Kambera: pronominal clitics and thematic roles

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will discuss one particular aspect of Kambera, namely: how lexical entries of predicates determine the syntactic expression of their arguments. I will focus on intransitive predicates, and discuss how the semantic or thematic roles of their single arguments (or: subjects) are paired with the way they are expressed in the sentence. In other words: we will see how the single argument of intransitive verbs can be expressed in the sentence. On the basis of these facts, I will argue that in Kambera there is no one-to-one correspondence between lexical argument structure and the morphosyntactic marking of verbal arguments. I will consider the consequences this has for (a) de status of the theta-criterion, thematic or theta-roles and theta-marking in linguistic theory, and (b) for the formal account of intransitive clauses in Kambera. But before doing this, I will first give an overview of the structural properties of Kambera that are relevant to this discussion.

Kambera is a head-marking language (Nichols 1986), in the sense that it has rich marking on the head of the clause: the verb, by pronominal, aspectual and modal clitics. Pronominal clitics mark the person, number and case (Nominative, Accusative, etc.) of definite verbal arguments on the verb. NPs that are crossreferenced on the verb are optional and used for disambiguation or emphasis. I therefore assume the pronominal clitics to have argument status, while their coreferent NPs are adjuncts (cf. Klamer 1994). Kambera word

1 Morphological nominative, genitive, dative and accusative ‘case’ in Kambera is not the same as grammatical ‘Case’ (GB) and it does not mark ‘grammatical functions’ or ‘roles’ (FG, RRG) in a one-to-one fashion, as will become clear in the course of this paper. On the other hand, these particular morphological case labels for the pronominal clitics are not chosen arbitrarily either: they relate the pronominal clitics to the most central or unmarked syntactic and semantic function of the verbal argument that they mark (cf. the discussion below).

2 There is one exception to this: an indefinite subject NP may be marked on the verb in certain specific constructions that are functionally similar to passive constructions in other languages (Kambera has no passive, cf. Klamer 1994: 79, 323-326; 1995): in these constructions the subject is neither in focus, nor the discourse topic. An illustration of such a construction is given in (i):

(i) Naŋ hoba -yaŋ iŋa nu
3SN swallow-3SA shark there
A shark swallowed him there/He was swallowed by a shark there
order facts suggest that the verb, together with its clitics and adverbs, forms one syntactic constituent. I will use the term 'nuclear clause' to refer to this constituent. A nuclear clause may on its own constitute a complete sentence and is thus the core of the clause and the sentence. If a clause contains NPs, I assume them to be adjoined to the nuclear clause; their positions are distinct from the topicalised (or left-dislocated) position in that they are adjacent to the nuclear clause and are within the scope of the conjunction. This is shown in (1):

(1) 
\[ \text{Sentence} \]
\[ \text{Topicalised position} \quad \text{Sent} \text{ence} \]
\[ \text{Conjunction} \quad \text{Clause} \]
\[ \text{Focused position for adjoined NPs} \quad \text{Nuclear clause} \quad \text{Focused position for adjoined NPs} \]

Consider the example in (2). In this sentence, the head of the clause is the verb beli 'return', which is modified by the adverb hili 'again'. The subject is marked with the nominative proclitic ku-, the enclitics are modal clitic -ma, pronominal object clitic -nya and aspectual -pa. Enclitics must appear in this order (modal-pronominal-aspectual).³

(2) \[ \text{Nda ku- } \text{hili beli } -\text{ma} -\text{nya } -\text{pa} \]
\[ \text{NEG 1SN- again return -EMP -3SD -IMPF} \]
\[ I \text{ am not going back to him again} \]

In (3) the expansion of the nuclear clause in (2) is given. Observe that the NPs are not part of the nuclear clause, and are outside the scope of the negation nda.

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³ Apart from ordering restrictions like these, Kambera clitics are subject to other idiosyncratic restrictions as well, cf. Klamer 1994.
(3) Nuclear clause

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Modifier
NEGATION

Dependent
Pronom. clitic
'1'-

Modifier
Modal cl.
-EMP

Head
Dependents
Pronom. cl.
-'him'

Modifier
Asp. cl.
-IMPF

Modifier
Adverb
'again'

Head
Verb
'return'
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Now we know the basic structure of a Kambera sentence, let us look at the pronominal enclitics more closely. Kambera pronominal clitics are genitive, accusative or dative (or a combination of these, e.g. genitive plus dative indicating continuative aspect, this will be discussed below). The four main clitic paradigms are listed in (4):

(4) *Kambera pronominal clitics:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1s</th>
<th>NOMINATIVE</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE</th>
<th>DATIV</th>
<th>GENITIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>ku-</td>
<td>-ka</td>
<td>-ngga</td>
<td>-nggu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2s</td>
<td>(m)u-</td>
<td>-kau</td>
<td>-nggau</td>
<td>-mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3s</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td>-ya</td>
<td>-nya</td>
<td>-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1p(inc)</td>
<td>ta-</td>
<td>-ta</td>
<td>-nda</td>
<td>-nda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1p(exc)</td>
<td>ma-</td>
<td>-kama</td>
<td>-nggama</td>
<td>-ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2p</td>
<td>(m)i-</td>
<td>-ka(m)i</td>
<td>-ngga(m)i</td>
<td>-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3p</td>
<td>da-</td>
<td>-ha</td>
<td>-nja</td>
<td>-da</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The morphological case labels for the four clitic paradigms in (4) are not chosen arbitrarily: they relate a clitic to the most central (or unmarked) syntactic and semantic function of the verbal argument that it marks, and are as follows. Nominative marks the subject of a transitive or intransitive verb. In (5) the verb *palu* 'hit' is transitive, the subject (*na tau watu* 'the big/fat man') is marked on the verb with a nominative clitic, the object with an accusative. In (6), the verb *tambuta* 'drop out' is intransitive, the subject (*na ài* 'the tree') is marked on the verb with a nominative proclitic. The brackets indicate that

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4 The third person singular pronominal clitic has a male, female or neutral pronominal translation. In translations I will only give the male form.
the NPs are optional; the pronominal clitics are not optional.

(5) (Na tau wūtu) na- palu -ka (nyungga)
    ART person be fat 3SN- hit -1SA I
    The big man hit me (lit. the big man he-hit-me I)

(6) (Na ãi) na- tambuta dāngu amung
    ART tree 3SN- drop out with root
    That tree is uprooted (lit. that tree it is dropped out with root)

In (7) the applicative verb kei(ng) ‘buy X for Y’ has two object arguments. Its indirect object is crossreferenced on the verb with the dative clitic -nja while the direct object (rī ‘vegetable’) is not marked on the verb because it is indefinite.

(7) (I Ama) na- kei -nja rī
    ART father 3SN- buy -3pD vegetable
    Father buys vegetables for them (lit. Father he buys them vegetables)

Although often only the indirect object of an applicative verb is marked, it is also possible to cliticize both the indirect object and the direct object (in that order) on the verb. This is illustrated in (8), where -ngga ‘me’ marks the indirect object, and -nya ‘it’ the direct object:

(8) (I Ama) na- kei -ngga -nya
    ART father 3SN- buy -1SD -3SD
    Father buys it for me (lit. Father he buys me it)

Observe that the direct object is marked with a clitic from the dative paradigm here, whereas in (5) it was marked with an accusative, the latter being the unmarked way to mark a direct object. In (8) a dative clitic is used because of an idiosyncratic restriction in Kambera which states that the second postverbal slot in a clitic cluster may only be filled with a dative clitic.

The genitive marks the possessor of a noun phrase, as -nggu ‘my’ in (9):

(9) Na uma -nggu (nyungga)
    ART house -1SG I
    My house

These are the most typical functions of the pronominal clitics. In the course of this paper we will consider other uses of the pronominal clitics that are, in a sense, derived from their basic uses as they are discussed here. Pronominal clitics are the morpho-syntactic expression of verbal arguments, while their coreferent NPs are optional adjuncts. In other words, pronominal clitics make