

Passive Diachrony in Borneo

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1 Introduction: An Voice and Passives in Borneo

Austronesian (or Philippine-type) voice is defined by the presence of multiple undergoer and valency non-altering voices commonly reconstructed to Proto-Austronesian itself. An voice is strongly associated with the Austronesian languages of Taiwan, the Philippines, North Borneo, and Madagascar, which reflect a predicate-initial syntax with optional postverbal subject fronting (as topic or focus) reconstructable to PAn (Blust 2013, Chen & McDonnell 2019, Wolff 1973).

This voice system has also undergone substantial changes, yielding a diverse range of “voice systems.”

- ▶ This study focuses on the innovation of analytic passives, accompanied by a loss of Philippine-type syntax, in “Central Bornean” (CB) languages (as defined by Clayre 1996, Kroeger & Smith 2024, Sommerlot to appear).

(1) Lebo' Vo' Kenyah (Smith et al. 2022)

a. akeʔ ηə-bueʔ umaʔ ini
1sg n-clean house that

‘I cleaned the house.’

b. umaʔ ini ən (akeʔ) ηə-bueʔ (akeʔ)
house that pass (1sg) n-clean (1sg)

‘The house was cleaned (by me).’

c. umaʔ ini ən (Kule) ηə-bueʔ (Kule)
house that pass (Kule) n-clean (Kule)

‘The house was cleaned (by Kule).’

(2) Kelai (Smith 2017)

a. sɛʔ bəwp koy
3sg hit 1sg

‘He hit me.’

b. koy en (*sɛʔ) bəwp (sɛʔ)
1sg pass (3sg) hit (3sg)

‘I was hit (by him).’

c. koy en (*Yotam) bəwp (Yotam)
1sg pass (Yotam) hit (Yotam)

‘I was hit (by Yotam).’

(3) Kayan (Uma Nyaving) (Smith, Sommerlot & Erlewine 2023)

a. asoʔ anih maʔət akuy
dog prox bite 1sg

‘That dog bit me.’

b. akuy an (naʔ) maʔət (*naʔ)
1sg pass (3sg) bite (3sg)

‘I was bitten (by him).’

c. akuy an (asoʔ anih) maʔət (*asoʔ anih)
1sg pass (dog prox) bite (dog prox)

‘I was bitten (by this dog).’

Based on these (and other) examples, we identify several features of analytic passives in CB languages (see also Clayre 1996, Kroeger & Smith 2024, Sommerlot to appear for more discussion).

(4) Features of Central Bornean-type passives

- Passives are marked by pre-verbal analytic markers, not by affixal morphology.
- Agents are optional. When they are present, agents may appear pre-verbally between the passive marker and the verb (“pass Ag V”) or post-verbally (“pass V Ag”).
- Pronominal agents sometimes appear as genitive case enclitics, but may also appear in their unmarked form.
- “Undergoer” morphology cannot appear on analytic passive verbs, even if the language has a separate morphological undergoer voice.

Central Bornean passives thus exhibit one or both of the basic word orders in 5:

- (5) Central Bornean-type passive surface word order
 - a. Subject/Patient Pass (Agent) Verb ...
 - b. Subject/Patient Pass Verb (Agent) ...

Analytic passives of this form are not unique to Borneo. In East and Southeast Asia, passivization with (5a) order are common, e.g. Chinese passives formed with *bèi* and Thai passives formed with *thúuk* (Prasithratsint 2006). The question of the historical source of these passives in Borneo, however, remains unanswered.

- ▶ We investigate the source of these Central Bornean-type analytic passives, building on earlier work from Clayre (1996), Soriente (2013), and others. Specific questions include:
 1. What is the source of the various passive markers (Pass)?
 2. What is the source of the pre-verbal agent position in (5a)?
(Post-verbal agent order (5b) is a retention of a Philippine-type, predicate-initial pattern.)

We propose that these analytic passives arose through multiple innovation pathways, supporting the idea that surface similarities which define cohesive typologies are not necessarily motivated by shared source constructions.

(6) Analytic passive innovation pathways in Central Borneo:

§2 Reanalysis of preverbal light verbs or auxiliary verbs as voice markers.

§3 Reanalysis of case marking prepositions as voice markers.

§4 Reanalysis of object focus constructions (null copula pseudoclefts) as passives.

2 Light verb \rightarrow passive marker

In many Daic languages, analytic passives with “Patient/S Pass Agent Verb” order arose through a reanalysis of complex constructions involving undergoer voice ‘do/make’ verbs embedding active verbs (Clayre 1996, 2014, Hemmings 2015, Mortensen 2021).

(7) Reanalysis of do-type verb into passive marker

Patient/S do-uv =Agent.gen [av-V ...] \rightarrow Patient/S pass =Agent.gen av-V ...

- (8) Lun Bawang ‘do; make’ from PMP *taRuq used as a lexical verb (Mortensen 2021)
- a. kərubaw nəh pian ŋə-lipo ar, iəmoʔ na nəkə-tauʔ=nəh
buffalo that.dist want av-jump fence but neg pfv-do=3sg.gen
‘That buffalo tried to jump the fence, but it was unable to do so.’
- b. ənun ru-ən=muh
what do-pv=2sg.gen
‘What are you doing?’

(9) Lun Bawang ‘do; make’ used in passive contexts (Mortensen 2021)

a. iko ruən=nəh m-(b)ukut
2sg.pvt do.pv=3sg.gen av-punch

‘You are punched by him.’

b. ruən=muh m-(b)ukut iəh
do.pv=2sg.gen av-punch 3sg.pvt

‘You punch him.’ (imperative)

(10) Restrictions on voice and case marking in Lun Bawang /ruən/ passives (Mortensen 2021)

- a. * ruən=muh m-(b)ukut nənəh
do.pv=2sg.gen av-punch 3sg.obl

Intended: ‘You punch him.’ (agent as subject and patient as oblique)

- b. * iko ruən=nəh bukut-ən
2sg.pvt do.pv=3sg.gen punch-pv

Intended ‘You are punched by him.’ (pv main verb)

With respect to Lun Bawang (and other Daic languages), we can provide satisfactory answers to the main historical questions related to passive voice innovation in Central Borneo.

- What is the source of the passive marker?
 - A light verb with ‘do; make’ semantics reflecting PMP *taRuq — potentially through an intermediate causative stage (see Haspelmath 1990: §4.3) — that was reinterpreted as a passive marker.
- What is the source of the pre-verbal agent position?
 - When the light verb appears in undergoer voice, non-subject agents appear in their typical position as a genitive case enclitic with the lexical verb following. After the light verb is reanalyzed as a passive marker the agent stays in its position.

3 Case marker/preposition → passive marker

Malayic and Land Dayak languages appear to have reanalyzed case markers or prepositions as voice markers, a rare innovation pathway (Adelaar 1992, 2005).

The pathway from case marker/preposition to passive marker is multi-staged. First, the case marker or preposition marks a demoted/non-subject agent in passive or undergoer voice constructions, without any overt voice morphology. Second, the marked agent precedes the verb. Eventually, the case marker/preposition itself is reanalyzed as the passive voice marker.

(11) Reanalysis of case markers/prepositions into passive markers

Pat/S V [cm/P Agent] → Pat/S [cm/P Agent] V ... → Pat/S Pass
(Agent) V ...

3.1 Agent marking preposition in Kelantan and Terengganu

In the first stage, prepositions are utilized to mark non-subject agents in passive constructions. Examples from outside of Borneo in Kelantan and Terengganu Malay show that post-verbal agents require either *kə* (← PAn oblique *ka) or *di* (← PAn dative *di).

(12) Kelantan agent-marking dative (Wu 2023)

a. *ɲə supəh k=əgɛ=lah*
it curse agt=person=spf

‘It would get cursed by people’

b. *anəʔ aku kənə ttɛ c=ceʔgu aɡi ni di skələh*
child 1sg advs hit agt=teacher day this loc school

‘My child was slapped by the teacher at school today.’

These case markers still function as datives outside of passive contexts.

(13) Kelantan dative as dative (Wu 2023)

a. aku wi kə miru buku tu
1sg give dat p.name book that

‘I gave Amirul that book.’

b. jatoh dagipade cuge tu, jatoh kə gaonj
fall from steep that fall dat canyon

‘(They) fall from the steep (cliff), and fell into the canyon.’

Terengganu Malay repurposed the locative *di* for non-subject agents, which also appears as a proclitic *d=* that assimilates to the the place of articulation of any root-initial consonant.

(14) Terengganu agent-marking locative (Wu 2023)

- a. abih ikan̩ hɔʔ bəli p=pasə taʔdi makaŋ di kucing
finish fish rel buy loc=market just.now eat agt cat

‘The fish that (I) bought at the market was eaten by the cat.’

- b. ckəlaʔ dudoʔ di mɛja
chewing.gum sit loc table

‘Chewing gum is on the table.’

3.2 Agent marking prepositions with additional voice properites

In both Malayic and Land Dayak groups, the non-subject agent marker has taken on an additional role as a pre-verbal voice marker. We see evidence for this directionality from the dual role that *di* plays in Mandor Ahe, a Malayic language of Borneo. Here, the familiar *di* marker may be described as indicating passive voice when the agent is either absent or preverbal, but also marks the passive agent when it appears in post-verbal position.

(15) Mandor Ahe *di* passives (Sommerlot 2024)

a. karusi koa dah di n-(t)ipa?
chair that pst pass n-kick

‘That chair was already kicked.’

b. buṅa di ku n-(t)anam
flower pass 1sg n-plant

‘Flowers were planted by me.’

c. karusi koa dah di n-(t)ipa? di kamuda koa
chair that pst pass n-kick agt child that

‘That chair was kicked by the child.’

A similar pattern is found in Ribun, a Land Dayak language, which utilizes *leʔ* as both a passive voice and passive agent marker. Interestingly, the same marker is found in Simpakng, a closely related Land Dayak language, but in Simpakng an infix <ə̃n> (← PAn *<in>) marks passive voice and *le* is only used as a marker of the non-subject agent.

(16) Ribun *leʔ* passives

(Sommerlot to appear)

- a. onyo han leʔ kosu mitak
 person that pass dog bite
 ‘That person was bit by a dog.’
- b. oko leʔ mise leʔ odiʔ
 1sg pass call agt 3sg
 ‘I was called by him/her.’

(17) Simpakng (Kraft 2024)

p<ə̃n>andeʔ le hobat-neh-eh
 <pass>bathe by friend-3sg-eh
 ‘(He) was bathed by his friend.’

A comparison of the Kelantan and Terengganu Malay data with Bornean Malay and Land Dayak data demonstrates the following:

- Case markers/prepositions may be adopted for non-subject agents in passive constructions.
- After case markers take on additional agent marking roles they may 1) remain strictly agent-marking as in Kelantan and Terengganu, 2) take properties of both voice and agent marking, as in Bornean Malayic and Land Dayak languages, or 3) lose their agent marking properties after taking on voice-marking roles as in Standard Malay/Indonesian.

A note on the origins of Malay di-

There is a long history of scholarship on possible origins of Malay di-. Our conclusions here are in line with earlier work by Adelaar (1992, 2005), but see Shibatani 1985, van den Berg 2004 for alternative proposals.

With respect to Malayic and Land Dayak, we can now provide partial answers to the main historical questions related to passive voice innovation in Central Borneo:

- What is the source of the passive marker?
 - A case marking preposition that is reinterpreted as a non-subject agent marker, and later as a passive voice marker due to its strong association with passive constructions.
- What is the source of the pre-verbal agent position?
 - No satisfactory answer, yet.

4 Pseudocleft construction \rightarrow passive construction

It is difficult to explain how agents became preverbal in passive constructions that don't have a light verb source. One possible explanation is that these originate from object focus constructions (null copula pseudoclefts) which were reanalyzed as passive constructions:

(18) Reanalysis of object focus constructions (null copula pseudoclefts)

Patient/Foc [rel Agent/S V ___ ...] \rightarrow Patient/S Pass Agent V ___ ...

A class of “linkers” or “ligatures” in PAn may then be a source for some analytic passive markers in CB languages. The most productive linkers are PAn *a and *na, which may have been allomorphs. These are described in the ACD as linkers which connect “PAn nominal heads and their lexical or phrasal attributes.” (Blust, Trussel & Smith 2023)

Toba Batak, for example, reflects PAn *na as a linker with multiple functions:

(19) Toba Batak na linker (Erlewine 2018)

- a. hu-ida baoa na modom i
pass.1sg-see man rel sleep med
‘I saw the man who is sleeping.’
- b. hu-boto na modom si Poltak
pass.1sg-know comp sleep pn Poltak
‘I know that Poltak is sleeping.’

- We observe multiple cases where analytic passives appear either synchronically or diachronically related to linkers or relative complementizers.

In Kelai, for example, passive markers may also be used as linkers.

(20) Kelai en passive (Smith 2017)

a. sɛʔ bəwp koy
3sg hit 1sg
'He hit me.'

b. koy en bəwp (sɛʔ)
1sg pass hit (3sg)
'I was hit (by him).'

(21) Kelai en as a linker (Smith 2017)

kət en koy
thing gen 1sg
'my thing/mine.'

In the Punan subgroup, Beketan *ɲe*, an analytic passive marker, is cognate with Punan Aput *ɲa*, a complementizer.

(22) Beketan passive (Smith 2017)

- a. *hen ɲəroti? hok*
3sg hit 1sg
'He hit me.'
- b. *hok ɲe hen ɲəroti?*
1sg pass 3sg hit
'I was hit by him.'

(23) Punan Aput pseudocleft (Smith 2017)

- he ɲa kaman kun ku*
who rel eat food 1sg.gen
'Who is the one who ate my food.'

Ida'an Begak has a semantically bleached auxiliary *noŋ* which is used with so-called “dependent” verbs where it has a vaguely modal usage, indicating “actions that need to be performed, actions that are going to take place very soon, actions that are just taking place, or actions that usually or habitually take place.” (Goudswaard 2005: p. 190)

(24) Ida'an Begak /*noŋ*/ (Goudswaard 2005)

noŋ *ku* *m-uppuʔ* *ulan* *ku*
aux 1sg.gen dep-wash clothes 1sg.gen

‘I have to/will/am just washing my clothes.’

noŋ-marked dependent undergoer verbs achieve the same word order as seen in passives (25a, b) and *noŋ* also doubles as a relativizer as in (25c).

(25) Ida'an Begak /*noŋ*/ (Goudswaard 2005)

- a. suku a-ssak no noŋ kəmmi m-iaŋ
all nv-ripe yonder aux 1p.ex dep-separate
'All the ripe (rice) has to be/is usually separated by us.'
- b. *suku a-ssak no noŋ m-uaŋ kəmmi
all nv-ripe yonder aux dep-separate 1p.ex
(Agent cannot be postverbal)
- c. pasod ulan noŋ ku m-uppu?
many clothes rel 1sg dep-laundry
'The clothes that I wash are many.'

We note the following observations regarding passive markers and their apparent connection to linkers and complementizers:

- Convergence in shapes of complementizers and passive markers to a (v)n(v) shape.
 - Passives: Kayan an, Kenyah ən, Kelai en, Matéq ni, Bakati ani, Ukit ine?, Bekatan ɲe
 - Complementizers: Salako an, Hovongan ni, Kelai ni, Kereho ni, Seputan ne, Punan Aput ɲa
- Analytic passives with secondary linker functions.
 - Kelai en
- Cognacy between analytic passives and complementizers.
 - Bekatan ɲe, Punan Aput ɲa
- Analytic passives with secondary complementizer functions.
 - Ida'an Begak noŋ

These observations suggest that a reanalysis of null copula pseudo cleft object focus constructions may have taken place in some Central Bornean languages with analytic passives following the trajectory shown here in 26.

- (26) Reanalysis of pseudo clefts with (n)a linkers and genitive marked non-subject agents
pat_i (n)a ni agt verb $_i$ → pat_i {(n)a+ni} agt verb

As a bonus, object focus pseudoclefts with a null complementizer may also explain agent preverbal positioning in some Malayic languages.

- (27) Reanalysis of pseudo clefts with a null complementizer
pat_i ∅ di_{agt} agt verb $_i$ → pat di_{pass} agt verb

5 Conclusion

Central Bornean analytic passives have similar surface structures but arose through diverse diachronic pathways. Three such pathways were identified in this presentation:

1. Reanalysis of light verbs with ‘do; make’ semantics as passive markers.
2. Reanalysis of prepositions, first as markers of the oblique agent, then as passive voice markers.
3. Reanalysis of object focus constructions as passive constructions.

Additional comparative work will hopefully shed more light on the convergence towards pre-verbal analytic passives in Central Borneo.