-Western and North-Eastern Aramaic, one finds, among other forms, a present tense based on the historical active participle and a (typically) ergative past tense based on the historical passive participle. In Ṭuroyo, a modern Eastern Aramaic language, the so-called "predicate" (i.e. non-ergative) inflection looks as follows, based on the root √g-r-š 'to pull'.[2] The first column reflects the inflectional base /$C_1oC_2eC_3$/ (active = present: "he is pulling") and the second column the inflectional base /$C_1C_2iC_3$/ (passive = resultative past: "he is (being) pulled") (2):

(2) Participle-based paradigms in Ṭuroyo

	PRS	PST
3SG.M	*gorəš*	*griš*
3SG.F	*goršo*	*grišo*
2SG.M	*gəršət*	*grišət*
2SG.F	*gəršat*	*grišat*
1SG.M	*gorašno*	*grəšno*
1SG.F	*gəršono*	*grišono*
3PL.C	*gərši*	*griši*
2PL.C	*gəršutu*	*grišutu*
1PL.C	*gəršina*	*grišina*

Even more idiomatic in modern Aramaic is the expression of past tense by means of an outright ergative paradigm, e.g., Ṭuroyo *grəš-l-i* 'I pulled [him]' (= "[he] is pulled to me").

Comparable to the scenario in Akkadian, both nouns and adjectives can be followed by clitic pronouns already in Classical Syriac Aramaic, e.g. (cf. RUBIN 2005: 31f.) (3):

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2   Cf., e.g., JASTROW 2011: 701ff.

(3) Clitic pronouns in Classical Syriac

wə-ʾena	*ʿap̄rā*	*(ʾ)nā*	'And I am dust' (Gen. 18:27)
CONJ-I	dust	I	

ʾāmar	*(ʾ)nā*	*lə-ḵōn*	'I say to you' (Matt. 3:9)
saying	I	to-you:PL.M	

The original bound orthography in these cases actually supports the analysis of these examples in terms of a cliticization process.

On a science-historical note it is interesting to observe that native Arab grammar views not only pronominal (object and possessive) suffixes but also inflectional morphemes (or: "actor affixes") of the various conjugations as *ḍamāʾir muttaṣila* 'bound pronouns', as opposed to *ḍamāʾir munfaṣila* 'separate(d) [i.e. independent] pronouns'. This is entirely in line with modern descriptions, e.g., in LIPIŃSKI 2001: 367: "While the actor affixes of the suffix-conjugations go back basically to a form of pronominal suffixes of the noun, the prefixed personals are survivals of pronouns once separate, but later agglutinated to the verbal base."[3] In a comparative Afroasiatic perspective, this analysis is supported by the scenario in Chadic, e.g., Hausa, where one finds forms (all based on *zaunā* `'sit') such as *tā zaunā`* 'she sat', *zā tà zaunā`* 'she will sit', *takàn zaunā`* 'she habitually sits', *bà tà zaunā` ba* 'she didn't sit', *kadà tà zaunā`* 'she shouldn't sit', etc. (cf. NEWMAN 2007: 695).

3 Converb (gerundial) constructions in Ethio-Semitic

The obvious Semitic example that supports a scenario of continuity (as opposed to dichotomy) between "finiteness" and "infiniteness" is the Ethio-Semitic converb. Let us first have a look at the morphological situation, juxtaposing Gəʿəz and Amharic (cf. also HETZRON 1972: 101) (4).

(4) The converb/gerund in Gəʿəz and Amharic

	Gəʿəz (type A)		Amharic (type A)	
3SG.M	ነጊሮ	*nägir-o*	ነግሮ	*nägro*
3SG.F	ነጊራ	*nägir-a*	ነግራ	*nägra*
2SG.M	ነጊረክ	*nägirä-kä*	ነግረህ	*nägräh*

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3 For an in-depth historical analysis of this problem cf. DIEM 1997 (with a tentative reconstruction of an "Ursemitisch" suffix conjugation on p. 72).

2SG.F	ነጊረኪ	*nägirä-ki*	ነገረሽ	*nägräš*
1SG.C	ነጊርየ	*nägir-əyyä*	ነገሬ	*nägərre*
3PL.M	ነጊሮሙ	*nägir-omu*	ነገረው	*nägräw*
3PL.F	ነጊሮን	*nägir-on*	"	
2PL.M	ነጊረክሙ	*nägirä-kəmu*	ነገራችሁ	*nägraččəhu*
2PL.F	ነጊረክን	*nägirä-kən*	"	
1PL.C	ነጊረነ	*nägirä-nä*	ነገርን	*nägrän*

In Gəʿəz, there is no doubt that the converb can be analyzed as a verbal noun in the adverbial accusative (or better: the dependent case), followed by possessive suffixes, as clearly evidenced by the forms of the second person.[4] In Amharic, the situation is more complicated. While LESLAU (1995: 55) analyzes the Amharic converb forms on as being formed on the base /C_1ä$C_2$$C_3$ä/, DIEM (2012) argues that this analysis only holds diachronically, for the two following reasons:

(a) there are too many differences between the Amharic converb endings and the Amharic possessive suffixes; and

(b) contrary to the scenario in Gəʿəz, the Amharic converb can take object suffixes that otherwise are restricted to the finite verb forms (and subordinate . The following examples illustrate this situation. An important observation in this context is that the modern Amharic verbal noun cannot take any object suffixes as illustrated in (5):

(5) Object suffixes on Amharic verb forms
አዩት

ayyu-t
see:PRF.3PL-him
'they saw him'

አይተውት ሄዱ

aytäw-t   *hedu*
see:CVB.3PL-him.OBJ   go:PRF.3SG.M
'having seen him they went away'

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4   Cf. DILLMANN 1899: § 189, KAPELIUK 1997: 493, WENINGER 2011: 1131, and DIEM to appear: 111. TROPPER (2002: 207) and RUBIN (2005: 32f.) refer to the Old-Ethiopic gerund as a "perfective participle" (so already LAMBDIN 1978: 140f.).

*ማየታቸትን አውቃለሁ

*mayät-aččäw-t-ən   awqallähu
see:INF-them-him-ACC   know:IPF.1SG
"they having seen him I know" = 'I know that they saw him'

The circumstance that the modern Amharic converb can take object suffixes, in contrast to the infinitive supports the contention to posit a continuum between the poles "finite" and "infinite", with the converb figuring somewhere in the middle. In other words, it is legitimate to consider the Amharic converb paradigm a grammaticalized verbal paradigm (ZABORSKI 2005: 24).

Concerning the functions of the Amharic converb, HETZRON (1972) identified three major possibilities: consecutive, serial, and coextensive.[5] In the following, I will give a survey of these functions and show that one can reasonably speak of a functional directionality or hierarchy from a sequence of events to adverbial simultaneousness. Indeed, one can argue that many adverbs in Amharic constitute frozen or grammaticalized converbs.

The following example (6) illustrates a clear sequence of events, without any temporal overlap:

(6) Sequence of events in Amharic
ታክሲ ጠርተው ተሳፍረው ከጥቂት ጊዜ በኋላ ምግብ ቤት ይደርሳሉ

taksi	*ṭärtäw*	*täsaffəräw*	*kä-ṭəqit gize*	*bä-hʷala*	*məgəb*	*bet*
taxi	call:CVB.3PL	get.in:CVB.3PL	of-littletime	after	food	house

yədärsallu
arrive:IPF.3PL
'they call a taxi, get in, and after a while they arrive at the restaurant'
("having called, a taxi, having gotten in, …")

The next group of examples (7) illustrate a close sequence of events, with possible temporal overlap:

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5   One reviewer points out that MOTOMICHI (2001) argues against this. According to him, converbs with a simultaneous reading are basically identical to consecutive converbs in clause-chaining function. The only difference between them is the verb semantics, i.e., it seems that a simultaneous reading only occurs with non-telic converbs and converbs denoting a specific manner of motion but not with telic converbs.

(7) Close sequence of events in Amharic with temporal overlap

ገብቶ ተቀመጠ

gäbto   *täqämmäṭä*

come.in:CVB.3SG.M   sit.down:PRF.3SG.M

'he came in and sat down' ("[he] coming in he sat down")

በሩን ከፍታ ትገባለች

bärr-u-n   *käfta*   *təgäballäčč*

door-DEF-ACC   open:CVB.3SG.F   go.in:IPF.3SG.F

'she opens the door and goes in' ("[she] opening the door she goes in")

ሥራዬን ጨርሼ እተኛለሁ

səra-ye-n   *čärrəšše*   *ətäññalläh^w*

work-my-ACC   finish:CVB.1SG   go.to.bed:IPF.1SG

'I will finish my work and go to bed' ("[I] finishing my work I go to bed")

ቀሚስ መርጠሽ ግዢላት

qämis *märṭäš*   *gəži-ll-at*

shirt   choose:CVB.2SG.F   buy:IMP.SG.F-for-her

'choose (sg.f.) a shirt and buy (sg.f.) it for her!'

("[you (sg.f.)] choosing a shirt buy it for her!")

ነገ ደውዬ ልንገርህ

nägä   *däwwəyye*   *ləngär-əh*

tomorrow phone:CVB.1SG tell:JUSS.1SG-you:SG.M

'let me call and tell you tomorrow' ("[I] calling let me tell you tomorrow")

The next group of examples (8) demonstrates the transition to coincidental events, the first of which may reflect a state of affairs:

(8) Coincidence in Amharic

ልጁ ሮጦ ገባ

ləǧǧ-u   *roṭo*   *gäbba*

child-def   run:CVB.3SG.M   come.in:PRF.3SG.M

'the boy came in [he] running'

ቤት ተመልሰን ደረስን

bet   tämälləsän   därräsən

house arrive:CVB.1PL   arrive:PRF.1PL

'we arrived back home' ("we arrived [we] returning home")

Going even one step further towards grammaticalization, the converb may constitute an element that would correspond to an adverb in a European language, as in the following examples (9):

(9) Adverbial use (manner) of the converb in Amharic
ደክሞ ወደቀ

däkmo   wäddäqä

be.exhausted:CVB.3SG.M   fall:PRF.3SG.M

'he fell exhausted' ("[he] being exhausted he fell")

አርፈህ ቁጭ በል

arfäh   quč̣č̣   bäl

be.quiet:CVB.2SG.M   sit.COMPLEX   say:IMP.SG.M

'sit (sg.m.) quietly!' ("[you (sg.m.] being quiet sit!")

(*quč̣č̣ alä* is a so-called "complex predicate" (or compound verb) in Amharic)

In the examples cited so far, the converb always agrees in person, number, and gender with the subject of the clause-final main verb. In the following group of examples (10), the situation is more complicated. In (10a), agreement still obtains. In (10b), however, the converb is frozen in the 3rd singular masculine, irrespective of gender and number of the clause-final verb:

(10) Lexicalized converbs (typically translated as adverb) in Amharic
(10a) with agreement
አብረን እንመጣለን

abrän   ənnəmäṭallän

be.together:CVB.1PL   come:IPF.1PL

'we will come together' ("[we] being together we will come")

ወረቀቱን ይዞ መጣ

wäräqät-u-n   *yəzo*   *mäṭṭa*

paper-def-acc   take:CVB.3SG.M   come:PRF.3SG.M

'he brought the paper' ("[he] taking the paper he came ")

እንደዚህ አድርገው ገደሉት

əndäzzih   *adrəgäw*   *gäddälu-t*

like.this   do:CVB.3PL   kill:PRF.3PL-him

'they killed him like this' ("like this doing they killed him")

(10b) without agreement

ፈጽሞ አጠፋችው

fäṣṣəmo   *aṭäffačč-əw*

complete:CVB.3SG.M   destroy:PRF.3SG.F-him/it

'she completely destroyed it' ("[he] having completed she destroyed it")

4   The converb in a comparative Semitic perspective

Concerning the distribution of the converb construction in a broader Semitic scenario, there exist at least two positions. Some authors have tried to find traces of the construction in Northwest Semitic and other branches of Semitic (e.g., ZABORSKI 2005: 24). The following examples (11) from LIPIŃSKI 2001: 427 are reproduced here without explicit endorsement. The relevant parts for the discussion at hand are the infinitive clauses (for recent discussion, cf. also LIPIŃSKI 2010):

(11) Converb-like constructions in Northwest Semitic

Biblical Hebrew:

wa-yhī   *ka-hărīm-ī*   *qōl-ī*   *wā-ʾeqrāʾ*

CONJ-be:PRET.3SG.M   as-lift:INF-my   voice-my   CONJ-cry:IPF.1SG

'lifting up my voice I cried' (Gen. 39:18)

Phoenician:

pʕl   *ʾnk* … *l-rbt-y*   … *w-šmʕ*   *ql*

make:inf   I   … to-lady-my   … CONJ-hear:3SG.F   voice(-my)

'I having made (this) … for my Lady …, she heard my voice'

It is noteworthy that these constructions are not strictly asyndetic like the Amharic converbial constructions; rather, the conjunction *w-* is intervening in both of them.[6]

ZABORSKI (2005: 24) argues that there is no principal difference between Arabic *baʿda ruǧūʿi-ka* (after return:VN:GEN-you:M.SG) 'after your return' and *baʿda mā raǧaʿta* (after what return:PRF.2SG.M) 'after you returned', pointing out that only the first construction has not been grammaticalized in Arabic (as opposed to the scenario in Akkadian and Ethio-Semitic). KAPELIUK (1997: 497) cites an older attempt by J. MONTGOMERY (1928) to relate the Ethio-Semitic gerund to the Akkadian stative, as also suggested by HETZRON (1972: 100), but this attempt has in general been refuted (e.g., by D. COHEN (1984)). Personally, I cannot subscribe to ZABORSKI's endeavor to reconstruct the conjugated converb to "Proto-Semitic" as an additional type of suffix conjugation, in line with the principle of "archaic heterogeneity". Rather, historically infinite forms can develop towards finite forms throughout historical time, as also happened in the history of Aramaic, where whole new paradigms emerged as the result of affixation of personal suffixes to active and passive participle forms.

In contrast to this position, HETZRON (1975) sees the use of the gerund as an exclusively Ethio-Semitic feature:

"A number of features common to all the Ethiopian Semitic languages but not found elsewhere in Semitic are probably all due to the early influence of Cushitic and argue for monogenesis … Some features are not found in all the languages, but they are found in representatives of each branch while not in the closest relatives of these. Such a feature is the use, employing a Semitic form according to a Cushitic pattern (i.e. calqued on Cushitic), of the converb (gerund) instead of sentence coordination. The converbial constructions are common in all the Ethiopian Semitic languages and were already so in Geʾez, but the original converbial forms (based on the Semitic pattern *säbir(ä)-*) are found today (in addition to Geʾez) in Tigrinya, (but not in Tigre), Amharic, Argobba and, with a limited application, in central and western Gurage (with a modified pattern *sibirtä-*) and Gafat."

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6   For an apparently comparable case in Sabaic, cf. KAPELIUK 1997: 492.

5   The converb in a comparative Afroasiatic perspective

As already emerged from the quotation by HETZRON (1975) cited above, the pervasive use of the converb construction is an areal feature in the historical core region of Afroasiatic, encompassing Cushitic and Omotic within Afroasiatic in addition to other non-Afroasiatic language families such as Nilo-Saharan. Regarding the situation in Cushitic, APPLEYARD (2012: 210f.) summarizes as follows:

"All Cushitic languages essentially follow an SOV word order. In complex sentences the main verb is usually final and subordinate clauses precede, each with internal SOV order. Most languages have rich clause-chaining mechanisms, and many have a specific converb form, sometimes called a gerundive, for this purpose, whilst others have different kinds of linking or coordinating devices, for instance involving lengthening of the terminal vowel of the clause-final verb. More specific types of adverbial relations may be indicated by conjunction-like particles, which in some languages may be clause-initial and in others take the form of suffixes added to the verb. This latter device often requires adding this suffix particle to a special form of the verb, different from the main-verb forms, and in some languages has developed through fusion into an extensive range of adverbial subordinate paradigms, such as conditional, temporal, causal, final or complemental forms."

Here in example (12) are two sample paradigms of the converb in Cushitic (Bilin and Sidaama) (cf. APPLEYARD 2012: 230 and YRI 2012: 268):

(12) Converbs in Cushitic (Bilin *geb* 'refuse' and Sidaama *ros-* 'learn')

	Bilin	Sidaama
1SG	*geb-o*	*ros-e*
2SG	*geb-ro*	*ros-te*
3SG.M	*geb-o*	*ros-e*
3SG.F	*geb-ro*	*ros-te*
1PL	*geb-no*	*ros-ne*
2PL	*geb-deno*	*ros-tine*
3PL	*geb-no*	*ros-te*

The following two example sentences (13), drawing on the same two Cushitic languages Bilin and Sidaama, illustrate the functional variety (consecutiveness) of the Cushitic converb (cf. APPLEYARD 2012: 231 and YRI 2012: 270):

(13) Examples of converb construction in Cushitic
Bilin:

jəxrana	*kʷal-gəri=lom*	*səkʷər-dɛ*	*sɛna*
guinea.fowl	see-3SG.F.NEG.CVB=them	approach-3SG.F.CVB	as

təxʷla	*wɛlɛyd-o*	*ʔɛntʼɛr*	*y-o*	*šax-əxʷ=la.*
wolf	be.quick-3SG.M.CVB	jump	say-3SG.M.CVB	seize-3M.PST=her

'As a guinea fowl drew near without seeing them, the wolf leapt up quickly and caught her.'

Sidaama:[7]

heeɗ-ɗé	*heeɗ-ɗé*	*y-itú*	*geden-s-áá-nni*
stay-CVB.3T	stay-CVB.3T	say-PFV.3T	be.later-CAUS-INF.OBL.U-ABL

mereer-ó-nsa	*gíbb-o*	*kalakʼ-an-tannó.*
middle-ACC-their	quarrel-NOM	create-PASS-IPF.3T

'After they had stayed together for a long time, a quarrel arose between them.'

Similar constructions are also found in the Omotic branch of Afroasiatic, e.g., in Wolaitta (cf. AZEB and DIMMENDAAL 2006: 96ff.) (14):

(14) A converb construction in Omotic

polísee	*mint-í*	*ʔoicc-ín*
police.DEF:NOM	strong:CAUS-CVB	ask-DIFFSUB:CVB

kaisóy	*miʃʃáa*	*kʼott-ído*
thief.M:NOM	money.M:CVB	exist.PRF:REL

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7   "T" in the interlinear transcription marks a certain noun class in Sidaama; "U" stands for "unmodified".

sohuwa	*bess-í*	*g-iisi*
place.M:ACC	show-M:CVB	say-3SG.M:PRF

'After the police interrogated him thoroughly, the thief showed them where he had hidden the money.'

6 "Verbal *hendiadys*"/serial verb constructions in Semitic

In a further step, I will have a closer look at such coordinated structures (both ones joined by a conjunction and asyndetic ones) that have been labeled in the literature "verbal *hendiadys*".[8] Properly speaking, this term "hendiadys" is less than fortunate here as it mostly refers to either nouns or verbs *on a par* that can be understood (or translated) as a complex unit, e.g., Hebrew *tōhū wā-ḇōhū* ("deserted and empty") (Gen 1:2) or *haṣlāḥā(h) ū-ḇrāḵā(h)* "success and blessing" (a wish known in German in the distorted form "Hals- und Beinbruch"). However, and especially in the verbal realm, the term has also been understood as referring to such structures where the first element is subordinated to or modifying the second element, e.g., recently by CHRZANOWSKI (2011). There is not yet consensus among Semiti(ci)sts on whether the term "serial verb(s)" is appropriate in this context, since it is sometimes the second verb in such constructions (other than Semitic) that is semantically restricted.[9] While WOIDICH (2002) rejects the term for this reason (as applying to Arabic), VERSTEEGH (2003–2005; 2009) explicitly supports it. Here, only such examples will be considered where the two verbs agree in tense and mood. These verbal constructions often semantically resemble "complex predicates" (or "compound verbs"), in which the first verb is usually semantically primary, with the second verb (also called "vector verb" or "explicator verb") providing fine distinctions as well as TAM markers, a definition that as a rule works well for Afroasiatic. One finds coordinated constructions joined by a conjunction (syndetic), typically enclitic *-ma,* as well as asyndetic constructions of this type. To begin with Akkadian, syndetic examples are the following (cf. HUEHNERGARD 2005: 125.f.) (15):

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8   Within Assyriology, cf. notably KRAUS 1987, BUCCELLATI 1996: 377–340, WASSERMAN 2003: 17-28, and HUEHNERGARD 2005: 125f.

9   Cf. the contributions in JOSEPH and ZWICKY (eds.) 1990.

(15) Syndetic "verbal *hendiadys*"/serial verb constructions in Akkadian

atūr-ma   *wardam*   *ana*   *bēli-ya*   *aṭrud*
return:PRET.1SG-CONJ   slave:ACC   to   lord:GEN-my   send:PRET.1SG
'I sent the slave to my lord again'

Examples with an asyndetic juncture include the following (cf. WASSERMAN 2003: 19f.) (16):

(16) Asyndetic "verbal *hendiadys*"/serial verb constructions in Akkadian

šutebrī   *šululī*   *ina ibrātim*
remain:IPT.SG.F   rejoice:IPT.SG.F   in   shrines
'Keep on rejoicing in the shrines!'

WASSERMAN (2003: 19-24) identifies the following semantic features of the verbal *hendiadys*/serial verb construction in this context: (i) duration of action (imperfective – durative/habitative); (ii) repetition of action (imperfective – iterative); (iii) execution of action: speed, total fulfillment (perfective – punctual/terminative); (iv) scope and extent of action: excessiveness; (v) motivation of agent towards action: willingness or capability; and (vi) multiple action. A typical litmus-test for the status of "verbal *hendiadys*" obviously consists in replacing the first verb in such constructions by an adverb in a European translation.

Comparable constructions are also attested in Biblical Hebrew (cf., e.g., GKC § 120). First, here are syndetic examples (17):

(17) Syndetic "verbal *hendiadys*"/serial verb constructions in Biblical Hebrew

way-yāšūḇū   *way-yiḇkū*   *gam*   *bənē*   *yiśrāʾēl*
CONJ-return:PRET.3PL.M   CONJ-cry:PRET.3PL.M   also   children:of   Israel
'And the Israelites wept again' (Num. 11:4)

way-yōseḇ   *ʾaḇrāhām*   *way-yiqqaḥ*   *ʾiššā(h)*
CONJ-add:PRET.3SG.M   Abraham   CONJ-take:PRET.3SG.M   wife
'And Abraham took once again a wife' (Gen. 25:1)

Asyndetic examples are also attested, mainly chains of imperatives (18):

(18) Asyndetic "verbal *hendiadys*"/serial verb constructions in Biblical Hebrew

šūḇ   *šəḵāḇ*
return:IMP.SG.M   lie.down:IMP.SG.M
'Lie down again!' (1 Sam. 3:5)

In Arabic dialects, one also encounters several construction types, where two verbs in the same tense are juxtaposed, e.g. (19):

(19)   Asyndetic "verbal *hendiadys*"/serial verb constructions in Arabic dialects

rigiʿ   *hirib*   *tāni*   'He fled a second time'
return:PRF.3SG.M   flee:PRF.3SG.M   second.time
(WOIDICH 2002: 128)

While FISCHER (2002) in this context argues for an underlying X_{PRF} wa-Y_{PRF} structure, WOIDICH (2002) prefers an explanation in terms of analogy to asyndetic X_{PRF} Y_{IPF} structures in Arabic, e.g., *ğāʾa yaḍḥaku* 'he came laughing' ("he came he laughs").

In this context, VERSTEEGH (2009) distinguishes three kinds of verbs in the first position: (i) verbs expressing *Aktionsart* (as in *rigiʿ* he returned' above); (ii) verbs expressing motion or posture (e.g., *ʾām* 'he got up'; *rāḥ* 'he went away', the latter also in second position, i.e. according to the classical definition of "serial verbs"); and (iii) certain other fixed expressions. The second kind is especially interesting for our purposes, as the verb *ʾām* 'he got up' in first position can be frozen in the 3rd person masculine singular.[10] This amounts to a process of grammaticalization (or: "deranking") towards a non-inflected (or: "de-finitized") particle ("then"). Cf. the following example (20):

(20) Grammaticalization of *qāma* in Arabic dialects

ʾām   *inta*   *ʿamalti*   *ʾē*   'What did you do?'
then   you:SG.M   do:PRF.2SG.M   what
(WOIDICH 2002: 148)

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10   Regarding this phenomenon, cf. also PIAMENTA 2002.

ʾām   ʾəžət-na   sayyāra   'Then, a car came toward us'
then   come:PRF.3SG.F-us   car

Middle Arabic texts already feature similar constructions with *qāma*, albeit with full agreement (21):

(21) Middle Arabic construction with *qāma*

qāmū   *taqātalū*   'They began to fight with each other'
get.up:PRF.3SG.M   fight:PRF.3SG.M

In grammaticalized form, the phonologically reduced verb *qām* is also attested as a verbal prefix in the history of the Aramaic verbal paradigms (cf. RUBIN 2005: 130-133).

In a comparable diachronic process, the verb *qad(d)ama* 'to precede' was reduced to the particle *qad* in Classical Arabic, indicating anteriority. Rubin (2005: 33) speaks explicitly of an underlying verbal *hendiadys* construction, as in, e.g. (22):

(22) *qad* + perfect in Classical Arabic

qad   *māta*   'He has/had died'
ANT   die:PRF.3SG.M

Interestingly, RUBIN adduces comparative evidence from Gəˤəz to underscore the validity of this etymological derivation (23):

(23) The verb *ʾaqdämä* in Gəˤəz
አቅደምኩ ወነገርኩክሙ

ʾaqdämku   *wa-nägärku-kəmu*   'I told you beforehand' (1 Thess 3:4)
'precede:PRF.1SG   CONJ-tell:PRF.1SG.-you:PL.M

7   Conclusion: the relationship between converbs and serial verbs

While "converb" and "serial verb", as initially stated, do by no means denote the same thing, there is a clearly a certain amount of functional overlap. In this context, it is important to distinguish between productively serializing languages (e.g., certan West African languages) and languages that have a limited number of serial constructions like in German and several Afrioasiatic languages mentioned in the present paper, in which two or more contiguous

finite verbs express a single event. Both types of constructions allow for the expression of logically subordinate events or the expression of notions that would typically be rendered by adverbs in European languages. And in both types can one observe the loss of inflection (or, if one so pleases, finiteness) by means of a process of grammaticalization towards an adverb (converb) and towards a particle (serial verb), respectively. In this context, the functioning of the Ethio-Semitic converb is fascinating insofar as the semantically relatied gerund in its classical definition designates an infinite verb form.

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