Copular clauses in Sumerian

I. Basic characteristics
a) enclitic copula

(1) En-metena 7 21–22 (Lagash, 25th c.)
ud-ba du-du, saŋja ćnin-ţiir2-su2-ka-kam
ud=be’a [dudu=∅] PC [saŋja ninjirsuk=ak=∅]=am=∅
day=DEM=L1 [PN=ABS] PC [official DN=GEN=ABS]=COP-3.SG.S
“At that time Duddu was the temple administrator of the god Ningirsu.”

(2) En-ana-tum 1 2 rev. 2:5 (Lagash, 24th c.)
an-ta-su-ra ḋa2-kam
š[antasura=∅] PC [ge=ak]=am=∅
“The Antasura is mine!”

(3) NG 214 obv. 1:8 (Umma, 21st c.)
inim ur-niŋin3-ţar nu-banda3-ta-am3
PC [inim urnijingar nubanda=ak=ta]=am=∅
PC [word PN overseer=GEN=ABL]=COP-3.SG.S
“This was with the permission of Urningabar, the overseer.”

b) independent copula

(4) Lugalbanda and the Anzud bird 106 (ETCSL 1.8.2.2) [contains a prefix other than the finite-marker]
diŋir ḍe2-me-en
PC [diŋir=∅] š[ba=∅]-š1=š1(me)-š1=en
PC [god=ABS] MOD=FIN=COP-2.SG.S
“If you are a god, ....”

1 Abbreviations used in the morphemic glosses: ~ reduplication, ~PL = reduplication expressing verbal plurality; ~PF = reduplication expressing present-future tense; 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; A = agent (subject of a transitive verb); ABL = ablative case-marker or prefix; ABS = absolutive case-marker; ADV = adverbiative; ANT = prefix of anteriority; COM = comitative case-marker or prefix; COP = copula; CVN = compound verb nominal element; DAT = dative case-marker or prefix; DEM = demonstrative pronoun; DN = divine name; ERG = ergative case-marker; FIN = finite-marker prefix; GEN = genitive case-marker; GN = geographical name H = human; L1 = locative1 case-marker or prefix; L2 = locative2 case-marker or prefix; L3 = locative3 case-marker or prefix; MID = middle prefix; MOD = modal prefix; NEG = negative particle; NH = non-human; P = patient (object of a transitive verb); PC = predicate complement; PF = present-future, or the marker of the present-future; PL = plural; PR = pronoun; PN = personal name; POSS = possessive enclitic; PT = preterite, or the marker of the preterite; SG = singular; SUB = subordinator suffix; SYN = synocopated form of a verbal prefix; TL = tenseless; TERM = terminative case-marker or prefix; TN = temple name; VEN = ventive prefix.

In the graphemic transliteration subscript numerals distinguish homophonically graphic graphemes; graphemes that constitute a word are linked by hyphens; in the morphemic segmentation and in the glosses the sign “¬” links enclitics to their hosts. Three special characters are used in transliterating Sumerian: ŋ (pronounced as the last consonant in sing), h (pronounced as the last consonant in loch), and ñ (as the first consonant in ship). ETCSL = Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk)
II. Types of copular clauses in terms of their semantic type and information structure

(6) NG 32 3 (Lagaš, 21st c.) [predicational, S functions as topic]

arad ur-[:kuš̱]-ba-[u₂]-ka nu-[:u]-me-en₁
PC[arad šara]=ak=ø) s₁⁻s₂⁻me⁻s₁⁻ø⁻s₁⁻a=ak
PC[slave GN=GEN=ABS] FIN-COP=3.SG.S-SUB=GEN

“I am not a slave of Ur”

(7) Ur-Namma 19 2:7-8 (Ur, 21st c.) [predicational, PC’s possessor functions as topic]

eg₃¹-[ba] a-[ba]-سنة=gin=ø, mu-be₂
PC[egg=be=ak] s₁[aba]=ø-nanne=gin=ø PC[mu=be=ø]=am=ø

“Of this levee ‘Who-is-like-the-god-Nanna?’ is its name.”

(8) Gudea Cyl. A 3:6 (Lagash, 22nd c.) (ETCSL 2.1.7) [specification, PC functions as topic, S as identificational focus]

ama-[nu₁₀] ze₂=me
PC[ama]=nu=ø) PC[ze]=ø]=me-en

“My mother is you (and no one else).”

(9) Letter from X to the god Nanna 16 (ETCSL 3.3.22) [specification, PC’s possessor functions as topic, S as identificational focus]

[an k₁]-be₂-ta lugal-be₂ za-e=me-en
PC[an k₁]=bed=ak] s₁[lugal]=be=ø) s₁[ze]=ø]=me-en

Akkadian: ša-me-e u₂, er-se-tam be-el-šu-nu at-ta-[ma]

“As for the universe, its lord is you.”

III. Attributive copular biclausal constructions (shared participant functions as the topic in the initial copular clause)

(10) Gudea Cyl. A 8:10 (Lagash, 22nd c.) (ETCSL 2.1.7)

li₃²̱ u₂ sikil kur-ra-kam
s₁[li]=ø] PC[u sikil kur=ak=ø]=am=ø
s₁[juniper=ABS] PC[plant pure mountain=ABS]=COP=3.SG.S

izi⁻a bi₂-si-si
izi⁻¹ a s₁⁻s₂⁻s₁⁻n⁻s₁⁻s_i⁻s₃⁻ø
fire=2.NH 3.SG.NH=2.SG.S.HA-FILL=PL-3.SG.P

Lit. “The juniper is the pure plant of the mountains; he (= Gudea) put it onto the fire.”

= “He put juniper, (which is) the pure plant of the mountains, onto the fire.”
(11) NG 123 1-8 (Lagash, 21st c.)

Lit. “He set a low head to the words that Nanshe told him” = “He accepted what Nanshe brother of Atu, in the temple.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEAD</td>
<td>MODIFIER</td>
<td>POSSESSOR</td>
<td>PLURAL-MARKER</td>
<td>CASE-MARKER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The Sumerian nominal template

(12) NATN 920 6-9 (Nippur, 21st c.)

The Sumerian nominal template

<table>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The Sumerian nominal template

(13) Gudea Cyl. A 7:11–12 (Lagash, 22nd c.) (ETCSL 2.1.7)

Lit. “He set a low head to the words that Nanshe told him” = “He accepted what Nanshe told him.”

(14) NG 137 obv. 7 (Umma, 21st c.)

“the cow whose name is Shabar-tur”
Sort of conclusion: The sentence “John, who is a sailor, built a house” may only be said in Sumerian as “John is a sailor; he built a house”. In constructions like exx. (10) and (12) above, the copular clause functions as paratactic, i.e., syntactically non-subordinate, copular relative clause; its predicate functions only to provide some additional information about the shared participant.

(15) Ur-Namma 28 1:10-13 (Ur, 21st c.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>id</th>
<th>da</th>
<th>ānanna-gu₂-gal</th>
<th>mu-be₂</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PCS∙POS</td>
<td>[id=ak]</td>
<td>[nannagugal=∅]</td>
<td>[mu=be=∅]=am-∅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCS∙POS</td>
<td>[canal=GEN]</td>
<td>[GEN=ABS]</td>
<td>[name=3SG.NH.POSS=ABS]=COP-3SG.S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"A canal, whose name is Nanna-gugal, (and) which is a boundary canal, was dug by him (= Ur-Namma)"

IV. Specificalional copular biclausal constructions (shared participant functions as identificational focus in the initial copular clause) (?)

(16) Enmerkar and En-suhgir-ana 276 (ETCSL 1.8.2.4) (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>za-e-me-en</th>
<th>en</th>
<th>ki</th>
<th>aŋ₂</th>
<th>ānina-me-en</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ze=∅]∙me-en</td>
<td>[en]</td>
<td>[ki=∅]</td>
<td>aŋ-∅</td>
<td>ānina=ak=∅∙me-en</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lit. “It is you. You are the lord beloved by the goddess Inana” = “It is you who is the lord beloved by the goddess Inana.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATRIX SUBJECT</th>
<th>COPULA</th>
<th>FOCUS PHRASE</th>
<th>RELATIVE CLAUSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>who is the lord beloved by the goddess Inana.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>=me-en</td>
<td>ze=∅</td>
<td>en ki=∅ aŋ-∅ ānina=ak=∅∙me-en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>=COP-1SG.S</td>
<td>2SG.PR=ABS</td>
<td>lord place=ABS measure=TL DN=GEN=ABS]=COP-2SG.S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

(17) Hoe and Plough 147 (ETCSL 5.3.1) (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nēp₂-e-me-en</th>
<th>mu₂z-sar-ra</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>bīz-ib₂-sig₁₀-sig₁₀-ge-en</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ge=∅]∙me-en</td>
<td>[musar=']a</td>
<td>a=∅</td>
<td>S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1SG.PR=ABS]=COP-1SG.S</td>
<td>plot=I₂.NH water=ABS</td>
<td>3SG.NH-L₂-3SG.NH.P-put=PL-1SG.A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“It is me who puts water in all the plots.”

(18) Gudea Cyl. A 13:2 (Lagash, 22nd c.) (ETCSL 2.1.7) (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>siki</th>
<th>udu</th>
<th>gan-na-kam</th>
<th>šu-a</th>
<th>mi-ni-ŋar-ŋar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>s₂</td>
<td>udu</td>
<td>[gan=ak=∅]=am-∅</td>
<td>šu='a</td>
<td>S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“(He undid the tongue of the goat and the whip; it was wool from lamb-bearing sheep that he placed instead in all hands.”

(19) NG 138 rev. 7 (Umma, 21st c.) (A)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>udu-ŋu₁₀-um</th>
<th>šúl-la-lum-ra</th>
<th>in-na-šum₂</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[udu-ŋu=∅]=am-∅</td>
<td>šulalum-ra</td>
<td>S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁ S₅₋₁₁</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“(Turam-ilili declared: ‘I gave MY sheep to Sulalum.”

Zólyomi, Nyelvtudományi Intézet, 2016.04.05
(20) HS 1512 obv. 9-10 (Nippur, OB period) (B)

dinjar an ki-a za-e-me-en i₃-zalag-ge-en
dinjar an ki=ak=ø ze=ø-me-en s₂i₃[-zalag-]s₁₄=en
god sky earth=GEN=ABS 2.SG.PR=ABS=COP-2.SG.S FIN-shine-2.SG.A
Akkadian: i₃-li ša AN u KI at-ta ma tu-na-ma-ar
“It is you who illuminates for the gods of heaven and earth.”

(21) NG 214 obv. 2:13 (Umma 21st c.) (AB)
ur-nigjar₃′₄ nu-band₃-a-am₂ mu-da-an-kar
urnijar nubanda=a=am-ø s₁mu₃[-s₅]da₃-s₁₁[n=]kar₃-s₁₄,ø
“(Ur-Ninnuca stated:) ‘It was Ur-nigjar, the overseer, who took it (= grain) away from me’.”

(22) Ur-Nanna D, version of unknown provenance 2 (ETCSL 2.4.1.4)
id₂ a-ba-a mu-un-ba-al-e
id=ø abe-e s₄mu₃[-s₁₁]n-s₅i₃[-]bal-s₁₄,e
channel=ABS who=ERG VEN-L1.SYN-dig-3.SG.A
“Who will dig there the canal?”

(23) Proverbs collection 2 + 6 Segment D 23 (ETCSL 6.1.02)
aba-am₁, nën₃[ma₂ bi₃-in-du₄
aba=ø-am-ø ma=ø s₃b₃-s₁₀[-s₅]n-s₁₁-du=-s₁₄ø
“Who caulked the boat?”

(24) Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the netherworld 36-37 (ms. UET 6/1 55)² (ETCSL 1.8.1.4) (B)
[munus-e] ūr-eš¹ šu-na ūr-l₃-bi₃-in-gub
munus-e ūr-eš=ø šu=ane=’a s₃nu₃[-s₅]b₃-s₁₀[-]n-s₁₁[gub]-s₁₄,ø
n̄n̄ir₂-ne₂-ta-am₁ <<<li>=>bi₃-in-gub,
n̄n̄ir-e=ta-am=ø s₃b₃-s₁₀[-s₁₁]n-s₁₁[gub]-s₁₄,ø
[munus-e] ūr-eš³ šu-na a ūr-l₃-bi₃-in-dug₄,³
munus-e ūr-eš=ø šu=ane=’a a=ø s₃nu₃[-s₅]b₃-s₁₀[-]n-s₁₁[dug]-s₁₄,ø
n̄n̄ir₂-ne₂-ta-am₁ bi₃-in-dug₄,³
n̄n̄ir-e=ta-am=ø s₃b₃-s₁₀[-s₁₁]n-s₁₁[dug]-s₁₄,ø
“The woman did not plant the tree with her hands; she planted with her FEET. The woman
did not water the tree with her hands; she watered it with her FEET.”

(25) NG 99 11 (Lagash, 21st c.) (B)
e₂ kug šu-na-ta-am₁ in-sa₁₀,a
ë=ø kug šu=ane=ak-ta-am=ø s₂i₃[-s₁₁]n-s₁₁[sa₃=]ø-in₃₁,ø a=[ø]
“(Inasaga took an assertory oath) she had bought the house with the silver of HER OWN
HAND.”

² The other mss. that contain these lines do not use the copula.
(26) NG 210 4:4-6 (Lagash, 21st c.) (B)

\[\text{dug}_2\text{-ga}=\text{ba-u}_2,\text{-še}_3, \quad \text{ur-}^{\text{af}}\text{sul}^{\text{l}}\text{-}\text{udul}^{\text{s}}\text{-}ke_4, \quad \text{kug} \quad \text{niŋj}_2\text{-GA}-\text{ne}2\text{-em}\]

\[\text{dugabauk}=\text{še} \quad \text{uršuludulak}=\text{e} \quad \{\text{kug}=\emptyset\} \quad \{\text{niŋja}\text{ane}=\emptyset\}=\text{am}2\text{-ø}\]

\text{PN=TERM} \quad \text{PN=ERG} \quad \{\text{silver}=\text{ABS}\} \quad \{\text{property}=3,\text{SG},\text{H}\text{.POSS}=\text{ABS}\}=\text{COP}-3,\text{SG.S}\]

\text{in-}^{\text{št}}\text{-in-}\text{la}_2\text{-a}

\[\text{s}_2\text{₁}^{\text{š}}\text{ne}=\text{št}_2\text{₁}^{\text{š}}\text{la}=\text{št}_2\text{₁}^{\text{š}}\text{š}=\text{ak}\]

\text{FIN}-3,\text{SG.H-TERM}-3,\text{SG.H.A}-\text{weigh}-3,\text{SG.P-SUB}=\text{GEN}

“(Ur-Shuludul is to swear) that Ur-Shuludul paid for Duga-Bau with silver that is HIS OWN property.”

(27) NG 167 10-11 (Lagash, 21st c.) (B)

\[\text{ur-ba-u}_2\text{-}ke_4 \quad \text{ur}=[\emptyset] \quad \text{na}^{\text{-f}}\text{mussa}^{\text{l}}=[\text{še}_4]\]

\[\text{urbauk}=\text{e} \quad \text{ur}[\emptyset]=\emptyset \quad \text{nammussa}=\text{še}\]

\text{PN=ERG} \quad \text{PN=ABS} \quad \text{son.in.law}=\text{TERM}

\[\text{niŋj}_2\text{-u}_2\text{-rum-ra-am}_3 \quad \text{in}=[\text{na-šum}_2\text{-ma}]\]

\[\text{niŋjuru}^{\text{m}}\text{um}^{\text{ra}}=\text{am}=\emptyset \quad \text{s}_2\text{₁}^{\text{š}}\text{am}=\text{š}_2\text{₁}^{\text{š}}\text{š}_2\text{₁}^{\text{š}}\text{š}=\emptyset\]

\text{PN=}\text{DAT.H}=\text{COP}-3,\text{SG.S} \quad \text{FIN}-3,\text{SG.H.-DAT}-3,\text{SG.H.A}-\text{give}-3,\text{SG.P-SUB}=\text{ABS}

“(Ur-Bau swore that) he has given Ur… as son-in-law to NiGRUM.”

(28) Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta 200-202 (ETCSL 1.8.2.3) (A)

\[\text{n}_2\text{a}^{\text{-a}}\text{-še}_4\text{-am}_3 \quad \text{kur} \quad \text{me} \quad \text{sikil-la}=\text{ke}_4\]

\[\text{n}_2\text{a}=\text{še}^{\emptyset} \quad \text{kur} \quad \text{me} \quad \text{sikil}=\text{ak}=\emptyset\]

\text{1SG.FR}=\text{TERM}=\text{COP}-3,\text{SG.S} \quad \text{mountain power pure}=\text{TL}=\text{GEN}=\text{L3.NH}

\[\text{ḥa}=\text{ma-du}_2\text{-e}\]

\[\text{s}_2\text{₁}^{\text{ḥa}}\text{-}\text{ša}^{\text{m}}\text{-}\text{a}=\text{š}_2\text{₁}^{\text{š}}\text{du}^{\text{s}}\text{₁}\text{e}\]

\text{MOD-}\text{VEN-}\text{DAT}-\text{build}-3,\text{SG.A}

“At is for me, ..., that he (= lord of Aratta) should make the mountain of the pure divine powers (= Aratta) build it (= the temple of Inana).”

References
