SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING KEENAN'S
"REMARKABLE SUBJECTS IN MALAGASY"[1]

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1. Introduction

Central to Keenan's (1976) claim that Malagasy is a subject-prominent language is his treatment of certain verbal affixes as voices. This paper raises the question as to whether or not such affixes are in all cases indications of voices. The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents a typology of cross-referencing (CR) morphology in three verb-initial Austronesian languages: Samoan, Tagalog, and Malagasy.[2] The CR morphology of these languages reflects (respectively) resumptive, focus, and voice systems. Section 3 shows that the primary function of the so-called "circumstantial voice" (CV) of Malagasy is not that of a voice, but rather that of a resumptive/focus suffix. Section 4 goes on to further describe some of the details of the CV and proposes that the failure of the CV to behave at times like a voice stems from the peripheral nature of the nominal types that it cross-references. It is also proposed that these nominal types themselves vary in degrees of peripherality-centrality. Section 5 summarizes the points made in the paper.

2. A typology of CR morphology in Austronesian languages

The Samoan CR system is primarily one of resumptive particles and suffixes which indicate the semantic roles of extracted nominals. The case marking which would normally indicate these roles is not present in clauses involving extraction. For example, the particles *ai* and the suffix *-a/-ina* resume nominals which would be marked with locative and ergative case (respectively) in simple sentences. Compare the simple sentences in (1) and the corresponding ones in (2) in which a nominal has been extracted in the formation of a question.[3]

(1) a. 'Olo'o tā'a'alo tamaiti i le paka.
         PROG play(PL) children LOC the park
         'The children are playing in the park.'

     b. Na 'ave e le tama le tusi.
         PST take ERG the boy the book
         'The boy took the book.'

(2) a. 'O fea 'olo'o tā'a'alo ai   tamaiti?
        FOC where PROG play(PL) PART children
        'Where are the children playing?'

     b. 'O ai na 'ave-ina le tusi?
        FOC who PST take-SUF the book
        'Who took the book?'

The resumptive system of Samoan can be contrasted with the focus system of Tagalog. Here there is CR morphology on the verb that indicates the semantic role of the topic (i.e. the definite nominal in focus marked *ang*) even when no extraction is involved:[4]

(3) a. Sumampal   ng babae ang lalake.
        strike[+actor] woman TOP man
        'The man struck the woman.'

     b. Sinampal   ng lalake ang babae.
        strike[+object] man TOP woman
        'The woman was struck by a/the man.'

It would be tempting to say that the nominal marked *ang* in these sentences is a subject, but as shown by Schachter (1976), properties commonly associated with subjects do not converge on a single nominal type (topic, actor, or actor-topic) in Philippine languages.

The voice system of Malagasy is similar to the Tagalog focus system except that here, for the most part, the nominal which is cross-referenced on the verb is a subject. Keenan (1976:249-254) gives several properties associated with subjects in Malagasy, notable among which are those of position and case. As illustrated in (4), subjects in simple sentences occur last (Malagasy is basically VOS) and are in the nominative case. (*Aho* 'I' in (4) is in the nominative as opposed to, for example, *ahy* 'me'.)

(4)   N-i-vidy   mofo ho'an'ny ankizy aho. (=K's (1))[5]
         PST-VCL-buy bread for-to-the children I
         'I bought the bread for the children.'

According to Keenan, there are four voices in Malagasy: active, goal, intermediary (Keenan's term), and circumstantial. The first three are properly analyzed as voices, that is to say that it is possible to construct sentences in which the CR morphology on the verb clearly indicates the semantic role of the subject of the sentence. In this section I will present the first three voices, and in the next section I will show what the problems are with the voice analysis of the circumstantial.

Some active verbs do not differ in form from their stems (e.g. *tonga* 'arrive'); others take the verb class infix *-an-* or *-i-* between a tense marker and the verb stem (*-an-* roughly for transitive verbs and *-i-* for intransitive verbs). The *n* of the *-an-* infix sometimes "absorbs" the initial consonant of the stem. Consider the active form *manasa* in (5) derived from the stem *sasa* 'wash':

(5)   M-an-asa   ny lamba Rasoa. (=K's (24a))
        PRS-VCL-wash the clothes Rasoa.
        'Rasoa is washing the clothes.'

The goal voice is indicated by the suffixes *-ana* and *-ina*. If a non-subject agent is present, it is cliticized to the verb in whatever form it would take as a possessor and the suffix is phonologically reduced:[6]

(6)   a. Sas-ana ny lamba.
           wash-GL the clothes
           'The clothes are being washed (by someone).'

        b. Sas-an-dRasoa ny lamba. (=K's (24b))
           wash-GL-Rasoa the clothes
           'The clothes are being washed by Rasoa.'

As mentioned above, subjects are in sentence-final position in Malagasy and if they are pronouns, they are in the nominative case. The fact that *lamba* 'clothes' is sentence-final in (6a&b) and the fact that *izy* 'he' in (7b) is in the nominative argue that these nominals are indeed subjects (cf. (7a)). Also, the fact that clauses like (6a) occur without agents suggests that they are in some type of non-active voice.

(7)   a. N-amp-i-asa   azy aho.
           PST-CAUS-VCL-work him I
           'I made him work.'

        b. N-amp-i-asa-i-ko   izy.
           PST-CAUS-VCL-work-GL-1SG he
           'I made him work.'
           (lit. He was made to work by me.)

The goal voice is not exactly a passive voice. Whereas a passive voice typically selects a patient as subject, the Malagasy goal voice selects the "endpoint" of an action as subject. For two-place predicates involving an agent and a patient, the endpoint will be the patient (as in the examples above), but for a three-place predicate that entails not only an agent and a patient but also a recipient, the endpoint will be the recipient. In this latter case, another voice, the "intermediary", is used when the patient is chosen as subject.[7] This voice is formed by prefixing *a-* to the verb stem. Compare the active form *manolotra* in (8a), the intermediary form *atolotro* (*atolotra+ko*) in (8b) and the goal form *tolorako* (*tolorana+ko*) in (8c), all forms of the same verb meaning 'hand'.

(8) a. Manolotra ny vary ny vahiny aho. (=K's (25a))
        hand[+act] the rice the guests I
        'I am handing the rice to the guests.'

     b. Atolotro   ny vahiny ny vary. (=K's (25b))
        hand[+int]-1S the guests the rice
        'The rice is handed by me to the guests.'

     c. Tolor-a-ko ny vary ny vahiny. (=K's (25c))
        hand-GL-1S the rice the guests
        'The guests are handed the rice by me.'

Chart (9) summarizes the differences in these CR systems:

(9)

Samoan	resumptive system	CR to extracted nominals
Tagalog	focus system	CR to extracted nominals and to non-subject topics
Malagasy	voice system	CR to extracted nominals and to subjects

Chart (9) is to be understood as a guide to the primary use(s) of
CR morphology in these languages. There are instances in which one
language will manifest characteristics of another type. For example,
there are cases in which the agent-resuming suffix -a/-ina in Samoan can
be used in a Tagalog-like, non-resumptive way. For instance, in formal
Samoan, the suffix appears in active transitive clauses in which the
subject is inherently highly agentive (as are supernatural beings and
persons in positions of power such as doctors and policemen). (10) is an
example of such a clause. Here the suffix could be thought of as cross-
referencing the (highly) agentive subject.

(10)   Sā 'ave-'ese-ina e leoleo le pagotā. (Milner 1966:38)
        PST take-away-SUF ERG police the prisoner
        'The police took the prisoner away.'

Similarly, Schachter (1976:511) reports that there are
restrictions on certain actor-topic verbs in Tagalog such that they may
occur in relative clauses (and in nominalizations) but not in simple
sentences. This restriction of CR morphology to relative clauses (an
extraction context) makes these particular Tagalog instances look more
like the typical Samoan cases of extraction-linked CR morphology.

3. The circumstantial voice in Malagasy

Keeping in mind the comments made immediately above, it is not
surprising to find that one of the so-called "voices" of Malagasy, the
"circumstantial voice" (CV) does not behave exactly like the other
voices in this language. In fact, what I will attempt to show in this
section is that the CV more closely resembles resumptive and focus
affixes in Samoan and Tagalog than it does the other voices of Malagasy.

Morphologically, if a verb stem takes the verb class affixes *an* and *i* in the active voice, then it also takes them in the CV, but unlike the active voice, these affixes are not preceded by the tense marker *m-* in the present tense (although they do take the past tense marker *n-* and the future tense marker *h(o)*). Verbs in the CV are also suffixed with *(a)na*, which at times is homophonous with the goal suffix *-ana*. According to Keenan (1976:255), this suffixation induces a shift in stress one syllable to the right.

Nominals cross-referenced by this voice would appear as obliques in active sentences (hence the term "circumstantial"). According to Rajemisa-Raolison (1966: 111-118), this voice subjectivizes thirteen semantically different types of nominals. Of these, Keenan (1976:255) mentions instrument, benefactee, location, time, purpose, and manner of action.

Keenan (1976:256) gives the following (b) clauses as examples of simple sentences in the CV (cf. the active (a) clauses). Our consultant, however, states that these sentences could occur in spontaneous speech but would not occur in careful speech or writing. (I will use the symbol % to mark these sentences.)

(11) a. M-an-asa   lamba   amin'itý savony itý Rasoa.
         PRS-VCL-wash clothes with-this soap   this Rasoa
         'Rasoa is washing the clothes with this soap.'

      b.%An-asa-n-dRasoa   lamba   itý savony itý.
         VCL-wash-CV-Rasoa clothes this soap   this
         'This soap is being used by Rasoa to wash clothes.'

(12) a. M-i-vidy   mofo ho an'ny ankizy   aho.
         PRS-VCL-buy bread for to-the children I
         'I am buying bread for the children.'

      b.%I-vidi-ana-ko mofo ny ankizy.
         VCL-buy-CV-1SG bread the children
         'I am buying bread for the children.'
         (lit. The children are bought bread for by me.)

(13) a. M-i-toetra   ato   amin'itý trano itý izahay
         PRS-VCL-stay there with-this house this we(excl)
         'We are staying in this house.'

      b.%I-toer-a-nay   itý trano itý.
         VCL-stay-CV-1PL-EX this house this
         'We are staying in this house.'
         (lit. This house is stayed in by us.)

The fact that these simple sentences in the CV are marginally acceptable throws doubt on the analysis of the CV as a voice, especially when we find that the same clauses are perfectly acceptable if the "circumstantial nominal" (CN) is extracted in the formation of the *no* focus construction (whether or not this involves question formation) or in relative clause formation:

(14) a. Itý savony itý no an-asa-n-dRasoa   lamba.
      this soap this FOC VCL-wash-CV-Rasoa clothes
      'It's this soap that Rasoa is using to wash clothes.'

      b. Ny ankizy   no i-vidi-ana-ko mofo.
      the children FOC VCL-buy-CV-1SG bread
      'It's the children I am buying bread for.'

      c. Itý trano itý no   i-toer-a-nay
      this house this FOC VCL-stay-CV-1PL
      'It's this house we are staying in.'

(15) a. Inona no an-asa-n-dRasoa lamba?
      what FOC VCL-wash-CV-Rasoa clothes
      'What is Rasoa using to wash clothes?'

      b. Trano inona no i-toer-a-nay?
      house what FOC VCL-stay-CV-1PL-EX
      'What (kind of) house are we staying in?'

(16) a. ny savony izay an-asa-n-dRasoa   lamba
      the soap that VCL-wash-CV-Rasoa clothes
      'the soap that Rasoa is using to wash clothes'

      b. ny ankizy   izay i-vidi-ana-ko mofo
      the children that VCL-buy-1SG bread
      'the children I am buying bread for'

      c. ny trano izay i-toer-a-nay
      the house that VCL-stay-CV-1PL-EX
      'the house that we are staying in'

This makes the CV seem more like a Samoan-type resumptive affix
than a voice. However, there is a way in which the CV also looks like a
Tagalog-type focus affix. In Malagasy, yes-no questions can be formed by
inserting the question particle ve in front of the subject. If we
perform this operation on marginal sentence (11b), the clause becomes
perfectly acceptable, even though the CN is coded as a subject and is to
the right of the verb:

(17)   An-asa-n-dRasoa   lamba   ve itý savony itý? (=K's (24a))
        VCL-wash-CV-Rasoa clothes Q this soap   this
        'Is this soap being used by Rasoa to wash clothes?'

Here the CV looks like a Tagalog-type focus affix in that a
nominal that is in focus is cross-referenced on the verb even though it
has not been extracted.[8] We see, then, that the CV behaves more like
Samoan resumptive morphemes (in extraction clauses) and Tagalog focus
affixes (in yes-no questions) than like the other Malagasy voices.

4. Further comments on the circumstantial voice

The question naturally arises as to why this particular voice should fail to have all the properties of a "true" voice. I think the most obvious answer lies in the nature of the nominals that are cross-referenced by the CV. They are all semantically peripheral in the events in which they occur. It is generally the case (in any language) that more central participants (e.g. agents and patients) are more likely to be coded as subjects than are peripheral elements like instruments and locations. The fact that CNs fail (at times) to be coded as subjects is probably little more than a consequence of their peripheral nature.

The full array of facts concerning the CV, however, are actually more complicated than presented so far. For example, although instruments, benefactees, and locations do not make good CN subjects if the verb is in the present tense (cf. sentences (11-13) above), they are fully acceptable as subjects if the verb is in the past (but not the future) tense. (As to why this should be the case, I have no explanation.)

(18) a. N-an-asa-n-dRasoa   lamba   itý savony itý.
          PST-VCL-wash-CV-Rasoa clothes this soap   this
          'This soap was being used by Rasoa to wash clothes.'

      b. N-i-vidi-ana-ko   mofo ny ankizy.
          PST-VCL-buy-CV-1SG bread the children
          'I was buying bread for the children.'
          (lit. The children were bought bread for by me.)

      c. N-i-toer-a-nay   itý trano itý.
          PST-VCL-stay-CV-1PL-EX this house this
          'We were staying in this house.'
          (lit. This house was stayed in by us.)

(19) a.%Ho an-asa-n-dRasoa   lamba itý savony itý.
          FUT-VCL-wash-CV-Rasoa clothes this soap this
          'This soap will be used by Rasoa to wash clothes.'

      b.%H-i-vidi-ana-ko   mofo ny ankizy.
          FUT-VCL-buy-CV-1SG bread the children
          'I will buy bread for the children.'
          (lit. The children will be bought bread for by me.)

      c.%H-i-toer-a-nay   itý trano itý.
          FUT-VCL-stay-CV-1PL-EX this house this
          'We will stay in this house.'
          (lit. This house will be stayed in by us.)

Futhermore, time, purpose, and manner CNs must be preceded by an appropriate preposition when they undergo extraction and are cross-referenced by a verb in the CV:

(20) a.*(Amin')ny antoandro no n-an-amboar-a-ko   ny kilalao.
      with the noon   FOC PST-VCL-make-CV-1SG the toy
      'It's at noon that I made a toy.'

     b.*(Ho an')ny fahasalama-ko no ihazakazah-a-ko.
      for to the health-my   FOC run-CV-1SG
      'It's for my good health that I run.'

     c.*(Amim-)pahendrana no andidi-an'   ny mpitsara.
      with   wisdom   FOC pass-judgment-CV the judge
      'It's with wisdom that the judge passes judgment.'

In contrast, instruments and benefactees do not tolerate
prepositions when they are extracted and cross-referenced. Locations,
however, admit prepositions under the same circumstances, but they are
not required.

(21) a. (*Amin')itý savony itý no an-asa-n-dRasoa   lamba.
      with   this soap this FOC VCL-wash-CV-Rasoa clothes
      'It's with this soap that Rasoa is washing clothes.'

     b. (*Ho an')ny ankizy no i-vidi-ana-ko mofo.
      for to the children FOC VCL-buy CV-1SG bread
      'It's for the children that I am buying bread.'

     c. (Ao amin') itý trano itý no i-toer-a-nay.
      there with this house this FOC VCL-stay-CV-1PL-EX
      'It's in this house that we are staying.'

These last facts, I believe, indicate that the central-peripheral
contrast mentioned above is a matter of degree. Instruments and
benefactees are more central (probably because they are more
participant-like in the sense of Langacker (1987)) than time, purpose,
and manner CNs. I take the lack of a preposition on an extracted
instrument or benefactee to be an indication of a greater degree of
centrality and the presence of a preposition on a time, purpose, or
manner CN to be an indication of lesser centrality. The fact that
locations take an optional preposition, then, would indicate that (with
respect to degree of centrality-peripherality) they are somewhere in
between instruments/benefactees and time/purpose/manner CNs on a
continuum such as that in (22).

(22) <u>More Central</u>.............................<u>More Peripheral</u>
     instruments   locations   time CNs
     benefactees   purpose CNs
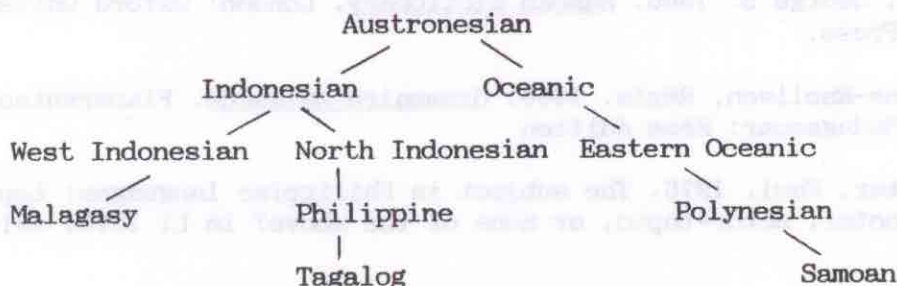   manner CNs

5. Summary

In this paper I have attempted to show that one of the voices of Malagasy, the "circumstantial voice" (CV) behaves more like a Samoan-type resumptive affix and a Tagalog-type focus affix than like the other voices of Malagasy. I have attributed this fact to the peripheral nature of the nominals that are cross-referenced by the CV and demonstrated that even among these nominals there are varying degrees of centrality-peripherality.

NOTES

1. This paper was written in the winter quarter of 1987 for a Malagasy field methods course at the University of California, San Diego. Our consultant was Aurélien Rajoharison of Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. The Samoan data herein is (unless otherwise specified) from my own field work on Samoan, which was funded in part by grants from the Academic Senate of the University of California, San Diego.

2. These three languages are related as follows:

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                        Austronesian
                       /            \
            Indonesian                Oceanic
           /          \                      \
West Indonesian   North Indonesian    Eastern Oceanic
      |                  |                    \
   Malagasy          Philippine            Polynesian
                         |                      \
                      Tagalog                  Samoan
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3. The pronoun *ai* 'who' in (2b) is not the same *ai* as the resumptive pronoun in (2a).

4. These sentences are from Keenan (1976:293). The case marker *ng* that appears in both these sentences marks both actors and objects (Schachter 1976:495).

5. The sentences taken from Keenan (1976) have been checked with our consultant and in some cases have been glossed differently in agreement with our consultant's reactions. The morphemic glosses also differ at times in order to make particular grammatical points.

6. The similarity of these suffixes to the Samoan suffix *-a/- ina* mentioned above is striking, considering that the two languages are rather remotely related (cf footnote 2). The actional passive in (6a) can be contrasted with the stative passive illustrated in (i).

(i)   Voa-sasa ny lamba.
        STAT-wash the clothes
        'The clothes have been washed.'

7. Keenan (1976:257) says that the intermediary voice is also used when a "weak instrument" is chosen as subject, but he does not clarify

exactly what he means by "weak instrument". Keenan (1976:258) also reports that "several very common verbs which take notional direct and indirect objects and would be expected to have both goal and intermediary voices have in fact only one or the other, and that form is used to present as surface subject either the direct or indirect object." In addition, Keenan notes that "at least for some speakers, the use of the intermediary voice is being usurped by the circumstantial."

8. I am assuming here that questioned nominals are in focus.

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