

**RESEARCH**

# The grammaticalisation of a copula in vernacular Arabic

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It is standardly assumed that Arabic copula constructions with present tense interpretation involve either a null copula or a pronominal copula. This paper provides evidence that some Arabic vernaculars are developing a three-way split, with an additional copula form occurring in some predicational copula clauses. This form has grammaticalised out of the active participle form of the posture verb meaning ‘sit’. While at different stages of development in different varieties of Arabic, this emergent copula shows the characteristics of a locative (temporary and/or permanent, depending on the variety) or contingent state (stage-level) copula, standing in contrast with the use of a null copula strategy, which marks characterising/defining individual-level properties. We propose a grammaticalisation trajectory for this copula in the Arabic varieties based on the comparative patterns of variation across those dialects, showing that the trajectory postulated for other, typologically distinct languages is also applicable to Arabic and hence providing further support for it. We suggest that there is also evidence of a distinct but related trajectory in some varieties which have developed a semantically bleached lexical existential predicate from this same form. We provide further evidence of the importance of the temporary/permanent split in the copula systems of Arabic arguing that the developing split copula system based on the active participle of the ‘sit’ verb is in alignment with the development of two other parallel split copula systems in other geographically diverse Arabic varieties, which use different bases/strategies for grammaticalisation.

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**Keywords:** split copula system; Arabic varieties; contingent/characteristic properties; grammaticalisation; posture verb

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## 1 Introduction

Arabic is generally described as a language in which present tense copula clauses exhibit a null (or zero) copula in predicational copula constructions and a pronominal copula in identity or equative copula clauses. This paper argues that this picture is too simple for a number of dialects and overlooks some of the empirical data. We focus on this data, and provide a more comprehensive picture of the real state of affairs as it is developing, synchronically, where in at least some Arabic dialects, an additional overt copula is emerging in the present tense non-verbal predicational constructions. As a result, these dialects display a three-way split, synchronically, in copula constructions with present tense interpretations. We will show that the niche that this copula has carved out for itself resembles the distribution of the contingent or locational copula familiar from other languages which exhibit a two-way split in their predicational copula constructions, and hence providing further support for the significance of this dimension from an additional language family. We will focus in some detail on the distribution of this copula form addressing the questions (i) which varieties do we find it in, and how does this correlate with the lexical use of this same item, (ii) what other properties might be relevant, and (iii) how we might

account for this grammaticalisation path? We provide a trajectory of change leading to the copula function, and since the emerging specialised copula strategy that we discuss involves grammaticalisation from a posture predicate, we will consider how the grammaticalisation trajectory for Arabic, might be related to the grammaticalisation paths trodden by such parallel specialised copula functions derived from posture verb sources and discussed in the literature for other, typologically distinct language families. We also argue that a further lexical/semantic development has also taken place in some dialects, from the same source, and propose a trajectory of change for this distinct but related development. Neither of these particular grammaticalisation path has, to our knowledge, been discussed previously for Semitic.

In support of our main hypothesis concerning the emergence of a specialised contingent copula, we bring together two other parallel but independently-emerging three-way split copula systems in other Arabic varieties, suggesting that these three different developments appear to be moving in the same direction, in that they all represent the morpho-syntactic realisation of a similar semantic distinction within the copula system. In each case the emerging form is also additionally the form that is found widely in contemporary dialects as an aspectual auxiliary with a core meaning of progressivity. This in itself raises questions concerning the relationship between these two grammaticalised forms, which are not always necessarily identical, and do not have precisely the same dialectal range. We do not address these additional questions here, but focus more narrowly on demonstrating the existence of this emergent copula and formulating a grammaticalisation trajectory for the pattern of copula usage we demonstrate; a necessary precondition for addressing these further theoretically important issues.

## 2 Copulas and copula constructions

Since the focus of this paper is on copula constructions, we start by providing some sense of how we understand this term. We use the term to refer to the basic construction or constructions used to encode the identity of two participants and to express group membership, classification, location and the ascription of a range of properties to a participant, excluding verbs like *become*, *remain*, *seem*, *feel*, which are sometimes referred to as semi-copulas. In section 2.1 we provide some background on the expression of non-verbal predication crosslinguistically and section 2.2 briefly reviews some salient facts concerning non-verbal predication and split copula systems, focussing mainly on Spanish and Irish.

### 2.1 The expression of non-verbal predication

Following Higgins (1979)'s classic study and subsequent literature (e.g. Mikkelsen 2011; Roy 2013) we can distinguish three major types of copular constructions, according to whether or not the subject and the "complement" XP of the copula are referential, as shown in Table 1 (adapted from Mikkelsen 2011: 1810) and (1).

- |     |                                   |                 |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| (1) | a. The room is untidy.            | predicational   |
|     | b. Cicero is Tully.               | equative        |
|     | c. The only person I know is Kim. | specificational |

The primary focus here is on the predicational sub-type of copula constructions.<sup>1</sup> We take the predicational copula construction to be a sentence type in which the lexical or contentful predicate is some non-verbal element (Mikkelsen 2011: 1805). The English

<sup>1</sup> We will generally use the term non-predicational to cover both specificational and equative types, although we will have very little to say about either.

**Table 1:** Types of Copula Construction.

	NP1	copula	XP
predicational	referential		non-referential
equative	referential		referential
specificational	non-referential		referential

examples in (2) are predicational copula constructions in which the sentential predicate is respectively adjectival, nominal and prepositional. In such clauses, the forms of *be* are copula verbs, that is, linguistic elements which appear in some sort of mediating or linking role between subject and predicate in predicational sentences in which the main semantic predicator is a non-verbal element. Hence we use the term *predicational copula construction* to include both property ascriptive examples, as in (2a) and (2b), and locational clauses, as in (2c).

- (2) a. John is very ill.  
 b. Jane was a teacher.  
 c. The children are in the garden.

It is often stated that in copula constructions the copula element is totally devoid of meaning, at least in predicative copula constructions (Hengeveld 1992: 32; Pustet 2003: 5), and, in some accounts, also in equative and specificational constructions (Partee 1987). We assume that the predicational copula has no inherent **lexical** semantic content but simply plays a role in semantic composition, i.e. in applying the predicate to the argument (Partee 1987; Roy 2013) and in carrying tense information, although such matters are orthogonal to our concerns here.<sup>2</sup> In languages with multiple copulas, a choice between competing forms generally corresponds to some semantic property, and hence may be thought to realize the competing values of that property, or is to constrain any such property to be present, depending on the precise details of the approach adopted.

Crosslinguistically we find a great diversity in the syntax of copula constructions. Languages differ in terms of the diachronic source and synchronic syntactic status of copula or linking elements; copulas may be full words or affixes, and common sources include pronouns, deictic particles and verbs (Devitt 1990; Pustet 2003). They also differ as to whether, and under what conditions, they require a copula clause to contain an overt copula or linking element. For example, no overt copula is required in predicational copula constructions with a present tense interpretation in Russian.

- (3) a. *Russian* (Roy 2013: 119)  
 Segodnja reka spokojna.  
 today river calm.SFORM  
 ‘Today the river is calm.’  
 b. *Russian* (Roy 2013: 119)  
 Ivan byl goloden.  
 Ivan was hungry.SFORM  
 ‘Ivan was hungry.’

Arabic also exhibits this tense-conditioned morphosyntactic alternation between the absence and presence of a copula element in predicative copula constructions. We will

<sup>2</sup> See also Rothstein (1999) for the opposing view that the copula element *does* make a semantic contribution in predicational copula constructions.

use the term null copula to refer to copula-free copula constructions, without commitment to any particular syntactic analysis.

When a language has multiple copulas, a range of different factors may govern the choice of copula. Choice of copula can be determined by various clausal features such as tense and aspect or polarity, but also by the morphosyntactic category of the predicate phrase itself, as in Bambara (Niger-Congo) which exhibits a four-way choice between copula forms, dependent on the category of the predicate (Pustet 2003: 46). Equally, it may be determined by the distinction between locational and non-locational clauses, as in Kinyarwanda (Bantu) (Jerro 2015) or by other semantic or pragmatic characteristics of the predicate, clause or subject argument (see Pustet 2003: 45–53). For example, Kuuk Thaayore (Paman) (Gaby 2006: 460–477) has five verbs used as optional copula verbs (*nhiin* ‘sit’, *than* ‘stand’, *wun* ‘lie’, *yan* ‘go’ and *yoongke* ‘hang’). The default choice of copula in ascriptive and locative copula clauses for higher animates is *yan* ‘go’, with the use of a different copula introducing additional connotations, which may or may not relate to the postural sense itself. The choice of an optional copula for animate subjects in ascriptive copula clauses is determined by the canonical posture of the animate entities in question.

## 2.2 Split copula systems

Split copula systems implicating a semantic/pragmatic distinction between permanent or inherent properties and temporary, contingent or temporally-bounded properties are quite widely attested. Stassen (1996) notes that an alternation between a null and a locational copula encoding for nominal predicates occurs in several Carib languages (Apalai, Hixkaryana, Macushi) and the Dravidian languages Tamil, Telugu and Kannada. The locational encoding for predicate nominals is associated with non-habitual, contingent or temporary states. As is well known, Irish makes use of forms of two distinct verbs in copula constructions, the copula verb *is* and the so-called substantive verb *bí* (Stenson 1981; Carnie 1995; Doherty 1996). Prepositional and adjectival predicates, whether interpreted as permanent, inherent properties, or as temporary states, properties or locations appear with *bí* (glossed simply as BI) in copula constructions. In the modern language, the copula use of *is* with adjectival and prepositional predicates is highly circumscribed and a vestige of Old Irish (Doherty 1996: 36–7; Stenson 1981: 99).

- (4) a. *Irish* (Doherty 1996: 2)  
 Tá sé                    ar meisce.  
 BI 3SGM.NOM in drunk  
 ‘He is drunk.’
- b. *Irish* (Doherty 1996: 38)  
 Tá sé                    cliste.  
 BI 3SGM.NOM clever  
 ‘He is clever.’

Nominal copula constructions make use of the copula verb *is*, which is variously characterised as predicating inherent qualities or defining characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

- (5) *Irish* (Doherty 1996: 2)  
 Is dochtúir é.  
 COP doctor 3SGM.ACC  
 ‘He is a doctor.’

<sup>3</sup> The equative sentence in (6) involves what is called the *pronominal augment*, which is an inflectional agreement morpheme which forms a single phonological unit with the copula, and if dropped, they are dropped together.

- (6) *Irish* (Doherty 1996: 27)  
 Is é Seán an dochtúir.  
 COP 3SGM.ACC Seán the doctor  
 ‘Seán is the doctor.’

What is of interest is that a clear contrast arises between a nominal copula construction with *is* (5)–(6) and one in which the nominal predicate is introduced by the preposition *ar* ‘in’ (4a), where the substantive verb *bí* is used. Several different characterisations of the associated semantic distinction are suggested in the literature; Stenson (1981: 94–5) takes nominal copula constructions with *is* to be defining or characteristic, and those with *bí* to be suggestive of the attainment of a state, and which is more anchored in time. Carnie (1995) and Doherty (1996) relate the contrast to the distinction between individual-level and stage-level predicates. Roy (2013) characterises the semantic distinction differently, suggesting that *is* is limited to maximal predicates, that is, predicates devoid of “perceptible spatio-temporal subpart properties” (Roy 2013: 90), while *bí* occurs with situation-descriptive predicates which are *dense*, that is, which hold continuously for every sub-interval of the eventuality, and habitual or generic sentences.<sup>4</sup> Consistent with these various characterisations of the difference, the nominal copula construction with *is* in the past tense shows lifetime effects, such that (7a) entails that Seán is dead, while the prepositional nominal construction with *bí* does not (7b).

- (7) a. *Irish* (Roy 2013: 183)  
 Ba dhochtúir Seán.  
 COP.PST doctor Seán  
 ‘Seán was a doctor.’
- b. *Irish* (Roy 2013: 183)  
 Bhí Seán ina dhochtúir.  
 BI.PST Seán in.3SGM doctor  
 ‘Seán was a doctor.’

The distribution of *ser/estar* as copula forms in predicative constructions in Spanish is also sometimes characterised in terms of the distinction between individual-level and stage-level predication.<sup>5</sup> Maienborn (2005a) offers a discourse-based account of the distinction within DRT, Luján (1981) (inter alia) takes an aspectual view associating *estar* with the feature [+perfective], and Roy (2013) proposes that copula *estar* occurs with *dense* predicates while predicative copula *ser* marks *maximal* predicates and those which are *non-dense*, that is, have spatio-temporal subpart properties and are not required to hold continuously for every sub-interval of the eventuality. A good overview of the facts for Spanish and the issues and challenges faced by different theoretical accounts is provided in Camacho (2012). Predicative NPs occur only with *ser*, unless preceded by the prepositional marker *de*, in which case they occur with *estar*, and receive a particular, transient, interpretation, as in the contrast in (8).

- (8) a. *Spanish* (Camacho 2012: 455)  
 Obama es/\*está (el) presidente desde el 2009.  
 Obama is(SER)/is(ESTAR) (DEF) president since DEF 2009  
 ‘Obama has been (the) president since 2009.’

<sup>4</sup> While Roy (2013: 179) argues that *all* predicates occurring with the copula *is* are in fact (covertly) nominal, Stenson (1981: 120) only treats some of the cases where *is* is used, as nominal.

<sup>5</sup> Similar but not identical facts also obtain in some other Romance languages.

- b. *Spanish* (Camacho 2012: 455)  
 Obama está/\*es de presidente desde el 2009.  
 Obama is(ESTAR)/is(SER) of president since DEF 2009  
 ‘Obama has been in the role of/acting as president since 2009.’

Many adjectives will occur felicitously with both *ser* and *estar* in predicative copula constructions—in the former case a permanent, inherent or intrinsic property is ascribed to the subject, while in the latter case, the property might be temporary, contingent or situation-descriptive. Such a contrast is provided in (9). Similarly, the absolute/transient distinction also applies with PP predicates, in general. With locational PPs, if the subject is a movable entity, in which case the location may be temporary, locative prepositions occur with *estar*, as in (10).

- (9) *Spanish* (Camacho 2012: 453)  
 Alejandro es agradable / está agradable.  
 Alejandro is(SER) pleasant / is(ESTAR) pleasant  
 ‘Alejandro is pleasant/is being pleasant (today).’

- (10) a. *Spanish* (Camacho 2012: 456)  
 Los libr-os están/\*son en el estante.  
 DEF.PL.M book-PL.M are(ESTAR)/\*are(SER) on DEF shelf  
 ‘The books are on the shelf.’
- b. *Spanish* (Camacho 2012: 456)  
 Mi hermano está/\*es en Buenos Aires.  
 my brother is(ESTAR)/\*is(SER) in Buenos Aires  
 ‘My brother is in Buenos Aires.’

This section has provided background to contextualise our discussion of Arabic predicative copula systems in subsequent sections. We have observed that many copula systems display a split which is grounded in a distinction between permanent, inherent or immutable properties and those which are temporary, contingent or episodic. In the following sections we first outline the picture for Arabic dialects as generally described. We see that two conditioning factors are standardly thought to be relevant to this split copula system—the clausal feature of tense and the distinction between predicative and non-predicative clause types. We then turn to Maltese, where the distribution of copula forms is more complicated, being sensitive to additional conditioning factors, including copula construction type (i.e. predicative versus non-predicative; locational versus non-locational), the clausal feature of tense, and the distinction between enduring and temporary properties.

### 3 Arabic copula constructions

The theoretical and descriptive literature on Arabic generally takes the basic facts for copula clauses to be as follows. Copula constructions of all types which are temporally situated in the non-present are mediated by the presence of a copula form, most generally a form of the verb *kān(a)* ‘be.PFV.3SGM’. With present time reference, affirmative non-verbal predications (PPs, APs and indefinite NPs) are not mediated by the presence of an overt copula element. In equative (i.e. identity and identificational) clauses with present time reference we find forms identical to the 3rd person strong pronouns, which are often referred to as pronominal copulas in this context. We shall have nothing more to say about equatives, which have referential complements, in this paper, restricting our focus to predicational structures.

The Lebanese Arabic examples in (11) and (12) illustrate the basic distribution of the null (or zero) copula and the so-called pronominal copula, showing that the pronominal copula is ungrammatical in predicational copula constructions with PP, AP and indefinite NP predicates, while the null copula is ungrammatical, or at least marginal, in equative copula constructions. It is this contrast which is the essential focus of theoretical analyses of Arabic copula constructions, whether in Modern Standard Arabic or the spoken dialects. There is a relatively large, mainly theoretically oriented, literature on copula constructions in Arabic, with considerable attention being given to the status and analysis of the so-called pronominal copula, including Eid (1983), Doron (1986), Eid (1991), Benmamoun (2000), Aoun et al. (2010: 35–44), Choueiri (2016), and Alharbi (2017) among many others. Distinctions among predicational copula constructions are not addressed, or generally acknowledged, despite the occurrence of relevant examples in descriptive sources. As the examples in (11b) and (12b) illustrate, there is no distinction between predicational and equational clauses in the past tense, where the fully inflected perfective form of the verb *kān* ‘be’ is employed, and the same is true for the clauses in the future, with the future-marked imperfective form.<sup>6</sup>

- (11) a. *Lebanese Arabic* (Choueiri 2016: 102)  
 l-bornayṭa ∅/\*hiyye meškle/həlw-e/b-l-bēt  
 DEF-hat.SGF ∅/COP.3SGF problem.SGF/nice-SGF/in-DEF-house  
 ‘The hat is a problem/nice/at home.’
- b. *Lebanese Arabic* (Choueiri 2016: 102)  
 l-bornayṭa kēn-it meškle/həlw-e/b-l-bēt  
 DEF-hat.SGF be.PFV-3SGF problem.SGF/nice-SGF/in-DEF-house  
 ‘The hat was a problem/nice/at home.’
- (12) a. *Lebanese Arabic* (Choueiri 2016: 102)  
 Amal Alamuddin ?\*∅/hiyye Amal Clooney  
 Amal Alamuddin ∅/COP.3SGF Amal Clooney  
 ‘Amal Alamuddin is Amal Clooney.’
- b. *Lebanese Arabic* (Choueiri 2016: 102)  
 Amal Alamuddin kēn-it Amal Clooney  
 Amal Alamuddin be.PFV-3SGF Amal Clooney  
 ‘Amal Alamuddin was Amal Clooney.’

For completeness, the example in (13) illustrates a further point, namely that the pronominal copula may additionally occur in predicational copula clauses with definite NP predicates.<sup>7</sup>

- (13) *Lebanese Arabic* (Choueiri 2016: 102)  
 Sami ∅/kēn/huwwe mudīr l-madrāse  
 Sami ∅/be.PFV.3SGM/COP.3SGM director.SGM DEF-school  
 ‘Sami was/is the director of the school.’

In a further wrinkle, Choueiri (2016: 102) provides an *identificational* equative copula clause with a null copula as an acceptable alternative (see (14)).

<sup>6</sup> We exclude from discussion here modal (typically epistemic) and aspectual (typically habitual) uses of the imperfective form of *kān* ‘be’ in copula constructions with present tense interpretations which would otherwise involve the null copula strategy.

<sup>7</sup> Following the terminology of Eid (1991) the literature on copula clauses in Arabic often uses the term *equational* to include all cases in which the complement of the copula is a definite NP, both when it is interpreted referentially, as in equative examples, and when it is interpreted predicationally.

- (14) *Lebanese Arabic* (Choueiri 2016: 102)  
 hayde Ø/kēn-it/hiyye Amal Alamuddin  
 DEM.SGF Ø/be.PFV-SGF/COP.3SGF Amal Alamuddin  
 ‘This is/was Amal Alamuddin.’

Despite these further wrinkles, and the existence of further differences and variation across the range of Arabic varieties, the basic generalisation which is relevant here is that the pronominal copula is limited to definite NP “complements” and the null copula, that is, the absence of a copula, characterises present tense affirmative predicational sentences with AP, PP and indefinite NP predicates. Three main dimensions are thus relevant to the distribution of forms in copula constructions: predicational vs non-predicational, definite vs indefinite, present vs non-present. The overall picture for the Lebanese Arabic data which emerges from Choueiri (2016) is the distribution of forms shown in Table 2. Similar distributions are described elsewhere for other varieties.<sup>8</sup>

It is this (idealised) picture which is addressed in various ways in theoretical work on Arabic copula clauses and which we challenge in this paper, arguing for the recognition of a further split in the predicational copula system itself.

#### 4 Maltese: A recognised multiple copula system

As a first step in establishing our central point, which is the existence of an overt predicational copula in Arabic with present tense interpretation, we discuss the relatively well-documented facts of Maltese, a Maghrebi/Siculo-Arabic dialect of Arabic (Brincat 2011). In Maltese, the existence of multiple copulas for non-verbal predication is both relatively well described and rather stable and categorical in its distribution.

The distribution of forms in copula constructions is sensitive to a number of factors; Maltese verbless sentences and copulas are discussed in Borg (1987; 1988), and Stassen (1996), and more recently in theoretical work by Dalmi (2015; 2016).<sup>9</sup>

**Table 2:** Copula Distribution in Lebanese Arabic.

	indefinite predicate	definite NP predicate	definite (identity) NP referential
Present	null	(pron cop)	pron cop
Non-Present	<i>kān</i>	<i>kān</i>	<i>kān</i>

<sup>8</sup> Although it is not given much attention in the literature (for example, it is not mentioned in Choueiri 2016), the distribution of the *negative* pronominal copula across the vernaculars is quite different from that of the affirmative pronominal copula, with potential consequences for the validity of theoretical analyses of the latter. The negative pronominal copula is not excluded from indefinite predications. Furthermore, while the pronominal copula of affirmative clauses is restricted to 3rd person forms, this is not true of the negative pronominal copula which, in most dialects, has a full array of inflected forms, allowing the subject to be dropped, as well as a default agreement form. By contrast, in Sason Arabic (an Anatolian variety), negated (pronominal) copulas *are* restricted to 3rd person forms, but in the singular show a gender distinction that is in turn not realised in the affirmative paradigm (see Akkuş & Benmamoun 2016: 166). All in all, a simple extension of the analysis proposed for the affirmative pronominal copula to the negative pronominal copula cannot be assumed. Moreover, the distribution of the affirmative pronominal copula in non-declarative clauses is not precisely the same as that in declarative clauses, being readily available in places where it wouldn't have figured in declarative contexts such as the ones illustrated above.

<sup>9</sup> Dalmi's perspective is theoretical rather than empirical; she discusses examples from the other sources cited in making a theoretical proposal for the treatment of the stage-level/individual-level distinction in terms of the alternative state model (Maienborn 2005a; b; 2011). Descriptively, Dalmi has mischaracterised somewhat the actual facts, especially when it comes to locative structures. For this reason we stick with examples taken from the source, which is Stassen (1996).



As well as the ‘be’ verb, the null copula, and the pronominal copula, which is restricted to 3rd person forms in the affirmative, and displays the full array of paradigmatic forms in negative contexts, two additional elements are found in copula constructions in Maltese: the SGM form *qiegħed*, along with the corresponding SGF and PL forms, and *jinsab* ‘3M-PASS-find.IPFV.SG’, along with the rest of the inflected imperfective forms of this stem. Since our focus here is on the factors governing the distribution of *qiegħed*, we omit *jinsab* from further discussion, noting only that it may occur in some types of adjectival and locational predications. *Qiegħed* and its inflectional counterparts are etymologically the active participle forms of the lexical verb meaning ‘sit’, but neither the active participle, nor the verb itself (except in lexicalised phrases where the verb is in contrast with the verb ‘stand; arise’) occur with this lexical meaning any longer, and hence we gloss these forms here as BE + inflection.

In Maltese, as in other Arabic varieties, the distribution of the verb *kien* ‘be.PFV.3SGM’ in copula structures is determined by the intended temporal reference, with forms of *kien* occurring only in non-present tense copula clauses with all predicate types (nominal, adjectival and locational).

- (15) *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 278)  
 Albert kien marid.  
 Albert be.PFV.3SGM sick.SGM  
 ‘Albert was sick.’

Locational predications with present temporal interpretations can be expressed with the null copula, and *jinsab* or *qiegħed*, with no “noticeable semantic difference” (Stassen 1996: 279). The pronominal copula is excluded.

- (16) a. *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 279)  
 Ġanni l-ħabs.  
 Ġanni DEF-prison  
 ‘John is in prison.’
- b. *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 279)  
 Il-vapur qiegħed il-port.  
 DEF-ship.SGM BE.SGM DEF-port  
 ‘The ship is in the harbour.’
- c. *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 279)  
 It-tifel j-i-n-sab id-dar.  
 DEF-boy.SGM 3M-EPENT.VWL-PASS-find.IPFV.SG DEF-house  
 ‘The boy is at home.’

The use of a bare locational NP, that is, one without a locational preposition, as in the examples in (16), is subject to various semantic constraints involving animacy and stereotypicality/habituality, which do not concern us here. For example, Stassen (1996) suggests that the use of the bare locational NP is infelicitous when the locations are not habitual, characteristic or stereotypical, and hence, the examples in (17) are odd. Locational predications may also be expressed by means of a PP, as in (18).

- (17) a. *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 281)  
 ?L-istudent il-ħanut.  
 DEF-student.SGM DEF-shop  
 ‘The student is in the shop.’

- b. *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 281)  
 ?Il-qassis il-ġnien.  
 DEF-priest DEF-garden  
 ‘The priest is in the garden.’

- (18) *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 281)  
 Iċ-ċacetta Ø/qieġhd-a fil-kexxun.  
 DEF-key.SGF Ø/BE-SGF in.DEF-drawer  
 ‘The key is in the drawer.’

The following examples show that both the inflected SGF *qieġħda* and the zero copula occur in locational predications, irrespective of whether they are temporary or permanent; (19a) is clearly a permanent location, while (19b) describes a temporary state of affairs. This in turn is in contrast with the distribution of the pronominal copula, illustrated below through the 3SGF pronominal copula form *hija*, which is ungrammatical in locative contexts.

- (19) a. *Maltese*  
 Malta Ø/qieġhd-a/\*hija f’nofs il-Baħar Mediterran.  
 Malta.SGF Ø/BE-SGF/COP.3SGF in.middle DEF-sea.SGM Mediterranean.SGM  
 ‘Malta is in the middle of the Mediterranean sea.’
- b. *Maltese*  
 Omm-i Ø/qieġhd-a/\*hija d-dar.  
 mother-1SG.GEN Ø/BE-SGF/COP.3SGF DEF-house  
 ‘My mother is at home.’

Beyond locational predications, *qieġħed* may also occur with nominal and adjectival predicates, but here the use of this strategy, as opposed to the neutral, zero copula strategy, is associated with a semantic distinction, and produces a clear interpretive effect (Stassen 1996: 277). Three strategies are available for nominal copula constructions: the pronominal copula, the zero copula and *qieġħed*. The pronominal strategy occurs in certain types of nominal copula clauses, most typically those involving identity and identification, including the specification of a hyponymic relationship, and generic statements. (20) provides an example.

- (20) *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 289)  
 Il-ġizimina Ø/hi(ja) fjura.  
 DEF-jasmine.SGF Ø/COP.3SGF flower.SGF  
 ‘Jasmines are flowers.’

The factor which is relevant to the choice between the null copula and the locational copula *qieġħed* can be characterised as *time stability* or *permanency* (Stassen 1996). The use of *qieġħed* is associated with states of affairs which are temporary, contingent or accidental, rather than permanent, inherent or characteristic. Whether this is possible will therefore depend on whether the property or class membership is amenable to such interpretations (“acceptability crucially depends on the degree to which speakers are prepared to view a class membership predicate ... as temporary” Stassen 1996: 286). (21a) is acceptable because being the examiner can be viewed as a temporary class membership, while (21b) is unacceptable because this concerns a permanent class membership. A similar interpretative effect is found with the use of the contingent or tem-

porally-anchored copula *qiegħed/qed* in (22) (recalling the contrast for Spanish shown in (8)).<sup>10</sup>

- (21) a. *Maltese*  
 Pietru  $\emptyset$ /qiegħed l-ezaminatur.  
 Peter  $\emptyset$ /BE.SGM DEF-examiner.SGM  
 ‘Peter is the examiner.’
- b. *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 286)  
 \*Malta qiegħd-a gżira.  
 Malta.SGF BE-SGF island.SGF  
 (‘Malta is an island.’)
- (22) a. *Maltese*  
 Min minn-hom hija Marija?  
 who.3SGM from-3PL.GEN COP.3SGF Mary  
 ‘Which of them is Mary?’
- b. *Maltese*  
 Min minn-hom qed Marija (fil-plej)?  
 who.3SGM from-3PL.GEN BE.SGM Mary in.DEF-play  
 ‘Which of them is (acting out the role of) Mary (in the play)?’

As for clauses with adjectival predicates, the null strategy is available across the board, but the distribution of both *qiegħed* and the pronominal copula with this class of predicates is associated with the distinction between the ascription of contingent and permanent properties, with the consequence that these two strategies are not uniformly available with all predicative adjectives. In (23), the pronominal and zero copulas give a time stable interpretation, while *qiegħed* gives a temporary/contingent interpretation, corresponding to the distinction between inherently quiet by nature, and being quiet, or behaving in a quiet manner. In (24), on the other hand, the contingent *qiegħed* is impossible, because *shortness* cannot be construed as a temporary property in this case.<sup>11</sup>

- (23) *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 292)  
 It-tifel  $\emptyset$ /hu(wa)/qiegħed kwiet.  
 DEF-boy  $\emptyset$ /COP.3SGM/BE.SGM quiet.SGM  
 ‘The boy is quiet/being quiet.’
- (24) *Maltese* (Stassen 1996: 295)  
 L-arblu  $\emptyset$ /hu(wa)/\*qiegħed qasir.  
 DEF-pole.SGM  $\emptyset$ /COP.3SGM/BE.SGM short.SGM  
 ‘The pole is short.’

<sup>10</sup> *Qed* is an invariant phonologically impoverished form derived from the SGM form of *qiegħed*, and shares the same semantic and morphosyntactic distribution as that of the full form *qiegħed*, as copula forms. Beyond copula constructions, that is, in the expression of progressive aspect, the morphosyntactic distribution of *qed* differs from that of *qiegħed* as it operates as a default, and is therefore not restricted to environments in which SGM morphology is expected.

<sup>11</sup> We use terms such as contingent versus inherent and temporary/particular versus permanent purely descriptively without any particular theoretical intent.

The basic distribution can be summarised as follows. The alternation between the zero copula and the marked copula *qiegħed* is essentially not meaningful with locational predicates, while the pronominal copula is excluded from such constructions. In nominal copula clauses, the pronominal copula occurs in a particular semantic range of constructions, most centrally identity and identificational cases,<sup>12</sup> and the use of *qiegħed*, instead of the zero copula, is associated with impermanency and the ascription of temporary class membership. The use of *qiegħed* is also associated with temporary or contingent properties in adjectival predication, and is excluded when such interpretations are impossible, while the pronominal copula is associated with time-stable interpretations with these predicates. The use of this strategy, which is itself an innovation when compared to other Arabic vernaculars, gives rise to contrasts of the type in (23), where the choice of the pronoun versus *qiegħed* expresses what Stassen (1996: 292) calls the *permanency parameter*. These distributional regularities, which are exemplified above for declarative clauses, hold equally well for other clause types such as exclamatives and interrogatives.

## 5 Arabic varieties beyond Maltese

We have seen that in addition to *be*, and the zero copula/pronominal copula split, Maltese has a further form, *qiegħed/qed*, etymologically the ACT.PTCP of the lexical root corresponding to the posture verb ‘sit’ of other Arabic varieties. This form is in free variation with the zero copula in the expression of locational predications. With adjectival and nominal predicates, however, the use of *qiegħed/qed* imparts a particular semantics. In Maltese, these ACT.PTCP forms no longer have any lexical meaning as posture verbs. Alongside grammaticalisation as a copula, we also find in Maltese the grammaticalisation of the same inflectional form as a progressive auxiliary (Borg 1987; 1988; Agius & Harrak 1987). In this section we show that the cognate items, which are grammaticalised forms of the ACT.PTCP of the root ‘sit’, actually also occur in usages which might be considered to be copula, in other Arabic varieties. Our claim is that a posture-verb-derived copula is in fact much more widespread across the Arabic dialects, and that in all of these varieties, as in Maltese, the grammaticalisation of the same set of forms as aspectual auxiliaries is equally present. Many of the examples we will discuss are drawn from descriptive sources which do not discuss them in the context of copula constructions, and indeed rarely characterise them as involving copulas. Hence, the wider theoretical claims and implications for grammaticalisation put forward here, are here our own alone, and are not drawn from those sources.

### 5.1 Libyan

Consider now these examples from Libyan, which involve a verbal element which is the ACT.PTCP form of what is etymologically the root ‘sit’, but which synchronically is the verb meaning ‘stay; remain’. In Libyan, *gāfād* **does not** mean ‘sitting’ at all (Pereira 2008, as also reported in Rubin 2005). We have examples such as the following, where our glossing and translation are intended to maintain the insights from the original descriptive source, which in some cases is indicative of a degree of ambivalence about the analysis of these items. To this end, we have provided the original free translation in French alongside our own English rendering, and reflect the original French gloss *restant* as ‘stay. ACT.PTCP’, and *se trouvant* and *étant* as BE, which is to be understood as indicative of a copula function in such contexts.

<sup>12</sup> Here we hypothesise that diachronically, the distribution of the pronominal copula was more restricted, and hence closer to what we find synchronically in other Arabic vernaculars.

An example such as (25), glossed as ‘stay.ACT.PTCP’ (*restant* in the original), is perhaps suggestive of a lexical predicate *gaʕad* ‘sit.PFV.3SGM’ with the semantically bleached **lexical** meaning of ‘stay; remain; continue to be (in a location)’, combining with a locational modifier to give a meaning of CONTINUE TO BE IN A LOCATION. If we associate the CONTINUE TO BE sense with *gaʕad* in (25), then this might suggest (taking a conservative view) that we are dealing with some bleached lexical function of the participle form in this variety, rather than a use that necessarily has a copula function. In isolation, then, (25) is consistent with a view of *gaʕad* as a bleached lexical predicate with the meaning shown in small capitals in (26), where the location phrase is a selected dependent or a modifier.

- (25) *Libyan Arabic* (Pereira 2008: 402)
- |      |                   |                  |          |    |                   |
|------|-------------------|------------------|----------|----|-------------------|
| hūwa | lāgi              | l-ʒəww           | mlīh     | fa | gāʕad             |
| he   | find.ACT.PTCP.SGM | DEF-ambience.SGM | good.SGM | so | stay.ACT.PTCP.SGM |
- yādi  
there
- ‘Il trouve qu’il y a une bonne ambiance, alors il reste là-bas.’  
‘He found that the ambience is good, so he is **staying** there.’

- (26) CONTINUE TO BE (SITUATED) [location phrase]

Similarly, *gāʕad* in (27) (glossed as ‘stay.ACT.PTCP’, reflecting *restant* in the original French glossing line), is part of an intransitive clause, and involves no overt locational phrase at all. This suggests a clearer lexical usage meaning *stay, remain, continue to be in a location* (rendered in French as ‘be there’). Clearly, since *gāʕad* is used with no potentially predicative dependent, it must itself have some lexical meaning.<sup>13</sup> Remaining cautious in our identification of potential copula uses, we might informally describe the use of *gāʕad* in (27) as in (28).

- (27) *Libyan Arabic* (Pereira 2008: 424)
- |     |       |                |          |           |      |     |
|-----|-------|----------------|----------|-----------|------|-----|
| mūš | lāzəm | n-ʒi           | yudwa    | ʕlē-xāṭər | hūwa | mūš |
| NEG | must  | 1-come.IPFV.SG | tomorrow | because   | he   | NEG |
- gāʕad!**  
stay.ACT.PTCP.SGM
- ‘Je ne dois pas venir demain parce qu’il ne sera pas là!’  
‘I don’t have to come tomorrow because he will not **be** (there)!’

- (28) (CONTINUE TO) BE SITUATED  
+ LOC

On the other hand, the following examples of *gāʕad* with locational predicates, whether glossed as stay.ACT.PTCP or BE.ACT.PTCP on the basis of Pereira’s (2008) translation, can at least equally well be seen as copula constructions in which the locative phrase *itself* (whether it involves a temporary or a more permanent location) contributes the main predication, as shown in (33). On this view, the verbal element is itself semantically

<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding this, note that the French translation does not put into focus the ‘continue to be’ element, which might suggest a lexical meaning of ‘be in location’. The point, however, is that the use of the verb without any dependents indicates that it has lexical meaning. A reviewer suggests that this could, alternatively, involve ellipsis of a verb phrase, given the existence of the preceding clause. We think this is unlikely, given Pereira’s own translation, which does not suggest ellipsis of ‘come’.

empty of lexical content. It does not express the location, and may or may not express a continuative aspectual value.<sup>14</sup>

- (29) *Libyan Arabic* (Pereira 2008: 441)  
 gāfəd                      yādi  
 BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM there  
 ‘Il est là-bas.’  
 ‘He is over there.’
- (30) *Libyan Arabic* (Pereira 2008: 351)  
 ʔədnān gāfəd                      bərra l-fətra                      hād-i  
 Adnan BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM abroad DEF-moment.SGF DEM-SGF  
 ‘En ce moment, Adnan est à l’étranger.’  
 ‘Adnan is abroad at the moment.’
- (31) *Libyan Arabic* (Pereira 2008: 405)  
 gaʔd-in                      f-əl-hōš                      əl-yōm?  
 BE.ACT.PTCP-PL in-DEF-house DEF-day  
 ‘Serez-vous à la maison aujourd’hui?’  
 ‘Are you at home today?’
- (32) *Libyan Arabic* (Pereira 2008: 272)  
 ḥdā-mən gāfəd?  
 near-who BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM  
 ‘A côté de qui es-tu?’  
 ‘Who are you next to?’
- (33) BE & [location phrase]  
 + LOC

Examples such as (34) present their own puzzle, the issue being whether what we see here is a copula use extending beyond locational predication to use in the ascription of contingent or temporary properties, or whether what we see here is the figurative extension of a stative predicate *stay*, *remain* beyond the locational domain, just as in English *John remained/stayed silent throughout this diatribe*. Clearly, distinguishing between these is a more than delicate matter, but we note that (34) is glossed and translated as a copula construction by Pereira (2008).

- (34) *Libyan Arabic* (Pereira 2008: 401)  
 āne gāfəd                      bla                      xədma  
 I BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM without work  
 ‘Je suis sans travail.’  
 ‘I am without work.’

Other examples are more questionable. In (35) Pereira in fact glosses the ACT.PTCP form *gāfəd* as an adverbial ‘still’ (*toujours*), which might suggest that it is only a continuative

<sup>14</sup> Pereira (2008) glosses (29) as ‘stay.ACT.PTCP’ (*restant*), but we suggest that this is actually a copula use, hence our gloss BE.ACT.PTCP. (30), (31) and (32) are glossed as BE.ACT.PTCP (*se trouvant*, *étant* and *se trouvant* respectively).

aspectual value which is maintained.<sup>15</sup> This is however still consistent with viewing it as a temporally-anchored copula.

- (35) *Libyan Arabic* (Pereira 2008: 417)  
 elē-ma      ṣallh-u      fi-h      gāfəd  
 as much as repair.PFV.3-PL in-3SGM.GEN BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM  
 ṣəkl-a      zēy əz-zəbb!  
 appearance.SGM-3SGM.GEN like DEF-dick  
 ‘Ils ont beau le réparer, ça a toujours l’air d’être une grosse merde!’  
 ‘However much they repair it (i.e. no matter what they do to repair it), it still  
 looks rubbish/crap!’

Given this fact about Libyan, an anonymous reviewer rightly asks how we might resolve the question of whether *gāfəd* in the examples above has a true copula function, or simply represents a figurative extension of *stay/remain* to mean something like *is still*? They observe that since expressions such as *stay*, *remain* and *is still* involve a presupposition that the state holds as a continuation of a previous state, and a simple copula such as *is* lacks this presupposition, we might use a context to test where such a presupposition is ruled out, to test whether *gāfəd* is still felicitous. The examples in (36), suggested by the reviewer as counterparts to (30) and (34) respectively, are such contexts, and hence provide further evidence for the conclusion that we are indeed dealing with a copula function of *gāfəd*.

- (36) a. *Libyan Arabic* (pc, Aicha Saad)  
 ʕədnān ʕamr-a      mā sāfar,      bas tawwa gāfəd  
 Adnan life-3SGM.GEN NEG travel.PFV.3SGM but now BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM  
 bərra  
 abroad  
 ‘Adnan has never travelled before, but now/at the moment he is abroad.’
- b. *Libyan Arabic* (pc, Aicha Saad)  
 kin-t      dīma na-xdim      bas tawwa gāfəd      blā  
 be.PFV-1SG always 1-work.IPFV.SG but now BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM without  
 xidma  
 work  
 ‘I used to always work, but I am now without work.’

The conclusion that can be deduced from the above array of data and usages of *gāfəd* is that there seems to be clear evidence for a locative copula use of this ACT.PTCP form in this variety, apart from broader semantic bleaching of the lexical posture predicate itself. Furthermore, in relation to the copula function, there may additionally be some evidence of extension beyond locative predicative constructions.

## 5.2 Chadian

Chadian Arabic (for which a major source is Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968, a pedagogical/descriptive manual) is another variety in which the ACT.PTCP form *gāfəd* **does not** mean ‘sitting’ at all, as is also the case with its verbal counterpart. Rather, it is used as a locational verb ‘be present’, i.e. ‘is situated/is located/exists’, as illustrated through (37) below.

<sup>15</sup> Other dialects have developed distinct means with which to express a durative/continuative ‘still’ reading.

- (37) *Chadian Arabic* (Rubin 2005: 139)  
 mūsa gāʔid  
 Moussa be present.ACT.PTCP.SGM  
 ‘Moussa **is (there)/exists.**’

In this variety too, it is thus clear from the outset that the lexical predicate *gāʔid* has undergone a significant degree of bleaching and widening. Beyond such bleached uses of the lexical function of *gāʔid*, we find many examples of *gāʔid* with locational predicates, both examples which can be construed as expressing a more permanent location (38)–(39), and those expressing temporary or contingent locations (40). The subject in such structures can be both animate and non-animate. The following examples illustrate this for both declaratives and interrogatives. Once again we choose to gloss the copula function of *gāʔid* in this variety as BE.ACT.PTCP.

- (38) *Chadian Arabic* (Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968: 112)  
 al-ʔūtel gāʔid yārib  
 DEF-hotel.SGM BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM West  
 ‘The hotel is towards the West.’
- (39) a. *Chadian Arabic* (Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968: 346)  
 ta-ʔrafa wēn as-sūq gāʔid?  
 2SG-know.IPFV where DEF-market.SGM BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM  
 ‘Do you know where the market is?’<sup>16</sup>
- b. *Chadian Arabic* (Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968: 201)  
 zamān l-ekōl gāʔid fi wēn?  
 PST DEF-school.SGM BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM in where  
 ‘Where was the school?’
- (40) a. *Chadian Arabic* (Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968: 210)  
 mā gāʔid fi jēb-i  
 NEG BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM in pocket-1SG.GEN  
 ‘It is not in my pocket.’
- b. *Chadian Arabic* (Kontzi 1986: 23)  
 ar-ruḥ hana ar-rabb gāʔid fōg-i  
 DEF-spirit.SGM of/GEN.MRKR DEF-Lord BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM on-1SG.GEN  
 ‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me.’ Luke, 4: 18

It is worth noting that the examples above are not simply semantically bleached lexical usages meaning ‘stay’ or ‘remain’. Even though they are all locational clauses, they do not have the additional “continuative” nuances which would follow on that view.

*gāʔid* is clearly an optional strategy with such locative PPs, occurring optionally with locational predicates of all sorts, in both declarative and interrogative clauses. As observed specifically for (41b) (*Where are you?* is surely asking about a contingent/temporary location), the presence of a zero copula is also available in the context of temporary locational predications, and hence a zero copula is possible for both temporary and

<sup>16</sup> An anonymous reviewer asks whether it is possible to drop the locative copula in this embedded context, in contrast, as is possible in root contexts such as (41) below. While we do not have any data to show whether *gāʔid* can be dropped in locative embedded structures, it seems to us that the copula behaves uniformly across root and embedded clauses.



permanent locations. The observed split distribution of *gāʿīd* and the zero copula parallels that discussed for Maltese.

- (41) a. *Chadian Arabic* (Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968: 99)  
 al-mūzē    ∅ fi ʔīd-ak                      az-zēnāy  
 DEF-museum ∅ in hand.SGM-2SG.GEN DEF-left.SGM  
 ‘The museum is to your left.’
- b. *Chadian Arabic* (Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968: 97-99)  
 wēn    ∅ is-sūq/bēt-ek/ʔint?  
 where ∅ DEF-market/house-2SG.GEN/you  
 ‘Where is the market/your house?’ / ‘Where are you?’

The plethora of examples above are all locative PPs. The examples which we have of non-locative uses of otherwise locative prepositions are ones with *min* ‘from’, which expresses origin in such constructions and hence a permanent or characteristic property, rather than a temporary (or permanent) physical location. The examples that we have ((42)–(43)) involve a null copula, which is consistent with what we seem to see here in terms of an emerging split copula system.

- (42) *Chadian Arabic* (Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968: 186)  
 human min wēn?  
 they from where  
 ‘Where are they from?’
- (43) *Chadian Arabic* (Abu Absi & Sinaud 1968: 126)  
 ʔana min tšād walākin zamān musāfir  
 I from Chad CONJ.but long time travel.ACT.PTCP.SGM  
 ‘I am from Chad but have been abroad for a long time.’

The above data concludes our observations about the emerging distribution of the copula function of *gāʿīd* from the available Chadian data.

### 5.3 Levantine region

Above we have demonstrated that locative copula uses, with a possible extension to some non-locational predications as well, as in Libyan Arabic, is present in dialects other than Maltese, with a concomitant loss of the central lexical meaning of ‘sitting’. This lexical meaning is preserved in some other dialects. The question arises as to whether the development of the locative copula use goes hand in hand with the loss of the ‘sitting’ meaning for *gāʿīd* ‘sit.ACT.PTCP’. We will below see that this is not a necessary prerequisite and indeed that *gāʿīd* is synchronically emerging as a copula in the locative constructions of a number of vernaculars where *gāʿīd*, as well as its associated verb-form, concurrently still maintain their lexical meaning ‘sitting’ and ‘sit’, respectively. The example in (44), from Palestinian Arabic (specifically Kufr al-labad, Tulkarem), illustrates the ambiguity which results synchronically from the development of *gāʿīd* as a locative copula and the concurrent maintenance of the lexical ‘sitting’ meaning in this variety.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> As expected, it is only the non-lexical reading that is compatible with something like *birkūḍīn* ‘running about’.

- (44) *Palestinian Arabic* (pc, Mohammed Al-labadi)  
 in-niswān kāʔd-at barra  
 DEF-woman.PL sit.ACT.PTCP-PLF outside  
 ‘The women are sitting outside.’  
 ‘The women are outside.’

Examples from the Levantine region denoting the emergence of a copula function include (45), denoting an *ad hoc* temporal location, in Negev Arabic. Further Palestinian data in (46) illustrates how beyond temporary locational predications (such as (44)), time-stable ones can also appear in the context of the optional use of *kāʔid*.<sup>18</sup>

- (45) *Negev Arabic* (Henkin 2010: 138)  
 has-sammāk alliy gāʔid ʔala ʔanb al-baħar  
 DEM.DEF-fisherman who BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM on side DEF-sea  
 ‘this fisherman who is by the sea’
- (46) a. *Palestinian Arabic* (pc, Mohammed Al-labadi)  
 makkā (kāʔd-i) fis-saʔwdiya  
 Mecca.SGF BE.ACT.PTCP-SGF in.DEF-Saudi Arabia  
 ‘Mecca is in Saudi Arabia.’
- b. *Palestinian Arabic* (pc, Mohammed Al-labadi)  
 ʔingiltra (kāʔd-i) fi ʔarb ʔurubba  
 England.SGF BE.ACT.PTCP-SGF in West Europe  
 ‘England is in the West of Europe.’

Use of this form is equally possible in negative clauses involving a time-stable locational predication, as in (47) (the negative marker *miš* may come before or after the copula, but appears only once).

- (47) *Palestinian Arabic* (pc, Mohammed Al-labadi)  
 makkā (miš) kāʔd-i (miš) fil-baħar il-ʔabyad  
 Mecca.SGF NEG BE.ACT.PTCP-SGF NEG in.DEF-sea.SGM DEF-white.SGM  
 il-mitwassit  
 DEF-middle.SGM  
 ‘Mecca is not in the Mediterranean Sea.’

#### 5.4 Kuwaiti/Hijazi – Gulf region

Other varieties which preserve the ‘sit’ lexical meaning of *gāʔid* include those in the Gulf, such as Kuwaiti, Qatari and the varieties of Saudi Arabia.<sup>19</sup>

The examples in (48) illustrate the ACT.PTCP with the ‘sitting’ meaning from Qatari, Kuwaiti, and Urban Hijazi, while (49) provides examples of the more desemanticised or bleached reading of ‘staying’ or ‘remaining’ in Kuwaiti and Urban Hijazi.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Once again we choose to gloss the copula function as BE.ACT.PTCP along with its inflections. We continue this practice below for instances of this active participle form when it functions as a copula.

<sup>19</sup> Persson (2009) explicitly justifies treating these dialects together, in her work on circumstantial modifiers.

<sup>20</sup> The Urban Hijazi data which Basulaiman (2018) provides are all taken from a corpus of authentic, contemporary vernacular materials.

- (48) a. *Qatari Arabic* (Persson 2009: 249)  
 al-marra ti-y ʔinda-na niswān gāʔid-īn hinī  
 DEF-woman 3SGF-come.IPFV with-1PL.GEN women sit.ACT.PTCP-PL here  
 ‘The woman comes to us, the women are sitting here.’
- b. *Kuwaiti Arabic* (pc, Duha Alaskar)  
 y-šarx-ūn maʔa baʔaḍ wu-hma gāʔd-īn ʔala  
 3-shout.IPFV-PL with each other CONJ-3PL.NOM sit.ACT.PTCP-PL on  
 al-qanafa  
 DEF-sofa  
 ‘They shout at one another while they are sitting on the sofa.’
- c. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 30)  
 niħna mā ġī-na al-baħar ʔašān ni-ʔḍal  
 we NEG come.PFV-1PL DEF-beach in order to 1PL-remain.IPFV  
 gāʔd-īn  
 sit.ACT.PTCP-PL  
 ‘We did not come to the beach to remain sitting.’
- (49) a. *Kuwaiti Arabic* Persson (2009: 248)  
 ʔādi kull wāħid gāʔid b-bēt-uh wa ma  
 normal all one.SGM sit.ACT.PTCP.SGM in-house-3SGM.GEN and NEG  
 le-h šuyl ṭāni  
 have-3SGM.GEN job.SGM other.SGM  
 ‘It’s normal, everyone is staying in his house, having no other job.’
- b. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 44)  
 ʔana illi gāʔd-a fi al-bēt li-ṭ-ṭabīx w  
 I COMP sit.ACT.PTCP-SGF at DEF-house for-DEF-cook.MSD and  
 an-nafīx  
 DEF-blow.MSD  
 ‘I am the one who remains at home for cooking and blowing (the fire).’

The examples of primary interest here are the following from Kuwaiti (pc, Duha Alaskar), demonstrating a further degree of grammaticalisation. In these cases, the distribution of *gāʔid* is that of a locative copula restricted to contingent or temporary locations.

- (50) a. *Kuwaiti Arabic*  
 ʔana (gāʔd-a) fil-mūl  
 I BE.ACT.PTCP-SGF in.DEF-mall  
 ‘I am at the mall.’
- b. *Kuwaiti Arabic*  
 li-shūn (gāʔd-a) ġiddām-ik  
 DEF-plate.PL BE.ACT.PTCP-SGF in front-2SGM.GEN  
 ‘The plates are in front of you.’
- c. *Kuwaiti Arabic*  
 il-akil (gāʔid) bis-saħan  
 DEF-food.SGM BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM in.DEF-plate.SGM  
 ‘The food is in the plate.’

The restriction to temporary locations is shown by the ungrammaticality of the following examples, if the copula *gāʔid* is used.

- (51) a. *Kuwaiti Arabic*  
 ?ingiltra (\*gāʔd-a) fi ʔarb ʔorobba  
 England.SGF BE.ACT.PTCP-SGF in West Europe  
 Intended: ‘England is in the West of Europe.’
- b. *Kuwaiti Arabic*  
 iš-šarkiyya (\*gāʔd-a) fi šāriʔ ...  
 DEF-company.SGF BE.ACT.PTCP-SGF in street ...  
 Intended: ‘The company is in ... street.’

Further evidence illustrating that the use of *gāʔid* does not extend to properties, whether permanent, or temporary, in Gulf dialects, here represented by Kuwaiti, is the ungrammaticality of the data in (52) (pc, Duha Alaskar).

- (52) a. *Kuwaiti Arabic*  
 il-walad (\*gāʔid) ʔawīl miʔil ub-ūh  
 DEF-boy.SGM BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM tall.SGM like father-3SGM.GEN  
 Intended: ‘The boy is tall like his father.’
- b. *Kuwaiti Arabic*  
 ?ihna (\*gāʔd-in) ḥalw-in wāyid hal-ayyām  
 we BE.ACT.PTCP-PL sweet-PL a lot DEM.DEF-day.PL  
 Intended: ‘We are looking really good these days.’

Parallel data illustrating the presence of *gāʔid* in temporary locations is also found in Hijazi (53). Additionally, we also find a broader extension to contingent states in this dialect, illustrated in (54).

- (53) a. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 32)  
 ti-gul humma gāʔd-in fi maḡʔaʔ  
 2-say.IPFV.SG they BE.ACT.PTCP-PL in remote area  
 ‘It’s as though they were in a remote area.’
- b. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 70)  
 ?inta gāʔid ǧuwwat an-nāmussiyya  
 you BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM inside DEF-mosquito net  
 ‘You are inside the mosquito net.’
- c. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 70)  
 gāʔid maʔā-ki  
 BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM with-2SGF.GEN  
 ‘I am/he is with you (F).’
- (54) a. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 42)  
 badal māni gāʔd-a fāḍy-a kida  
 instead of BE.ACT.PTCP-3SGF idle-SGF like this  
 ‘instead of being idle like this’
- b. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 70)  
 kān gāʔid li-waḥd-u  
 be.PFV.3SGM BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM for-alone-3SGM.GEN  
 ‘He was alone.’

- c. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 70)  
 lē gāʕid mibawwiz kida?  
 why BE.ACT.PTCP.SGM grumpy.SGM like this  
 ‘Why are you (being) grumpy like this?’
- d. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 71)  
 gāʕd-a ʕala galb-ak  
 BE.ACT.PTCP-SGF on heart-2SG.GEN  
 ‘You are (being/existing in a given state) against your will.’
- e. *Urban Hijazi Arabic* (Basulaiman 2018: 71)  
 illi gāʕd-a li-lyulb  
 COMP BE.ACT.PTCP-3SGF for-overburden.MSD  
 ‘the one that is overburdened’

The range of data above from some Gulf dialects supports our claim that the posture active participle *gāʕid* is grammaticalising as a copula, even if still in parallel distribution with the null copula strategy. While the Gulf dialects seem to be very clearly grammaticalising the presence of *gāʕid* in temporary locative predications, Urban Hijazi appears to have gone beyond locative constructions, and data is available where the use of *gāʕid* has evidently extended to other contingent states as well.

### 5.5 Data summary

In this section we have suggested that *beyond* the phenomenon of desemanticisation of the lexical predicate into a cluster of meanings in the general domain of ‘remain’ or ‘stay’ (CONTINUE TO BE AT LOCATION), *gāʕid* has developed a copula function within predicational locative structures across non-peripheral/core Arabic vernaculars very similar to the grammaticalisation of *gāʕid* as a copula in (peripheral?) Maltese. Some vernaculars permit both temporary/contingent and permanent/stable locations with *gāʕid*. Others, such as Kuwaiti, distinguish between temporary/contingent locations using a null copula or *gāʕid*, and permanent locations, where *gāʕid* cannot figure. We have also pointed to possible evidence for the extension of this locational copula strategy beyond cases of locational predication in Libyan and in Urban Hijazi. The distribution of what we have argued to be copula uses across this range of dialects indicates that this grammaticalisation is found **both** in vernaculars where *gāʕid* maintains, and in those where it has lost, its original lexical posture meaning of ‘sitting’. Table 3 provides a summary overview of the data presented in the subsections above.

**Table 3:** Distribution of an emergent copula developed from the active participle of the ‘sit’ verb, along with the loss/maintenance of the lexical meaning ‘sit’ for that form.

	Temporary Locations	Permanent Locations	Temporary Properties	Lexical ‘sit’ sense
Hijazi	YES		YES	YES
Kuwaiti	YES			YES
Negev	YES			YES
Palestinian	YES	YES		YES
Chadian	YES	YES		NO
Libyan	YES		YES	NO
Maltese	YES	YES	YES	NO

### 5.6 Implications as to grammaticalisation

While the characterisation in §5.5 summarises the data which we have argued support our claim that an additional copula is emergent within the copula systems of Arabic vernaculars, in what follows we consider what the ramifications of this data are from a diachronic perspective. That is, we seek to understand how the grammaticalisation of a copula that stands in both a morphosyntactic and semantic contrast with the zero copula strategy and the pronominal copula may have come about and developed in the vernaculars. Given the lack of a historical written record for vernacular Arabic, and the fact that this innovation also does not figure in Classical Arabic texts, our methodology in addressing this question is essentially comparative, considering the variation across the different Arabic varieties, but also informed by a typological perspective.

We have argued above that data from a considerable number of different Arabic varieties supports the view that the pre-existing split copula system has undergone further complexification with the emergence of an additional copula form so that the resultant system marks the sorts of semantic distinctions among different types of eventualities which have been described for other copula systems (such as those of some Celtic and Romance languages), often under the label of the distinction between stage-level and individual-level predication.<sup>21</sup>

The backdrop to the innovation is a copula system with a two-way choice between the null and pronominal copula in the present tense. Following the recruitment of the posture active participle *gāʿid* into the system, a three-way split copula system in the present tense emerges. If we consider the distribution of data across the different dialects to be indicative of the trajectory of change in progress, the most striking observation is that all of these dialects allow the presence of the emergent copula with temporary/contingent locations. This possibility remains in free variation with the zero copula strategy. In Maltese, on the other hand, the use of the copula *qiegħed* in such structures is notably itself becoming the default strategy. Beyond this core, there is variability in the occurrence of the newly grammaticalised copula *gāʿid* in locative predicational structures: it is not the case that both time-stable or temporary locational anchorings are found with the newly grammaticalised copula in all dialects, or that inanimate subjects are necessarily found across the board. This sort of variability is of course in the very nature of change in progress.

As a very first approximation, this distribution appears to align itself with what is observed crosslinguistically from a typologically diverse set of languages. First, suppletion and renewal of copula elements is a common phenomenon, within and beyond Indo-European (Irslinger to appear: 6). Second, posture verbs are found crosslinguistically as a source of copula elements (Lesuisse & Lemmens 2018: 44, Devitt 1990: 104). Third, crosslinguistically, it is a very common pattern for languages to encode nominal predication in a distinct manner from locational predication (Stassen 1996: 482, Irslinger to appear: 38), and bodily posture verbs are frequent sources for the encoding of locational predication

<sup>21</sup> A reviewer has suggested to us that there might be similarities between the split copula system of Arabic which we describe here and the split present tense marking of Marathi as discussed by Deo (2019). This is a very interesting suggestion which deserves further investigation. However there are some significant differences. In the Marathi system which Deo describes, present tense sentences obligatorily mark the contrast between particular (event in progress, deictic) and characterising (habitual or generic) claims by the choice of (copula/auxiliary) verb, and this pattern is found in copular clauses and also in periphrastic aspectual constructions. Deo argues that the choice of a particular specialised auxiliary (*āhe*) anchors the interpretation of a clause to the time and world of utterance. Hence Marathi lexicalises a distinction between particular and characterising claims which is covert in languages like English. A point of commonality between the Marathi data and the Arabic patterns which we discuss is that the innovated, specialised present tense auxiliary derives historically from the verb *acch* 'sit', however the contrast introduced into the system differs in a number of respects from the one we see in Arabic, both in terms of the semantic distinctions it encodes and its syntactic domain of application. We leave further investigation of this suggestion for future work.

(Newman 2002: 7). The suggested trajectory which we envisage for Arabic, rooted in the salience of the locational element of the meaning of a posture verb is hence consistent with what we know about the diachronic development of copulas from posture verbs crosslinguistically. A case in point is the grammaticalisation of the Portuguese, Catalan and Spanish copula and auxiliary *estar* from Latin *stāre* ‘stand’ and its gradual encroachment on *ser*, a well-researched case of posture verb grammaticalisation, where locational predication has played a key role (see e.g. Falk 1979, Vañó-Cerdá 1982, Remberger & González-Vilbazo 2007, Brucart 2012, Carvalho 2010, and many others). The historical record here supports a trajectory in which the newly grammaticalising element (*estar*) first established its place alongside *ser* in locative constructions, and then extends to other uses, as Batllori & Roca (2012: 86) observe: “We can see that in the twelfth century there is feature syncretism concerning the use of *ser* and *estar* to express the same value only in locative constructions, whereas in the thirteenth century it [*estar*] extends to stage-level copulative, resultative passive, and existential sentences ... a syntactic change that conveys replacement of *ser* by *estar* is taking place progressively” [in locatives and stage-level predicate copulatives] Batllori & Roca (2012: 86).

The salience of the locational element is pinpointed as a key factor in the development of copula forms in a range of languages, including Spanish and Turkish in Devitt (1990). The grammaticalisation path which is at the core of his proposal is shown in (55), which takes account of the fact that a language may go on to develop a general copula. For Turkish, which does not generally make use of a copula in the present tense, Devitt (1990) suggests that the notion of temporariness has led to the development of a modal, presuppositional flavour associated with the use of the addition of the enclitic *-dir*, itself derived from the posture verb meaning ‘stand’, as shown in (56) (see Devitt 1990: 113).

(55) posture verb > locative verb > copula with a temporary sense > general copula

(56) posture verb > locative verb > copula with a temporary sense > presuppositional modal

In the light of these considerations and the central role of locative predications in the data we have presented, we suggest that a natural hypothesis is that the grammaticalisation is triggered primarily through a semantic extension from the encoding of mere ‘sitting’ to ‘be located somewhere’, where a PP predicate is most natural. This eventually gave rise to the copula + locative PP combination, alongside the pre-existing zero copula structures. Irrespective of the (internal) distinct stages the different Arabic dialects display, in their grammaticalisation and establishment of *gāʿid* as a locative copula, there is clear evidence from the same dialects for further extension to a general contingent/*ad hoc* marker, as it comes to express particular/temporary states. Hence we suggest that the Arabic dialects provide evidence for the cline of incremental change and grammaticalisation shown in (57), although we leave open for further research a more fine-grained understanding of the temporally-anchored nature of the predicates.

(57) posture verb > locative copula > copula with a temporary sense

It should not be taken as a deficiency to the path being posited here that a further developmental extension to a temporary state function of the copula follows the prior establishment of the locative function of the copula, independent of the variation observed

in the use of the locative copula itself. Rather, it is in fact in line with observations from different Romance languages with split copula systems, where fine-grained studies (Remberger & González-Vilbazo 2007; Batllori & Roca 2012) of these languages reveal subtle differences over the choice of copula, and which do not invalidate the general trajectory proposed. While for instance Portuguese and Spanish both make use of the split between the copulas *ser* ‘be’ and *estar* ‘contingent BE’ to express a distinction between permanent versus temporary states in the context of adjectival predicates, their individual use of the copulas in locative structures differs. While Spanish makes use of *estar* in *all* locative contexts, Portuguese *still* uses both copulas in locative contexts, such that *ser* is maintained to mark permanent locations, while *estar* is used in the contexts of temporary physical locations (58).<sup>22</sup>

- (58) a. *Portuguese* (Devitt 1990: 108)  
 A casa e no Flamengo.  
 DEF house is(SER) in.DEF Flamengo  
 ‘The house is in Flamengo.’
- b. *Portuguese* (Devitt 1990: 108)  
 João está em casa.  
 João is(ESTAR) in house  
 ‘João is in the house.’

The split in the locative constructions in Portuguese thus essentially reflects the same split that obtains in the context of adjectival predicates. A similar, if not exactly parallel split use of the copulas in locative constructions, is also true of Catalan (see Batllori & Roca 2012). The pattern of difference which we see between these Romance languages, including in particular the locative use of *estar* in Spanish, is relevant to the use of the new copula with *all* locational predicates in Maltese. These differences show that as the languages or dialects develop along the same grammaticalisation cline, different nuances or components of meaning become or remain focal. For some discussion of this in relation to Romance, see Remberger & González-Vilbazo (2007).

The path in (57) that we reconstruct as the developmental path for Arabic involves a change from an active participial of a posture predicate to a copula with various functions and domains of applicability, with variability across the dialects. This path of change, we claim, did not take place on its own. Rather, there is evidence of a distinct but related development in which the same posture predicate maintains its status as a *lexical* predicate, yet undergoes distinct stages of semantic bleaching as hypothesised in (59). These different stages are posited on the basis of the range of variation that exists across the dialects, where for instance we observe the loss of a ‘sitting’ reading in Libyan and Chadian, varieties which use the same lexical form to mean ‘exist, be situated’. On the other hand, Levantine and Gulf dialects make use of *gāʿīd* with both a maintenance of the original ‘sitting’ sense, as well as the more desemanticised sense of ‘staying, remaining’. In these dialects a further bleached existential reading is however not (as yet) recorded.

- (59) ‘sitting’ posture predicate > ‘staying, remaining’ > ‘existential be’

<sup>22</sup> *Still* because diachronically, in Romance, the copula *ser* (< *essere* ‘be’) was the copula originally used in such contexts. This is prior to the later emergence and grammaticalisation of a strategy using *estar*, giving rise to the morphosyntactic encoding of nuanced semantic distinctions.



If (59) is on the right track, it displays key parallels with the cline in (57) as the ‘staying, remaining’ is clearly closely related to the locative copula part of the latter path. We keep (59) distinct from (57) for our Arabic data, because the former are **not** copula functions of *gāfid*, but rather, bleached lexical extensions, and the development of an existential use does not in principle need to be correlated with the emergence of a predicative copula. However, the fact that those dialects which do have the existential use also have the copula use is suggestive of a close connection, raising the possibility that the locative copula stage in the trajectory in (57) might actually encompass two stages, the first of which involves the bleached lexical extension to a ‘stay, remain’ meaning which also underpins the development of the existential usage. This possibility is discussed in more detail in Camilleri & Sadler (under review).

## 6 Parallel split systems internal to Arabic

A temporary/permanent or stage-level/individual-level distinction in the domain of copula constructions has been said to have grammaticalised in other peripheral varieties of Arabic, such as the Anatolian variety of Sason Arabic (Akkuş 2016; Akkuş & Benmamoun 2016). (See also the descriptions of Qartmin and Kinderib in Jastrow 1978; Jastrow 1999). Akkuş (2016) shows that Sason Arabic has extended the use of the past tense forms of copula ‘be’ to the present tense in the non-3rd person, but shows an alternation between two sets of forms in the 3rd person. Table 4 gives the paradigm of the copula system in Sason. A set of forms corresponding to cliticised forms of the 3rd person pronoun are used as general copula predicators (60), and additionally, a set of forms which Akkuş takes to be derived from the verbal copula, are available, but restricted to use with temporary or stage-level properties, as illustrated in the contrast in (61).

- (60) a. *Sason Arabic* (Akkuş & Benmamoun 2016: 164)  
 sabi raxu-ye  
 boy sick.SGM-COP.3SG  
 ‘The boy is sick.’ stage-level
- b. *Sason Arabic* (Akkuş 2016: 9)  
 koys-e-ye  
 handsome-SGF-COP.3SG  
 ‘She is handsome.’ individual-level

**Table 4:** The verbal and pronominal copula paradigm in Sason Arabic.

Morphosyntactic values	Past	Present
3SGM	kan	ye (general)
		ku (stage-level only)
3SGF	kane	ye (general)
		ki (stage-level only)
3PL	kano	nen (general)
		kænnen ~ kænno (stage-level only)
2SGM	kənt	kənt
2SGF	kənte	kənte
2PL	kənto	kənto
1SG	kəntu	kəntu
1PL	kænna	kænna

- (61) a. *Sason Arabic* (Akkuş 2016: 9)  
**kū** raxu  
 COP.3SGM sick.SGM  
 ‘He is sick.’ stage-level
- b. *Sason Arabic* (Akkuş 2016: 9)  
 \***kū** koys  
 COP.3SGM handsome.SGM  
 ‘He is handsome.’ individual-level

Jastrow (1978: 300) argues that the emergent (stage-level) *k*- forms (which in Sason happen to be restricted to the 3rd person) are not derived from the perfective ‘be’ verbal forms. Rather, he analyses them to be pseudo-verbal forms, where the source is a demonstrative spatial copula *kū*, onto which pronominal forms expressing the subject have attached. If this is the source, rather than the 3rd person perfective forms of *kan* ‘be’ as suggested by Akkuş, then what we have is a copula emerging from a locative/spatial lexical item, very similar to what we have argued for in relation to the data in the different Arabic varieties discussed in this paper, particularly as we have also demonstrated how in some of the varieties *gāfiḍ* has bleached its ‘sitting’ posture meaning to a more locational sense of ‘remain, stay, be present’ (CONTINUE TO BE/EXIST AT LOCATION).

An anonymous reviewer points out that “Jastrow’s explanation for the *k*- forms leaves the conjugation patterns unexplained. It makes it accidental that the present form of the verbal ‘be’ forms are identical to the past in Sason. Moreover, it does not straightforwardly explain why the third person cells are different from the first and second person”. Our understanding of what may be going on, consistent with the interesting speculations in Rubin (2005: 142), is the following. The 1st/2nd person *k*- forms in the present-tense paradigm are direct imports from the past tense paradigm, and are hence etymologically verbal. The motivation for that was to (redundantly) fill a deficiency in the present tense paradigm, which was diachronically only filled in by pronominal forms in the 3rd person cells, as is still the case synchronically in other (non-Anatolian) varieties. It is then only the emergent *k*- forms (*ku*, *ki*, and *kænnen/kænno*) in the 3rd person, which are in fact morphologically distinct from the 3rd person verbal forms in the past tense paradigm, that are etymologically non-verbal and which are the *only* forms restricted to occurring only with stage-level predicates. More specifically, the suggestion is that they have come about via the grammaticalisation of an original demonstrative copula that was itself formed out of the fusion of demonstrative *k*- + independent (subject) pronouns. In Sason, these emergent grammaticalised forms, which are synchronically verbal, and which are also used as aspectual auxiliaries expressing the progressive, happen to be limited to the 3rd person. Full paradigms of these emergent forms are on the other hand available in for instance, Kinderib, with the same semantic distribution. Under this characterisation of what is taking place in Sason, there is nothing accidental, from a morphological perspective. What may be striking is the outcome, which is essentially a split copula function that only targets the 3rd person, thus creating a split copula system that is itself sensitive to, and in tandem, the result of, a person-based paradigmatic split, which was after all already present in the paradigm, but one which at first only gave the basis for the suppletive pattern: pronominal form in the 3rd person cells versus verbal form in the 1st/2nd cells. With the emergence of the *k*- forms restricted to the 3rd person, the split that existed earlier in the paradigm was simply *reinforced*, yet this time with the additional expression of a semantic distinction, rather than a mere morphological one.

Algerian Arabic has also developed a distinct system in which a temporally-anchored copula has emerged. This overt copula has grammaticalised out of the fossilised perfective 3SGM form of the lexical predicate *raʔā* ‘see’, here glossed as BE + inflection. Morphologically, it behaves like an impersonal or pseudo-verbal form in taking non-NOM pronominal suffixes coding for the subject. While this grammaticalised item itself is present in a number of different vernaculars, ranging from the Maghreb to the Negev and Yemeni, it has a variety of uses (Taine-Cheikh 2013 for an overview). For this reason we focus on the Algerian facts, mainly because to our knowledge, it is the function of this item in Algerian that has been referred to directly as a copula, over and above its presentational (and other) uses.

Rubin (2005: 43) illustrates how in Algerian, “this copula has the rough meaning of ‘be located, be in a state/condition, exist’”. This can be seen in the data below.

- (62) a. *Algerian Arabic* (Boucherit 2002: 62)  
 rā-ni            fi-l-kuzina  
 BE-1SG.ACC in-DEF-kitchen  
 ‘I am in the kitchen.’
- b. *Algerian Arabic* (Boucherit 2002: 86)  
 ma-rā-hu-š            ʔand-i  
 NEG-BE-3SGM.ACC-NEG at-1SG.GEN  
 ‘He is not at my house.’
- c. *Algerian Arabic* (Tapiéro 2002: 14)  
 hūwa rā-h            f-əl    ḥammām  
 he    BE-3SGM.ACC in-DEF bath-house  
 ‘He is at the bath-house.’

The locative context in which the copula can appear seems to be restricted to temporary locations; a permanent location as the one in (63) is ungrammatical with *rā* + inflection. A parallel broad split in the use of *ra* for temporal situations, and  $\emptyset$  for more permanent situations is something which Cohen (1912: 252) identifies also for the Algerian Jewish Arabic of Algiers.

- (63) *Algerian Arabic (Dellys)* (pc, Lameen Souag)  
 l-otel    (\*rā-hu)    jayy            qoddam t-téatr  
 DEF-hotel BE-3SGM.ACC come.ACT.PTCP.SGM in front DEF-theatre  
 ‘The hotel is in front of the theatre.’

There are however other examples, such as (64), which suggest that the copula function has extended beyond a pure locative use.

- (64) a. *Algerian Arabic* (Tapiéro 2002: 14)  
 mohammed rā-h            b-xēr  
 Mohammed BE-3SGM.ACC with-good  
 ‘Mohammed is well.’
- b. *Algerian Arabic* (Tapiéro 2002: 14)  
 rā-ha            mrēḍ-a  
 BE-3SGF.ACC sick-SGF  
 ‘She is sick.’

- c. *Algerian Arabic (Dellys)* (pc, Lameen Souag)  
 anā lli rā-ni r-rāyis tāf el-jemʿiyya  
 I COMP BE-1SG.ACC DEF-president.SGM of DEF-association  
 ‘It is I who is (currently) the president of the association.’

Furthermore, the contrasts in the data in (65)–(66) also suggest that the choice between the use of the zero copula strategy and the presence of the copula *rā* + inflection in Algerian has grammaticalised in a split system around the same distinction, with the zero strategy employed for time-stable/characteristic properties and *rā* + inflection giving rise to a particular/temporary reading. This bears a lot of similarity to the Maltese data in (23) discussed above, so that we see that a similar distinction has emerged from different sources in these different varieties.

- (65) a. *Algerian Arabic (Dellys)* (pc, Lameen Souag)  
 ʃ-ʃif ∅ sxun bezzaf f-ed-dzayer  
 DEF-Summer.SGM ∅ hot.SGM very in-DEF-Algeria  
 ‘Summer is very hot in Algeria.’
- b. *Algerian Arabic (Dellys)* (pc, Lameen Souag)  
 rā-hi s-sxana bezzaf ɖokka  
 BE-3SGF.ACC DEF-heat.SGF very right now  
 It is really hot right now.
- (66) a. *Algerian Arabic (Dellys)* (pc, Lameen Souag)  
 in-nas ∅ mlah  
 DEF-people.SGF ∅ good.PL  
 ‘The people/folks are good.’
- b. *Algerian Arabic (Dellys)* (pc, Lameen Souag)  
 rā-hi n-nas mlah had in-nhār-at  
 BE-3SGF.ACC DEF-people.SGF good.PL DEM DEF-day-PLF  
 ‘The people are good these days.’

From this Algerian data set it seems clear that the emergent copula strategy using *rā* + inflection is a development leading to the realisation of similar parallel distinctions just discussed for both Anatolian varieties, as well as the other varieties making use of the *gāfid* strategy. Although the lexical base at the start is not a posture verb but a verb of perception (‘see’), the path of incremental progression hypothesised in (57) also holds for the grammaticalisation that we see in Algerian Arabic, holding of (temporary) locations and contingent properties and standing in paradigmatic opposition with the use of the zero copula.

Beyond the fact that these three parallel systems (albeit from distinct sources) are emerging in different Arabic varieties, involving the morphosyntactic realisation of similar distinctions in the copula system, there is an intriguing further common denominator among these three parallel split copula systems. The active participle copula *gāfid* (along with the shortened *qed* counterpart in Maltese), the special 3rd person stage-level copula forms in Sason, and the pseudo-verb *rā* + inflection in Algerian, in particular, **also** function as auxiliaries, combining with imperfective verb-forms to express PROGRESSIVE ASPECT (see also Borg 1988 for Maltese) as well as other, related ASPECTUAL values, such as the HABITUAL, depending on the lexical aspect of the verb. On this point, see Fabri (1995) for

Maltese; Camilleri & Sadler (2017) for an initial overview across Arabic vernaculars in general, Akkuş (2016) for Sason, and Marçais (1956); Grand'Henry (1972); Cohen (1989); Boucherit (2002); Rubin (2005) for parallel observations with respect to the employment of *rā* + inflection in the context of verbal or active participle forms, and the prefixes *ka/ku* etc. prefixed onto imperfective verb-forms in Algerian. A discussion of how the copula and the auxiliary functions are related falls beyond the scope of this work (see Camilleri & Sadler under review for a view).

## 7 Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that a number of Arabic vernaculars are developing an additional split in the copula system with the emergence of a new copula form derived from the active participle of a posture verb root with the etymological meaning of 'sit', *gāʿid* (and its associated variant forms) that has itself also bleached and desemantised, and given rise to additional lexical senses associated with this active participle form. These innovations present across a number of Arabic vernaculars lead to a copula system akin to the split system which has emerged in Maltese. We have shown that this split, and its further entrenchment within a system of a given variety, is unrelated to whether we have complete loss of the postural, lexical meaning of *gāʿid* or not. We have suggested that Maltese and Urban Hijazi may be seen as displaying parallel developments in the copula system, even if the details of the copula's grammaticalisation in both varieties is not the same; Maltese has broadly lost the lexical postural reading for the active participle form, which has purely grammatical meanings, while Urban Hijazi maintains lexical uses of the active participle associated with the lexical meaning 'sit', as well as other more bleached uses. Furthermore, while Maltese demonstrates evidence for the grammaticalisation of *qieghed* as a locative copula across the board, this is not the case in Urban Hijazi, where we only find evidence for the use of *gāʿid* in particular/temporally-anchored locations. In arguing that the Arabic dialects are developing or have developed an additional copula based on a form of a posture verb, we make the first explicit claim that such a grammaticalisation has taken place in Semitic. We have suggested a grammaticalisation path leading to this copula form, based on a cross-dialectal comparative method. This aligns with the core essence of parallel developmental paths hypothesised for other typologically-distinct languages, particularly ones with a stronger written tradition.

Looking beyond the grammaticalisation of the copula derived from a posture verb root, we have drawn a parallel with two other emerging split copula systems in other Arabic varieties, involving different grammaticalised items. While we see different degrees of grammaticalisation, and differences from variety to variety in the precise domain of the new copula, we see that the core characteristics determining the distribution implicate the distinctions between locational and non-locational predication, and inherent, i.e. characteristic versus temporally-dependent properties.

## Abbreviations

1 = 1st person, 2 = 2nd person, 3 = 3rd person, ACC = accusative, ACT.PTCP = active participle, BE = copula, BI = Irish copula verb, COMP = complementiser, CONJ = conjunction, COP = copula, DEF = definite, DEM = demonstrative, EPENT.VWL = epenthetic vowel, F = feminine, GEN = genitive, INTERROG = interrogative, IPFV = imperfective, M = masculine, MRKR = marker, MSD = maşdar (nominalisation), NEG = negation, NOM = nominative, PST = past, PFV = perfective, PL = plural, PROG = progressive, SFORM = short form, SG = singular

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## Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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