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Merja Salo
(Helsinki)

The Derivational Passive and Reflexive in Mari Grammars

Deviating from other Finno-Ugrian languages, Mari verbs fall into two groups traditionally referred to as *em-* and *am-* conjugations revealed by the ending in the indicative 1st person singular. These two groups are distinguishable throughout all mode-tenses and persons, except for the imperative 3rd person plural. The precise mechanics of the development of these two inflectional patterns – discernible in most forms, both finite and non-finite – have not been adequately explained. Earlier, for instance, Ravila (1938: 8, with its references) proposed that the *am-* conjugation contains the old Finno-Ugrian suffix *-w-*, occurring in many languages as a sign of the passive and reflexive. Very many *am-* conjugation verbs are intransitive or reflexive and *em-* conjugation verbs are transitive or at least non-reflexive, e.g. *koδ-em* ‘I leave (tr.)’, *koδ-am* ‘I remain’, *tem-em* ‘I feed [him] up’, *tem-am* ‘I eat my fill, I become full’, *šindž-am* ‘I sit down’, *šindž-em* ‘I sit, stay’.

For a long time it has been known that there are several exceptions as well in the basic verbs as in the derivatives. Ravila (1938: 24) concludes that the *em-* verbs are representatives of verbs with an original *a/ä-* stem, and that *am-* verbs originally had an *e-* stem and partly an *a/ä-* stem already derivated with some suffix. Itkonen agrees and even shows calculations on the grounds of related languages according to which the Mari verbs originally with an *a/ä-* stem (Itkonen 1962: 96–97) are mostly transitive (25: 10), whereas with the *e-* stems intransitives scarcely dominate (13: 10). As Kangasmaa-Minn (1998: 229, 235) writes: “In all probability the difference is due to the conspiracy of several factors phonetic, morphological, and functional ... The origin of this duality is highly controversial. Whatever its pedigree, it is also seen in some deverbal derivational suffixes, e.g. reflexive/passive-forming *-alt-*, which produces *am-* conjugation verbs like *šarn-alt-eš* ‘is remembered, comes to mind’, and momentaneous-forming *-altə-*, which produces *em-* conjugation verbs like *šarn-alt-a*

‘(s)he remembers it, calls it to mind, mentions it’. Whatever the original difference between the two conjugations, it is not to be sought in transitivity alone, for there is ample counter-evidence, e.g. *kol-am* ‘I hear’ and *kol-em* ‘I die’.”

The first Mari grammar from the year 1775 delineates four voices: active, passive, middle and causative (*vinoslovnyj*). In addition to these, negative forms are regarded as their own negative voices, so that there are actually eight voices. Voice permeates the verb. Tense and conjugation are indicated by means of the mood system. The definition of a mood is connected to transitivity. In the active voice, transitive verbs only are included. The book offers voice pairs, such as *l’ebed-am* ‘I cover’ [pokryvaju] – *l’ebed-alt-am* ‘I get covered’ [pokryvajus’]. In the classification of this book the suffixes are without meaning, only the semantics have meaning. It is not possible to form the passive from the verbs of middle voice. According to contemporary opinion, this is a reference to intransitive verbs (TFChGr 73–75; Galkin 1958a: 3; Vasikova 1977: 50–51).

The grammar of 1837 gives four voices: active, passive, negative and causative (ChGr 1837: 47–48; Galkin 1958a: 3). The description reveals that the negative voice includes active and passive voices. In this connection the middle voice is not mentioned. Actually it remains obscure how many voices are represented in the grammar, for a little earlier the text mentions that semantically the verbs can be divided into 1) actives, 2) reflexives including reciprocals, generals and passives, and 3) middles mostly formed of causatives having active meaning (ChGr 1937: 38–40). In the chapter titled *Coordination of verbs with substantives and pronouns* the unknown author has probably replaced the first passive sentence in grammar (1) and notes that these kinds of utterances formed of actives needing the postposition *dono* are very rare in Mari.

- (1) *Golia:f” puš-ma š·l-en” Davi-d”-dono.*
 G. kill-PASS.PTC be-IPRET3SG D.-POP(with)
 ‘Goliad” byl” ubit” Davidom”.’ (ChGr 1837: 237)
 [Goliath was killed by David.]
 = *pušt-am* ‘to kill, murder’

In the next grammars (Castren 1845; Wiedemann 1847, the later based on translations of the four Gospels in 1821 and the catechism of 1832) the term ‘voice’ is not even mentioned. Castren has a brief list of derived verbs, but the reflexive-passive suffix is not included (Castren 1845: 52–53). Wiedemann has 21 different verb suffixes each in its own paragraph, still their meanings are very difficult to derive from the few examples (Saarinen 1989: 36). The suffix *-lt* (§ 113) is the longest in these paragraphs including such examples as *altal-alt* ‘to make

case, Ramstedt combined the passive participle in example (2) and the intransitive verb as above, which must be erroneous due to the morphology of the verb in question showing suffix of the *em*-conjugation.

After interviewing Mari prisoners of war and examining some earlier sources, Lewy compiled a grammar in 1922, where among 33 suffixes he mentions the passive suffix *-alta-*, which with derived verbs is inflected according to the first conjugation (Lewy 1922: 108). He offers only stems of the verbs and no context.

In the 1920s and 1930s one noted developer of the Mari literary language was Karmazin, who wrote the first grammar in Mari, published in 1926 in two volumes. This was the first grammar published in the native area. In the second version Karmazin analyses verb-derivating suffixes but does not give many explanations. According to him, the *am*-conjugation verbs take the suffix *əl+d* and the *em*-conjugation verbs the suffix *al+t*, *äl+t* (Karmazin 1929: 54–55). A few years later he compiled a small booklet of word-forming suffixes in Mari. Its last example is a verb in the passive with separated morphemes:

(3) *jol+əš+t+AL+T+-a-m*

‘(ja) budu kem-to ili čem-to privjazan k čemu-to’ or ‘(ja) budu privjazan’

(Karmazin 1931: 12)

[I am going to be bound]

< *joləšt-em* ‘to tie, bind’

Very few scholars have analysed whole sentences. On the last pages of her dissertation concerning Mari derivation, Kangasmaa-Minn gives five examples of *am*-verbs having the derivational suffix *-alt-*, *-əlt-* and designating a reflexive or passive action, as in (4) – (6):

(4) *oksa tül-alt-ən*

money pay-PASS-IPRET3SG

‘The money is paid.’ (Kangasmaa-Minn 1956: 95)

< *tül-em* ‘to pay’

(5) *šič-əlt-eš tamak-əm šupš-ən.*

sit-REFL-PRES3SG tobacco-ACC smoke-AFF.GER

‘He sits down [*for a while*] and smokes tobacco.’

(Kangasmaa-Minn 1956: 95)

< *šindž-am* ‘to sit down’, cf. *šindž-em* ‘to sit; to be; to stay’

(6) *kiškə pütr-alt-eš jər-em.*

snake wind-REFL-PRES3SG POP(around)-PX1SG

‘The snake winds itself around me’ (Kangasmaa-Minn 1956: 95)

< *pütər-em* ‘to turn, wind, wrap’

On the other hand, she is of the opinion that there are two suffixes: the suffix *-t-* occurs only after two derivative suffixes, the diminutive or iterative *-al-* or *-əl-*. In many occasions these suffixes occur in free variation. The suffix is the same as in the following cases: HMa *ärä-lt-äm* ‘I become surprised’ > *ärä-l-äm* ‘I am surprised’, *är-em* ‘I am surprised’, MMA *poč-əlt-am* ‘I get open’ (a bit peculiar without context) > *počə-l-am* ‘I open’, *poč-am* ‘I open’ (Kangasmaa-Minn 1956: 66–70, 94–95).

For his part, Alhoniemi (1985: 160–161; 1993: 149–150) gives separately among his deverbal derivatives the suffix MMA *-alt-*, HMa *-alt-* / *-ält-*, carrying reflexive, translative and passive meaning, and the suffix *-lt-*, with reflexive-translative and frequentative meaning.

The only monograph specially dedicated to grammatical voice in Mari was published in Yoshkar-Ola in 1958. The author Galkin describes three voices: active, reflexive and causative. He gives a summary of earlier studies of this subject and finds that only two suffixes (*-alt-*, *-əkt-*) have reached such an abstract level that they can be considered to be signs of voice. They are used to form voice in the same way as in Russian from transitive verbs only. Intransitive verbs are not included in the discussion of voice, except in part of the *-alt-* derivatives. In his classification they belong to the side of verbal derivation; on the other hand they can have meanings of voice (Galkin 1958a: 51). This important study creates the basis for the description of verbs in many later grammars and textbooks, which are often by Galkin (SMJa 1961; Galkin 1966, 1986).

In 1973 Vasikova came forth with an interesting point of view about polysemantic suffixes. She indicates seven suffixes by meaning and the conjugation has been left unaddressed.

Of the younger generation, Smedman has several times dealt with this subject matter (Smedman 1997; 2000). She has a collection of examples gathered from belles-lettres which I will utilize in the next pages.

Galkin has a large number of sentence-examples gathered from fiction, some of which I present here based on the framework which has already been used for describing verbs in Finnish (Hakulinen & Karlsson 1979: 102–104), Mordvin (Salo 1990; 2006), Mansi and Khanty (Kulonen 1989: 10–11). I also have some random sentences from other sources. For the present, the analysed material is modest, so all the semantic roles have not yet been found. Only some preliminary results are presented here.

Passive

Grammars of some Indo-European languages have traditionally considered the passive to be a transformation where the subject and object of a transitive active sentence become the agent and subject of a passive sentence: *John broke the vase.* > *The vase was broken by John* (Fillmore 1977: 69). As a result of the passive transformation, the number of mandatory verb-related actants or arguments decreases by one. The status of the agent is purely facultative. In an active sentence the first or primary actant appears in the subject position. When the primary actant is demoted from the subject position, its place is occupied by the secondary actant.

Even if the passive sentences in Mari do not have an agent, this hidden AGENTIVE can always be inferred to be animate. In these sentences the surface subject has the semantic role of GOAL/PATIENT, as in sentences (2) – (4). Other examples include:

- (7) *Kelšəmaš vij terg-alt-eš, man-ət, žap šot deñe.*
 friendship strength check-PASS- say-PRES3PL time Ø POP(with)
 PRES3SG

‘Sila ljubvi, govorjat, proverjaetsja vremenem.’ (Galkin 1958a: 13; SMJa 161)
 [The strength of friendship, they say, is put to trial with time.]
 < *terg-em* ‘to check, verify, revise, search, put to trial’

- (8) *Ikmanaš, lica-m da čisla-m ončəkt-aš ik morfema kučəlt-alt-eš.*
 in one word person- and number- show-INF one morpheme use-PASS-
 ACC ACC ACC

(Galkin 1986: 55)

‘In one word, one morpheme is used to show person and number.’
 < *kučəlt-am* ‘to hold, use, spend (money), consume’
 < *kuč-em* ‘to hold, catch, reach, take’

- (9) *Podl’ežəšij tüñ šot-əšto lüman ojləmaš užaš deñe kalas-alt-ən.*
 subject head according- noun speech part POP(with) say-PASS-
 INES IIPRET3SG

(Galkin 1986: 107)

‘In broad outline the subject was said with the noun speech part.’
 < *kalas-em* ‘to say, speech, tell’

- (10) *u fabrika əšt-alt-eš*
 new factory make-PASS-PRES3SG
 ‘stroitsja novaja fabrika’ (MRM 447)

[a new factory is going to be build]

< *əšt-em* ‘to do, make, perform, cause, create, organize, form, build’

- (11, 12) *Mə́nar araka jü-**alt-ən**, mə́nar taga šəl kočk-**alt-ən**!*
 how much spirits drink-PASS-IPRET3SG how much ram meat eat-PASS-IPRET3SG
 ‘Skol’ko vypili vina, skol’ko baraniny s’eli!’ (Smedman 1997: 116)
 [How much spirits were drunk, how much mutton was eaten!]
 < *jü-**am*** ‘to drink’
 < *kočk-**am*** ‘to eat; to corrode; to smart, itch, sting’

Automative

In the automative sentences the AGENTIVE is never present. The occurrences arise spontaneously. The majority of deverbals formed with U derivational affixes in Finnish as well as *v* derivatives in Mordvin represent a specific type of agentless passive. For this group, Kulonen (1985: 290) has started to use the term *automative* for the active-passive axel alongside *reflexive*, as reflexive and passive are often loosely used to refer to several different semantic categories.

In automative events, the AGENTIVE is absent from both the deep and surface structure. This type of verb’s only actant, the subject, does not control the event or state. In the case grammar terms, these subjects come in two types: NEUTRAL, which is inanimate or abstract, and EXPERIENCER, whose awareness is affected by the event stated in the sentence, even though the EXPERIENCER does not actively participate in this event.

Sometimes in Mari the same derivative can, depending on the context, be passive, automative or reflexive.

- (13) *kugu jer ašt-**alt-ən***
 big lake make-AUTOM-IPRET3sg
 ‘obrazovalos’ bol’šoe ozero.’ (MRM 447)
 [a large lake was formed.]
- (14) *me-mnan ončəl-no lop ver poč-**alt-ən***
 we-GEN front-INES lowland place open-AUTOM-IPRET3SG
 ‘pered nami otkrylas’ dolina’ (RMS 249)
 [in front of us a valley opened out]
 < *poč-**am*** ‘to open (tr.)’
- (15) *Imne-šaməč-ən šinčalmə-št orva jük den lug-**alt-eš**.*
 horse-PL-GEN neigh-PX3PL carriage sound POP(with) blend-AUTOM-PRES3SG
 ‘Ržanie lošadej smešivaetsja so skripom koles.’ (Galkin 1958a: 13)
 [The neigh of the horses blends with the sound of a carriage.]
 < *lug-**em*** ‘to blend, mix, stir’

- (19) *Mlande lüm deñe l'eved-alt-eš.*
 ground snow POP(with) cover-AUTOM-PRES3SG
 'Zemlja pokryvaetsja snegom.' (Galkin 1958a: 15, 48)
 [The ground is covered with snow.]
 < *l'eved-am* 'to cover'
- (20) *Jualge mardež den, püčk-əlt-ən ləštaš jol jəma-ke jog-en*
 cool wind POP(with) cut-AUTOM- leaf foot POP(under)- fall down-
 IIPRET3SG ILL IIPRET3SG
 'Otryvajas' prohladnym vetrom, padali pod nogi list'ja'
 (Smedman 2000: 262–263)
 [Cut loose by the cool wind the leaves fell down under the feet]
 < *püčk-am* 'to cut, carve; to saw; to get wounded'

Reflexive

The action of the verb is directed to its subject, and the roles of AGENTIVE and PATIENT have merged. The only obligatory actant in these situations is ACTOR, which fills both roles. In sentence (22) the verb is the same as in sentence (19) but the meaning is slightly different depending on the roles expressed in the context.

- (21) *Lüj-alt-am, a tarzə-že o-m lij!*
 shoot-REFL-PRES1SG but servant-PX3SG neg-1SG be
 'Zastreljus', no ne budu ego slugoj!' (Galkin 1958a: 48; 1958b: 63; SMJa 161)
 [I (shall) shoot myself, but I am not going to be his servant.]
 < *lüj-em* 'to shoot, fire'
- (22) *Məj šinel' deñe l'eved-alt-am.*
 I overcoat POP(with) cover-REFL-PRES1SG
 'Ja ukryvajuš' sinel'ju.' (Galkin 1958a: 15)
 [I (shall) cover myself with the overcoat.]
- (23) *tarl-alt-əm tut-lan paša-jeŋ-lan*
 engage-REFL-IIPRET1SG he-DAT work-human-DAT
 'ich verdingte mich ihm als Arbeiter' (OtschWb 138)
 [I engaged myself to him as a worker]
 < *tarl-em* 'to engage, employ, hire'
- (24) *merəŋ šürt-eš βapt-alt-e*
 hare wire-LAT tangle-REFL-IIPRET3SG
 'der Hase verfing sich im Jagdnetz' (OtschWb 8)
 [the hare got tangled in the wire]
 < *βapt-em* 'to tangle'

Zero meaning

With intransitive verbs there is sometimes no difference between the root verb and its derivative, as in sentences (25) – (27), where the root verbs are intransitives.

- (25) *Bomba pudešt-e / pudešt-alt-e.*
 bomb explode-IPRET3SG / explode-Ø-IPRET3SG
 (Vasikova 1973: 135)
 ‘The bomb exploded.’
 = *pudešt-am* ‘to break, split, burst (intr.)’
- (26) *Muro jong-a / jong-alt-eš.*
 Song sound-PRES3SG / sound-Ø-PRES3SG
 (Vasikova 1973: 135)
 ‘The song sounds.’
 = *jong-em* ‘to ring, sound, jingle, chink, clink, tinkle’
- (27) *Čašker-la-šte kajək mur-a, pel’edəš-la vuj-əšto mükš özg-a / özg-alt-eš.*
 thicket-PL- bird sing- flower-PL top- bee hum-PRES3SG /
 INES PRES3SG INES hum-Ø-PRES3SG
 ‘V čaščobe pticy pojut, na cvetah žužžat pčely.’ (Smedman 1997: 116–117)
 ‘In the thicket the birds are singing, in the flowers the bees are humming.’
 = *özg-em* ‘to buzz, hum, drone, whirl, purr, roll’

Discussion

In the majority of cases the Mari *-alt-*, *-əlt-* has been added to a verbal stem. Sometimes a root without any suffix is not findable, only longer stems merging this suffix as in sentence (2) where the same verb has two meanings, transitive or intransitive depending on the conjugation. In sentence (5) the situation is interesting, the root verb already having an intransitive and transitive meaning. Perhaps the *-əlt-* suffix has also an explanatory reflexive meaning mixed with momentaneous shading. Also mentioned in the literature are some cases where the suffix has been added directly to a nominal stem (Galkin 1958b: 64; Vasikova 1973: 134; Smedman 1997: 116). Different grammars and shorter grammatical descriptions often offer some other meanings in addition to those handled in this brief examination. In any case, *-alt-*, *-əlt-* derivational verbs having diminutive, momentaneous, perfective or disparaging meaning (often *em*-conjugation) or frequentative meaning (*am*-conjugation), as well as compound meaning, have so far been kept apart. They are in urgent need of further investigation.

Glosses

ACC	accusative
ACT.PTC	active participle
AFF.GER	affirmative gerund
AUTOM	automative
COMP	comparative
GEN	genetive
HMa	Hill Mari
ILL	illative
INES	inessive
INF	infinitive
intr.	intransitive
LAT	lative
MMa	Meadow Mari
PASS	passive
PASS.PTC	passive participle
PL	plural
POP	postposition
PRES	present
PX	possessive suffix
REFL	reflexive
SG	singular
SX	suffix
tr.	transitive
Ø	zero meaning

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