

# THE ROLE OF NOMINALISATION IN THETICITY: A SIKUANI CONTRIBUTION

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Since Kuroda (1972) put forth the linguistic correlates of the categorical / thetic judgment distinction borrowed from logics, a number of theoretical and typological works have appeared on the question, often invoking a variety of typological data. Surprisingly, descriptions of particular languages merely pay cursory attention, if any, to its impact on the syntactic structure of the clause.

The aim of this paper is to draw attention to some data that seem to contribute to the theoretical and typological discussion on, respectively, the grammatical status of the thetic constructions together with the syntactic elements they involve, and the variety of formal means that languages resort to for rendering the thetic / categorical distinction. The issue at stake is, given a piece of information made of a manner of existing<sup>1</sup> plus its central participants, what — if any — are the grammatical correlates that formally distinguish utterances packing the information in an informationally indifferentiated chunk, from those picking out a participant in such a way that the rest of the information is delivered as bearing on such participant. Therefore, one particular — but far-reaching — aspect of the question is the status, at the pragmatic and syntactic levels of structure, of noun phrases that in thetic and categorical constructions express the core participants of the predicate.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, the treatment of "subject" noun phrases seems to have been, more often than not, unsatisfactory.

The Sikuani data show that the thetic predication can reorganise the clause material in a way that pays no attention to any particular noun phrase, "subject" or other. On the contrary, the expression of the participants is compacted altogether with the expression of their manner of existing so as to, prototypically, deliver all of the information in a single word. A simple and elegant way of rhematising the whole propositional content of the intended utterance.<sup>3</sup> As a

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<sup>1</sup> I intend this phrase to be a cover term for all types of meanings conveyed by predicates: actions, events, processes, states, properties, qualities, inclusion, identification, and so on.

<sup>2</sup> Although Sasse (1987) puts some emphasis in assessing that *thetic statement* and *predication* are mutually exclusive notions, I will not refrain from speaking about "thetic predicates", for if, admittedly, the rationale of predication is what, in informational terms, categorical utterances do about particular entities and specimens of these entities, i.e. referents, thetic utterances do much the same about the world (see below).

<sup>3</sup> "Rheme" is the term of the Prague school of Linguistics for the most salient constituent of the clause as to the informational load it carries. Its companion term is "theme", representing some unit of existence to which the rheme connects some semantic content. A "resident theme" (my terms) is one that remains operational for a stretch of discourse in the speaker's mind and — so the speaker assumes — in the hearer's mind. Equivalents of

consequence, all the information, including that concerning the participant which in a categorical utterance would qualify for the pragmatic status of theme, becomes rhematic. The form of such a single and rich word is a verb nominalisation, or a truncated version of it. Nominalisation of both types is a highly regular and productive mechanism in Sikuani grammar, and a pervasive form of expression in discourse. The reason seems simple: nominalisation is needed for putting a propositional content (*i.e.* a manner of existing plus its participants) in a formal mold of: argument noun phrase ("completives"), object of postposition, adnominal dependent, and nominal predicate. As predicates, nominalisations are not restricted to thetic environments. What I term "full nominalisation" (section 4) serves also for categorical predications by which a referent is either included in a class (**my son is a winner**) or equated (identified) to another referent (**my son is the winner**). Nominalisation seems to be attested as the privileged formal device to achieve thetic clauses in various languages or linguistic families, among them Austronesian, Arabic (Sasse 1987) and Trio (Carlin 2011).

The paper opens with an overview of some basic grammatical features of Sikuani (section 2), intended — together with a few considerations on finiteness (section 3) — to set the stage for what comes after, to wit: the form of full nominalisations and their syntactic positions in the clause (section 4). Among the latter, particular attention is paid to the predicate position (section 5), for that is where I delve into thetic nominal predications, by means of their contrast to the inclusive / equative nominal ones. The special form of nominalisations that appears to be exclusively dedicated to make up thetic predications is derived, by morphological subtraction, from that of full nominalisation (section 6). A few clues for the non-argumental nature of noun phrases in this clause type are uncovered. In the following section I briefly look into two constructions that at first sight seem to compete, functionally, with nominalisation in terms of information strategies, while, contrary to nominalisations, preserving most of the syntax of the basic clause (section 7). I dedicate the closure to comment upon the issues involved and the contribution Sikuani can make in this respect (section 8).

## 2 TYPOLOGICAL PROFILE

Sikuani is spoken in the savanna areas of the middle Orinoco, Colombia and Venezuela, by more than 25,000 people. A member of the small Guahibo linguistic family, Sikuani is an agglutinative language, with a fair amount of polysynthetic features (mainly pronominal verb affixes, incorporation, loose constituency, no strong syntactic hierarchisation of arguments). Examples (75) and (80) below contain fine instances of morphologically complex words.

Parts of speech with lexical content divide into verbs, nouns, adjectives (a very small class) and adverbs. Nouns are sensitive to number, gender, class and person. Noun phrases are headed on their right. They host, besides their head, determiners, modifiers and, with a divalent ("inalienable") head, an internal argument. Verbs can be mono-, di- or tri-valent.<sup>4</sup>

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the "resident" computer metaphor are: "active" (Chafe 1987; Lambrecht 1994), "established" (Sasse 1987), "ratified" (Lambrecht 2000), and "storage address" (Schwartz 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Sikuani lacks adpositional objects of verbs. Thus, the homonymy between monovalent and intransitive on one hand, and between divalent and transitive on the other hand, is perfect. However, given the interesting generalisations that can be achieved in certain languages by assuming a single concept of valence for verbs and nouns (see such a language in Queixalós 2005; as for Sikuani, *cf.* the notion of "internal argument", particularly in noun phrases headed by a nominalised verb), I will be using the "...-valent" terms instead of the more common "intransitive / transitive".

Their arguments appear as noun phrases without overt case marking and also in verbal morphology.<sup>5</sup> Third person is zero in verb morphology but has phonological realisation on nouns heading noun phrases that contain an adnominal argument. No copula is needed for nouns to lexically head a predicate, which can be existential ('X exists'), inclusive ('X belongs to the class of Y'), or equative ('X has the same referent as Y'). Monovalent verbs consist of two classes, one aligning its sole argument with the argument expressing the agent in divalent verbs, the other aligning its sole argument with that of nominal predication. Trivalent verbs align the argument expressing the recipient with the object of divalent verbs. Basic verbal clauses display a uniform accusative alignment in verb morphology — nominative suffixes and accusative prefixes<sup>6</sup> — and in "S(O)V" constituent order, for example in (1).

- (1) **howibo<sub>1</sub> naehawanü<sub>2</sub> Ø<sub>2</sub>-tanakaena-Ø<sub>1</sub>**  
 wind trees 3ACCUSATIVE-BreakFUTURE-3NOMINATIVE  
 'the wind will break the trees'

Although not in a very straightforward way, arguments feature some syntactic properties that allow to posit the existence in this language of a subject, a direct object, and an indirect object.<sup>7</sup> The accusative noun phrase moves rather freely to post-verbal position. Argumental noun phrases are, given appropriate pragmatic conditions, easily elided.

A word on passive is in order here, since it will help to understand several important assumptions made below about nominalisations. Passive voice is only available in predicates with all third person participants, provided that the patient is highranked on some saliency hierarchy (semantic or pragmatic). It entails no morphological promotion of the participant appearing as accusative argument. This is a direct consequence of the morphological device used for the purpose of achieving passivisation: a first person inclusive suffix **-tsi** preempts the nominative slot in verb pronominal morphology. Far from referring anymore to a first person inclusive, the suffix in the passive is void of reference (indexed <sub>0</sub> in the examples).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In my usage the term *argument* denotes a linguistic expression — including structurally required zeroes —, without any reference to some "deeper" level of participant structure mid-way between semantic roles and linguistic expressions. As said, Sikuani features some non-configurational properties such as argumenthood of pronominal affixation on the verb. On the other hand, noun phrases coreferring with these affixes are constrained for some morphosyntactic properties in a way that adjuncts are not. I therefore adopt for this language something like an intermediate stand between Jelinek's (1984) version of non-configurationality (affixes are arguments, noun phrases are adjuncts) and Baker's (1995; noun phrases — including *pro*'s — are arguments, affixes are agreement), a view that seems to boil down to Steele's (1989) analysis of subject in Luiseño: the linguistic expression of a core participant can distribute over more than one surface locus (nothing in common with so-called "discontinuous constituents").

<sup>6</sup> Nominative on verbs on noun & verboid predicates accusative on divalent predicates

1	<b>-hü</b>	<b>-nü</b>	<b>ne-</b>
2	<b>-me</b>	<b>-mü</b>	<b>ka-</b>
3	<b>-Ø</b>	<b>-Ø</b>	<b>Ø-</b>
1 plural inclusive	<b>-tsi</b>	<b>-tsi</b>	<b>naka-</b>

The marking of plural is restricted to 1 exclusive and 2: the person affixes are supplemented by a **pa-** prefix at the leftmost end of the verb. Its coupling with either a person prefix or suffix is a matter of semantic or pragmatic saliency of the referred participant.

<sup>7</sup> As can be inferred from the previous lines, trivalent verbs in this language are of the kind involving so-called primary / secondary objects (Dryer 1986). I do not adhere to this terminology; see Queixalós (2003) for a discussion.

<sup>8</sup> As an anonymous reviewer accurately suggests, the suffix in passives should be glossed as a mere operator of passive voice, which is what it plausibly has been reanalysed as. However, sticking to the "1 plural inclusive"

Since no formal intransitivising device is present, the third person accusative prefix, standing for the only extant argument, can be retained from the active form. As for syntax, the noun phrase coindexed with the accusative prefix accesses a kind of weak rhematisation which, among arguments, is a prerogative of subjects.<sup>9</sup> The agent participant may surface as a markless adjunct.

Besides the passive agent adjunct, adverbial expressions are either lexical adverbs, case marked noun phrases or postpositional phrases. TAM categories appear through verb morphology, auxiliaries and particles. (For a full description of the grammar of Sikuani, see Queixalós 1998 & 2000).

### 3 FINITENESS

Predicates in basic clauses display different degrees of finiteness. This entails that they lend themselves to a prototype characterisation in terms of finiteness. Building on Givón (2011 & this volume) I suggest in Queixalós (2012a) a list of nine properties that converge toward what one would want to hold as the prototypical finite clause:

- i. the speech act is declarative;
- ii. the information structure is categorical;
- iii. the polarity is affirmative;
- iv. the lexical head of the predicate is a verb;
- v. the verb denotes a manner of existing that is an action;
- vi. the predicate is saturated for all its valence slots;
- vii. spatial and temporal settings are provided, preferably deictic in nature;
- viii. the denoted manner of existing has temporal structure (aspect);
- ix. the speaker gears the denoted proposition to his/her own communicational strategies (facets of information structure other than ii., modality, evidentiality).

As we will see, the opposite counterparts of several among these properties directly inform aspects of the thetic constructions in Sikuani. To begin with, let us examine a mood suffix that is the touchstone of the distinction between finite and non-finite in verbal clauses. This two-morpheme paradigm contrasts virtual and factual moods,<sup>10</sup> (2)-(3), and its phonological form generates ten morphological classes of verbs proper, (4).

#### (2) **nawia-ta-Ø**

return-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE  
' he returned '

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gloss allows me — and the reader — to keep trace of the mechanism at work in building a passive: the blocking of the nominative-agent morphological slot.

<sup>9</sup> The "rhematisation" of subjects, which will be dealt with in section 7, has to be distinguished from what I call "focus": emphasis on the selection of one particular item out of a substitution class (contrastive focus). Sasse (1987) is right in keeping this notion distinct from presentational thetic predicates (see footnote 28). Now, "topic": a posited segment of the world in which the proposition conveyed by the clause will have truth value and will be relevant. (Definitions for focus and topic are inspired from Chafe (1976), but the notion of relevance is my responsibility.) This is the reason for my using "theme" instead of Givón's (1984:170) "topic".

<sup>10</sup> Factual / virtual can grossly be equated to realis / irrealis. Concerning Sikuani, notwithstanding, for some minor reasons related to nominalisations "virtual" seems to me more accurate than "irrealis" (there can be instances of 'hunter' that owe nothing to irrealis: the association between the property and the referent is a fact, and the manner of existing that motivates the property has repeatedly been a real event).

(3) **apo-nawia-tsi-Ø**

NEGATION-return-VIRTUAL-3NOMINATIVE

'he didn't return '

(4)	factual	virtual	
<b>pitsa</b>	<b>-pa</b>	<b>-pae</b>	'exit'
<b>horo</b>	<b>-ka</b>	<b>-kae</b>	'sew'
<b>hu</b>	<b>-na</b>	<b>-nae</b>	'climb'
<b>bahako</b>	<b>-ba</b>	<b>-bi</b>	'greet'
<b>ü<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>-wa</b>	<b>-wi</b>	'be jealous'
<b>uxu</b>	<b>-ne</b>	<b>-ni</b>	'blow'
<b>ewe</b>	<b>-ta</b>	<b>-tsi</b>	'wait'
<b>t</b>	<b>-ane</b>	<b>-ae</b>	'see'
<b>h</b>	<b>-ia</b>	<b>-e</b>	'stow'
<b>h</b>	<b>-ua</b>	<b>-ue</b>	'swim'

Other verbs lack the mood suffix. The majority are monovalent. Semantically all of them, mono- and di-valent, show a low level of agentivity (a few divalents are **itoya**, 'hate', **asiwa**, 'keep for oneself', **amahitsinae**, 'dream of', **itsi**, 'do' vs. verb proper **exa-na**, 'make'). Since no semantic feature can exclusively identify this class (lots of verbs proper are non-agentive, stative, or psychological), I label them by a semantically opaque term, "verboids".

Since the presence of virtual mood is a main symptom of finiteness loss in verbs, I will briefly outline its basic occurrences. Virtual mood is triggered by the following contexts: negation, as just seen, future, (6), prospective, (7), participle, (8), gerund, (9), and nominalisation (see below). Optative provides the only minimal pair between both moods. Compare (5) with (2):

(5) **nawia-tsi-Ø**

return-VIRTUAL-3NOMINATIVE

'let him return '

(6) **nawia-tsi-ena-me**

return-VIRTUAL-FUTURE-2NOMINATIVE

'you will return '

(7) **nawia-tsi-hitsia-Ø**

return-VIRTUAL-PROSPECTIVE-3NOMINATIVE

'he is about to go away '

(8) **ta-yapiüt-ae-itane**IRELATIONAL-know-VIRTUAL-symbol<sup>12</sup>

'symbols known to me '

(9) **humatabünahi-nae-ya po-na-Ø**

BeSad-VIRTUAL-GERUND

GoAway-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE

'he went away sadly '

<sup>11</sup> /ü/ is a high back unrounded vowel [ɯ].

<sup>12</sup> This example will be resumed in section 4 with more complete morphemic glosses.

Except in the future, (6), in all the contexts in which the virtual mood occurs — for instance with negation, (11) — the verbal nominative paradigm is replaced by that appearing on verboids and predicate nouns, (13) and (12) respectively (see footnote 6). Compare with the finite verb paradigm in (10).

- (10) **nawia-ta-me**  
return-FACTUAL-2NOMINATIVE  
'you returned'
- (11) **apo-nawia-tsi-mü**  
NEGATION-return-VIRTUAL-2NOMINATIVE  
'you didn't return'
- (12) **aura-mü**  
BeAshamed-2NOMINATIVE  
'you were ashamed'<sup>13</sup>
- (13) **taxüinato-mü**<sup>14</sup>  
MySon-2NOMINATIVE  
'you are my son'

I now turn to the basics of nominalisation morphology and syntax.

#### 4 NOMINALISATION

As said, nominalisation shows a high degree of regularity and productivity. Its other central feature is that it systematically recycles morphological material primarily designed for purposes other than nominalisation, such as mood (see previous section), adnominal person<sup>15</sup> (as in (14)-(15)) and gender/class (as in (16)-(17)). This means that no morpheme in the language has the nominalisation of verbs as its primary function (Cubeo is another language lacking specialised nominalising material, Chacon 2012 295).

- (14) **pe-taxu**

<sup>13</sup> In examples, any form glossed as a verb but unsegmented for mood is a verboid.

<sup>14</sup> This example will be resumed in section 5 with more complete morphemic glosses.

<sup>15</sup> There are two adnominal person paradigms, whose members are phonologically short vs. long. Their occurrence on nouns relies on the latter being divalent vs. monovalent. Respectively:

1	<b>ta-</b>	<b>taha-</b>
2	<b>ne-</b>	<b>niha-</b>
3	<b>pe-</b>	<b>piha-</b>
1 plural inclusive	<b>wa-</b>	<b>waha-</b>

Similarly to verb morphology, the marking of plural is restricted to 1 plural exclusive and 2: the person prefixes are supplemented by a **pa-** prefix at their left. Nominal valence is the morphosyntactic correlate of the semantic distinction inalienable / alienable "possession". Thus, the long forms denote basically possessors. The short forms denote entities much more abstractly related to the entity described by the noun hosting the prefix. In other words, such nouns are inherently relational (and their semantics is by far larger than body parts and kinship). For this reason I will gloss the short forms as *relational*, avoiding terms that might evoke any notion of possession. If the noun phrase contains an embedded noun as adnominal dependent, the third person of both paradigms corefers with that dependent.

3RELATIONAL-foot  
'his foot'

- (15) **piha-mo**  
3POSSESSIVE-canoe  
'his canoe'

- (16) **ainawi-wa**  
WaterSpirit-FEMENINE  
'water spirit female'

- (17) **tsema-bo**  
tobacco-CYLINDRICALOBJECT  
'cigar'

Queixalós (2012b) is a detailed account of the morphological and syntactic aspects of Sikuani nominalisation. Here we will content ourselves with a short survey.

The nominalised form of a monovalent verb consists of the latter's lexical root, followed by the virtual mood suffix and preceded by the relational person prefix. This prefix stands for the referent expressed in finite clauses by the nominative argument. At the right end appears a gender-class suffix. The nominalised divalent verb enters the same morphological mold but retains from its finite form the accusative prefix. The gender-class suffix denotes the entity which the nominalisation is oriented to: masculine, feminine, animate collective, non-animate and class for participant oriented nominalisations (i.e. oriented toward the participant expressed by the nominative argument of the finite verb counterparts), (18)-(21).

- (18) **ta<sub>1</sub>-po-nae-nü<sub>1</sub>**  
1RELATIONAL-go-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE  
'I, the walker (man speaking)'

- (19) **pe<sub>1</sub>-ka-huna-tsi-wa<sub>1</sub>**  
3RELATIONAL-2ACCUSATIVE-call-VIRTUAL-FEMENINE  
'she, your caller'

- (20) **pe<sub>1</sub>-e-kae-hawa<sub>2</sub>**  
3RELATIONAL-sit-VIRTUAL-NonANIMATE  
'his sitting place'

- (21) **pe<sub>1</sub>-sü-nae-ra<sub>1</sub>**  
3RELATIONAL-ferment-VIRTUAL-LIQUID  
'fermented liquid'

The non-animate is also used in non-oriented forms, i.e. "action" nouns, (22) and (23). As a rule of thumb we can say that the gender-class suffix corefers with the relational person prefix, (18), (19) and (21).

- (22) **pe<sub>1</sub>-po-nae-hawa<sub>0</sub>**  
3RELATIONAL-go-VIRTUAL-NonANIMATE

' his / her departure '<sup>16</sup>

- (23) **pe<sub>1</sub>-ka-huna-tsi-hawa<sub>0</sub>**  
 3RELATIONAL-2ACCUSATIVE-call-VIRTUAL-NONANIMATE  
 ' his / her call to you '

However, it does not in action nouns, (22) and (23), passive nominalisations, (24), and in case of semantic incompatibility with the entity represented by the relational person prefix (20), (see below example (41) for another instance of semantic incompatibility, and also of a passive on finite verbs which (24) can be compared with; more information about ways as to how to compute the coreference between the gender-class suffix and the personal prefixes can be found in Queixalós 2012b).

- (24) **pe<sub>0</sub>-Ø<sub>1</sub>-huna-tsi-nü<sub>1</sub>-tsi<sub>0</sub>**  
 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-call-VIRTUAL- MASCULINE-1PLURALINCLUSIVE  
 ' the called one '

As said in the previous paragraph and the examples show, the retrieval of finite clause arguments by the person prefixes aligns accusatively. Lexical arguments appear in the position of adnominal arguments, coreferring either with the accusative prefix of divalent verbs,<sup>17</sup> (25) and (26), or the relational person prefix of monovalent verbs, (27) and (28). Hence, adnominal noun phrases as arguments of nominalised verbs align ergatively.

- (25) **tulikisi<sub>1</sub> pe<sub>2</sub>-Ø<sub>1</sub>-komua-kae-nü<sub>2</sub>**  
 collar 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-buy-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE  
 ' collar buyer '

- (26) **mapa<sub>1</sub> pe<sub>2</sub>-Ø<sub>1</sub>-phara-bi-hawa<sub>0</sub>**  
 VegetalCloth 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-BeatForSoftening-VIRTUAL-NONANIMATE  
 ' vegetal cloth making '

- (27) **awiri<sub>1</sub> pe<sub>1</sub>-ho-bi-nü<sub>1</sub>**  
 dog 3RELATIONAL-BarkInHuntingParty-VIRTUAL- MASCULINE  
 ' barking dog (lit.: the barking one which is a dog) '

- (28) **newüthü<sub>1</sub> pe<sub>1</sub>-phia-bi-hawa<sub>0</sub>**  
 jaguar 3RELATIONAL-whistle-VIRTUAL-NONANIMATE  
 ' jaguar's whistling '

A nominalised verb is syntactically a noun. Its "nouniness" is granted to it by the gender-class suffix, **-nü** and **-hawa** in the immediately previous examples. I regard the gender-class suffix as the functional head of the nominalised form: 1) nominalisations lacking this suffix do not generate noun phrases (see below *circa* (70)); 2) in noun predicates taking a gender-class suffix, the latter agrees with the gender-class of the subject noun phrase:

- (29) **Nusalia Sikuani-nü**  
 Nusalia SikuaniIndian-MASCULINE

<sup>16</sup> Here as well as in the passive of (21) below, zero index stands for "non-referential". Anticipating on the passive example, let me point to the fact that in the latter the adnominal third person prefix is also zero-indexed, since in nominalisations it takes its reference from the nominative argument of the active verb.

<sup>17</sup> With one exception in the data (see Queixalós 2012b), where the adnominal complement noun phrase corefers with the relational person prefix of the divalent nominalised verb (agent).



'Nusalia is a Sikuani man '

- (30) **pe-kuharu-bi-nü** **Sikuani-nü**  
3RELATIONAL-teach-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE SikuaniIndian-MASCULINE  
 'the teacher is a Sikuani man '

- (31) **Kalaba Sikuani-wa**  
Kalaba SikuaniIndian-FEMENINE  
 'Kalaba is a Sikuani woman '

- (32) **pe-kuharu-bi-wa** **Sikuani-wa**  
3RELATIONAL-teach-VIRTUAL-FEMENINE SikuaniIndian-FEMENINE  
 'the teacher is a Sikuani woman '

- (33) **\*pe-kuharu-bi-wa** **Sikuani-nü**  
3RELATIONAL-teachh-VIRTUAL-FEMENINE SikuaniIndian-MASCULINE

3) the gender-class suffix occupies the same morphological slot than a lexical noun modified by a participle, compare examples (25)-(28) to (8), renumbered here as (34);

- (34) **ta<sub>1</sub>-Ø<sub>2</sub>-yapüt-ae-itane<sub>2</sub>**  
1RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-know-VIRTUAL-symbols(generic)  
 'symbols known to me '

As a consequence, the formal parallel between participles and adjectives is perfect: both are bound forms modifying a noun head as in (34) and

- (35) **tsikiri-itane**  
small-symbols  
 'small symbols '

And for both, a gender-class suffix replacing a noun head lends a full nominalisation.

- (36) **ta<sub>1</sub>-Ø<sub>2</sub>-yapüt-ae-hawa<sub>2</sub>**  
1RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-know-VIRTUAL-NONANIMATE  
 'things known to me '

- (37) **tsikiri-hawa**  
small-NONANIMATE  
 'small things '

Several participles have turned into adjectives by lexicalisation.

As a noun, a nominalised verb has access to the syntactic position of head of a noun phrase. We can see nominalisations as subject and object in (39), as object of postposition in (41), as adnominal argument in (43), and as predicate in (45). (Each example is preceded and supplemented by another example bearing a lexical noun phrase in the same syntactic position than the nominalisation to be illustrated.)

- (38) **[Nusalia]<sub>1</sub> [Hialai]<sub>2</sub> Ø<sub>2</sub>-huna-ta-Ø<sub>1</sub>**  
Nusalia Hialai 3ACCUSATIVE-call-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE  
 'Nusalia called Hailai '

- (39) **[pihawa pe-Ø-xai-nae-nü]<sub>1</sub>...**  
 HisWife 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-have-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE  
**...[pe-n-ue-hawa]<sub>2</sub> Ø<sub>2</sub>-kopa-ta-Ø<sub>1</sub>**  
 3RELATIONAL-cry-VIRTUAL-NonANIMATE 3ACCUSATIVE-leave-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE  
 'the husband stopped crying (lit.: the wife owner stopped his crying)'
- (40) **peri Ø-x-ane-Ø** **[hiopebeno] yahawa**  
 cassava 3ACCUSATIVE-eat-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE FishFlour COMITATIVE  
 'he ate cassava with fish flour'
- (41) **bowitsanü pina [pe-Ø-taha-bi-nü]...**  
 FishSp. HEARSAY 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-roast-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE  
**...yahawa Ø-puenete-ta-tsi**  
 COMITATIVE 3ACCUSATIVE-leave-FACTUAL-1PLURALINCLUSIVE  
 'she was left (behind) together with the fish *sp.*, the roasted one, they say'<sup>18</sup>
- (42) **[hara] matakabi**  
 TurtleSp. time  
 'time of turtle *sp.*'<sup>19</sup>
- (43) **[pe-Ø-u-bi-hawa] matakabi**  
 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-sow-VIRTUAL-NonANIMATE time  
 'time for sowing it'
- (44) **baharaponü [taxünato]<sup>20</sup>**  
 ThisGuy MySon  
 'this guy is my son'
- (45) **baharaponü [pexanialiwaissi apo-pe-Ø-xai-nae-nü]**  
 ThisGuy NiceTalk NEGATION-3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-have-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE  
 'this guy is a tough fellow (litt.: ...is no nice-talk owner)'
- As expected, such a formally powerful and functionally useful device is prone to endure lexicalisation:
- (46) **pe-nahoro-bi-nü**  
 3RELATIONAL-blow-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE  
 'shaman'
- (47) **pe-nahapa-tsi-wa**  
 3RELATIONAL-HaveOne'sFirstMenses-VIRTUAL-FEMENINE  
 'nubile girl'
- (48) **pe-Ø-kuharu-bi-wi**

<sup>18</sup> This example contains 1) a passivised finite verb, 'leave', and 2) a nominalisation without coindexing between the gender-class suffix and the relational person prefix, due to semantic incompatibility between the (indefinite) agent participant of 'roast', represented by the prefix, and the entity represented by the suffix, the fish (the hearer knows that the whole form, hence the suffix, refers to the fish thanks to the sequence of apposed noun phrases).

<sup>19</sup> Period in which this species of turtle lays its eggs.

<sup>20</sup> This example and the following will be resumed in section 5 with more complete morphemic glosses.

3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-teach-VIRTUAL-COLLECTIVE  
' teachers '

With these basic elements of nominalisation in mind, we can have a closer look at the construction involved in example (45), where the nominalised verb stands in predicate position.

## 5 NOMINAL PREDICATION

No copula is present in nominal predicates, see (44). But as far as form goes, this example requires a nominative suffix, as does (45). The paradigm of nominative suffixes in nominal predication is phonologically different from its verbal predication counterpart (footnote 6). Except for first plural inclusive and third persons, identical in both predications (-**tsi** for first inclusive, and zero for third person). Strictly speaking, thus, (44) should be segmented and glossed as (49). With a second person, (13) renumbered (50).

(49) **baharaponü**, **taxü nato-Ø**<sub>1</sub>  
ThisGuy MySon-3NOMINATIVE  
' this guy is my son '

(50) **taxü nato-mü**  
MySon-2NOMINATIVE  
' you are my son '

This is true for the two extensional acceptances of the noun phrase 'my son' contained in the predicate '(be) my son': either a referent, which lends an equational predicate 'you are my (only) son', or a class of referents, which lends an inclusive predicate 'you are (one of) my son(s)'. Along with many languages but contrary to others (mainly non-configurational, *e.g.* Kamayura, Seki 2000), Sikuani does not make any formal difference between these two semantic types of predicates.

A conspicuous peculiarity attached to the existential clause is that its predicate appears to be deprived of the nominative suffix slot, a fact that, in Sasse's (1987) terms, equals to downgrading its predicative character.<sup>21</sup> Exceptions result from the pragmatic need to avoid critical underspecification of referents or even mismatches in their identification, brought about by inherent gaps in the morphological tools that nominalisation uses for the retrieval of arguments (see Queixalós 2012b for details).<sup>22</sup>

I depart here from Queixalós (2000 310) on the issue of the putative occurrence, in existential predicates, of a non-referential third person nominative suffix, a potential equivalent of expletives English **it** or French **il** in impersonal and / or existential clauses. The question bears on the relevance of zeroes in morphology since, as we know, third person in non-existential predicates allegedly surfaces as -Ø. The fact is, these predicates pick out a paradigm of four persons, of which first, second, and first plural inclusive receive overt phonological realisation whereas third person remains unrealised. In other words, the lack of phonological realisation

<sup>21</sup> Note that in Serbian thetic predicates, the agreement is partial (Casielles & Progovac 2009), and in Lelemi the person-number-gender agreement is freezed to a first person singular form whose referent is no participant in the manner of existing denoted (Schwartz 2010).

<sup>22</sup> There is, however, one possible piece of evidence against the assumption of nominative-less existential predicates: passive (see below section 6).

does have meaning, precisely third person. Hence, we have indeed a third person zero morpheme here (this holds for accusative prefixes also). The same line of reasoning entails, *a contrario*, that for existential predicates there would be no reason to postulate a zero suffix: *since no overt person suffix ever occurs, there is no morphological paradigm there*. In other words, existential predicates are nominative-less. A corollary is that in an existential clause there is no noun phrase that would be external to the predicate but, at the same time, internal to the clause core morphosyntax (*i.e.* the predicate and its arguments). Differently from nominal equational-inclusive predication, nominal existential predication is not categorical but thetic (or sentence-focused, in Lambrecht's terms, 1987). As such, it has no argument that can be characterised by a cluster of formal properties such as external-nominative-subject.

Thus, as a predicate, **taxü nato** enters two formally different structures, an equational-inclusive clause (51), and an existential one (52), the difference between both, at the immediate constituency level, relying on the ability for the former / inability for the latter, to contain an external argument noun phrase. (Braquets in (51) are intended to remind the reader that noun phrases are elidable in argument positions. In (52) they mean, in association with the star, that the presence of the noun phrase is incompatible with the intended existential meaning.) The same contrast holds for predicates made out of nominalised verbs, (53)-(54).

- (51) **(baharaponü<sub>1</sub>) taxü nato-Ø<sub>1</sub>**  
 ThisGuy MySon-3NOMINATIVE  
 ' he (this guy) is my son '

- (52) **(\*baharaponü) taxü nato**  
 ThisGuy MySon  
 ' there is my son '

- (53) **(baharaponü<sub>1</sub>) pexanialiwaishi<sub>2</sub> pe<sub>1</sub>-Ø<sub>2</sub>-xai-nae-nü<sub>1</sub>-Ø<sub>1</sub>**  
 ThisGuy NiceTalk 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-have-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE-3NOMINATIVE  
 ' he (this guy) is a nice fellow '

- (54) **(\*baharaponü) pexanialiwaishi<sub>2</sub> pe<sub>1</sub>-Ø<sub>2</sub>-xai-nae-nü<sub>1</sub>**  
 ThisGuy NiceTalk 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-have-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE  
 ' there is a nice fellow '

The interesting thing here is that despite the fact that the predicate in (54) has no external argument, the verb 'have' *does entail* a participant 'owner', represented by the relational person prefix. The speaker in (54) is not speaking *about* anybody endowed with the characteristic of being 'a nice-talk owner'. At best he / she speaks about the situation, or the world, characterised as containing such an entity. But this needs not preclude the possibility of some participant being involved and mentionned — including an 'owner' in (54) — by means of an expression perfectly apt to refer. In (54) such a referring expression<sup>23</sup> is the relational person prefix, as the comparison between the respective relational person prefixes in (54) and (56) shows. (The latter is somewhat awkward to translate in a natural style. The scene is a girl arriving back home after a several-day runaway in the woods:)

- (55) **Nusalialia<sub>2</sub> ne<sub>1</sub>-Ø<sub>2</sub>-hitsi-pae-wa<sub>1</sub>-mü<sub>1</sub>**  
 Nusalialia 2RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-want-VIRTUAL-FEMENINE-2NOMINATIVE  
 ' you are Nusalialia's lover '

<sup>23</sup> ... "referring" meaning 'apt to refer', not necessarily 'referential, *i.e.* actually referring'.

(56) **ne<sub>1</sub>-naxua-bi-wa<sub>1</sub>-he!**

2RELATIONAL-GetLost-VIRTUAL-FEMENINE-MIRATIVE

'here you are, you lost one!'

Turning to noun phrases, such an expression relating to a referent whose semantic role would — given a verb — entitle it to appear as the clause theme noun phrase, but which enters a construction in itself unable to allot such a pragmatic position, is reminiscent of how Kuroda (1972) characterises the **ga** noun phrase in Japanese, as in the classical pair (57). In both a. and b. the noun phrase denotes a referent involved as the performer of the manner of existing 'run'. But in b., contrary to a., the referent is not what the speaker intends to provide information about. It is not the clause theme. In b. the communicative purpose of the speaker is to bring about a piece of information concerning, once again, the situation or the world.<sup>24</sup> It just happens that the 'runner' is part of this information.

(57) a. **inu wa hasitte iru**b. **inu ga hasitte iru**

dog running is

'a/the dog is running'

The well observed affinity between constructions with existential function — 'the situation / world is such that X is located in it' — and what has been called thetic constructions after the Brentano-Marty-Kuroda and (to some extent) Sasse tradition, rests on this: the speech style of the speaker of a natural language being different from that practised by logicians, he / she will skip as informationally immaterial the theme portion — in italics — of '*the situation / world is such that X is located in it*' (for "location", see the notion of "stage-topic" in Erteschik-Shir 2007: 26), or reduce it to minimal dummy — but often locative etymologically — material (English **there**, French **y**), yielding a clause that in informational terms is made of the sole rheme, and in syntactic terms is made of one single immediate constituent, the predicate. This assumption is tantamount to saying that in such a clause all the participants of the denoted manner of existing are in the rheme — which is but common for those surfacing as objects and some intransitive subjects in many languages (Lambrecht 2000; DuBois 1987). The formal counterpart of this should be that the expression of the participants must be located either *within* the predicate or *outside* the clause core syntax, nothing preventing them from being simultaneously located in both — cross-reference index and noun phrase respectively. In a nutshell: the lexical head retains its arguments; none of them is privileged at the informational level; to the extent that the category of subject can be seen as the syntactic reflection (grammaticalisation) of the theme ("topic"; Mithun 1991; Shibatani 1991; Givón 1997), none of the arguments is a subject.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> In Lewis' (2001) terms (his "subject" equates my theme), thetic predicates are in fact categorical, but they have "abstract subjects".

<sup>25</sup> Of course, some authors (e.g. Rosengren 1997) conceive of the thetic / categorical distinction as a direct sub-product of information structure: there would be no such thing as thetic clauses; instead, we would have a mere particular reading — given some semantic and / or contextual conditions — of sentence-focused, "topic-less", clauses. Thanks to an anonymous reader for pointing to me, for a comparable line of thought, Wehr 2000. I must confess that, up to this point and in terms of communicative strategies, I do not clearly see the difference — other than terminological — either between thetic and sentence-focus clauses, or between categorical and predicate-focus clauses. Now, if the issue is whether the thetic / categorical distinction — or what it might be termed — impinges on the morphosyntactic make up of the clause (Rosengren seems to deny such a thing), Sikuani truncated nominalisation (see below) looks very much as evidence that the answer is "yes".

The Sikuani examples (54) and (56) show that the referents ‘the nice talk owner’ and ‘the lost one’, that is, the referents of the participant which in a verbal clause would surface as subject, are expressed by means of pronominal verb morphology. Thus, a nominalisation within an existential predicate serves as a powerful grammatical tool to deliver a bunch of information in a simple, compact, and informationally non-hierarchized way. In fact, in one single syntactic constituent, the predicate, which can reduce to a single phonological word provided that no additional material is required for the correct identification of the participant(s), as in (56), repeated here as (58), to be compared with (52), repeated here as (59).

- (58) **ne<sub>1</sub>-naxua-bi-wa<sub>1</sub>-he!**  
 2RELATIONAL-BeLost-VIRTUAL-FEMENINE-MIRATIVE  
 'here you are, you lost one! '

- (59) **taxüinato**  
 MySon  
 'there is my son '

Functionally, three pragmatic motivations trigger the use of thetic predicates: existential (see examples above), presentational<sup>26</sup> (60), and the scoop effect, precisely that produced by a piece of “out of the blue” information which is not only new but spectacular enough for being worth of some special formal means of transmission, (61).

(Old woman calling her lover alligator:)

- (60) **Tsebokoli! Ne-ø-x-ae-hawa-yo!** **Aha!**  
 Tsebokoli 2RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-eat-NONANIMATE-DIMINUTIVE TakeIt!  
 'Tsebokoli! Here's your food! Take it!'

(Jaguar entering a house where someone is complaining:)

- (61) **pe-tsaba-na-ru-kae-wa-he!**  
 3RELATIONAL-decay-FACTUAL-BeHanging -VIRTUAL-FEMENINE-MIRATIVE  
 'What's that?! There is a woman decaying in the hammock! '

The scoop effect is an important component of the thetic predicate functions. It accounts for the often noticed affinity between nominalisations and exclamatives (*e.g.* in Austronesian, Kaufman 2011, Potsdam 2011): 1) there is some urgency in delivering the whole of the information, and nominalisations provide a compact device for speaking about a set of participants and their manner of existing; 2) the news is astounding and deserves emphatic delivery. As predictable, this kind of predicate will often carry the mirative morpheme, as in (61). Now, nominalisations only take care of participants and their manner of existing. As with categorical predicates (62), a supplement of non-argumental information can always be made available — mainly circumstantial, aspectual, and modal — through adverbs and particles, (63) and (64).

- (62) **wamo Kutsikutsi merawi pe-ponapo-nae-nü-ø**  
 OurGrandFather Kutsikutsi night 3RELATIONAL-wander-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE-3NOMINATIVE  
 'our grand-father Kutsikutsi is a night wanderer '

<sup>26</sup> Lambrecht (1987).

- (63) **merawi pe-ponapo-nae-nü-behe**  
 night 3RELATIONAL-wander-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE-DUAL  
 'there was a couple of night wanderers'

- (64) **pe-bisia-hawa baha saya**  
 3RELATIONAL-BeFilthy-NONANIMATE CONCLUDED JustThat  
 'there were only filthy things (to eat)'

As long as a satisfying identification of the participant(s), including the would-be subject,<sup>27</sup> can be supplied by the person and gender-class affixes, along with the verb root contributing with the manner of existing, one-word thetic predicates are a convenient device. What, then, if the mentioned material does not suffice for a correct identification of a given participant? This can be a common problem with 'action nouns', since the nominalised form is not oriented to any participant in particular and consequently the gender-class suffix, non-animate, does not provide any clue to the identity of the participant linked to the would-be subject. In such a situation, the speaker will resort to a constituent able to host lexical information, a noun phrase. That noun phrase is apt to appear as the adnominal argument inside the larger noun phrase headed by a nominalised verb and allotted in predicate position. We have seen several examples of such a construction. Let us here resume two of them for an illustration.

- (65) **newüthü<sub>i</sub> pe<sub>i</sub>-phia-bi-hawa**  
 jaguar 3RELATIONAL-whistle-VIRTUAL-NONANIMATE  
 'jaguar's whistling'

- (66) **mapa<sub>i</sub> pe<sub>i</sub>-Ø<sub>i</sub>-phara-bi-hawa**  
 VegetalCloth 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-BeatForSoftening-VIRTUAL-NONANIMATE  
 'vegetal cloth making'

As these examples remind us, there is a restriction on the retrieval of lexical arguments of the nominalised verb within its noun phrase: the only noun phrases of the finite clause that can appear as adnominal lexical arguments of the nominalised verb are those representing the unique argument of the monovalent verb and the accusative argument of the divalent verb. The way the language seems to find its way out of this limitation imposed, within the predicate constituent, on the lexical retrieval of the nominative argument of divalent verbs, leans on a special, reduced, form of nominalisations.

In other words, nominalisation is used, among several purposes, to pack a complex piece of information — manner of existing and its participant(s) — into a single constituent, more often than not a single word, by way of 1) building a noun phrase that contains all the information to deliver, and 2) putting that noun phrase in the predicate position of a thetic-existential clause. Much in the style, for instance, of what French achieves through subordinations internal to the noun phrase in:

- (67) **y a [1 la soupe<sub>N</sub> [2 qu'il faut [3 que j'éteigne 3]<sub>COMPLEMENT CLAUSE</sub> 2]<sub>RELATIVE CLAUSE</sub> 1]<sub>NP</sub>!**<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *I.e.* that participant which in the basic, finite, clause counterpart would appear as subject. It is unfrequent to find authors cautious enough to explicitly draw this distinction. Sasse (1987) and Carlin (2011) are among them.

<sup>28</sup> A similar example in Lambrecht (1987), **y a JEAN qui est arrivé**, lit. 'there is John that has arrived', purportedly illustrates a means of introducing a new participant in French by using a "biclausal" sentence made of "a presentational ("existential") clause followed by a (non-restrictive) relative clause". But: 1) functionally this construction is perfectly apt to render the mere scoop effect (see (56)), even with an accented **Jean**, and 2) formally its structure is rather a noun phrase [**Jean qui est arrivé**], 'John that has arrived', within an existential

lit. 'there is the soup that I ought to turn off!'

So far, we have seen that nominal predications are split into two formally distinct classes: inclusive / equative on one hand, and existential on the other hand. As a predicate, the existential construction is defective as to its capacity to be coupled to a referring expression, pronominal index or noun phrase, that could fill the nominative argument position in categorical constructions. Functionally, existentials are thus the predilect format for suppressing the theme constituent of the clause (at the syntactic level, the subject). As a consequence, existentials built upon nominalized verbs and their retrieved arguments are fit to deliver complex information — manner of existing together with its participant(s) — in a compact, holistic, way. In fact, a convenient means to convey communicative strategies aiming at scoop effects.

But there is more, concerning the retrieval of arguments. In Sikuani, a severe restriction is imposed on the possibility of instantiating lexically a (very) central participant — the agent — as a genitive within the noun phrase resulting from the nominalisation of divalent verbs (see above section 4, and Queixalós 2012b for details). For that purpose, the language resorts to an alternative nominalisation-like construction that lies, morphologically, in the mid-way between finite verb and nominalised verb. Now, its syntax, as the retrieval of participants brings out, is neither that of a categorical-finite clause nor that of a noun phrase. Thanks to what, no constraint obtains any more on the lexical instantiation of its participant(s).

## 6 TRUNCATED NOMINALISATION

This special type of nominalisation has the following properties: 1) semantically, it is non-oriented, i.e. it denotes no participant, just the manner of existing itself (event, state, etc.); 2) morphologically, it lacks the gender-class suffix, including the non-animate **-hawa** which, as we know, is selected for non-oriented full nominalisations (examples (22) and (23)); the nominative suffix is also proscribed (but see below for passive); what is left, thus, are the verb root, its virtual mood suffix, the relational person prefix referring to the participant expressed by the nominative suffix in finite verbs and, in case the verb is divalent, the accusative prefix; 3) syntactically, this kind of nominalisation qualifies for only two positions, object of post-position, (68) (compare (69) for a non-derived noun phrase in same syntactic slot), and predicate, (70).

(68)	<b>atahu-nü</b>	<b>iso</b>	<b>[ta-Ø-woko-bi]</b>	<b>kuhinae</b>
	FeelHot-1NOMINATIVE	wood	1RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-ChopWood-VIRTUAL	after
	' I feel hot atter chopping wood '			

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predicate headed by **y a**. Moreover, the relative clause **[qui est arrivé]** is in effect non-restrictive — its head is a proper noun —, whereas the favorite kind of relative clause found cross-linguistically in participant introducing noun phrases is of the restrictive type (Fox 1987). Sasse (1987) draws attention to the fact that neither such constructions are biclausal, nor these "focus" clefts are clefts, but "phrases consisting of a noun and a modifying element". Carlin (2011) notes that several thetic ("sentence focus") examples in Lambrecht's work are hardly convincing. As for **JEAN** and other accented "subjects" in scoop effect predicates —and as far as they can be clearly kept apart from (contrastive) focus constructions, see footnote 9 —, I regard them as a natural consequence of the inherent prosodic salience of rhematic information chunks (Chafe 1974; Lambrecht 2000; Givón 2009 326), of which they are part. In this respect, the following observation is at stake: a very common way of introducing a piece of news in Brazilian TV, to-day, is to put extra prosodic emphasis — pitch and intensity — on the very first syllable of the initiating segment of discourse, whatever part of speech it belongs to (often an article or a preposition).



- (69) **pa-ta-ø** **Palemekohawa** **bereka...**  
 arrive-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE AtPalemeko's DownThere

**...[akueyabi pahuametobehe] kuhinae**  
 three moons after  
 'they arrived down there at Palemeko's three months later'

- (70) **ne-yaki-nae**  
 2RELATIONAL-engrave-VIRTUAL  
 'there you are, writing'

Additionally, and contrary to full nominalisations (*i.e.* containing gender-class suffix),<sup>29</sup> truncated nominalisations do not lend themselves to lexicalisation.

The construction in (70) is formally comparable with existential predications in that it lacks any external-nominative-subject argument (section 5). And it is informationally thetic since, in contrast to its finite counterpart (71), it insists on some presupposed manner of existing such as 'you did not write'.

- (71) **yaki-na-me**  
 engrave-FACTUAL-2NOMINATIVE  
 'you write'

The question arises of the possible pragmatic link between the theticity of (70) and the truncated nominalisation appearing in adverbial expressions such as post-positional phrases, (68). As far as I can see, setting background states of affairs is accomplished through the rhematic portions of the clause. But it does not seem that this amounts to saying, as Sasse (1987) does, that "background descriptions" are one of the typical domains for thetic expressions.

I resume now the issue — announced in footnote 22 — of whether passive is a potential counter-example to the lack of nominative suffixes in thetic clauses built upon nominalisations. Existential predicates have repeatedly been said, above, to be unable to take a nominative suffix. On the other side, there is no reason to block the possibility of predicating the existence of a patient participant. Nominalisations, thus, are relatively common as passive existential predicates. An instance of full nominalisation is

- (72) **pe<sub>0</sub>-ø<sub>1</sub>-thaü-ukunua-pae-nü<sub>1</sub>-tsi<sub>0</sub>** **baha** **hota,...**  
 3RELATIONAL-3ACCUSATIVE-leg-chop-VIRTUAL-MASCULINE-1PLURALINCLUSIVE CONCLUDED here  
 'there was a man amputated from his leg, here...'

**...pethaüto pina baha naira bo!**  
 HisLeg HEARSAY CONCLUDED OnTheGround EXCLAMATIVE  
 '...there was his leg on the ground, they say!'

The assumption (partially touched upon in section 2 *in fine*) that the **-tsi** suffix in the passive is no real nominative mark relies on two facts: 1) in passive there is no choice as for the person allowed to appear in the nominative position; in other words, no nominative paradigm is present; 2) the agent noun phrase, if realised, won't be an argument of the verb but an adjunct. In sum, passive allows for no nominative argument.

<sup>29</sup> And contrary to participles, see above section 4 *in fine*.

Now, as for passive truncated nominalisation, the situation seems to be different in terms of functional load: the following example is the only instance in my spontaneous speech data<sup>30</sup> of a passive predicate built on a truncated nominalisation.

(Daughter at the very moment of finding her missing mother:)

(73) **Haü! Wüpesitoyo ekaria!...**  
 Gee! JustBone SitThere

...De ponü<sub>1</sub> metha piha<sub>0</sub>-Ø<sub>2</sub>-x-ae-tsi?  
 INTERROGATION ThisOne DUBITATIVE 3POSSESSIVE-3ACCUSATIVE-eat-VIRTUAL-NOMINATIVE  
 'Gee! Just bone left! Who may possibly have eaten her?'

To begin with, it should be noticed that, since the girl is alone, the question is a deliberative one, not a true query for new information. I assume that the pragmatic motivation for such a rare combination of forms is two-fold. First, express an utterly startling fact. Hence, the thetic predicate. Second, assess concern toward the main resident theme, 'mother', turned into a patient. Hence the passive. (Three-fold, in fact: simultaneously put blame upon whoever has committed the deed,<sup>31</sup> hence the possessive person prefix; see below). My guess is that 1) at the pragmatic level, such a special cluster of motivations (surprise, concern, blame) may have induced the narrator to extend the passive form beyond full nominalisation existential predicates, where it is usually found; 2) at the formal level, the narrator could indulge in such a plausibly innovative combination only because the first plural inclusive person nominative suffix, in its dereferentialised version, has already reached the status of a mere formal, dummy, device for building the passive. Thus, the latter is no real exception to the hypothesis that truncated nominalisations are nominative-less.

The main motivation for the truncated nominalisation as an alternative to full nominalisation existential predicates is to achieve the scoop effect through a thetic predicate while keeping the whole as far as possible from denoting an entity. Something of a manner of existing typical of a finite clause, but forced into a thetic — *i.e.* holistic — mold. Such a hybridity is to be compared with that encountered in non-standard English sentences like **there was [a farmer had a dog]** (Lambrecht 1988, there labelled "syntactic amalgams") in which a finite clause fills a syntactic position that typically selects noun phrases. The one-word preference is so strong that in (75) it leads to the unusual incorporation of a noun denoting humans (**koxi**, 'children'; the characters are the human-like animals in mythology).<sup>32</sup>

(74) **imoxoyo ta-tü-pae-he!**  
 near IRELATIONAL-die-VIRTUAL-MIRATIVE  
 'I almost died!'

(Rabbit to She-Jaguar after a dreadful trick of his:)

(75) **ne-na-koxi-x-ae-bia-ba-bo-kae** **bo!**

<sup>30</sup> More than 300 pages of transcribed spontaneous texts of all sorts (Queixalós & Jiménez 1994). Elicitation of data that we want to be highly motivated by pragmatics often gives unreliable results.

<sup>31</sup> There is no restriction in the grammar on questioning about an adjunct constituent (see Queixalós 2000 394ff.).

<sup>32</sup> More radically, Mohawk and Boni can incorporate the subject in thetic predicates (Sasse 1987; note that his examples seemingly involve only unaccusative verbs).

2RELATIONAL-REFLEXIVE-children-eat-VIRTUAL-ITERATIVE-FACTUAL-COMMISERATIVE-VIRTUAL EXCLAMATIVE  
 'you've been eating your own children, you pitiful one!' <sup>33</sup>

The semantic link between the manner of existing and the participant expressed by the relational ("inalienable") person prefixes can be seen as intrinsic, as going without saying.<sup>34</sup> Of course, in an exclamative scoop effect construction it may presumably be conceived of as less intrinsic.<sup>35</sup> The possessive ("alienable") person prefixes are used as a way of supplementing the scoop effect with strengthened modalisation. The link is now seen as extrinsic, even somewhat anomalous, (76). With non-humans we often get perplexity, (77). With humans, the general meaning is assessment of a wrong behaviour on the part of the referent which on the finite verb would surface as nominative, (78). This is extensive to first person, (79).

(First time Indians see fire guns:)

(76) **yamaxübürütobehe<sub>1</sub>** **raha** **baha** **piha<sub>1</sub>-nu-kae** **bo!**  
 RowOfGuns EMPHATICASSERTION CONCLUDED 3POSSESSIVE-stand-VIRTUAL EXCLAMATIVE  
 'there is a whole row of guns standing (there)!'

(77) **de** **pakuenetha** **suretasi<sub>1</sub>...**  
 INTERROGATION ThisWay CockroachFeces  
**...piha<sub>1</sub>-hone-ria** **piha?!**  
 3POSSESSIVE-enterVIRTUAL<sup>36</sup>-DIRECTIONAL EXCLAMATIVE<sup>37</sup>  
 'how did these cockroach excrements get into (my lunch pot)?!'

(78) **de** **tša** **xuahitsia** **baha...**  
 INTERROGATION INTERROGATIVEREINFORCER ForThat CONCLUDED  
 pis-aller  
**...topaxahiwi<sub>1</sub>** **taha<sub>(1)</sub>-ne<sub>2</sub>-kuhuna-wi** **piha?!**  
 MySonsInLaw 1POSSESSIVE-1ACCUSATIVE-fear- VIRTUAL EXCLAMATIVE<sup>38</sup>  
 'why in the world do my sons-in-law fear me?!' <sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The auxiliary for 'commiseration' correlates to a full verb root **bo-** that in its monovalent form, **bo-ka /bo-kae**, means 'lie (on the ground)' and in its suppletive divalent form, **bua-ta / bua-tsi**, means 'lay down'. In the active verb, the commiseration attitude is directed toward the participant expressed by the nominative argument when the monovalent auxiliary is used, as here, but toward the participant expressed by the accusative argument with the divalent auxiliary, as in (79) second line. There are four body posture verbs which grammaticalise as auxiliaries with aspect-modal functions. As for the three successive mood markers, the rightmost suffix is in virtual as required by nominalisation; the other two (leftward: factual then virtual) are mere effects of allomorphy rules concerning auxiliarisation. No functional content is involved.

<sup>34</sup> See the affinity between verbal notions expressed through nominalisations and customary activities in Otomi (Palancar, this volume).

<sup>35</sup> In Serbian (Casielles & Progovac 2009) thetic predicates mainly report a misfortune. In Trio (Carlin 2011), indirect evidentiality, that is, non-commitment toward the link between participant and manner of existing. More radically, for Sasse (1987) thetic constructions are intended to remove the link between a predicate and its subject.

<sup>36</sup> This verb has suppletive forms to express the mood distinction (**hunua** for factual).

<sup>37</sup> Angry.

<sup>38</sup> Angry.

<sup>39</sup> The sequence **taha-ne-**, literally 'me (acting on) me' results from an idiosyncratic restriction on the co-occurrence of person prefixes in nominalised verbs that I call *first person preemption*: with a first person accusative (patient), no other person is allowed in the adnominal (possessive, relational) person prefix slot (agent). So **ta(ha)-ne-** means 'you acting on me' and 'he/she acting on me'. Reflexive is supplied by totally different means, namely: replacing the accusative prefix paradigm by a reference-vacuous morpheme **na-**. The

- (79) **xanü<sub>1</sub> raha taha<sub>1</sub>-Ø<sub>2</sub>-beyaxua-ba-bua-tsi!...**  
 me EMPHATICASSERTION 1POSSESSIVE-3ACCUSATIVE-kill-FACTUAL-COMMISERATIVE-VIRTUAL  
 'it's me who killed her, she pitiful one!'

**...xanü<sub>1</sub> raha Ø<sub>2</sub>-beyaxua-ba-bua-ta-hü<sub>1</sub>!**  
 me EMPHATICASSERTION 3ACCUSATIVE-kill-FACTUAL-COMMISERATIVE-FACTUAL -1NOMINATIVE  
 'I did kill her, she pitiful one!'

The previous example, staging she-Fox wife after she has slaughtered her she-Angel co-wife, is interesting because it shows that the speaker can choose between two ways of describing the same semantic association between the protagonist and its manner of existing: in the example, we first see a thetic format, aiming at the scoop effect (the cleft rendition for **xanü raha** in English is a *pis aller*), then, after the news has been delivered, a categorical description of the protagonist's behaviour. See also (87), where Jaguar is victim of Anteater's cheating on the issue of their respective feeding habits. (80) is an example with human third person. Turning to second person — the most frequent occurrence of this pattern —, we have recrimination, (81).

(Speaking dog had its tongue lengthened because it talked too much about what its masters did in the woods:)

- (80) **Itsabo! Awiri<sub>1</sub> nua...**  
 damned! dog INCLUDING

**...piha<sub>2</sub>-na-itaxu-to-ya-nabihia-na-bua-tsi no!**  
 3POSSESSIVE-RECIPROCAL-eye-SINGULATIVE-LOCATIVE-copulate-FACTUAL-COMMISERATIVE-VIRTUAL EXCLAMATIVE<sup>40</sup>  
 'Damned! They started making love to each other even in front of the poor dog!'

- (81) **wü-xamü<sub>1</sub>-xae kobesa niha<sub>1</sub>-po-na-bia-bi!**  
 RESTRICTIVE-you-CAUSE EmptyHands 2POSSESSIVE-go-FACTUAL-ITERATIVE-VIRTUAL  
 'it's your own fault if you usually get around with no game!'

Worth noticing is the fact that the modal motivation can combine with — or even override — the scoop motivation, allowing the construction to be used interrogatively, (82) and (83), but also (73), (77), (78).

(Jaguar to Rabbit, who is setting up a new trick:)

- (82) **Tamoho! Bapexaniakuenia netsutoxotaekame!...**  
 BrotherInLaw NiceThings YouAreSittingAndCrackingItWithoutTellingMe  
 'Hey, brother-in-law! You are cracking nice things without telling me!'

**...De tsa pakuenia...**  
 INTERROGATION INTERROGATIVEREINFORCER ThatWay

**...niha<sub>1</sub>-Ø<sub>2</sub>-toxota-bia-bi piha?!**  
 2POSSESSIVE-3ACCUSATIVE-crack-FACTUAL-ITERATIVE-VIRTUAL EXCLAMATIVE (ANGER)

index between brackets, e.g. (1), stands for the intended referent behind the first person prefix; in the example, third person for 'sons-in-law'.

<sup>40</sup> Conciliatory.

'How do you crack them?!'

(At twilight in the woods, someone asking a couple of runaway girls:)

- (83) **de** **hota** **pa-niha<sub>1</sub>-ru-kae-behe** **bo?!**  
 INTERROGATION here PLURAL-2POSSESSIVE-BeHanging-VIRTUAL-DUAL EXCLAMATIVE  
 'where are you two going to sleep?!'

Parallely to full nominalisation predicates, in truncated nominalisation predicates, whatever the paradigm of adnominal person prefixes (relational vs. possessive), information beyond the manner of existing and its core participant(s) can always be made available. Of course it will appear in non-argument positions. Some of the preceding examples, along with (84) and (85), show the following constituents: aspectual-modal particle, evidential particle, adverbial adjunct (lexical adverb, postpositional phrase), and, crucially, coreferential adjunct in (79).<sup>41</sup>

- (84) **bahara-xua** **yaniwa** **ta<sub>1</sub>-ka<sub>2</sub>-hai** **pikani!**  
 EMPHATICDEMONSTRATIVE PREVENTIVE 1RELATIONAL-2ACCUSATIVE-say FRUSTRATIVE  
 'I warned you to prevent precisely that, but it was in vain'

- (85) **xua-tha** **pina** **nexatha...**  
 that-SOCIATIVE HEARSAY then

**...waha<sub>1</sub>-ka<sub>2</sub>-t-ae** **hane** **merawi...**  
 1PLURALINCLUSIVEPOSSESSIVE-2ACCUSATIVE-see-VIRTUAL SPEAKERPSYCHOLOGICALLYAFFECTED night

**...waha<sub>1</sub>-ka<sub>2</sub>-t-ae** **hane** **matakabi**  
 1PLURALINCLUSIVEPOSSESSIVE-2ACCUSATIVE-see-VIRTUAL SPEAKERPSYCHOLOGICALLYAFFECTED day  
 '... for this reason, then, we look at you at night, they say, we look at you in the day'

Participants that are expressed by arguments of the fully nominalised verb can also surface as lexical noun phrases to satisfy identification needs. We have already seen that the participants projected on the accusative argument of the finite divalent verb, (25) and (26), and on the nominative argument of the finite monovalent verb, (27) and (28), suit, as noun phrases, the adnominal argument position of a full nominalisation, contrary to the participant that with the finite divalent verb would be projected on the nominative argument.

Differently from full nominalisation, the truncated nominalisation does not generate a noun phrase: the lexical instantiation of the participants that surface morphologically as arguments is not constrained by constituency, which amounts to saying that none is syntactically an adnominal argument. Hence, as coreferential adjuncts they appear in merely pragmatically conditioned order respective to the predicate. Moreover, they freely, and frequently, intermingle with particles and adverbial constituents.<sup>42</sup> See examples of noun phrases coreferring with the accusative prefix of a nominalised divalent verb, (86) and (87), and with the possessive person prefix of a nominalised monovalent verb, (88) and (89).

<sup>41</sup> The notion of "coreferential adjunct" covers all cases of noun phrases located *outside* the syntactic core of the clause, but coreferring with pronominal forms expressing the arguments *inside* the core. It thus comprises left and right "dislocated" noun phrases as well as all noun phrases *apparently* argumental but *structurally* non-argumental in Jelinek's (1984) version of non-configurational languages or Launey's (1994) omnipredicative languages. Free pronouns for first and second persons, **xanü** / **xamü**, appear as either coreferential adjuncts similar to 'Fox-wife' in (79) or inside adverbial adjunct phrases similar to 'your own fault' in (81).

<sup>42</sup> To be sure, *much more* freely and frequently than argument noun phrases in the finite clause.

- (86) **peri<sub>1</sub> wayapho-ya beria apo-piha<sub>2</sub>-Ø<sub>1</sub>-x-ae**  
 cassava savanah-LOCATIVE OverTere NEGATION-3POSSESSIVE-3ACCUSATIVE-eat-VIRTUAL  
 'he doesn't eat cassava in the savanah area over there'

- (87) **de xuahitsia kiuli<sub>1</sub>...**  
 INTERROGATION ForThisReason ants

**...taha<sub>2</sub>-Ø<sub>1</sub>-kae-kae piha?!**  
 1POSSESSIVE-3ACCUSATIVE-defecate-VIRTUAL EXCLAMATIVE<sup>43</sup>  
 'Damned! Why did I defecate ants?!'

- (88) **itsiatha enayo<sub>1</sub> kobesa piha<sub>1</sub>-po-na-bia-bi!**  
 however YourMother EmptyHands 3POSSESSIVE-go-FACTUAL-ITERATIVE-VIRTUAL  
 'however, your mother uses to get around carrying no game!'

- (89) **E! Baha piha<sub>1</sub>-nubenae...**  
 EXCLAMATION CONCLUDED 3POSSESSIVE-standDURATIVEPLURAL

**...yamaxütonü<sub>1</sub> hane bo!**  
 FireGuns SPEAKERPSYCHOLOGICALLYAFFECTED EXCLAMATIVE  
 'Hey! There are fireguns standing there!'

Example (89), to be compared with (76) (same fragment of narrative), shows an adjunct noun phrase coreferring with the possessive person prefix of an intransitive root but following the predicate, whereas (86) and (88) display adverbial expressions located between a coreferential adjunct and the predicate. See (76) for particles in same position.

Similarly, the would-be subject noun phrase of transitive is banned from the adnominal argument position of a full nominalised form (see above section 4), but unconstrained as coreferential adjunct of a truncated nominalisation. And plausibly, the feeling conveyed by the possessive person — disapproval — is more likely to aim at the initiator of a manner of existing that affects someone else than at other participant types. Examples of coreferential adjunct noun phrases coindexed with the adnominal person prefix — be it either relational or possessive — of a nominalised divalent verb are:

- (90) **Munuanü<sub>1</sub> imoxoyo ta<sub>(1)</sub>-ne<sub>2</sub>-x-ae!**  
 Munuanü near 1RELATIONAL-1ACCUSATIVE-eat-VIRTUAL  
 'Munuanü almost ate me!'

- (91) **axuanü<sub>1</sub> piha<sub>1</sub>-ka<sub>2</sub>-koxi-tsi piha?!**  
 YourFatherInLaw 3POSSESSIVE-2ACCUSATIVE-MakePregnant-VIRTUAL EXCLAMATIVE<sup>44</sup>  
 'so, your father-in-law made you pregnant, didn't he?!'

The following fragment, which resumes and expands example (78), is additional evidence for the lack of syntactic link, in truncated nominalisations, between the lexical instantiation of participants and the morphological argument affixes: in exactly the same position within their respective clauses, two noun phrases occur, **topaxahiwi** and **xanü**, representing the would-be nominative and the accusative arguments of the divalent verb, respectively (coreference

<sup>43</sup> Anger.

<sup>44</sup> Anger.

between **topaxahiwi** and the possessive prefix is obscured in the example due to the first person preemption constraint — see footnote 39: in both first person possessive prefix **taha-** replaces the prefix for third person **piha-**; it is worth noticing that the disapproval flavour toward the third person referent of long form **piha-** is retrieved by the dummy first person **taha-**). The discursive make up of the fragment is perhaps a consequence of another formal contrast between finite clauses and truncated nominalisation clauses: whereas the former allows the instantiation of two argumental noun phrases representing the participants of the divalent verb, example (1), the latter is restricted to one coreferential adjunct noun phrase. Hence, we can assume that the only way to mention both participants of the same verb — for identification purposes, emphasis or whatever — would be to resume the clause while switching the noun phrase.

- (92) **De** **tsa** **xuahitsia** **baha...**  
 INTERROGATION INTERROGATIVE-REINFORCER ForThat CONCLUDED
- ...[**topaxahiwi**<sub>1</sub>] **taha**<sub>(1)</sub>-**ne**<sub>2</sub>-**kuhuna-wi** **piha?!...**  
 SonsInLaw 1POSSESSIVE-1ACCUSATIVE-fear- VIRTUAL EXCLAMATIVE<sup>45</sup>  
 'Why in the world do (my) sons-in-law fear me?!'
- ...**De** **tsa** **xuahitsia...**  
 INTERROGATION INTERROGATIVE-REINFORCER ForThat
- ...[**xanü**<sub>1</sub>] **taha**<sub>(2)</sub>-**ne**<sub>1</sub>-**kuhuna-wi?**  
 me 1POSSESSIVE-1ACCUSATIVE-fear- VIRTUAL  
 'Why do they fear me?!'

As a consequence of the fact that subordination — a favorite locus for background information — is not easily available for conveying strong illocutionary force (but see note 24), there arises one more formal difference between coreferential adjuncts and finite clause argument noun phrases: inaccessibility to relativisation. (93) and (94) are instances of subject (**pamonaē**) and object (**ponü**) relativisation, respectively. No such constructions are attested with coreferential adjuncts as nominal heads of relatives built upon truncated nominalisation predicates. More generally, no truncated nominalisation occurs in embedded positions.

- (93) [**pamonaē**<sub>1</sub> [**nonohi**<sub>2</sub> **apo-ø**<sub>2</sub>-**matawahi-bi-ø**<sub>1</sub>]]<sub>1 NP</sub> **ahumatabütane-ø**<sub>1</sub>  
 ThisGroup chili NEGATION-3ACCUSATIVE-invoke HaveABreastache-3NOMINATIVE  
 -VIRTUAL-3NOMINATIVE  
 'people that do not invoke chili have a breastache'
- (94) **wekuaxaenatsi** [**ponü**<sub>1</sub> [**petiriwa**<sub>2</sub> **ø**<sub>1</sub>-**witsataru-ta-ø**<sub>2</sub>]]<sub>1 NP</sub>  
 WeWillEatItAwayFromHer ThisGuy woman 3ACCUSATIVE- breed -FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE  
 'when she's gone we'll eat the guy the woman breeds'

As we have seen in sections 5 and 6, existential nominalisations, either full or truncated, erase the syntactic link between the nominative noun phrase and the predicate. The output is a whole rheme clause, and the involved participant has to surface as a coreferential adjunct if it is to be mentioned by way of a noun phrase. Additionally, truncated nominalisations, since they do not generate a noun phrase, are unable to instantiate as a lexical genitive the nominative argument of monovalent verbs and the accusative argument of divalent verbs. All noun phrases are, there, coreferential adjuncts.

<sup>45</sup> Anger.

It is worth here mentioning two constructions that seem to be designed to rhematize the nominative argument while keeping intact its syntactic link to the predicate, that is, preserving the finite verbal condition of the clause.

## 7 HYBRIDS

The reader will notice, in the following, finite tense-mode morphology on several verbs. Sasse (1987) mentions Boni and Modern Greek as two languages where what is supposed to be a thetic construction retains the formal properties of a subject constituent.

One such construction in Sikuani is the cross-linguistically well known order inversion, specifically nominative noun phrase appearing in post-verbal position. As (96) and (97) show, inversion is not limited to unaccusative verbs. Moreover, the co-occurrence in (96) and (97) — and many other instances of divalent clauses — of two core participant noun phrases in one and the same spontaneous speech clause contrasts with the restriction of one coreferential adjunct noun phrase per thetic clause (see above). I take this as a clue to their argument status and, by contrast, to the non-argumental status of noun phrases in thetic clauses.

- (95) **atahu- $\emptyset_1$**                       **matakabi<sub>1</sub>**  
       BeHot-3NOMINATIVE        day  
       ' the day is hot '

- (96) **duhaiyo<sub>1</sub>**     **$\emptyset_1$ -yaxunoho-ka- $\emptyset_2$**                       **pebinüyo<sub>2</sub>**  
       SomeFish        3ACCUSATIVE-TakeFish-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE        LittleBoy  
       ' the little boy took some fish '

- (97) **pehewaxihwixi<sub>1</sub>**     **$\emptyset_1$ -naükobaru-ta- $\emptyset_2$**                       **pexi**        **pexainaewaxi<sub>2</sub>**  
       children                      3ACCUSATIVE-LookFor-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE        children        FemenineOwners  
       ' mothers (children owners) looked for the children '

On pragmatic grounds, these are not instances of a right-dislocation motivated by something like an afterthought. In the later, prosodic factors starkly present the noun phrase as splitted from the clause core syntax, which is not the case in the above examples. Neither are they presentational constructions: (96) is extracted from a fragment where the little boy is the resident theme, wandering light heartedly in the wild before falling into jaguar's jaws; and (97) is about the resident theme parents coming back to the village after extra-terrestrial visitors have kidnapped all the children around. In line with Sasse's (1987) contention that thetic and new are not superposed notions, I would say that the participant is indeed rhematized, that is, is included in the rheme as being part of the information peak, notwithstanding its possible<sup>46</sup> *old* rather than new information status. And, should I add, without losing its projection on formal argumenthood properties.

The second device resorts to totally different material. A particle **baitsi** takes the rheme status away from the predicate — the natural locus for rheme —, endowing another constituent with maximal prominence in informational terms. Among noun phrases in basic finite clauses, only nominative ones are eligible for rhematisation, (98) and (99).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> In (87) 'day' is not old.

<sup>47</sup> Remember that, correlatively, accusative noun phrases are in general already included in the rhematic part of the clause (section 5). No attempt will be made to offer a literal translation of several examples.



- (98) **nakua<sub>1</sub>** **baitsi** **nahumetsi-ena-Ø<sub>1</sub>**  
 world RHEMATISATION rumble-VIRTUAL-FUTURE-3NOMINATIVE  
 'the world will rumble'

- (99) **wamo<sub>1</sub>** **baitsi** **kahena...**  
 OurGrand-father RHEMATISATION well

**...apo-naka<sub>2</sub>-humatabü-rahu-tsi-Ø<sub>1</sub>**  
 NEGATION-1PLURALINCLUSIVEACCUSATIVE-thought-give-VIRTUAL-3NOMINATIVE  
 'our grand-father is not really willing to give it to us'

Alternatively, the selected constituent can be an adverbial adjunct, (100), or the whole clause, (101), in which case the particle occurs initially.

- (100) **ahumehibia** **baitsi** **Ø-xaeothootho-pa-me** **tsaena**  
 silently RHEMATISATION 3ACCUSATIVE-ComeAndEat-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE FOCALISATION  
 'what you did was come and eat it, and you did it sneakily'

- (101) **baitsi** **Kuwainü<sub>1</sub>** **daxitakuene<sub>2</sub>** **Ø<sub>2</sub>-exa-na-Ø<sub>1</sub>**  
 RHEMATISATION God AllThings 3ACCUSATIVE-make-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE  
 'well, God created all things'

Two crucial remarks are in order here. First, as Sasse (1987) puts it, including the "subject" referent in the rhematic component is a quite different pragmatic attitude from (contrastive) focus. (98) and (99) are absolutely not emphasising the selection of 'world' and 'grand-father' out of their respective classes of potential competitors: in the situations described — the Genesis for (98), and first humans's visit to the unique owner of metal tools for (99) — there just are no such classes. Formal evidence for the fact that **baitsi** is not a focus marker comes from the very existence of the particle **tsaena**, whose function is precisely to allow such focusing of the preceding constituent, be it an argumental noun phrase, (102), or a predicate, (103). Moreover, both particles can co-occur in a single clause, (100) above.

- (102) **dunusi<sub>1</sub>** **tsaena** **kowü** **wamo<sub>2</sub>** **Ø<sub>1</sub>-x-ane-Ø<sub>2</sub>**  
 pineapple FOCALISATION INFERENCE OurGrand-father 3ACCUSATIVE-eat-FACTUAL-3NOMINATIVE  
 'seemingly, it's pineapple that grand-father ate'

- (103) **ahumehibia** **Ø-xaeothootho-pa-me** **tsaena**  
 silently 3ACCUSATIVE-ComeAndEat-FACTUAL-2NOMINATIVE FOCALISATION  
 'what you did was come and eat it, and you did it sneakily'

Second, the rhematiser **baitsi** supplies one of the few clear pieces of evidence in the language for the category of subject as a syntactically privileged argument whose behaviour is not predictable from coding properties. In an all third person divalent clause the participant expressed through the accusative argument can only be selected by **baitsi** through passivation. This yields a noun phrase simultaneously expressing the single participant of the clause and co-referring with the verb accusative prefix.<sup>48</sup>

- (104) **Kawiri<sub>1</sub>** **baitsi** **Ø<sub>1</sub>-bihiana-tsi<sub>0</sub>**  
 Kawiri RHEMATISATION 3ACCUSATIVE-metamorphose-1PLURALINCLUSIVE

<sup>48</sup> The Sikuani passive is thus non-promotional morphologically, as said, but promotional syntactically.

' the Kawiri were metamorphosed '

Now, the question is, of course, that of the functional demarcation between true thetic clauses like those built upon nominalisations on one side, and on the other side inversion clauses or clauses like (101) where the whole is under the scope of the particle **baitsi**. I assume that the difference is the scoop effect, which, as we have seen above — the one-word prototype —, is the main purpose of thetic constructions. Impressionistically, I would say that a clue toward this assumption is the drastically lower rate of inversion or **baitsi** clauses in exclamative make ups — see (105) for an instance of such a combination — compared with that of thetic nominalisations, mainly of the truncated type. In other words, the outcome of a thetic *intention* — all rheme — without the scoop purpose is, in this language, categorical syntax plus either inversion or inclusion under **baitsi**'s scope.

(Conquest of the all-edible-plants tree:)

- (105) **akuenebi-Ø<sub>i</sub>**                      **waha-Ø-nika-bi-hawa<sub>i</sub>!**  
 BeDifficult-3NOMINATIVE    1PLURALINCLUSIVEPOSSESSIVE-3ACCUSATIVE-CutTree-VIRTUAL-NONANIMATE  
 ' our cutting of it is difficult '

## 8 CONCLUSION

So far, I have introduced two kinds of nominalisations, full and truncated, focusing on their properties as predicates. In doing so I have uncovered their proclivity toward thetic predication, since the latter is the only function of truncated nominalisation predicates, and one of the two functions of full nominalisation independent predicates — existential (*vs.* inclusive-equative). Two other constructions seem to serve thetic-like purposes without altering the categorical form of the clause, especially the finite character of the verb and the existence of at least one syntactic position to be filled by a noun phrase endowed with argument properties. Nominalised verbs as thetic predicates do have core participants, which surface as argumental bound forms on the verbs. Nonetheless, noun phrases can be needed to ensure the correct identification of participants. When the nominalised verb itself sets up a noun phrase — full nominalisation —, internal adnominal arguments provide a means to lexically mention the participants.<sup>49</sup> But a restriction obtains on the participant that in finite clauses surfaces as nominative of divalent verbs: it is not allowed as internal argument of the noun phrase headed by the full nominalisation. Truncated nominalisation does not generate a noun phrase nor a finite predicate. So, no noun phrase can bear any grammatical relation to it. Since noun phrases will have to occur free of any syntactic link to the nominalisation form, no restriction prevails anymore on the participant otherwise barred from lexical adnominal expression, namely, the agent of a divalent verb. It can surface, as any other participant, as a noun phrase which, syntactically, is an adjunct of the *coreferential* sub-type, that is, an expression that refers to — and provides identificational information about — some participant present pronominally in verb morphology.<sup>50</sup> In sum, truncated nominalisation clauses are properly non-configurational (Jelinek's 1984 version).

The non-configurationality of this Sikuani thetic predication — no noun phrase as argument — seemingly renders null and void the issue of the presence and status of a "subject" in such clauses. My guess is that beyond Sikuani this assessment should apply to several languages

<sup>49</sup> See example (45).

<sup>50</sup> Adjunct to be distinguished, I insist, from *adverbial* adjuncts, that is, expressions anchoring the manner of existing and its participants to some background environment.

and a significant lot of studies. In effect, many scholars, notoriously Lambrecht (1994, 2000), pay little or no attention to the fact that, if the noun phrase entitled to the status of subject in categorical predication loses its subject properties in thetic predication, then the term "subject" altogether with the notion it conveys are utterly inappropriate when speaking of thetic clauses. Sasse (1987) criticises Kuroda's (1972) extension of the notion of "logical subject" to thetic clauses, and opts for speaking himself of "alleged subject", "potential subject" and "would-be subject". He points out that after Kuroda the term "rhematic subject" is also sometimes used. All these qualified "subjects" reveal a concern with their exact morphosyntactic status but are, nevertheless, misleading as a consequence of both levels of structure —informational / syntactic — not being adequately distinguished.

My two-fold contention is that 1) in every instance of a thetic clause there happens, by definition, a dethematisation (a rhematisation; or, as Lambrecht puts it, a "detopicalisation") of a given noun phrase; however, 2) in some languages (*e.g.* Sikuani) / some constructions (*e.g.* Sikuani truncated nominalisations and full nominalisations in nominative-less, existential, predicates), the thetic clause additionally brings about the desubjectivization (Sasse's term) of a given noun phrase.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the latter ought to be neatly identified either as a formally downgraded subject but notwithstanding subject, as it happens with inversion in many languages, or as a coreferential adjunct blatantly different from a syntactic subject, as in Sikuani truncated nominalisation predicates.

Whether the non-configurational character of this kind of thetic predication provides, as a by-product, any clue to the nature and / or genesis of non-configurationality in languages remains an open question, but one that deserves an in-depth research *per se*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Remember that in Sikuani the would-be subject participant either surfaces as a coreferential adjunct (truncated nominalisation) or as an adnominal argument (full nominalisation of monovalent verbs).

<sup>52</sup> Pivotal to this endeavour would be Erteschik-Shir's (1997) intuition that configurational dependencies, particularly those related to identification strategies, match better categoriality ("canonical information structure" in her terms). And also the putative affinity between Sikuani truncated nominalisations and the notion of small clause as Progovac (2008) construes it: 1) an internally non-hierarchized constituent, *i.e.* deprived of any "internal source of structural case for [its so-called] subject" (square brackets mine, FQ); 2) a source of sentence syntactic derivations from a synchronic perspective, along with a source of complex-hierarchized syntax from an evolutionary perspective.

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