

Origin of Redundant Agreement in Malto *-ke* Converb*

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Abstract

Malto has two perfective converbs, uninflecting *-ko* and inflecting *-ke*. According to the passages extracted from our transcript corpus, there is no essential difference in aspect between them, but they function differently when viewed as switch reference markers; the former occurs when the subject is different from that of the main clause, and the latter when it has the same subject as the main clause. In other words, the same-subject *-ke* converb shows redundant agreement with the subject whereas the different-subject *-ko* converb does not show agreement at all. Since no comparable phenomena are found in other Dravidian languages, this inflecting *-ke* converb is considered to involve innovation in Malto. Based on the uninflecting *-ka* converb in Southern Malto and cognate Kurux verbal adjective suffix *-ka:*, we propose that *-ke* converb with redundant agreement originates from the Proto-Kurux-Malto perfective verbal adjective, with a pronominal suffix which is regularly attached in Malto when an adjective is used as a predicate.

1. Introduction

When a language acquires a new morphological complexity in the course of its development, it is usually a concomitant of a new distinctive function. For example, Middle Indo-Aryan verbs were inflected in six ways according to the person and number of their subjects, while Sindhi, a New Indo-Aryan language, has incorporated object agreement affixes as well, and developed a complex verb paradigm of six by six ways.

When, on the contrary, a language has a morphological complexity which is functionally redundant, it is often an archaism. For example, while German requires an overt subject, German verbs still show inflection in person and number inherited from Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European. To take another example, Welsh prepositions may doubly specify their objects by marking person-number agreement on them in addition to taking overt objects.

In this paper, I will first show that Malto *-ke* converb has functionally redundant agreement with the subject in person, number and gender, and that this is not an archaism but the result of innovation. Then I will propose an explanation on how this innovation took place in Malto.

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2. About the Language

Malto is a Dravidian language. It is spoken by approximately 100,000 people belonging to communities called Sawriya Pahariya, Mal Pahariya and Kumarbhag Pahariya, in the Indian states of Jharkhand and West Bengal, and in the Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh. Isolated from other Dravidian languages geographically and genetically, it forms a close subgroup of the Dravidian language family with Kurux spoken in Chota Nagpur Plateau, and shares a few traits with Brahui spoken in Baluchistan as well.

Malto has considerable dialectal variation in its phonology, morphology and vocabulary; if we classify the dialects according to verbal inflection and phonemic inventory, there are at least three groups: Northern, Central and Southern-Western (Kobayashi 2012:14f.). Northern and Central dialects have the vowels /a i u e o/ together with their long and/or nasalized counterparts, the consonants /q k c ʈ t p g g j d d b ŋ ɲ n m y w ʃ r l s h/, and past forms with the tense suffix *-k-*. Central and Southern-Western Malto form the past with the tense suffix *-t-*. While Central Malto has the same phonemic inventory as Northern Malto, Southern-Western dialects have /ʔ/ and /h/ instead of /q/ and /g, ŋg/, respectively.

3. Two Perfective Converbs in Malto and ‘Redundant’ Agreement

Malto has two perfective converbs, *-ko* converb and *-ke* converb, both attached to the past stem of a verb. The former is uninflecting and does not show any agreement, as in example (1).

- (1) mandr-a garc-ko ahe-k maqe-h meɲj-ah
 medicine-ACC melt.PS-CVB he-DAT child-M become.PS-PST.3SG.M
 “After [the ascetic] prepared medicine, he (i.e. the king) had a baby boy.” (Kobayashi 2012:338)

On the other hand, *-ke* converb agrees with its subject and takes a corresponding agreement marker, sometimes fused with *-ke*: 1SG *-ken*, 2SG.M *-ke*, 2SG.NM *-ki*, 3SG.M *-keh*, 3SG.NM *-ki(ð)*, 1PL.EXCL *-kem*, 1PL.INCL *-ket*, 2PL *-ker*, 3PL *-ker*.¹

- (2) pac ʈoma ... kalsa nulk-ker ante tey-ar ɖoba-k
 five hole ... jar bore-CVB.3PL and send-PAST.3PL well-DAT
 “[The sisters-in-law] made five holes in a jar and sent [the youngest sister] to the well.”
 (Kobayashi 2012:300)

¹ 1SG *-kan*, 2SG.M *-ke*, 2SG.NM *-ki*, 3SG.M *-kah*, 3SG.NM *-ki(ð)*, 1PL.EXCL *-kam*, 1PL.INCL *-key*, 2PL *-ker*, 3PL *-kar* in Central and Southern Malto (Mahapatra 1979:183).

“[The boy] swung around [a stick] and chased [the parrot] away from there.” (Kobayashi 2012:260)

4. Typology of Switch Reference

In some languages, the identity or difference of the subjects of clauses in a complex sentence is morphologically marked. This phenomenon, called switch reference, is common in the native languages of North America and Australia. *-ke* and *-ko* converbs of Malto mark identity or difference of the subjects of the clauses, if not as their primary functions, and may be called switch reference markers. In the languages of South Asia, switch reference is not so common, but there are cases like (6) and (7) from the South Munda language Gtaʔ, in which *-ʃe* marks the same subject and *-la* a different subject, neither of which marks agreement with the subject as the Malto *-ke* converb does.

Gtaʔ (Anderson 2007:218f.)

(6) ɲku gnag-hwaʔ toʔ-ʃe ga-ge
 tiger door-rope open-SS enter-ge.PST
 “the tiger opened the door(-rope) and entered”

(7) ldʒo haboʔ-bo-la huŋ-dæ-ke bæ-ke
 field forget-AUX-DS child-3.REFL-OBJ send-ke.PST
 “it (the jug) was forgotten on the field, (so) he sent his child”

Outside South Asia, there are languages with switch reference suffix marking agreement. In Kolyma Yukaghir, for example, one of the two switch reference suffixes, *-ke*, marks agreement with the subject of the converb as in Malto, but unlike in Malto, this suffix is used only when the subject of the converb is *different* from that of the main clause, and the uninflecting *-t* suffix occurs when the converb and the main clause have the same subject.

Kolyma Yukaghir (Maslova 2003:370)

(8) čaj ože-t modo-l-u-ke met ejme-n
 tea drink-SS:IPFV sit-1/2-0-DS I across-PROL
 adā-n pugeže-sʹ
 here-PROL dart.out-PFV:INTR:3SG
 “I was sitting and drinking tea, (and) it darted out right there, at the other side.”

From the viewpoint of distinctive function, the system of Kolyma Yukaghir makes more sense than Malto, because it is an overspecification for the latter to indicate the subject of *-ke* converb

which is anyway identical with that of the main clause.

As mentioned in section 1, redundant marking itself is nothing uncommon if it reflects archaism. However, there is no indication that Malto *-ke* converb marking agreement is an archaism. In Kurux, the language most closely related with Malto, the uninflecting converb suffix complex *-ar ki* (Grignard 1924:72) does not show any agreement with the subject.

Kurux (from fieldwork)

- (9) oŋʃa: xadd-as ro:j coʔ-ar.ki k^hali: guli:-ɖaŋʃa:
one child-M every.day get.up-CVB only ball-bat
be:c-das
play-PRS.3SG.M
“A boy gets up every day and is only playing cricket.”

There is no other cognate of Malto *-ke* converb in Kurux, except that the Kurux past endings of the first and second persons, 1SG *-kan*, 2SG.M *-kay*, 2SG.NM *-ki*., 1PL.EXCL *-kam*, 1PL.INCL *-kat*, 2PL *-ker*, might be traceable to a common origin (see section 6). While converbs without agreement are quite common (Krishnamurti 2003:440f.), no cognate or isofunctional suffix with agreement is found in other Dravidian languages, so we have to conclude that the redundant agreement marking on *-ke* converb involves some innovation in Malto.

5. Origin of Redundant Agreement (1): Contact with Santali

If the redundant agreement of Malto *-ke* converb arose by innovation as we argue, the next question would be how it developed. A possible scenario is that a similar structure was transferred from a language with which Malto was in close contact.

Although we do not know the prehistory of the Pahariyas, the Malto-speaking community, they have been in close contact with the Santals at least for the past two centuries. Pahariya villages are typically on hilltops, surrounded by more populous lowland Santal villages, and practically all Malto speakers are fluent in Santali as well.

Santali belongs to the Munda branch of the Austroasiatic language family. In verbal morphology, it shows a head-marking tendency, and the verb takes suffixes marking agreement with the direct object, the indirect object, and sometimes even with the possessor of the direct object. On the other hand, agreement with the subject is marked by a pronominal enclitic attached to the word preceding the verb in the unmarked word order as in (10).

Santali (Bodding 1929:268)

- (10) jom-kate=ko calao-en-a

eat-CVB=3PL go.off-PST-FINITE

“They went off after eating.”

In Santali, the subject of the main clause is marked on the second orthotonic word from the end. This is effectively the same as a significant number of Malto sentences with *-ke* converb such as (11), where the converb occurs right before the finite verb and shows agreement with its subject. We may be tempted to hypothesize that the redundant agreement of the Malto *-ke* converb started from the second from sentence-final position, by interference of the interlanguage of the speakers who were bilingual in Santali.

- (11) aḍa-k oca-ken ḍo:k-tr-ken
 house-DAT take.PS-CVB.1SG stay-CAUS-PST.1SG
 “I took [my future wife] to my house and put [her] up.” (Kobayashi 2012:148)

However, this hypothesis is difficult to maintain, given that another pattern of sentences, in which the main verb phrase contains more than one word and accordingly *-ke* converb appears before the second from final position, such as (12), is as common as sentences with a *-ke* converb in second from final position.

- (12) gosāyi bar-a:k a:n-kar ḍole-n ah-nar
 god come-OPT say-CVB.3PL drum-ACC beat-PRS.3PL
 “[Villagers] beat drums saying ‘Come, God!’” (Kobayashi 2012:164)

It would of course be possible to maintain that the subject marking on the penultimate word in Santali partially influenced Malto, where *-ke* converb often occurs as the penultimate word and thus came to mark the subject of the main clause. However, since change by language contact is hard to prove, we cannot push this hypothesis any further without more compelling evidence of change by contact with Santali.

6. Origin of Redundant Agreement (2): Internal Development

In discussing the origin of *-ke* converb showing agreement, we cannot avoid considering which of the two converbs, *-ke* converb and *-ko* converb (which shows no agreement), is older. Most dialects of Malto have two constructions side by side, and it is difficult to judge which is older. However, in Southern (and probably Western) Malto, there is yet another converb in *-ka*. Like the other two converb suffixes, *-ka* is attached to the past stem, and like the *-ke* suffix, it is used when the subject of the converb is the same as that of the main clause, but like the *-ko* suffix, it does not show

agreement with the subject.⁴

Southern Malto

- (13) i: maʔe-n ... oca-ka e:n pu:ha-ka mo:ʔ-an
 this boy-ACC take.PS-CVB I boil-CVBeat-FUT.1SG
 “I will take this boy, boil him, and eat him.” (Kobayashi 2012:238)

oca-ka in (13) occurs side by side with another converb with agreement, *oca-kan* {take.PS-CVB.1SG}, and seems to be interchangeable with it. The subject of the converb is the same as that of the main clause in 73 out of 74 cases of *-ka* converb from Southern and Central Malto. In cognate forms, Southern and Central /a/ often corresponds to Northern Malto /e/ and Kurux /a/, e.g. the pronominal dative suffix *-a* : *-e* as in Southern/Central *eng-a* : Northern (Boarjor) *eng-e* : Kurux *eng-a:(ge)*.

Furthermore, Kurux has a suffix *-ka*: which forms a perfective verbal adjective (past participle) from a past stem and perfectly matches Southern and Central Malto *-ka* in sound correspondence and morphological condition, e.g. Kurux *ir-ka*: *amxi*: {roast-VBL.ADJ vegetable} ‘stir-fried vegetables’, *cando*: *arg-ka*: *bi:ri*: {moon climb-VBL.ADJ time} ‘when the moon had risen up’. Malto also has a few adjectives ending in *-ke/-k*, e.g. *paŋjke* (Droese *paŋjek*) ‘ripe’ probably from *pa:n-* ‘to ripen’, past stem *pa:nj-*, although there is no productive verbal adjective formation with this suffix, and if this suffix belongs with the converb suffix *-ke*, we can posit *-ka*: : *-ke* as a verbal adjective suffix in Proto-Kurux-Malto even more safely.

If the Kurux verbal adjective suffix *-ka*: is cognate with the Malto converb suffix *-ke/-ka* as we propose, we can explain that the Malto *-ke* converb started as a verbal adjective used predicatively, like ‘as someone who had done ...’. Then, as Malto adjectives regularly take a pronominal suffix showing concord with the subject when they are used predicatively (Kobayashi 2012:29), *-ke* converb naturally took pronominal suffixes which agree with the subject. And since a verbal adjective, which is in the nominative case, is naturally coreferential with the subject of the main clause, it agrees with the subject of the main clause. This is why *-ke* converb shows concord with the subject even though it has the same subject as the main clause. Reconstruction of the forms of the Malto *-ke* converb as the Proto-Kurux-Malto verbal adjective suffix combined with a pronominal suffix gains further support from the past endings of Kurux and Northern Malto, which are isomorphic with *-ke* converb in the first and second persons. Since a verbal adjective is used as a predicate, it might have replaced original past forms in the first and second persons, while the third-person past forms were not replaced and stand side by side with the *-ke* converb forms, e.g.

⁴In her description of Western Malto, Puttaswamy (2008:244) analyzes *-ka* as a third singular masculine form.

oc-ah {take.PS-PST.3SG.M} aside from *oca-keh* {take.PS-CVB.3SG.M}.⁵

The last mystery to be solved is the origin of *-ko* converb, to which Kurux has no cognate morpheme. Malto has a few adverbs formed by attaching *-o*, e.g. *qalwo* ‘stealthily’ to *qalweh* ‘(male) thief’ or *qalwi* ‘theft’ (DEDR 1372, Tamil *kaḷvaṅ* ‘(male) thief’, Kurux *xalbas* id. etc.), or the adverbial imperfect participle *-no* to the adjectival imperfect participle *-ne* (Kobayashi 2012:54), and there seems to be a systematic alternation of adjective *-e* and adverb *-o*. So it is highly likely that *-ko* developed (or, possibly, was preserved) in Malto as an adverbial counterpart of *-ke* converb, used in complementary distribution with the latter when the subject is different from that of the main clause.

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⁵ An alternative explanation by Steever (1988:102) is that *-ke* converb descended from earlier finite verb forms. We consider that third-person past forms such as *oc-ah*, which are marked for the perfective aspect only with one (incorporated) suffix *-c*, is older than third-person converb forms such as *oca-keh*, which are doubly marked for the perfective aspect with *-c(a)* and *-ke*. Although not covered in this article, there is yet another converb with the past stem and vowel-initial endings such as *oc-a(n)* 1SG, *oc-e* 2SG.M etc. in Central and Southern Malto (Mahapatra 1979:182f., Kobayashi 2012:71, cf. Puttaswamy 2008:118), and they might reflect older inflection as Steever considers.

Steever, Sanford B. 1988. *The Serial Verb Formation in the Dravidian Languages*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Abbreviations

1: first person; 2: second person; 3: third person; ABL: ablative; ACC: accusative; AUX: auxiliary; CAUS: causative; CVB: converb; DAT: dative; DEDR: Burrow and Emeneau1984; DS: different subject; EXCL: exclusive; FUT: future; INCL: inclusive; M: masculine; OBJ: object; OPT: optative; PL: plural; PROL: prolative; PRS: present; PS: past stem; REFL: reflexive; SS: same subject