

Argument marking in Santali*

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1. Introduction

Among the Munda languages, Santali¹ has the most elaborate verb morphology. Besides various types of argument marking the verb is inflected for seven tense/aspect/mood (=TAM) categories of which the markers have two shapes, one for transitive and one for intransitive use. In addition several derivational processes can apply to the stem, such as the marking of reciprocal or intensive.²

After a short overview of Santali verb morphology the discussion will be limited to the marking of arguments³ on the verb. Santali arguments can appear as pronominal affixes in various ways. The table in (1) gives an overview:

(1) Types of argument marking

Subject	Ø	dal-a-n	'I will strike'
Direct object	Ø	dal-in-a-e	'he will strike me'

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¹Santali belongs to the Kherwari group of northern Munda languages (together with Mundari, Ho and some other dialects or languages). The number of speakers is 4.3 million (according to the 1991 census, cf. Ghosh 1994:3), most of them living in Bihar, West-Bengal and Orissa.

²Santali morpho-semantics has been described by Bodding (1929a) and more thoroughly in Bodding (1929b). For paradigms see Skresfrud (1873), for a short introduction McPhail (1983) and for a recent treatment of the morphology Ghosh (1994). The data described here is taken from these sources; additionally I will cite examples from Bodding's huge Santali dictionary (1929-36) and from Santali folk tales (Bodding 1925). I use the following abbreviations: Bo = Bodding (1929a), Bo2 = Bodding (1929b), folktales = Bodding's folktales (1925), dictionary = Bodding's dictionary (1929-36), McP = McPhail (1983), Sk = Skresfrud (1873). Following Bodding's orthography I had to slightly adapt citations from Skresfrud (1873) and Grierson (1908:IV).

³Unless further specified, the term "argument" includes both core (i.e. subject and object) and peripheral arguments (oblique objects).

Concerned object -ta- dal-ti-*n*-a-e⁴ 'he will strike mine'

A fourth possibility involves a separate conjugation paradigm, that interacts with the TAM system in an intriguing way.

Applicative -a- dal-a-*n*-a-e 'he will strike for me'

To further clarify the Santali data, we will have a look at two languages in the neighbourhood: the Indo-Aryan language Maithili, spoken in Bihar and Nepal, and the Tibeto-Burman language Hayu in Nepal.

2. Overview of Santali verb morphology

Santali verb morphology is of strong agglutinating character. There are various slots which are filled with person or TAM markers without fusion (one of the few exceptions is the combination of the possessor suffix -*ta* + *n* (1s object) which yields -*tin*). The following scheme reflects the rough sequence of affixes:

(2) Affix order

stem + TAM + pronoun (DO or dative) (+IPFV) + POSS+ pronoun (possessor) + FIN + pronoun (subject)

The first slot is for pronouns referring either to the direct object or to the dative⁵; both can not be marked at the same time. The second slot contains possessor pronouns and the final position is for subject pronouns. The shape of the affixes is the same in all three slots. They are shown in (3):

(3) Pronominal affixes⁶

	singular	dual excl incl	plural excl incl
1	- <i>n</i>	- <i>lin</i> - <i>lan</i>	- <i>le</i> - <i>bon</i>
2	- <i>m</i>	- <i>ben</i>	- <i>pe</i>
3 anim	- <i>e</i>	- <i>kin</i>	- <i>ko</i>
3 inan	- <i>k'</i>		

In combination with a prefix *a-* they are all used as free personal pronouns, e.g. *am* 'you (sg.)', *ape* 'you (pl.)' (besides the two exceptions *in* 'I' and *ac* 'he').

⁴The possessor affix -*ta* has the variant -*ti* when followed by palatal /*n*/ 1s (cf. Mundari *tain* (dictionary V.396)).

⁵The term "dative" is used to subsume the functions "goal", "beneficiary", and "direction" (see 6.1).

⁶The two variants -*in* 1s and -*me* 2s are used for direct objects.

Pronominal reference is restricted to animate beings; with one exception: There is one affix for inanimate objects, *-k'*, as indicated in Table (3). It appears only in the applicative construction.

The three functions subject, direct object and dative share an interesting characteristic: A coreferential noun in the same clause is not marked for case. In other words, nouns with case suffixes are not resumed by pronominal affixes on the verb.

In order to understand the examples, a short look at the TAM system is necessary. Santali distinguishes two sets of TAM markers: one appears with verbs in transitive function, the other one with verbs in intransitive function.

(4) Tense / aspect / mood marker⁷

	transitive set	intransitive set
Future	$\emptyset$	-ok'
Present	-et' ⁸ (-kan) ⁹	-ok' -kan
Past1	-ket'	-en
Past2	-let'	-len
Perfect	-akat'	-akan
Optative	-ke	-k-ok'
Conditional	-le	-len

3. Subject pronominal suffixes

The subject pronoun occupies the final position in the verb form, or, very frequently, it is attached to the word that immediately precedes the verb, cf. (5):¹⁰

- (5) a. oṛak'-iṇ ɲel-a. b. oṛak' ɲel-a-ɲ.
 house-1sS see-FIN house see-FIN-1sS
 'I will see the house.' 'I will see the house.' (McP 30)

According to McPhail (1957:30) (5a) is more common than (5b).

The term "subject" is justified, since the agent of a transitive verb (6a) and the single argument of an intransitive verb (6b) are coded in the same way:

⁷The terms for the various TAM categories are of preliminary character; their exact function has yet to be specified.

⁸The transitivity marker *-t'* changes to *-d* before pronominal suffixes with initial vowel.

⁹Verbs in transitive use distinguish two present tenses, one with a progressive reading (with *-kan*) and another one with habitual reading (without *-kan*).

¹⁰The subject pronouns attached to the preceding word will be written as suffixes, as it is done by all previous writers on Santali. This is confirmed by morphophonological alternations (e.g. when the preceding word ends in *u* or *ə*, *e* (3s) is modified to *i*: *guru-i ɲela* 'the guru will see') and stress rules (e.g. normally diphthongs are stressed, but diphthongs arising through suffixation of the pronoun *-e* (3s) do not attract stress: *'ado* 'then' + *-e* (3s) -> *'ade* 'then he' (Bodding 1922:136)).

- (6) a. *bəbəric'-ko dal-ked-e-a.*
 terribly-3pS strike-PST1:TR-3sO-FIN
 'They beat him terribly.' (Bo 24)
- b. *noa ato-khən-ko nir-en-a.*
 this village-ABL-3pS emigrate-PST1:ITR-FIN
 'They emigrated from this village.' (sd IV.436)

4. Pronominal suffixes in direct object function

Animate direct objects are expressed by pronouns affixed to the verb. Their position is after the TAM marker, but before the imperfective marker *-kan*. They are found with all TAM categories.

The object pronoun denotes various semantic roles: 1) the patient of an action, 2) the source or 3) the experiencer.

Example (7) and (8) illustrate the use as patient. This is the most frequent function.

- (7) *idi-me-a-e.*
 take-2sO-FIN-3sS
 'He will take you along with him.' (Bo 31)
- (8) *ere-ket'-le-a-kin.*
 deceive-PST1:TR-1pO-FIN-3dS
 'They (two) deceived us.' (Bo 31)

In addition the object pronoun can express source:

- (9) *ɽanga-e rɛc'-ked-ɽn-a.*
 axe-3sS take-PST1:TR-1sO-FIN
 'He took the axe from me.' (Sk 366)

The next example shows an experiencer:

- (10) *rɛŋɛc'-ed-ɽn-kan-a, daka em-a-n-pe.*
 be_hungry-PRS:TR-1sO-IPFV-FIN food give-APPL-1sO-2p
 'I am hungry, give me food.' (dictionary V.73)

Other verbs which behave in a similar way are "be thirsty" or "be tasty". However, this construction is not so frequent; another way to express the experiencer role is by means of the intransitive tense markers (here marked by *-ok'*, which makes a verb intransitive and occurs in the Future and in the Present):

- (11) *rɛə-k'-kan-a-e, ba-e suk-ok'-kan-a.*
 be_ill-ITR-IPFV-FIN-3sS NEG-3sS be_at_ease-ITR-IPFV-FIN
 'He is constantly ill, he is not at ease.' (dictionary V.370)