INTERPRETING TENSE IN SUPINE CLAUSES

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1. **Preliminaries** It gives me great pleasure to be honoring a very distinguished colleague Professor **Petre Gheorghe Bârlea**, an eminent classicist, as well as a modern humanist, through the breadth of his intellectual concerns and his openness to interdisciplinary studies, running from essential contributions on the Latin of the Christian church to literary philological, and modern linguistic, studies. Personally, I have learned a lot from his semantic and semiotic studies, also sharing with him an interest in the study or Romanian grammar, illustrated in the paper below. Beyond all this, ever since I met him almost twenty years ago, I have always appreciated and loved his kindness and generosity, and his infinite desire to the good.

Abstract: The article below is based on a more extensive study devoted to the grammar of the verbal supine clauses (Cornilescu & Cosma, 2013) and it addresses a problem that had not been systematically investigated before, that of the temporal properties of verbal supine clauses, with special reference to supine clauses introduced by the prepositional complementizer DE. The paper makes two important claims: The first is that the supine clause does not contain a Tense projection, a claim supported by strong empirical evidence. The second claim is that the supine clause may show a particular temporal interpretation: futurity, in spite of the missing Tense projection. This interpretation is tied to the aspectual properties of the supine clause.

Keywords: supine clause, functional structure, tense

2. On the functional structure of the supine clause.

2.1 The morphology of the supine: supine vs. participle As known, from a morphological point of view, the supine verbal form is homonymous with the past participle, both are marked by the suffix -(v)T/-(v)S, attached to the verbal stem; the particular morpho-phonological realization of the supine varies with respect to verb classes (see GALR, 2005/2008, for details).

Differences between the participle and the supine are immediately apparent, however, even at the morphological level. Thus, the participle shows φ-features/agreement features (1a), everywhere except for the compound perfect, while the supine never has gender-number marking; in other words, it is not endowed with φ-features (1b).

(1) O consider (ca) deja *concediată*
CL.3SG.F.ACC consider.1SG (as) already fired.F.SG
'I consider her as already fired.'

In my opinion, the homonymy of the supine and the past participle is significant, since all of the properties of the supine clause can be derived from the properties of the supine- participle morpheme. The participle and the supine are both *aspectual morphemes*, as noticed for the past participle by Avram (1999). As aspectual morphemes, the past participle and the

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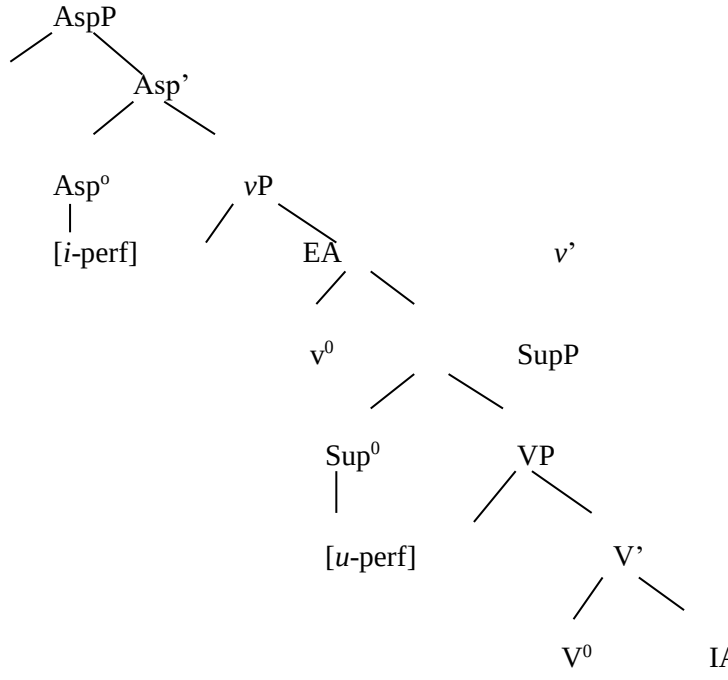
supine contrast with respect to perfectivity; this is evidenced by minimal pairs of the following type:

(2) a. carte deja citită : carte de citit
book already read.F.SG book
DE read.SUP
'an already read book' 'a book to read'

Dima (2010) proves that the past participle is [+/- perfective], while the supine is [-perfective]. The participle is bounded, possibly resultative, the supine is unbounded (undetermined and unrealized). Unlike the past participle, however, the supine lacks φ/agreement-features.

As to the syntax of the supine morpheme, a natural hypothesis is that it enters the derivation in the same manner as the past participle. According to Collins (2002) and Pestesky and Torrego (2004), the past participle, and by assumption also the supine morpheme, heads a functional projection placed above the lexical VP and below the light verb phrase, *v*P, as shown in (3). Since the supine's aspect feature is uninterpretable imperfective, i.e. [*u* -perfective], it will be valueg against a grammatical Aspect head, endowed with a matching interpretable imperfective feature, [*i*-perfective] grammatical Aspect head. In fact, all supine constructions, nominal ones included (Cornilescu 2003), are at least Aspect Phrases, as in (3). Beyond this common aspectual element, supine constructions are quite diverse, as briefly reviewed in the next section

(3)



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2.2 *The variety of supine forms: the verbal and the nominal supine* Several syntactic supine structures have been acknowledged (Pană Dindelegan 1992, Soare 2002, GALR 2008)[1], centering around a "nominal" and a "verbal" supine. There is first a *fully nominal* construction, which is identified by the obligatory presence of an article (usually the definite article) and of an internal argument in the Genitive case.

(4) darâmatul brutal al bisericilor[2]
demolish.SUP.DEF brutal ART.GEN churches.GEN.DEF
'the brutal demolishing of the churches'

Like any other NP, the nominal supine may, be introduced by a preposition, but the preposition is not critical for the syntactic description of the nominal supine.

(5) Se gândeşte ***la*** spălatul rufelor.
SE think.3SG at wash.SUP.DEF laundry. PL.GEN.DEF
'He is thinking of washing the laundry.'

Unlike the nominal supine, the so-called verbal supine *must* be introduced by a preposition. It is customary to distinguish two prepositional supine constructions. In the first case, the supine is introduced by a *lexical preposition*, which has θ-marking abilities, indicating the semantic value of the supine construction. The lexical preposition is often *c-selected by a prepositional verb* (*a se gândi **la** copt fructe,* 'to think of baking fruit'; *a trăi **din** cântat*, 'to live on singing'), by an adjective (*doritor de* 'eager, desirous of', *sătul de* 'fed up with' etc.), by a noun (*dorinţa **de** scris articole bune,* 'the wish to write good articles'). C-selected prepositional supines are *arguments*. The supine prepositions (*la* 'to, at', *pentru* 'for', *de* 'of', etc.) also introduce supine verbal or nominal adjuncts ((6), (7)):

(6) A plecat la vânat raţe.
have.3SG gone to hunt.SUP ducks
'He went about hunting ducks.'

(7) maşină pentru tuns iarba
machine for mow.SUP grass
'machine for lawn-mowing'

A quite different situation is that of the supine introduced by the preposition *de*, but selected by *transitive* verbs. In such cases, the preposition is *functional* and it is a member of the supine clause. Here is an example.

(8) Am terminat *de* fumat toate ţigările.
have.1.SG finished DE smoke. SUP all cigarettes.the
'I have finished smoking all the cigarettes.'

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In such cases, the preposition *de* may be analysed as a (low) complementizer (Hill 2002, Soare 2002, Dye 2006, Cornilescu and Cosma, 2013) or a mood particle (Giurgea and Soare, 2010:78); in both analyses, *de* is viewed as left periphery constituent, introducing the supine clause. It has been shown (Cornilescu & Cosma 2013, 296-305) that even used with transitive verbs, in the supine construction, *de* continues to have prepositional properties, playing an important case-assigning role with respect to the verb's internal argument. From a cross-linguistic perspective, *de* behaves like the English prepositional complementizer *for*, in the infinitive *for-to* construction, so we have chosen to describe de as a complementizer, rather than a mood particle, though nothing material depends on this (terminological) choice.

The distinction between the prepositional supine construction illustrated in (5)-(7) and the complementizer construction, illustrated in (8) remains, however, clear cut. At least the following diagnostics show this difference:

a. Substitution In the prepositional construction, the supine clause alternates with a PP, with the same preposition followed by an NP (9a). In the complementizer construction the *de*+ supine clause is substituted by a bare NP or a demonstrative (9b).

(9) a. S-a apucat [$_{PP}$ de [$_{SupP}$citit piesele lui Shakespeare] /
SE-have.3SG started DE read.SUP plays.DEF of Shakespeare
S-a apucat [$_{PP}$ **de** [$_{DP}$ **asta**]].
SE-have.3SG started DE this
'He has started to read Shakespeare's plays// He has started this.'

b. Am terminat [$_{SupP}$ de citit piesele lui Shakespeare]/
have.1SG finished DE read.SUP plays.DEF of Shakespeare
Am terminat [$_{DP}$ **asta**].
have.1SG finished this
'I have finished reading Shakespeare's plays// I have finished this.'

b. *Extraction* Expectedly, extraction is not possible out of PPs, but is possible out of CPs.

(10) a. Umblă întotdeauna după agăţat fete.
look.3SG always after pick.SUP girls
,He is always trying to pick up girls.'
b. **Pe cine/ ce umblă după agăţat?
PE who/what look.3SG after pick.SUP

(11) a. N-ar fi rău de întâmpinat *musafirii* la gară.
not- AUX.COND.3SG be bad DE welcome.SUP guests.DEF at station
'It would not be bad to welcome the guests at the station.'

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b. Pe cine n-ar fi rău de întâmpinat la gară?
PE who not-AUX.COND.3SG be bad DE welcome.SUP at station
'Who(m) would it not be bad to welcome at the station?'

Against this general background, in section 3, we sketch the functional skeleton of the supine clause, detailing the temporal interpretation of the supine in section 4. The analysis mostly concerns the supine DE-complementizer construction.

3. The functional structure of the supine clause

3.1. *The finite clause* Previous studies on Romanian (Dobrovie Sorin 1994; Cornilescu 1997; Avram 1999; Alboiu 2002; Isac 2004, Nicolae 2013) agree on several points regarding the syntax of the Romanian finite clause. There is consensus that the functional domain of the verb includes (at least) the categories in (53), and that there are characteristic heads/morphemes which fill some of these different functional positions. Here is an example, mapped on this structure:

(12)

C >	Fin P>Neg P >	PersP >	TP >	AspP > *v*P >SupP/PrtP >VP
a. ca	să nu	îl	dăruiască ...	
~~dăruiască~~		~~dăruiască~~ …….		

a'. ca să nu îl dăruiască
CA SĂ not CL. 3SG.M.ACC offer.SUBJ.3SG
'in order not to offer it (as a gift)'

Since some of these projections are sometimes represented by the same morpheme or are phonologically null, syntacticians have developed diagnostics which identify the presence or absence of a given projection in the functional domain of a verb. One presumably universal finding is that a nominative subject correlates with finite Tense, i.e. Tense with agreement features (person, number). This correlation is clear in English, for instance, where only finite clauses have a Nominative subject. Secondly, the Tense position is also characterized by the fact that *auxiliary verbs*, which do not project a lexical domain, end up in Tense, or, when they are inflected, they move through Tense to the Person /Agreement field, if Tense and Agreement are scattered rather than fused. Here are examples of auxiliaries in finite clauses:

(13)

C	Fin	Neg	Agr	T	Asp	*v*P	Sup/Part	VP
a. că		nu	l-**am**	dat	~~dat~~	~~dat~~	~~dat~~	
b. ca	să	nu	**o**	**fi**	~~repetat~~	~~repetat~~	……	

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c. că nu **erau** spălate ~~spălate~~
a'. că nu **l-am** dat
that not CL.3SG.M.ACC-have.1SG offered
'that I have given it'
b'. … să nu o fi repetat
SĂ not CL.3SG.F.ACC be repeated
'not to have repeated it'
c' că nu **erau** spălate ~~spălate~~
that not were wash. PRT.PL.F
that they were not washed

Notice the difference position of the auxiliaries *fi* and *avea* above. Inflected auxiliaries, that is, perfect *avea* 'have' and passive *fi* 'be', show up under agreement, while perfect *fi* 'be', which is *uninflected* appears under Tense. One final important point regards clitic adverbs, like *mai* '(any) more' *tot* ,'still', etc. Given their meaning, they have been analysed as aspectual markers, i.e. they merge above Aspect and cliticize on any verb which reaches T, allowing to move upwards from the Aspect phrase. In other words they may be accommodated by any verb which reaches Tense (i.e. one position higher than Aspect), as apparent below:

(14) C Fin Neg Agr T Asp
a. ca să nu îl +**mai+dea** mai dea dea
b. ca să nu îl **mai** *fi* dat
c. că l-*ai* **mai** auzit
a' ca să nu îl mai dea
CA SĂ not CL. 3SG.M.ACC anymore give.SUBJ.3SG
' that he should not give it anymore.'
b' ca să nu îl **mai** *fi* dat
CA SĂ not CL. 3SG.M.ACC anymore be. INF give.PRT
'that he shouldn't have given it anymore.'
c.' că l-*ai* **mai** auzit
that CL.3SG.M.ACC-have.2SG anymore hear. PRT
'that you have heard it before'

As apparent in these examples, *mai* may cliticze on the uninflected **fi** (which is in T) in (14) and on the participle of the lexical verb also in T in (14), as also shown by the inversion structure, where *mai*+Participle raises, leaving the inflected auxiliary behind (see (15)):

(15) Mai-auzit-ai dumneata, cumnată, una ca asta?
anymore-hear.PRT -have you, sister-in-law one like this
'Have you ever heard anything like this, sister?

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3.2. *The supine clause* In contrast to the finite clause, *the supine clause* has a reduced domain, which we propose to represent as below:

(16) C (Neg) Tense/Aspect > (Pass) *v*P > SupP VP V

de neg [*i*-perf] ∅ uT/uS……..

According to what has been said so far, in the supine clause, there is morphological evidence for an *Aspect projection*, where the imperfective, [*u*-perf], feature of the supine is valued, and there is also evidence for a complementizer position represented by *de*. Examples like (17), (18) testify that a NegP projection is also available, represented by the negative morpheme *ne-* . Notice that *ne* licenses negative polarity items (e.g. *vreodată*, 'ever' (66), as well as N-words (e.g. *nimic* 'nothing', in (67). Such data indicate that *ne-* instantiates *sentential* negation, being the head of NegP, as suggested in (107).

(17) a. Iată un adevăr de *ne*spus *vreodată* cuiva.
here's a truth DE not-say.SUP ever anyone
'Here's a truth not to ever mention to anyone.'

(18) Se pricepe grozav la *ne*făcut nimic.
SE know.3SG terribly-well at not-do.SUP nothing

'He/she is very good at not doing anything.'

A passive phrase is also likely to be present. The passive morpheme is never realized on the verb, but may be made apparent by the passive sense and by the *de către* 'by' phrase.

(19) Este bine de ştiut *de către toţi participanţii* că evenimentul
be.3SG good DE know.SUP by all.PL participants.DEF that event.DEF
are loc mâine.
have.3SG place tomorrow
'It is good for all participants to know that the event will take place tomorrow.'

If one compares the structure of the supine clause in (16), with the structure of the finite clause in (12), the most striking difference is the absence of a separate Tense+Agreement projection. As mentioned above, Tense is crucial for licensing auxiliaries verbs, clitics and also the nominative Subject. If Tense is not available, the expectation is that none of these can overtly be realized in the supine clause, and this is indeed the case. Thus, the supine subject cannot get Nominative Case because there is no Tense+Agreement to license it. Accordingly, the Subject of the supine clause is PRO, more often than not, interpreted through control.

(20) Maria are de PRO făcut toate calculele astea *singură*.

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Mary have.3SG DE do.SUP all.F.PL calculations.DEF these alone.F.SG
'She has to do all these calculations on her own/all alone.'

Proof of the fact that the subject is, nevertheless, projected in the supine clause is that when the sentence has a passive interpretation, it may appear as a *de către* phrase; in this case, the subject may be case assigned and, consequently, it may be overt, as in (19) above. Secondly, since Romanian clitic pronouns cliticize on the verb in T, and there is no T/Agr projection in the supine clause, clitic pronouns are not available, either. For a limited number of main verbs which allow restructuring, there is *clitic climbing*, i.e. the clitics of the supine verb are visible on the main verb.

(21) a.*Scrisorile nu am terminat de **le** scris încă.
letters. DEF not have1.SG finished DE CL.PL.ACC write. SUP yet.
b. Scrisorile nu **le-**am terminat de scris încă.
letters. DEF not CL.PL.ACC –have.1.SG finished DE write. SUP yet

'I haven't finished writing the letters yet.'

Thirdly, the absence of T amounts to the impossibility of overtly realizing any auxiliary, and indeed, the passive supine clause in (19) above has no auxiliary.

Further evidence that there is no T projection in the verbal functional domain of the supine is supplied by the curious distribution of the clitic adverb *mai* '(any)more,again'. As observed above, *mai* merges in the Aspect phrase and raises on the verb in T. The prediction is that *mai* will not appear in supine clauses since there is no verb in T. This prediction is confirmed (see ()). Interestingly but not unexpectedly, *mai* does show up in negative supine clauses.

(22) *Textele astea sunt de **mai**-citit si a doua oara.

texts. DEF. these are DE again-read.SUP also a second time/

These texts are to be read a second time

(23) Textele astea sunt de ne**mai**citit vreodată.
texts. DEF these are DE not -again-read.SUP ever.
'These texts are to neverbe read again'

The syntactic structure proposed in (16) for the supine neatly accounts for the asymmetry between affirmative and negative clauses, as far as *mai* is concerned. In negative clauses, there is one more projection above the AspP, namely the NegP, where the verb or verb phrase raises, taking the aspectual adverb along. In conclusion, there is strong and typical evidence that supine clauses do not contain a dedicated Tense projection.

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6. The interpretation of Tense in the supine clause

In spite of the fact that they contain no TenseP, supine clauses are often semantically tensed, in the sense that they place the even denoted in a time interval different from the event time of the main clause. For instance in the example below, the event time of the main clause is past, while the event time of the supine clause is distinct and posterior, with a future in the past interpretation with respect to the main clause.

(24) Ii dăduseră de terminat raportul până a doua zi.
They him-had-given DE finish.SUP report.DEF till the second day.
'They had ordered him to finish the report by the next day'

Ritter and Wiltschko (2011) argue that when clauses are syntactically tenseless, their temporal properties may be derived from their aspectual interpretation. In the supine clause, The Aspect projection is clearly present, since it is morphologically marked. We will therefore assume that, whenever the supine clause is semantically tensed, there is a Tense feature under the Aspect node, a feature whose meaning is derived from the imperfectivity of the supine. Since the supine is *aspectually imperfective*, when the supine clause is valued for tense, it denotes *a time different from that of the main clause*, moreover it denotes *a future (or present) time sphere, since past interpretations are conveyed by the perfect aspect.* The futurity of the supine has long been noticed and we claim that it is inferred from the imperfectivity of the supine. Futurity characterizes both prepositional supine constructions and *de*-complementizer ones.

(25) a. A plecat *la* cumpărat cărămizi.
have.3SG gone at buy.SUP bricks
'He went to buy bricks.'

b. Ii dăduseră de terminat raportul până a doua zi.
They him-had-given DE finish.SUP report. DEF till the second day.
'They had ordered him to finish the report by the next day'

On the other hand, not all verbs select tensed complements, as recently shown in Cotfas's (2012) analysis for subjunctive complements. There are also main verbs, which select tenseless supine complements, i.e. complements that merely *copy the Tense feature of the main clause*. A case in point is that of aspectual verbs, where the supine clause is interpreted at the time of the main clause.

(26) Am terminat de citit cartea.
have.1SG finished DE read.SUP book.DEF
,I have finished reading the book.' (=> I have been reading the book.)

(27) Voi termina de citit cartea până mâine seară.
AUX finish DE read.SUP book.DEF until tomorrow evening

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,I will finish reading the book by tomorrow evening.' (=> I will have read the book by tomorrow evening.)

We may thus distinguish two situations regarding the temporal interpretation of the supine. The by far most frequent situation in terms of its distribution is for the supine tense feature to be distinct from the main clause tense feature and to be valued as future, in line with the imperfectivity of the supine.

(28) I-a fost imposibil de spus adevărul
CL.3SG.DAT-have.3SG be.PERF.3SG impossible DE tell.SUP truth.DEF
'It was impossible to him/her to tell the truth.'

At a closer inspection, the interpretation of the supine should be characterized as *irrealis future*, an interpretation equivalent with that of the infinitive and the subjunctive, which are *irrealis* modalities, both of them. This explains why the supine is often interchangeable with the infinitive and the subjunctive. One question that may arise is whether the specific temporal interpretation of the supine clause is induced by the main verb, or whether it derives from the aspectual meaning of the supine. A tentative answer to this question comes from supine relative clauses, whose nominal head does not contain a Tense phrase. The interpretation of supine relative clauses is homogenously *future or generic*, both readings naturally deriving from the (modal) aspectual properties of the supine.

(29) a. Aceasta este / a fost o maşină de scris. (generic)
this is/ has been a machine DE write.SUP
'This is/will be/has been a type-writer.'
b. texte de tradus acum/mâine/*ieri de toţi elevii (future)
texts DE translate.SUP now/tomorrow/*yesterday by all pupils.DEF
'texts to be translated now/ tomorrow/*yesterday by all the pupils'

In supine relatives, the head noun cannot transmit any particular Tense feature to the complementizer of the relative clause, so at least in such cases, futurity is inferred clause internally. When the embedding predicate is verbal, it syntactically c-selects a supine, without imposing any further temporal requirements. On the contrary, it is the supine which limits the supine-expressible complements of a predicate to those that are future-oriented. Compare again the subjunctive and the supine from this point of view. As (30b) shows, the supine may not be used to express anteriority to the main clause, unlike the subjunctive:

(30) a. Este imposibil de spus asta mâine /să spunem asta mâine.
be.3SG impossible DE say.SUP this tomorrow /SĂ say.1PL this tomorrow

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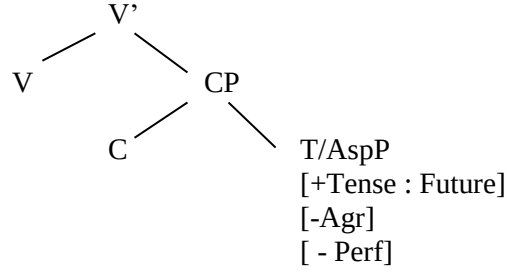
'It is impossible to say this tomorrow.'

b. Este imposibil să fi spus asta ieri / *de spus asta ieri.
be.3SG impossible SĂ be said this yesterday / DE say.SUP this yesterday
'It is impossible to have said this yesterday.'

Tensed supines are independent, showing no restrictions imposed by the main verb, appearing, however, only if future or simultaneous readings are called for. The configuration of tensed subjunctives is shown in (89) below.

The second, less frequent situation, is that, due to the nature of the main verb, the supine clause is tenseless. In such cases the Tense feature of the supine is anaphoric, that is, it lack a specific value. In such cases, the Tense-feature of the main clause is simply copied onto the Tense/Aspect-head of the embedded clause, the time denoted by the two clauses being the same. Examples have been given in (84, 85 above) above, for aspectual verbs like *continua*, 'to continue', *termina* 'finish' and others.

(89)



8. Conclusions

1. A detailed analysis of the supines introduced by the complementizer *de* has shown that they have a reduced functional structure, consisting of the following ordered projections:

(31) CP > (NegP) > T/AspP > (PassP) > *v*P > SupP > VP

The properties of the supine clause have been derived from the *properties of the supine morpheme*, analyzed as an aspectual imperfective morpheme. The supine's grammatical aspect feature is checked in the Aspect Phrase right above the lexical *v*P.

2. From a syntactic perspective the most consequential property of the supine clause is the absence of a Tense/Agreement projection. The absence of an overt Nominative subject, the absence of clitics and auxiliaries in the supine clause clearly indicate the absence of a Tense projection. Also, a close study of the distribution of the adverbial clitic *mai* '(any)more, again' in negative, as well as in affirmative supine clauses, strengthens the conclusion that the supine clause has a reduced structure and *does not contain an independent Tense Projection*. In the supine clause, the Tense feature is fused with the Aspect one.

(vii) The *temporal interpretation* of the supine clause is derived from its aspectual properties. Since the supine is *aspectually imperfective*, when

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there is a Tense feature under Aspect, it denotes a time different from that of the main clause, namely it denotes a *future time sphere* (the event is unrealized). The futurity of the supine is inferred from its imperfectivity. There are also main verbs (e.g. aspectual verbs) which select untensed complements, complements which have an anaphoric tense feature, sharing the tense of the main clause.

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