

## TOWARDS A TYPOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE VERBAL SYSTEM IN PROTO-AUSTRONESIAN

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In Austronesian linguistics comparative morphology has never had the attention paid to comparative phonology. There is nothing exceptional about this; it is – or has been – the case in the comparative linguistics of most of the other language families. The study of sound laws has to precede morphological comparison, because without them identification of cognate morphemes is not possible. Another reason why morphology has to wait for the results of the comparative study of sounds, is that historical phonology gives more reliable means for classification. Sound-changes, although showing some universal tendencies, have the advantage of being independent of meaning (at least in most cases) and, therefore, are unique in the combination in which they occur. For that reason, they are better indications for common or separate innovations. In morphology structural coherence and meaning may cause parallel developments. And insight in the classification is necessary for assigning a certain feature or change to a certain branch or to a proto-language. Finally, morphological comparison asks for a much deeper and more thorough knowledge: the data cannot be collected from wordlists and dictionaries and grammatical descriptions usually are a poor substitute for personal familiarity with the languages in question, as exceptions and irregularities may provide clues equally important as those found in rules and regular phenomena. This precludes fast progress, especially in the case of the Austronesian family with its great number and variety of languages.

As to the methods of comparative morphology, the most direct and 'classical' approach is that of *morpheme reconstruction*: grammatical morphemes are reconstructed in the same way as basic morphemes and words, their meaning and function are taken from what is common in meanings and functions of their reflexes in the various languages. But every change in a morphological system means restructuring of that system and may bring about change in the distribution of functions of its elements. This makes reconstruction of the meaning and function of grammatical morphemes a hazardous if not impossible enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

A valuable complement is found in *typological reconstruction*: the various morphological structures are compared and a hypothesis is formed as to the system from which they developed. In this approach use is made of the fact that sometimes morphological distinctions persist or even return, though their markers

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are lost or replaced.<sup>2</sup> Typological comparison is mainly used for descriptive purposes, to draw conclusions as to functions in a certain language from what can be learned from other languages, and is closely connected with general studies of grammatical theory.<sup>3</sup>

Another complementary method is *internal reconstruction*: looking for indications for a former state of a language, mainly from inconsistencies in its present system.<sup>4</sup> Very similar is the use of petrified forms and all other debris of a previous state of morphology. As the persistency of forms, even after the breakdown of a system, is the main principle, it makes a good complement to the typological approach.

Finally, it must be kept in mind that morphological comparison is impossible without constant reference to syntactical phenomena, as morphological elements are often replaced by syntactical constructions and vice versa.

Most of the monographic publications on AN morphology concentrate on verbal morphology.<sup>5</sup> Of the latest ones which reached for at least an outline for reconstruction Wolff's study (1973) suffered from being built on materials from a limited number of languages and attributed the Philippine system too easily and without real proof to PAN, whereas the paper by Pawley and Reid (1976), though more thorough-going than anything else on the subject, leaves one question without a definite answer (the historical priority of either the Philippine or the Oceanic type of 'transitivising') and another problem untouched: the position of the so-called 'conjugated' verb forms in the historical development of the verbal system.

In the present paper we will try to do full justice to these conjugated forms, as in our opinion they play an important role, not only in most of the Western AN languages but also in the development of the Oceanic languages. Further we will show that certain phenomena in languages showing the Oceanic type clearly point to a solution of the priority question in the direction of the Philippine type being the most likely to be assigned to PAN, thus corroborating Wolff's rather aprioristic choice and Pawley and Reid's reasoned preference.

One of the most important questions one has to ask about the functional categories determining the character of the AN verbal system is: do the terms we are used to in western languages also apply here and are they sufficient? The most important question is: can all verbal forms be classified as either active or passive? It seems that this question was seldom explicitly posed and the answer too readily taken for granted.

Another matter which has to be pointed out beforehand is the possibility of *homomorphy*: two or more morphological functions or categories being marked by a morpheme of the same shape, like *s* as a marker of both plural and genitive of nouns in English. In several AN languages homomorphy occurs to such an extent that it has exercised a confusing influence on many descriptions. Historically it raises the question if the homomorphy indicates a morphological split, that is: was the morpheme originally just one, or has a merger taken place of what was a set of different morphemes originally (like *\*-en* and *\*-an* merging in Malay because of a regular sound-change).

The questions about the existence of passive forms, or whether certain verb forms had to be regarded as passive or not, was raised a long time ago<sup>6</sup> and there will be ever more answers to it as more data become known and new languages taken into consideration.<sup>7</sup> But these discussions have no direct bearing on the question whether a passive is reconstructible for PAN. Clark (1973) concluded that POC must have had an agentless passive. Passive forms implying unimportance of the

agent (e.g. Indonesian *ter-* forms) or not admitting the agent to be mentioned at all (e.g. Wolio *t-* forms) are of so general occurrence that it is hardly conceivable that such forms did not exist in PAN, although their formal markers show a number of different shapes. However, many languages show forms which are often also labelled 'passive' with which the agent is not left out or removed to the background. In many languages the constructions with these forms and the way they are used are such that they raise doubts as to their passive character. As it may be difficult to decide whether the agent or the goal is seen as the more important element, so that it seems that they are of equal importance, the greatest importance being given to the action itself, these forms may be regarded as representing something in between.<sup>8</sup> It is exactly in this in-between area that we find the so-called 'conjugated forms'; therefore, we will devote some attention to them first.

What is meant by this term is: verb forms having an actor-marker, usually a prefix, incorporated. The distinctions made by these markers correspond to differences in the system of the personal pronouns, though not all distinctions of person and number found in the pronominal system need to be made or represented in the verbal markers. A great number of languages having conjugated forms and systems of their use were described by Haaksma (1933), however, without any comparative conclusions. Haaksma's book is far from exhaustive, as it was based on materials from published sources available at the time, that is almost fifty years ago. To the languages described by Haaksma as having conjugated forms many can be added now.<sup>9</sup> A full-fledged system in which all persons and numbers are separately marked is found in Simalur, Nias, Mentawai, Busang, Mori, Napu, Sumba, Lamaholot, Roti, Kei, Buli, Weda, Biak, and the Yapen languages. The same, but without a distinction of number for the third person, is found in Aceh, Makasar, Sa'dan, Timor, and Minangkabau, without the distinction of number for the second person in Solor, and without number distinction in both the second and the third person in Buginese, Bare'e, Wolio, Bima, Kupang, and Old Javanese.

Some systems show one or two deviating forms. Malay and Lampung, for instance, have a third person form with prefix *di-* and the possessive suffix for the third person. In Toba and Mandailing we find *di-* forms with possessive suffix for both the second and third person. In Gayo and Mandailing the situation is the same, but there the prefix is *i-*. Dairi has *i-* and possessive suffix for the second person, the third person having the prefix *i-* only. These forms have played an important role in the discussion about the origin and function of verb forms in AN languages. On the one hand the prefixes look like ordinary actor-markers and are found as third person prefixes (without any suffix) in several languages (Dairi, Mentawai, Biak). On the other hand there are quite a few languages having passive forms with a comparative affix and a possessive suffix marking the agent and underlining the nominal character of these forms.<sup>11</sup> Some languages — e.g. Malay — show both forms; Malay has *di-* forms used as passive or goal-focussed forms with or without the agent explicitly mentioned and *di-* forms with the third person possessive suffix *-nya*. The most likely hypothesis for this double character of the *i-/di-* forms is that these prefixes were used for marking passive participles and also as third person actor markers and that this homomorphy caused the disappearance of one of the two forms in most languages and restructuring of the original system in others. A quite different position was taken by Wils (1952) who regarded the actor-suffix forms as proof that all conjugated forms are in essence possessive constructions, constituting a possessive (though really verbal) flexion, different from both active and passive. This more or less forced him to explain all actor prefixes

as of possessive origin, a way of reasoning which finds very little support in the structures and forms of the languages in question. Following in C.C. Uhlenbeck's (his teacher's) footsteps, Wils further looked for a connection between this possessive flexion and the alienable/inalienable opposition in possession marking, at least in those languages having a complete set of conjugated forms.<sup>12</sup> This last hypothesis is interesting enough but asks for further research. What Wils said about the conjugated forms being neither active nor passive deserves our full attention. First it must be said that this was not a brand new idea: more or less the same had been said by Berg (1937:101-109). The best evidence for such a position, however, is found in those languages which have not only a set of actor-prefixes but also a series of suffixes or enclitical forms referring to the goal of the action. In Wolio the use of such double-reference forms is obligatory in transitive constructions, also in those which have goal and/or agent explicitly mentioned. Which of the two - goal or agent - is topic in a sentence is indicated by word order and intonation:

o anaana akamatea o buea *'the child sees the crocodile'* (focus: child)  
 o buea akamatea o anaana (with different intonation, same meaning, but  
 focus: the crocodile)  
 akamatea o buea o anaana (same meaning, no focus on either the child or  
 the crocodile).

This makes clear that the double-reference forms can not be simply listed as either active or passive. The same is true for corresponding forms in other languages, although some of them show a tendency to avoid these forms if the agent is in focus in which case the active forms are used. The same can be said about the actor-prefixed forms in many languages.<sup>13</sup> In Makasar and Bugis conjugated forms of intransitive verbs may be used if an adverbial phrase is focus or topic: Mak. iyami kunumera *'this I cry (about)'*; muko kulampa *'tomorrow I go'*; apa nuboya nubattu mae? *'what are you looking for (that) you come here?'*. (Esser 1929:165-166). This is the more remarkable, as these languages do not use actor-prefixes with intransitive verbs in any other context (see below).

The question, whether the post-verbal forms indicating the goal go as far back historically as the actor-prefixes, cannot be answered yet. The latter ones are found in many more languages than the former. Moreover, the goal-markers are less fully incorporated in the word-form than the actor-prefixes. In Wolio the goal-markers cannot be denied the status of suffixes, but some aspect-markers, whose tie with the nuclear morpheme is looser, may be inserted between goal-suffix and verb-stem. For Uma the goal-markers are explicitly called enclitics by Esser (1964:36). This clitical character is also apparent in Bugis and Makasar.

Many languages (especially found in Eastern Indonesia) have conjugated forms also for the intransitive verbs.<sup>14</sup> Some languages, Makasar, Bugis, and Uma among them, have the enclitics indicating goal with transitive verbs also for indicating the 'agent' of intransitive verbs, so that the result may well be regarded as an ergative construction. Still a construction of agent-marker+verb+goal-indicator (suffix, clitic, or pronoun) is a good hypothesis for a historical prototype, not only for the 'conjugating' languages but also for the Oceanic languages not having any 'conjugation'. It is quite conceivable that a full pronoun referring to the actor was added whenever a pronominal actor had some stress, as is still the case in Buli: iseli *'I eat'*, ya iseli *'I eat (the others don't)'*. In such cases the prefix becomes redundant and might be dropped. If the same happens to both actor-prefixes and post-verbal goal-indicators, the result is exactly what we find in languages like Fijian: eratou sa yādra na

cauravou (*they asp.-marker get-up the young-man*) '*the young men got up*'; au a raici iratou na gone (*I tense-marker see them child*) '*I saw the children*'. And after losing the personal pronouns in the construction, only keeping a general goal-suffix (i.e. a transitivity or passive marker) and introducing markers for agent and goal, this type becomes the Polynesian construction type, with its own possibilities and its own problems of 'passive or active?'.<sup>15</sup>

The transitivity-markers bring us to our last point. In Philippine languages we find a neat system of what usually are called focus-types: either the agent, the direct goal, the instrumental goal, the locative goal, or the beneficent goal have the central role in a verbal construction.<sup>16</sup> Usually all the verb-forms, except the actor-focus form, are regarded as passive. But it must be kept in mind only the object-focus form has an active (i.e. actor-focus form) counterpart in which the goal is a direct object. Other languages having suffixes for indicating a relation to an object are different from the Philippine type in two ways. In the first place they show both active and passive forms and constructions with these object-relation markers, whereas the Philippine type languages only have the 'passive' forms. Secondly, they have a less differentiated system, distinguishing only one or two indirect-goal relations. The semantic range of these forms is often very wide. Buli, for instance, has no formal distinction between instrumental and locative in these forms: an '*eat*', ano '*eat with*', topa '*throw*', topo '*throw at*', taping '*to light fire*', tapngo '*shoot at, shoot with*' (Maan 1951:73-79). Balinese has two different suffixes, -in and -ang, but their functions do not seem to be clearly definable: -in usually has locative objects, but also benefactive and even instrumental, whereas -ang marks indirect objects, instrumental, sometimes locative or temporal, e.g. bedbed-ang '*to wrap around*', gebeg-ang '*to rub with*', linggih-in '*to sit on*', ampak-in '*to open for*'.<sup>17</sup> One of the functions of -aka in Wolio is giving the verb in question a subordinated position in the sentences.<sup>18</sup> The prevailing type, however, is that found in languages like Malay, Javanese, Toba, etc., where -i forms are found with a locative goal and (a)kən forms mainly with an instrumental but also with a beneficent goal. In Oceania the difference in use between these two forms have become vague, as both developed in the direction of becoming just transitivity markers without any differentiation in the action-goal relation. The role played by the homomorphy of the locative -i and a former third person object marker -i in the functional reduction of the object-relation marking system can only be guessed.

That also in the Philippine-type languages there is not always a clear-cut set of object-relation categories, might be inferred from the fact that the benefactive (lacking as a separate category in non-Philippine languages) is not fully equivalent to instrumental and locative e.g. in Tagalog.<sup>19</sup> But there is also Malagasy, which shows the Philippine type structure insofar as there is no separate verb-form for active-indirect object, but which in the passive forms only has a difference between direct-goal ('real passive') and indirect-goal forms (traditionally called 'relative forms') with only incidental possibilities of further distinction. The semantic range of the functions indicated by these relative forms is very wide: beneficent, place, time, instrument, price, part of a whole, cause, reason, etc.<sup>20</sup>

The historical relationship between the Philippine type of verb and the type having active verb-forms with affixes for indirect goals — which take the place of a direct object — might be illustrated by the occurrence of incidental or regular cases of something belonging to one system in the other. In other words: if something normal in the Philippine type were to be found in languages of the other type (and not the reverse) this might be taken as an indication

that the Philippine type was older and that from it the type developed through analogy and rearrangement of morphemes. Active counterparts for an indirect-goal passive is an active verb-form with a prepositional phrase in the Philippine-type languages, or active -i or -(a)kən form in the others. If the latter were to occur – but only incidentally – with a preposition phrase instead of a direct object, this would be what we are looking for.

These forms actually occur: Indonesian *dia menulis surat* 'he writes a letter', *dia menuliskan surat kepada saya* 'he writes a letter to me'. Javanese *klasne digelar* 'the mat is unrolled', but *klasne digelarkan ing jobin* 'the mat is unrolled on the tiles'; *gripe diasah* 'the lead-pencil is sharpened', *kowe diasahake gripe* 'the lead-pencil is sharpened for you', *gripe diasahake ing bata* 'the lead-pencil is sharpened on a stone'. In these cases there seems to be a preference for the -(a)kən forms.<sup>21</sup> The opposite is also possible: a preposition phrase functioning as focus of an indirect-goal verb in a Philippine-type language: Malagasy.

Tamin'ny alatsinainy no nifanekena tamin-dRakoto  
'it was on Monday that a contract was signed with Rakoto'.

These cases, and also the more passive-like use of the transitive-suffix forms in Polynesian, make it very likely that the active -i and -(a)kən forms are a later development and that the special development of the Philippine-type languages mainly consisted in the morphemes, and in the differentiation, of the indirect-goal-focus forms; maybe also in the role of the interplay between verb-forms and definiteness of syntactical elements.<sup>22</sup>

## NOTES

1. The consequences of these methodological defects are clearly seen in some of R.A. Kern's articles (Kern 1931, 1935).
2. e.g. the restored opposition singular-plural in the pronoun system of Sakaleva and Vezo (Dahl 1951:242).
3. cf. the long and not yet finished discussion on active and passive in AN languages.
4. A good example is Berg (1937).
5. There are too many of them to list them all in the bibliography. The most comprehensive ones are Brandstetter (1912) (now completely outdated), Wolff (1973) and Pawley & Reid (1976).
6. We cite one example of the older publications: Tendeloo (1895).
7. See for Indonesia: Esser (1929) and for Polynesia Krupa (1973), and the literature mentioned by them.
8. See e.g. Berg (1937), where the term 'degrees of activity' is used to cover active, passive, and the in-between forms.

9. To mention just a few: Uma (Esser (1964), Wolio (Anceaux 1952), Biak and the AN languages of Sarera Bay (Anceaux 1961:150-156), Lamaholot (my data from Drs Inyo Yos Fernandes and Drs Aron Mako Mbeté).
10. These lists of names are *not* exhaustive.
11. See e.g. Wolio (Anceaux 1952:28). Philippine languages, and also some languages of Northern Celebes, show comparable forms with some differences in use (Kern 1931).
12. Uhlenbeck's theory was mainly based on American Indian languages (Uhlenbeck 1916 and 1917).
13. Berg (1937), Esser (1964:7).
14. Many are mentioned by Haaksma (1933); other languages are Lamaholot and Wolio.
15. See for the Samoan case: Milner (1962).
16. The vague wording is not without purpose (see Schachter 1976).
17. Kersten (1948:18-28; 1970:54-67).
18. Anceaux (1952:47).
19. Compare, e.g., the treatment of this part of Tagalog grammar by Llamzon (1976:92-106) with that by Ramos (1978).
20. Examples in Malzac (1960:71-74 and 143-150). See also Dahl (1978) and Rajaona (1972).
21. For Dairi Batak I found the following examples of active and passive forms, both having the -(a)kən form in combination with a preposition phrase:
 

mamberu memereken kepeng baku *'the uncle gives me the money'*,  
 kepeng ibereken mamberu baku *'the money is given to me by the uncle'*;  
 galuh i iambongken mi teruh (*money that is thrown (+ -ken) to below*)  
*'that money is thrown down'*. (Tinambunan 1980).
22. For this see Bell (1978).

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