TENSE, ASPECT AND MODALITY
in the Sabellic Languages

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Conventions and abbreviations

*	reconstructed form
°	"common Sabellic" form
/	introduces the phonetic context in which a sound change is operative, with the symbol _ taking the place of the phonetic element that undergoes the change
#	word boundary
C	consonant
T	dental obstruent
N	nasal
Ṇ	syllabic nasal
E	front vowel
n.a.	not applicable
occ.	occurrences
pl.	plural
sg.	singular
TAM	tense, aspect and modality
#000	see table 3 "Morphological and semantic analysis by token" (page 116)
bold type	text written in a native Sabellic alphabet
italic type	text written in the Latin alphabet

Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

This research focuses on the grammatical expression of tense, aspect and modality (henceforth TAM) in the Sabellic languages. Based on a corpus of Sabellic epigraphic texts and on the secondary literature dealing with the expression of TAM in its relation to Sabellic verbal morphology and syntax, it aims to provide a critical assessment of what can be known or inferred about TAM in these poorly attested languages. This assessment is placed in the broader context of the methodological issues which the study of such languages raises.

The Sabellic language branch comprises a group of languages within the Italic branch of Indo-European spoken in central and southern Italy during the first millennium B.C.E. (Fortson 2010, 296; Wallace 2007, 1), of which two best attested members, Oscan and Umbrian, have historically been the focus of attention in most grammatical analysis (cf. Buck 1904, 2-3). Beyond a handful of words in the Greco-Roman literary tradition, which contribute very little to our understanding of the languages, the Sabellic languages are attested only through a few hundred epigraphic inscriptions, dating from the 7th century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. (Wallace 2007, 1-2). As such, the Sabellic languages are better attested than many of the other languages which were spoken in the linguistically diverse Italian peninsula of this period, such as Venetic or Messapic (Fortson 2010, 466-67), but their attestation pales in comparison with the available data for well-attested ancient languages such as Latin or Greek. Whereas the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae contains nearly a hundred million words (Juhl 2010, 1656) and Brepolis' Library of Latin Texts Series A over eighty million (Tombeur 2018, 6), the best attested Sabellic language (Oscan) is preserved through a total of about 4,000 words.[1] Clearly, the methodological approach to the study of TAM in the Sabellic languages as opposed to Greek or Latin must necessarily be very different and brings with it its own set of questions. How can we ensure that TAM in fragmentary languages is described in its own right rather than through the lens of better described languages? How can diachronic and diatopic variation in the use of TAM in fragmentary languages be taken into account? Is it possible to draw meaningful conclusions about TAM in sparsely attested languages such as these at all?

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[1] Own estimate based on the corpus of Rix (2002a).

Figure 2.
The geographic distribution
of °fu-tud and °es-tud

a. The attestations of the
imperative II of the verb °es-/
fu- ("to be") formed on the
basis of the stem °fu-

b. The attestations of the
same imperative
formed on the basis of the
stem °es-

Finally, a number of non-finite verb forms are attested, most of them based on the present stem. A gerundive is attested 26 times, formed by the addition of *-nn-* to the present stem (for instance °*opsannum*, using the present stem °*opsa-* rather than the perfect stem °*ops-*). In the case of the third declension a single attestation indicates that the morpheme is *-enn-*, as proven by the alteration between °*am-fer-um* and °*am-fer-enn-eis* (a compound root *am-fer*, "to surround"). The other non-finite forms attested for Sabellic are two participles (*-nt-s* and *-t-s*), two infinitives (*-om* and *-fir*) and a poorly attested supine (*-tom*). Of these, as we have seen previously in this section, the passive participle in *-t-s* is employed in several periphrastic expressions which appear to serve as the functional counterparts of active perfect forms. Nevertheless, the passive participles themselves are clearly

[23] inuk ukar: pihaz fust (TM 171820, table I.b., line 7). **#573**

Then the mound *will have been purified*. (At the close of a ritual).

°*pihat-s fust*, perfect stem future, 3ʳᵈ sg. (periphrastic passive form).

Finally, the perfect stem future is used when the action in the main clause is an "inbuilt consequence" – using the terminology of De Melo (2007, 40) – of the action in the dependent clause, without any necessary sense of anteriority being involved:

[24] *sue. muieto. fust. ote. pisi. arsir. andersesusṭ disler alinsust*. (TM 171820, table VI.a., line 7). **#976 #977 #978**

If *a noise is made* or any other person *sits in the way*, he *will make (the ceremony) invalid*.

°*muye-t-om fust*, °*anderses-us-t*, °*alins-us-t*, perfect stem futures, 3ʳᵈ sg.

In three separate instances, a makeshift periphrastic perfect stem future passive imperative is created by combining a past passive participle with the imperative II of the copula (°*es-tud* or °*fu-tud* depending on the geographic region; see Figure 2). In such cases, the usage of the periphrasis is the exact imperative equivalent of the indicative usage instantiated by **[24]**: the periphrastic imperative describes an "inbuilt consequence" of the action in the protasis:

[25] *suae pis* [*contrud exeic post exac medd*]*is <f>acus f>ust izic amprufid facus estud*. (TM 170991, lines 29-30). **#72**

If anyone hereafter shall have been appointed a magistrate contrary to these rules *he is not to be validly appointed*.

°*fak-us*, active perfect participle + °*es-tud*, imperative II, 2ⁿᵈ/3ʳᵈ sg.

The only systematic counter-examples to the above analysis of the differences between the present and perfect stem futures involve the ambiguous form °*fust*, which is attested both with anterior force and with simple future reference. An example of both uses is supplied in the sentences below. Zair (2014, 373) is clearly correct to state that this verb form is a functional anomaly, and it is odd that Crawford often translates it as a perfect future, as if expressing anterior relative time, even where this is contextually clearly wrong (see **[26]** below). It is for this reason that I have not taken this form into account for the purposes of the analysis given above.

[26] *in*(*im*) *ei*(*tuo*) *siuom pae*{*i*} *eizeis fust pae ancensto fust* / *toutico estud*. (TM 170991, lines 22-23). **#50 #51**

And the whole of his property, which *shall have been* his and which *shall not have been* listed, is to be made public. (= future simultaneity).

		Trismegistos	Token	Meaning	Stem	Tense	Mood	Category	Diathesis	Number	Person	Periphrasis	Crawford reference	Dependent?	Finite verb form?	Semantic analysis
VIIa, 40	#1403	171820	aitu	sort, separate?	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1404	171820	fetu	make	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1405	171820	fetu	make	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1406	171820	fetu	make	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1407	171820	fetu	make	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1408	171820	tases	silent	perfect stem	n.a.	participle	n.a.	passive	n.a.	n.a.	no		/		65
	#1409	171820	persnimu	silent	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	passive	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1410	171820	prosesetir	cut out	perfect stem	n.a.	participle	n.a.	passive	n.a.	n.a.	no		/		65
	#1411	171820	arsueitu	add, pour in	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1412	171820	naratu	assure	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1413	171820	purdinśiust	bring	perfect stem	future	indicative	n.a.	active	sg.	3rd	no		yes	yes	26
	#1414	171820	carsitu	cry	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1415	171820	facurent	make	perfect stem	future	indicative	n.a.	active	pl.	3rd	no		yes	yes	27
	#1416	171820	dersa	give	present stem	n.a.	subjunctive	1	active	sg.	3rd	no		yes	yes	44
	#1417	171820	dirsust	give	perfect stem	future	indicative	n.a.	active	sg.	3rd	no		yes	yes	26
	#1418	171820	combifiatu	inform	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1419	171820	dersa	give	present stem	n.a.	subjunctive	1	active	sg.	3rd	no		yes	yes	44
	#1420	171820	combifiatu	inform	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1421	171820	covertu	return	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1422	171820	comoltu		present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1423	171820	comatir	grind	perfect stem	n.a.	participle	n.a.	passive	n.a.	n.a.	no		/		65
	#1424	171820	persnimu	pray	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	passive	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1425	171820	aitu	sort, separate?	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1426	171820	covertu	return	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1427	171820	comoltu	grind	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1428	171820	comatir	grind	perfect stem	n.a.	participle	n.a.	passive	n.a.	n.a.	no		/		65
	#1429	171820	persnihimu	pray	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	passive	sg.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1430	171820	purditom fust	bring	perfect stem	future	indicative	n.a.	passive	sg.	3rd	yes		no	yes	30a
	#1431	171820	andirsafust	around + give	perfect stem	future	indicative	n.a.	active	sg.	3rd	no		yes	yes	25
	#1432	171820	habiest	have	present stem	future	indicative	n.a.	active	sg.	3rd	no		yes	yes	18
	#1433	171820	tasetur	silent	perfect stem	n.a.	participle	n.a.	passive	n.a.	n.a.	no		/		65
	#1434	171820	persnihimumo	pray	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	passive	pl.	3rd	no		no	yes	56a
	#1435	171820	tursitu	chase away	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	2nd	no		no	yes	58
	#1436	171820	tremitu	scare?	present stem	n.a.	imperative	2	active	sg.	2nd	no		no	yes	58