

NOMINAL TENSE WITH NOMINAL SCOPE: A PRELIMINARY SKETCH

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## Abstract

The morphosyntactic categories of tense, aspect and mood are traditionally considered to be properties of verbs. However, the morphological expression of these categories within the nominal system is attested across a range of languages. Drawing on data from a number of languages, we provide a preliminary sketch of the phenomenon of *nominal tense with nominal scope* - that is, cases in which nominal tense serves to temporally locate the nominal independent of the temporal specification of a governing predicate.

## 1 Types of Nominal Tense

Although the categories of tense, aspect and (to a lesser extent) mood are traditionally considered to be properties of verbs, the morphological expression of tense, aspect and/or mood (henceforth TAM) on nominals is attested across a range of languages. We distinguish two major subcases of nominal tense, that is, of cases in which TAM marking occurs on a nominal or other constituent of NP/DP.<sup>1</sup>

In some cases, a dependent nominal or nominal phrase (of whatever grammatical function) bears some TAM marking which serves to temporally, aspectually or modally specify the clausal predicate which is itself distinct from the nominal argument. This is illustrated by examples (1)-(2) in which the case marking of the dependent NPs changes to reflect the tense (future vs. nonfuture) of the clausal predicate:

- (1) *Ngamari-lu ngunytyi-ka ngali-nha mangarni-marru-nga-nha kathi-nha.*  
 mother-ERG give-PAST we.DU-ACC bone-having-GEN-ACC meat-ACC.  
 Mother gave us the doctor's meat. (Pitta Pitta (Australia), Blake 1987:60, ex. 4.12)
- (2) *Ngamari-ngu ngunytyi ngali-ku mangarni-marru-nga-ku kathi-ku.*  
 mother-NOM.FUT give we.DU-ACC.FUT bone-having-GEN-ACC.FUT meat-ACC.FUT.  
 Mother will give us the doctor's meat. (*op. cit.*, ex. 4.14)

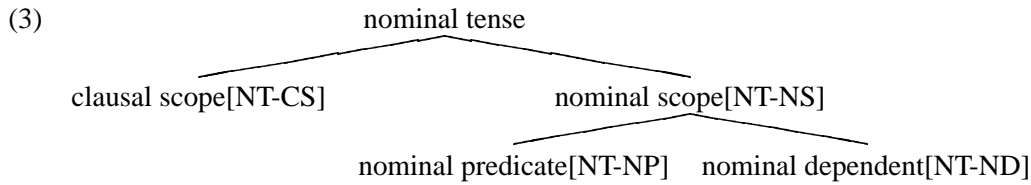
We refer to this as nominal tense with clausal scope (NT-CS for short). In Nordlinger and Sadler (2000) we discuss several cases of NT-CS, demonstrating that this phenomenon is well attested and showing how it can be simply analysed in LFG using inside out statements. Further work is needed to draw up a typology of exponence for NT-CS, and on the description of the interaction at the clausal level of nominally and verbally expressed clausal TAM features. We will have nothing more to say in the present paper about this phenomenon (but see Nordlinger and Sadler (in preparation)).

In other cases, the nominal tense has scope only over the nominal constituent itself, that is, is interpreted with respect to the nominal phrase (rather than the verb phrase). This paper is concerned with the phenomenon of nominal tense with nominal scope (NT-NS for short). Here two subcases are conceptually distinct. In what are sometimes called nominal sentences, the nominal itself is not an argument of a verbal predicate but serves as the main predicate of the proposition, without showing any signs of undergoing morphological derivation to form a verb (see, for example, 4.3 below). When such a nominal (or noun phrase) is tensed, we refer to this as nominal tense on nominal predicates (NT-NP for short). In many languages, subordinate 'clauses' often involve the use of predicates which are transparently nominal in category but which bear TAM marking, and this is another situation in which NT-NP is attested (Koptjevskaya-Tamm 1993). Although we exemplify both these sorts of construction briefly below, for reasons of space we will concentrate mainly in this paper

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<sup>1</sup>For ease of exposition, we use the term **nominal tense** throughout to refer to TAM marking on nominal elements. Throughout this paper we interpret nominal tense to mean nominal tense with nominal scope, in the sense to be defined below.

on the second subcase. Here tense is marked on a *dependent*<sup>2</sup> nominal and serves to temporally locate that nominal *independent of the temporal specification of the governing predicate*. We can refer to this as nominal tense on a nominal dependent (NT-ND for short). Most of the data in this paper exemplifies this phenomenon. The distinctions between cases of nominal tense outlined above can be summarised in the the following diagram:



The phenomenon of NT-NS raises a number of interesting questions. **Morphosyntactically**, it seems that we need to accommodate TAM features associated with *nominal* morphological and syntactic structures. This runs counter to the view that features are strictly typed into “nominal” and “verbal” features. The data shows that morphological tense on nominals is syntactically active. **Semantically**, quantificational and referential approaches to the semantics make different predictions as to the temporal location of nominal arguments: in quantificational approaches the temporal location associated with the event has scope also over the nominal argument while referential approaches (e.g. (Enc 1986)) allow in principle for events and arguments to be independently temporally located (for an insightful discussion of the temporal location of nominal arguments, see the dissertation by (Tonhauser 2000)). The data supports this latter view and also illustrates a full range of referential, deictic, anaphoric and discourse related interpretations.

As noted above, the existence of TAM marking on nominals has received very little attention to date. The present paper is basically descriptive in its aim, constituting a preliminary attempt to provide some sort of overview of the phenomenon of NT-NS by bringing together an illustrative (but not exhaustive) set of data.<sup>3</sup> We hope, in presenting this brief overview, to show that this phenomenon is much less marginal than the paucity of theoretical discussion in the literature might lead one to expect, and to provide the impetus for future theoretical work on the issue.

## 2 Nominal Tense Affixes in Tariana

Tariana is an Arawak language from north-west Amazonia, Brazil.<sup>4</sup> It is a polysynthetic language which combines head marking and dependent marking morphology. Nouns and verbs are heavily inflected, with both prefixing and suffixing, and upwards of 15 possible structural ‘positions’ may be identified in each. In Tariana, nouns can be inflected for either past or future tense, and the tense marking is interpreted with respect to the nominal predicate itself (the examples that we discuss are all cases of NT-ND). The occurrence of tense morphology on nominals is very widespread, indeed Aikhenvald reports that around 40% of nouns in texts are tense inflected. The nominal tense system is much simpler than that on verbs (which also involves evidentiality distinctions), and most of the forms are quite distinct from their verbal counterparts.

There is a single form for nominal future tense, *-pena*, which denotes that a predicate holds in the future, for

<sup>2</sup>As far as we can judge from the data we have seen so far, it is clear that nominal tense may occur on nominal arguments but it remains an open question whether it occurs also on nominal adjuncts, though we expect that it does.

<sup>3</sup>We thank members of the LINGTYP list for producing many useful leads and in particular Alexandra (Sasha) Aikhenvald, Brent Galloway, Bill Lewis and Tom Payne for access to unpublished data.

<sup>4</sup>The data provided is courtesy of Sasha Aikhenvald, and is taken from her forthcoming grammar *The Tariana language of Northwest Amazonia*, CUP (Aikhenvald’s numbering given in brackets throughout this section)

example: *wa-tfimatī-pena* (1PL-son.in.law-NOM.FUT) ‘our future son-in-law’, *pi-ya-dapana-pena* (2SG-POSS-house-NOM.FUT) ‘your future house’ and (4):<sup>5</sup>

- (4) *kayu-maka hī waripere unyane-pena di-kakwa-pidana*  
 so-AFF DEM:ANIM Walipere flood-NOM.FUT 3sg.NF-plan-REM.P.REP  
 Thus Walipere was planning the future flood. (ex. 9.4)

Nominal past tense has three forms: *miki-ri* for masculine singular nouns, *-miki-ru* for feminine singular nouns, and *-miki* for plural nouns. *-miki-* is used to refer to a previous state of the head noun (e.g. English ‘ex-’). It is used more with animates than inanimates, but possible with both, e.g. *correio-miki-ri* (post office-PST-NF) ‘old/former post office’; *du-sa-do-miki-ru* (3SG.NF-spouse-FEM-NOM.PST-FEM) ‘his late spouse’ and (5):

- (5) *thepi di-mare-pidena eta-miki-ri-nuku*  
 to.water 3SG.NF-throw.CAUS-REM.P.REP eagle-NOM.PST-NF-TOP.NON.A/S  
 He threw the remains of the eagle (lit. what used to be the eagle) into water. (ex. 9.15)

Clausal (that is, verbal) tense is marked in Tariana by floating tense/evidentiality clitics which attach to any focussed constituent in a clause. Naturally, it is possible for these clitics to attach to nominals, along with ‘real’ nominal tense as illustrated above. The clausal clitics in the following examples are glossed PRES.NONVIS ‘present nonvisible’ and PRES.VIS ‘present visible’.

- (6) *kayu-maka diha nawiki-nha ñamu na-nite*  
 so-AFF he person-PAUS evil.spirit 3PL.say-TOP.ADV+CL:ANIM  
*nawiki-miki-ri-mha*  
 person-NOM.PST-NF-PRES.NONVIS  
 So this man called evil spirit ñamu, he is the one who used to be a person (lit. he is an ex-person)  
 (ex. 9.10)
- (7) *pi-ya-dapana-pena-naka*  
 2SG-POSS-house-NOM.FUT-PRES.VIS  
 This is your future house (I can see it)
- (8) *pi-ya-dapana-miki-ri-naka*  
 2SG-POSS-house-NOM.PST-NF-PRES.VIS  
 This is what used to be your house (I can see it)

In the following example, a single nominalised form is marked for tense three times: a past verbform is nominalised, takes nominal past marking and then a clausal tense clitic:

- (9) *yatu ka-pusuku-kari-miki-ri-mha diha*  
 snuff REL-mix-PST.REL.NF-NOM.PST-NF-PRES.NONVIS he  
 He is the one who used to mix up snuff a long time ago (and he’s not doing it anymore). (ex. 9.20)

*-kari* refers to the fact that he used to mix the snuff before the moment of speech, *-miki-ri* refers to the fact that he has stopped doing so, and *-mha* is the clausal (present-nonvisual) tense/evidentiality marker.

<sup>5</sup>Non-obvious abbreviations in these examples include: AFF ‘affix’, CL.ANIM ‘animate classifier’, DEM.ANIM ‘demonstrative animate’, NF ‘non-feminine’, PAUS ‘pausal’, PRES.VIS ‘present visible’, REL ‘relative’, REM.P.REP ‘remote past reported’, TOP.ADV ‘topic advancement’, TOP.NON.A/S ‘topical non-subject clitic’.

### 3 Category Neutral Tense Affixes in Halkomelem

Our second example of nominal tense comes from Halkomelem, a Salish language spoken on the Northwest coast of North America (Burton 1997, Gerds 1988, Galloway 1993). This language is predicate-initial and head-marking. As in Tariana, nominals can be inflected with one of two tense markers: future tense, expressing ‘will be’, and past tense encoding meanings such as ‘former, -ex, late (dead)’. In contrast to Tariana, however, the same set of affixes mark tense on nominals and on verbal predicates, a point to which we return below. The following past tense examples are from Burton (1997:67), who discusses the various interpretations available for past tense nominals:<sup>6</sup>

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (10) <i>tel mál</i><br>my father                            | (12) <i>te sqwemá:y</i><br>the dog                         |
| (11) <i>tel má:l-elh</i><br>my father-PST<br>my late father | (13) <i>te sqwemá:y-elh</i><br>the dog-PST<br>the dead dog |

The ‘deceased’ reading exemplified above occurs only with animate nouns. When the noun refers to a non-cancellable (or ‘lifetime’) property such as ‘father’ or ‘dog’ (i.e. one cannot cease to be a father or a dog without ceasing to exist) then past tense animate nouns always have the deceased reading. When the noun refers to a cancellable property, however, Burton notes that an alternative reading of ‘former, -ex’ is possible (Burton 1997:74):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (14) <i>stó:les-elh</i><br>wife-PST<br>dead wife, ex-wife | (15) <i>siyó:ye-lh</i><br>friend-PST<br>dead friend, former friend |
|---|--|

When the past tense marker is used with a possessed inanimate noun, it marks the fact that the possession relation was in the past, or that the possessed item has been destroyed (Burton 1997:67-68):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (16) <i>tel xeltel-elh</i><br>my pencil-PST<br>my former pencil, used to be my pencil,<br>my destroyed pencil | (17) <i>tel pukw-elh</i><br>my book-PST<br>my former book, used to be my book,<br>my destroyed book |
|---|---|

In (18) the suffix *-elh* is attached to a pre-verbal auxiliary and marks clausal past tense, thus illustrating the fact that the same tense affix can attach indiscriminately to nouns and verbs. Clausal tense marking is not obligatory in Halkomelem; it is possible for the verb to remain uninflected for tense, in which case the tense of the clause is determined by contextual and pragmatic considerations (Burton 1997:68), as exemplified in (28) below.

- (18) *i-lh imex tel sí:le*  
AUX-PST walk my grandfather  
My grandfather walked.

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<sup>6</sup>For simplicity, these Halkomelem sentences are given in the established practical orthography. For information about the pronunciation of Halkomelem, and the IPA equivalent of each grapheme see Galloway (1993). Some of the interlinear glosses have also been simplified for ease of exposition. Again, the reader is referred to Galloway (1993) for further details.

A number of influential papers have argued that the Salish languages lack a distinction between the lexical categories, including the basic distinction between noun and verb (see e.g. (Jelinek and Demers 1994, Jelinek 1996)). In essence, on this view, the differentiation between “propositional” and “referring” syntactic categories comes about solely through the functional “shell”: basically, every lexical item projects an IP, which can itself be selected by a D, to form a DP. The most persuasive evidence for this analysis comes from inflectional morphology. For example, in St’át’incets any open class element can inflect with person/number subject markers to form clauses, as shown below:

- (19) *qwatsáts-kacw*  
leave-2SG.SUBJ  
You left/leave
- (20) *smúlatš-kacw*  
woman-2SG.SUBJ  
You are a woman
- (21) *xzúm-lhkacw*  
big-2SG.SUBJ  
You are big (Demirdache and Matthewson 1995:81)

and the definite past and future tense particles encliticize to the main predicate (the bracketting shown is that of (Demirdache and Matthewson 1995)).

- (22) [*qwatsáts- $\emptyset$  tu7*] [*kw-s Gertie*]  
leave-3ABS DEF.PAST DET-NOM Gertie  
Gertie left
- (23) [*qwatsáts- $\emptyset$  kelh*] [*kw-s Gertie*]  
leave-3ABS FUT DET-NOM Gertie  
Gertie will leave
- (24) [*plísmen- $\emptyset$  tu7*] [*kw-s Bill*]  
policeman-3ABS DEF.PAST DET-NOM Bill  
Bill was a policeman
- (25) [*plísmen- $\emptyset$  kelh*] [*kw-s Bill*]  
policeman-3ABS FUT DET-NOM Bill  
Bill will be a policeman
- (26) [*xzum- $\emptyset$  tu7*] [*ti s-géw’p-a*]  
big-3ABS DEF.PAST DET NOM-meet-DET  
The meeting was big
- (27) [*xzum- $\emptyset$  kelh*] [*ti s-géw’p-a*]  
big-3ABS FUT DET NOM-meet-DET  
The meeting will be big (Demirdache and Matthewson 1995:81-82)

On the category neutral view of Salish languages, there are no bare lexical projections, that is, no NPs and VPs, only IPs and DPs. This is naturally of importance to the phenomenon under discussion here since on this view (13) might be analysed as [<sub>DP</sub> the [<sub>IP</sub> PRO was dog]] “the one which was a dog”, with tense occurring not nominally but on the main predicate of the IP.

However, Demirdache and Matthewson (1995) provide evidence that the syntax of St’át’imcets requires reference to “bare” lexical projections (the categories AP and NP), and therefore evidence against the category neutral view. First they show that there is evidence for a head-final relative clause in which the head must be an uninflected noun (that is, having neither a determiner nor subject person/number inflections). They then show that the class of complex predicates in the language are predicate nominals (NPs), in which an AP modifies an NP in the structure  $[_{NP} AP NP]$ . This position is supported for Halkomelem by Galloway (1993) who argues on morphological and syntactic grounds for a distinction between nouns and verbs in Halkomelem: for example, affixes encoding possession and diminutives are possible only with nouns (verbs must first be nominalised), while only verbs may be inflected with subject and object pronominal affixes and valency-changing morphs (pp 238, 371-2). Accepting the force of these arguments against the category neutral view of Salish languages, we suggest that the Halkomelem examples discussed in this section are indeed cases of tense affixes occurring on nominals with nominal scope.

Despite the fact that they are encoded with the same morphological marker, clausal tense and nominal tense are completely independent categories in Halkomelem, and can vary independently of each other. In (28) and (29) a past-tense inflected nominal (with the deceased reading) co-occurs with clausal past time reference (non-overt in (28) and overt in (29)). But in (30) a past-tense nominal occurs in a future tense clause, indicating that nominal and clausal tense marking are distinct. Such examples establish that tense marking on nominals is semantically distinct from clausal tense, otherwise we would expect such cases of conflict in tense values to result in ungrammaticality.

- (28) *kw’étlexwes tel má:l-elh te sqwemá:y*  
 see my father-PST the dog  
 My (late) father saw the dog. (Burton 1997:68)

- (29) *éwe-lh kw’étslexw the-l sí:l-á:-lh*  
 NEG.be-PST see the(f)-my grandparent-PST  
 He didn’t see his late grandmother. (Brent Galloway, p.c.)

- (30) *El-’éliyemet-tsel-cha the-l sí:l-á:-lh*  
 RDP-dream.about-1SG.SUBJ-FUT the(f)-my grandparent-PST  
 I’ll be dreaming about my late grandmother. (Brent Galloway, p.c.)

To summarize, there is a single past tense morpheme for both verbs and nouns. With verbs and auxiliaries, it places the action in the past. With nouns, it identifies as past the time as which the referent of the NP had the property denoted by the noun, or, in the case of a possessive construction, the time at which the possessive relation held.

The role of future tense marking on nominals is rather different. In combination with the future suffix *-cha*, also used to mark future tense with verbs (see (30) above), the noun functions as a (future) stative predicate. In these cases, the tensed nominal constitutes the clausal predicate, and thus what we have here is a case of NT-NP.<sup>7</sup> The suffix *-s* in (32) functions to nominalize the following phrase so that it can be relativized.

- (31) *Swíyeqe-cha*  
 man-FUT  
 It will be a man.
- (32) *Swíyeqe-cha kw’-a’-s hákw’eles*  
 man-FUT the-your-NMZR remember  
 It will be a man that you remember.

<sup>7</sup>These examples are from Brent Galloway, p.c.

## 4 Nominal Tense and Possession in Hixkaryana

We turn now to our third example language, the Carib language Hixkaryana, spoken in Northern Brazil. This is a mixed ergative, head marking and polysynthetic language, again with very rich verbal morphology. The basic word order is OVS.

Hixkaryana illustrates a rather different situation in which tense marking in nominals is inextricably linked with possession. The tense suffixes are distinct from those used with verbal stems. The language has a set of nominal suffixes which express present, past and remote past possession, and deposal.<sup>8</sup> The choice of basic possessive suffix (expressing present possession) is lexically conditioned, with most nouns taking *-ri*, *-ni*, and other forms being *-ti*, *-tje*, *-ø*. The deposal suffix is *-nano*. The past possessive suffixes are *-thiri* (*-tshiri*), and *-tho* (*-tsho*) — the forms in parenthesis being phonologically conditioned allomorphs. Remote past possession is indicated by the suffixes *-nhiri* and *-nho*. Of these possessive suffixes, *-tho* and *-nho* occur with first person, first person exclusive and third person (with preceding NP) prefixes, and *-thiri* and *-nhiri* with the remaining person-marking prefixes.<sup>9</sup> The following examples are from Derbyshire (1979:98-99).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (33) <i>ro-kanawa-ri</i><br>1-canoe-POSSD<br>my canoe             | (35) <i>ow-ot-ti</i> ( <i>owoti</i> )<br>2-meat-POSSD<br>your meat         |
| (34) <i>ro-kanawa-tho</i><br>1-canoe-POSSD.PST<br>my former canoe | (36) <i>ow-wo-ti-thiri</i><br>2-meat-POSSD-PST<br>that which was your meat |
| (37) <i>i-he-tje</i><br>3-wife-POSSD<br>his wife                  | (39) <i>ro-katxho-ø</i><br>1-things-POSSD<br>my things                     |
| (38) <i>i-he-tje-nhiri</i><br>3-wife-POSSD-REM<br>his former wife | (40) <i>i-katxho-ø-thiri</i><br>3-things-POSSD-PST<br>his old things       |

There is some evidence of the use of the past possessed marker on non-possessed words. The forms *-nhiri* and *-nho* also inflect non-possessed words as in *waha-nho* “one who had been a killer”, and *toto-tho-nhiri* (human-DEV-REM.PST) “one who had been a human being” (Derbyshire 1979:99).

Past and remote possession marking is also found on deverbal nominals, where the possessor morphology codes one of the core arguments (either subject or object), and is very often obligatory. The following action and result nominalizations illustrate:

- (41) *ro-to-thiri-nhiri*  
1-go-PST-REM  
my going long ago (Derbyshire 1979:99)

<sup>8</sup>According to Derbyshire (1999) the deposal suffix appears (although rarely) on inalienably possessed nouns to indicate more general reference.

<sup>9</sup>The PST forms *replace* the POSSD form *ri* but follow the other POSSD forms. In the examples in this section, some changes have been made in the abbreviations used in the examples taken from (Derbyshire 1979) in order to increase consistency in glossing across the languages discussed. Non-obvious abbreviations in these examples include DEV ‘devalued’, REM ‘remote’.



- (42) *e-karyma-tʃhĩri-nhĩri*  
3-tell-PST-REM  
its telling long ago (Derbyshire 1979:99)
- (43) *o-n-menho-thĩri-nhĩri*  
2-OBJ NOMZ-write-PST-REM  
the thing you wrote long ago' (Derbyshire 1979:99)

Derbyshire notes that the remote past may be used in these cases to distinguish between earlier and later events, even if the early one is not actually remote from the utterance time. Although the details provided are quite sparse, Derbyshire (1979) suggests that the interpretation of *-nhĩri* appears to be dependent on the choice of nominalising suffix, with *-nye* he interprets it as meaning 'past', with *-saho* he interprets it as meaning 'remote past' and with *-hĩni* he interprets it as meaning 'past':

- (44) *oy-okaryma-nye-nhĩri*  
2-tell-DOER NOMZ-PST  
the one who told about you (Derbyshire 1979:99)
- (45) *e-karyma-xaho-nhĩri*  
3-tell-OBJ PST ACT-REMP  
thing that was told long ago (Derbyshire 1979:99)
- (46) *r-okaryma-nye-hĩni-nhĩri*  
1-tell-DOER NOMZ-NEG-PST  
not the one who told about me (Derbyshire 1979:99)

In Hixkaryana, nominalized forms very frequently serve as clausal predicates; in fact, Derbyshire (1979) observes that nominalization is the dominant form of (clausal) subordination. Derivational suffixes attached to nominalized forms are used to derive a variety of adverbial (pseudo-)clauses (e.g. 'during' clauses, purposes clauses, 'until' clauses). For example, temporal adverbial (subordinate) clauses denoting simultaneous action involve suffixation of *-toko* to a nominalized verbstem. The fact that the resultant wordform is nominal, rather than verbal, is clearly indicated by the morphology — the form is possessed, with the prefix referring to the subject of the action with intransitive stems and the object of the action with transitive stems:

- (47) *o-horohĩ-nĩ-toko*  
2-stop-ACT NOMZ-SIMUL  
when you stop (Derbyshire 1979: 177)
- (48) *r-aryma-nĩ-toko*  
1-throw-ACT NOMZ-SIMUL  
when my being thrown (Derbyshire 1979: 178)

(49) and (50) illustrate the difference between (verbal) main clauses and (nominal) subordinate clauses, with the possessed/tense forms occurring in the nominalizations.

- (49) *karyhe toye (∅-to-ye) kamara*  
quickly went (3S-go-REM) jaguar  
The jaguar went quickly

- (50) *karyhe kamara tothĩrĩ* (=ϕ-to-thĩrĩ)  
 quickly jaguar (3-go-POSS.PST)  
 the quickly going of the jaguar (Derbyshire 1979:23)

Finally, before ending this section, we should note that the marking of a past/present distinction alongside possession is not limited to Hixkaryana among the Carib languages. In his overview survey of Carib, (Derbyshire 1999) notes that the following other Carib languages also mark form/past possession morphologically: Apalai, Wai Wai, Carib, Dekwana, Trio, Wayana, Makushi.

## 5 Nominal Tense and Definiteness in Somali

In a series of recent papers, Lecarme provides extensive discussion of the phenomenon of nominal tense in Somali (see (Lecarme 1996, Lecarme 1999)), and we draw extensively on this work in discussing Somali in this section. Somali is a Cushitic language, and is spoken in Somalia. In this language, definite determiners (which are nominal affixes) encode a past/nonpast distinction on the heads of noun phrases. Affixal determiners involve an initial consonant (*-k* and its allomorphs with masculine stems and *-t* and its allomorphs with feminine stems — these forms are subject to sandhi rules), followed by *-ii*, *-u* or *-a*: *-ii* forms are +past (case neutral) and *-u*, *-a* forms are -past, nominative and non-nominative respectively.<sup>10</sup>

	initial C		[-past]	[+past]
(51)	-k/t-	[+nom]	-u	-ii
	-k/t-	[-nom]	-a	-ii

(Lecarme 1999: 335)

The tensed determiners shown in the table above are in paradigmatic opposition with a separate deictic system involving near/far demonstratives, which do not have a temporal interpretation:

		proximal	remote
(52)	-k/t-	-án ‘this’	-áas ‘that’
	-k/t-	éer ‘that (far away)’	-óo ‘that (very far away)’

(based on Lecarme 1999: 335)

The following is an example of nominal tense on the head noun within a complex noun phrase (the affairs could be completed, or referred to earlier in the discourse).

- (53) *arrimí-hii Gúddi-ga Sare ee Tawrád-du*  
 affairs-DET.M.PST Committee-DET.M upper and Revolution-DET.F.NOM  
 the affairs of the Supreme Council of the Revolution (Lecarme 1999:235)

Somali also has a set of possessive determiners which are suffixed to nominal heads, and undergo a set of sandhi rules similar to those affecting definite determiners. These also show past/nonpast distinctions: *gúri* ‘your house’ *gúrigàagii* ‘your house.PST’ (Saeed 1999:115), with the meaning ‘your former house’.

<sup>10</sup>In Somali, case is marked on the rightmost constituent of the nominal phrase, while definiteness is marked on the head noun.

## 5.1 Interpretation of Nominal Tense

Nominal tense is independent of clausal tense, in that it may coincide or differ from the tense of the verbal predicate. Thus in (54) and (55) below, the temporal location of the clause and that of the nominal happen to coincide, while in (56) and (57) they do not.

(54) *dhibaatá-da Khalíj-ku welí way taagán tahay*  
 problem-DET.F Gulf-DET.M.NOM still FOC.3S permanent is

The crisis of the Gulf still persists

(55) *dhibaatá-dii Khalíj-ku wáy dhammaatay*  
 problem-DET.F.PST Gulf-DET.M.NOM FOC.3S end.PST

The crisis of the Gulf ended (Lecarme 1999:335)

(56) *ardáy-da baan kasin su'áash-aadii*  
 students-DET.F FOC.NEG understand.PST question-DET.F.POSS2S.PST

The students (who are present/I am telling you about) did not understand your question.

(57) *ardáy-dii wáy joogaan*  
 students-DET.F.PST FOC.3P are present.-PST

The students (I told you about) are present. (Lecarme 1999:335)

Lecarme also provides some examples of the choice of determiner leading to specific presuppositions: (58) is only appropriate if the speaker believes the exhibition is closed at Utterance time, and (59) only appropriate if the speaker believes it is open. Likewise, the choice of determiner in (60) is determined by whether the journey is still in progress or not.

(58) *bandhíg-gii máad daawatay?*  
 exhibition-DET.M.PST Q.2S see.PST

Have you seen the exhibition(still running/closed at UT) (Lecarme 1999:338)

(59) *bandhíg-ga máad daawatay?*  
 exhibition-DET.M Q.2S see.PST

Have you seen the exhibition(still running/closed at UT) (Lecarme 1999:338)

(60) *búugganu sáfarkayga/-ii buu tilmáanayaa*  
 book.DET.M.NOM journey.DET.M.POSS1S./PST FOC.3S relates

This book relates to my journey (Lecarme 1996:7)

A possible view of the nonpast/past distinction in affixal determiners might be that it encodes the presence (or absence) of ‘present relevance’. There are several indications, however, that the distinction is temporal in character. In discussing the choice of determiners in examples (56) and (57) Lecarme notes that the second of these sentences, (57), “is only possible if the discourse has already mentioned some past time which is taken as the reference point, that is, a time already given in the context” (Lecarme 1996:6). Further evidence that this phenomenon is not just marking of present relevance is provided by the fact that overt (nominal) temporal modifiers must occur with a matching tense marking. In the examples below, the temporal modifier ‘next year’ selects a non-past determiner, while ‘last year’ selects a past determiner: clearly, depending on the nature of the event, some event taking place last year may still have ‘present relevance’.

- (61) *sánnad-ka/\*-kii dambe*  
 year-DET.M next  
 next year
- (62) *sánnad-kii/\*-ka hore*  
 year-DET.M.PST before  
 last year (Lecarme 1999:342)

Note that in (57), *ardáy-dii* (students-DET.F.PST) does not have the interpretation ‘ex-students’: that is, it is not the event or predication time (that is, the time of being a student) which is fixed in the past, but rather the reference time. The addition of a temporal modifier such as *hore* ‘before’ may unambiguously fix the event or the reference time. In (63), *ardáyday-dii* excludes the possibility of the individuals still being students at the time of utterance (that is, the nominal predication or ‘event’ itself is temporally restricted).

- (63) *ardáyday-dii hore dhammáan-t-ood (waa ilá soo xariiran).*  
 students-DET.F.POSS1S.PST before entirety-DET.F.POSS3P (are in contact with me)  
 All my ex-students (are in contact with me). (Lecarme 1999:342)

Definite temporal modifiers like *shálay* ‘yesterday’ provide a (contextually determined) reference time:

- (64) *qabqabashá-dii shálay*  
 arrests-DET.F.PST yesterday  
 Yesterday’s arrests (Lecarme 1999:342)

Although nominal tense may occur as the sole overt expression of tense in so-called *nominal clauses*, note that the nominal tense does not determine the clausal interpretation in these cases. The determiner in (65) is present while that in (66) is past, but both clauses are given ‘present’ interpretations. The lexically empty word *waa*, glossed here by Lecarme as a focus marker, occurs in positive, declarative verbless sentences. This particle, analysed by Saeed (1999) as a sentence type marker, often serves to focus the complement NP in sentences such as these.

- (65) *búug-gii wáa kan*  
 book-DET.M.PST FOC DET.M.DEM  
 Here is the book (distant but in sight, I have in mind, I told you about)
- (66) *nimá-kii waa macallimín*  
 men-DET.M.PST FOC teachers  
 The men (over there, I have in mind, I told you about) are teachers (Lecarme 1999:335)

To summarise, then, in Somali definite determiners (which are nominal affixes) show a past/non-past distinction. Nominal tense and verbal tense have different morphological forms. Nominal tense is independent of verbal tense in Somali and its domain is restricted to the DP. It may be interpreted referentially, deictically or anaphorically (and thus, the interpretation of nominal tense is not always determined by the discourse context).

## 5.2 Morphosyntactic Aspects

Nominal tense is implicated in the syntax of Somali in several intriguing ways. One of these concerns tense agreement within the noun phrase. Adjectives used attributively also inflect for tense, sharing the tense

endings of the highly irregular verb ‘be’ ( $\emptyset$  -PST, *-aa* PST.M, *-ayd* PST.FS). Adjectives agree in gender and tense, with adjectival tense only appearing when the noun is definite (and therefore tensed) (Lecarme 1996:4, Lecarme 1999:343).<sup>11</sup> The following examples show gender and tense agreement with masculine singular, feminine singular and feminine plural nouns respectively.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (67) <i>árday-ga wanaagsan</i><br>student-DET.M good                                 | (69) <i>ardayád-da wanaagsan</i><br>student(f)-DET.F. good                                    |
| (68) <i>árday-gii wanaagsan-aa</i><br>student-DET.M.PST good-PST<br>the good student | (70) <i>ardayád-dii wanaagdan-ayd</i><br>student(f)-DET.F.PST good-PST.F<br>the good student  |
| (71) <i>ardáy-da wan-wanaagsan</i><br>students-DET.F PL-good<br>the good students    | (72) <i>ardáy-dii wan-wanaagsan-aa</i><br>students-DET.F.PST PL-good-PST<br>the good students |

Predicative nouns in modifier position also display concord, agreeing in tense and definiteness. These nominal modifiers occur with a copula element: the copula shows tense agreement and the nominal definiteness agreement. This concord phenomenon appears with proper names and with idioms (see (75)-(77)):

- (73) *ardayád-da soomaalí-da ah*  
student(f)-DET.F Somali-DET.F be  
the Somali student(f)
- (74) *ardayád-dii soomaalí-da ahayd*  
student(f)-DET.F.PST Somali-DET.F be.PST  
the Somali student(f) (who phoned you) (Lecarme 1999:344)
- (75) *dád fará badan*  
people fingers many  
many people
- (76) *dád-ka fará-ha badan*  
people-DET.M fingers-DET.M many  
the numerous people
- (77) *dád-kii fará-ha badn-aa*  
people-DET.M.PST fingers-DET.M many-PST  
the numerous people (past) (Lecarme 1999:344)

Lecarme (1999) further argues that nominal tense is implicated in licensing certain possessor constructions in Somali.<sup>12</sup> The syntactic expression of possession can take the form of either a construct state construction or a prenominal genitive construction. In the construct state construction the head and the possessor are both obligatorily definite and tense is marked only on the head:

- (78) *dhibaata-dii Khalíj-ku (wáy dhammaatay)*  
problem-DET.F.PST Gulf-DET.M.NOM (FOC.3FS end.PST)  
the crisis of the Gulf (ended) (Lecarme 1999:345)

<sup>11</sup>Number may be marked through optional reduplication in Somali adjectives.

<sup>12</sup>Her insight is essentially that the availability of the +/-T feature within DP makes the possessor relation visible.

In the prenominal genitive construction, tense appears on the head, after the genitive infix coding the prenominal possessor:

- (79) *Khalíj-ka dhíbaatá-d-iis-ii (wáy dhammaatay)*  
 Gulf-DET.M problem-DET.F-POSS3M-PST (FOC.3FS end.PST)  
 the Gulf crisis (ended) (Lecarme 1999:345)

As noted above, the construct state construction requires the head noun to be definite. Relational nouns (which lack autonomous reference) and other non-referential nouns (e.g. *láf-(ta)* 'soul, self') can take a definite determiner, but are unable to take tense marking. Such nouns permit only the prenominal genitive construction (as they lack tense, although definite).

- (80) *inán-tii yar-ayd iyo waláalkeed/\*-ii)*  
 girl-DET.F.PST small-PST.FS and brother.DET.M.POSS2FS/\*PST  
 the small girl and her brother (Lecarme 1999:348)

- (81) *af-soomáali-ga láf-t-iisa/\*-ii)*  
 language-Somali-DET.M bone-DET.F-POSS3MS/\*PST  
 the Somali language in itself (Lecarme 1999: 348)

As we have seen, nominal tense in Somali is independent of clausal tense, is inextricably associated with definiteness in affixal determiners, and can be used referentially or deictically or be linked to the domain of discourse. In the final section we look briefly at an example of languages in which nominal tense is essentially bound up with deictic markers.

## 6 Nominal Tense, Deixis and Visibility in Iraqw and Mao Naga

In some languages nominal tense markers also express notions of visibility/nonvisibility, spatial or discourse proximity, and deixis. Such languages include the Cushitic language Iraqw, spoken in Tanzania (Mous 1993). Iraqw has four affixal determiners (glossed DEM for 'demonstrative') which encode meanings of spatial proximity and visibility as follows: *-í* or *-ká* 'near the speaker'; *-sín* 'near the addressee'; *-qá* 'near neither of them but still visible, or mentioned earlier'; and *-dá* 'far away, or mentioned earlier' (Mous 1993: 90). Some of these determiners also encode temporal information. When used to refer back to a previously mentioned noun, *-qá* is used in the present tense and *-dá* in the past tense (Mous 1993:91):<sup>13</sup>

- (82) *xa'i i-na túu' xa'i-dá' ka kwáahh*  
 trees O.N-PAST uproot:3SG.M:PAST trees-DEM4 O.3:IMPS:OBJ.N:PERF throw:PST  
 He uprooted trees . . . Those trees were thrown away.
- (83) *gwara-r-qá' hhiya-'éé' i-r gwâa'-i*  
 death-F-DEM3 brother-1.SG.POSS S.3-INST die:INT-INF:S.3  
 Is that a death for my brother to die? (after a sentence about the way he died)

<sup>13</sup>Note that *i-na*, *ka* and *i-r* in the following examples are verbal auxiliaries containing subject/object markers and TAM information. Abbreviations include: DEM 'demonstrative', F 'feminine', IMPS 'impersonal subject', INF 'infinitive', INT 'interrogative', O.3 'third person object', O.N 'neuter object', PERF 'perfect', S.3 'third person subject'

Thus, with *-qá'* we see the association of visibility with present tense, and with *-dá'* the association of spatial distance with past tense.

A somewhat similar association is found in Mao Naga, a Tibeto-Burman language from India (Giridhar 1994). In this language, nouns can be inflected with one of three ‘individuation’ markers, which encode meanings of (in)visibility, location with respect to speaker, and discourse prominence: *-hi* marks visible or spatially proximate entities; *-ṭi* marks nonvisible entities which are known or familiar; and *-sü* marks nonvisible entities which are unfamiliar, or only vaguely remembered (Giridhar 1994:118-9).<sup>14</sup>

Interestingly for our purposes, these markers can also encode temporal distance with *-hi* referring to the present time (the time of utterance), *-ṭi* the past, and *-sü* the future (pp. 135-6). Thus:

- |      |                    |                             |
|------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
|      | <i>hata-li-hi</i>  | ‘in the current week’       |
| (84) | <i>hata-li-ṭi</i>  | ‘in the past week’          |
|      | <i>hata-li-sü</i>  | ‘in the week to come’       |
|      | <i>ovo koso-hi</i> | ‘the current work’          |
| (85) | <i>ovo koso-ṭi</i> | ‘the past/done work’        |
|      | <i>ovo koso-sü</i> | ‘the work still to be done’ |
|      | <i>ni cümüi-hi</i> | ‘your current wife’         |
| (86) | <i>ni cümüi-ṭi</i> | i ‘your past wife’          |
|      | <i>ni cümüi-sü</i> | ‘your future wife’          |

As in Iraqw, the Mao Naga data shows the association of visibility (and spatial proximity) with present tense (*-hi*). Nonvisibility is associated both with past tense (*-ṭi*) and future tense (*-sü*), the difference being one of familiarity and/or discourse prominence (not surprisingly, past tense is associated with familiarity, and future tense with nonfamiliarity).

## 7 Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to provide a preliminary sketch of the phenomenon of (morphologically expressed) nominal tense with nominal scope, distinguishing this from nominal tense with clausal scope. We have seen that NT-NS occurs in a range of languages from distinct language families, and that it sometimes, but not always, shares a set of exponents with verbal tense. The expression of nominal tense may be tied up with the expression of possession (Hixkaryana, Somali), definiteness (Somali), deictics or demonstratives (Iraqw and Mao Naga). Syntactically, data from Somali show that nominal tense is syntactically active, controlling concord phenomena and playing a crucial role in the grammaticality of construct state constructions, suggesting the presence at f-structure of (nominal) tense features alongside nominal agreement and definiteness features. Semantically, data from several languages show a range of clear temporal interpretations for nominal tense with nominal scope, suggesting that the semantics of nominal structures in these languages involves reference and event times (where the event can equally well be the “possession event” in possessive nominals). Nominal tense affixes may also have a deictic interpretation, or be related to the expression of (non)visibility.

<sup>14</sup>We are grateful to D.N.S. Bhat for drawing our attention to this Mao Naga data.

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