

Reconstruction of the Proto-Gheg Infinitive

Published accounts of the Gheg Albanian infinitive give the construction as *me* + participle (Camaj 1984, Gjinari 2000, Newmark et. al. 1982). However, examples of usage in sentences show that when necessary, object clitics (*e*, *i*) and reflexive clitics (*u*) are inserted between *me* and the participle, for example, *me e ble librin* ‘to buy the book’, *ka me u kulluem dheu* ‘the earth will purify itself’. Thus, the syntactic construction is best described as the particle *me* + (clitic) + participle. In this paper, using data I collected from native speakers of Samsun Albanian, I reconstruct an earlier stage of the infinitival particle. I argue that the Proto-Gheg infinitival particle was *ma* and the syntactic construction was the particle *ma* + (clitic) + participle.

The synchronic facts of Samsun Albanian require the internal reconstruction of the earlier participle form as *ma*. Speakers, when asked to give infinitive forms always used *ma* with intransitive verbs and *me* with transitive verbs, for example, [mɔ ɔrð] ‘to come’, [mɔ dejt] ‘to die’, [mɔ hũger] ‘to eat’ but [me kafũ] ‘to bite’, [me ftỹ] ‘to push’, [me mut] ‘to kill’. My reconstruction entails that a grammaticalization of the infinitive particle with the direct object clitic (*e*) must have occurred in Proto-Gheg (*ma* + *e* + participle > *me* + participle) resulting in two infinitival particles used in complimentary distribution to distinguish transitive from intransitive verbs. A subsequent reanalysis in all varieties of Gheg except Proto-Samsun Albanian resulted in the loss of the reconstructed infinitival particle *ma* being replaced by the grammaticalized form *me* known in the literature. Cross linguistically it is common to find changes like *ma* + *e* > *me*, but the change *me* > *ma* can not be easily motivated. My data and reconstruction suggest a similar grammaticalization process created the particle *mu* in Samsun Albanian which allowed speakers to distinguish active from reflexive verbs.

Furthermore, I will argue that the Proto-Gheg grammaticalization of *ma* + *e* > *me* and the Proto-Samsun Albanian grammaticalization of *ma* + *u* > *mu* followed from the fact that at the underlying level all verbs were overtly marked for valency. I propose that verbs in this Proto-Gheg system were marked univalent-agentive *ma kãnduem* ‘to sing’, univalent-patientive *ma dekun* ‘to die’, univalent-reflexive *mu urẽzuem* ‘fall down’, or divalent *me mytun* ‘to kill’. My analysis explains the infinitive construction in Samsun Albanian, the parallel development of a grammaticalized second progressive aspect in Samsun Albanian (Maynard to appear), and the North Gheg perfect construction in which univalent-agentive verbs pattern with divalent verbs by taking HAVE as an auxiliary in the perfect tenses while univalent-patientive and univalent-reflexive verbs both take BE as their auxiliary. It further explains why reflexive subject and direct object clitics are obligatory in Gheg Albanian.

Camaj, Martin. 1984. *Albanian grammar, with exercises, chrestomathy, and glossaries*. Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz.

Gjinari, Jorgji, and Gjovalin Shkurtaj. 2000. *Dialektologjia*. Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese e Librit Universitar.

Maynard, Kelly Lynne. to appear. ‘The aspect marker *pe* in Samsun Albanian’ *CLS 45: 2009: proceedings from the forty-fifth Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago, Ill: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Newmark, Leonard, Philip Hubbard, and Peter R. Prifti. 1982. *Standard Albanian: A reference grammar for students*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.