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## Mermaid construction in Kolyma Yukaghir

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## Mermaid Construction in Kolyma Yukaghir

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### 1. Introduction

Tsunoda (this volume-a) proposes the structure of the prototype of the mermaid construction ('MMC') as follows.

- (1) Prototype of the mermaid construction:  
[Clause] Noun Copula

In addition, as Tsunoda (this volume-a) and other papers in the present volume show, there are instances in which the 'Noun' slot is occupied by an enclitic. (The enclitic may have derived from a noun.) There are also instances in which a noun or an enclitic has changed into a suffix and the suffix continues to occupy the 'Noun' slot. The noun, the enclitic or the suffix may be a nominalizer.

Kolyma Yukaghir does not have the prototype of the MMC. Nonetheless, it has two constructions that may be considered varieties of the MMC.

In one type, the 'Noun' slot of the MMC is occupied by an enclitic whose allomorphs are *=ben* and *=bed* (represented by *=ben*). The verb preceding this enclitic is in either of the two participle forms (cf. 4.2). That is, it is in a non-finite form. This MMC (i) expresses past situations, or (ii) has a modal meaning, such as strong assertion. This construction is marginal in the language. The etymology of *=ben* is not known for certain.

Nonetheless, it has been suggested that this enclitic is related to the noun *pen* that means ‘thing’, or more precisely, ‘supernatural thing’.

In the other type, which is even more removed from the prototype than is the first type, the ‘Noun’ slot is occupied by a suffix whose allomorphs are *-jo:n/-jo:d*, *-d’o:n/-d’o:d*, and *-t’o:n/-t’o:d* (represented by *-jo:n*). This suffix is a nominalizer and it is added to the stem of a verb. This MMC, too, expresses past situations, although it does not seem to have a modal meaning. It is not known if etymologically this suffix derived from a noun.

## 2. Initial illustration

As an initial illustration, two examples of the MMC in Kolyma Yukaghir are given: (2) (the enclitic =*ben*) and (3) (the nominalizer suffix *-jo:n*). (Throughout this paper, glosses are mine.)

- (2) *jel’o:je puden nutn’e-j=bed-ek.*  
 sun upward stay-PTCP=*ben*-FOC  
 ‘The sun stayed high outside.’ (Nikolaeva 1997: 21)
- (3) *tet tuda: xon-d’o:n o:-d’ek.*  
 2SG before go-*jo:n* be-I2SG  
 ‘You went [there] before.’ (Nagasaki 2001: 63)

## 3. Profile of the language

Kolyma Yukaghir is spoken in the Taiga area along the upper reaches of the river Kolyma in East Siberia. It is closely related to Tundra Yukaghir. The possibility of the genetic affinity of the Yukaghir languages to the Uralic language family has been suggested by several researchers, such as Collinder (1940) and Angere (1956). No definitive conclusion, however, has been reached so far.

Kolyma Yukaghir is a critically endangered, or possibly moribund, language. The number of its fluent speakers is around 20.

The following phonemes can be set up: twenty-one consonants /p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, n’[n’], ŋ, r, č [tʃ~ʃ], ʃ [dʒ], ʃ, ʒ, ʒ, w, j, l, l’[l’]/, six short vowels /i, e, ö, a, o, u/, and six long vowels /i:, e:, ö:, a:, o:, u:/. The main stress within a word falls on the final heavy syllable. Stress placement on words with light syllables only is largely unpredictable.

Kolyma Yukaghir overwhelmingly shows agglutinating morphology. It possesses suffixing morphology.

Verbs have the following forms.

- (a) Finite forms, which may inflect for aspect, mood, number-plus-person of the subject, and for focus on the subject and the object.
- (b) Nonfinite forms: two participles and one verbal noun, and five

converbs.

Kolyma Yukaghir shows both head-marking and dependent-marking. It is mildly configurational.

The case system in Kolyma Yukaghir is basically of the NOM-ACC type, where the nominative case has the zero-suffix, while the accusative case has a non-zero suffix. (In the examples that follow, the nominative case will be left un glossed.)

- (4) *tudel met-kele juö-m.*  
3SG 1SG-ACC see-T3SG  
'He/She saw me.'

The subject is consistently in the nominative case (zero) (unless it is followed by a focus marker; see 4.1). The object generally has the accusative case marker, e.g. (4), although it has no case suffix if the subject is the first or second person and the object is the third person. When both the subject and the object are third persons, the object is marked by the accusative case if it is definite, e.g. (5), and by the instrumental case if it is indefinite, e.g. (6).

- (5) *tudel Nikolaj-de:-gele juö-m.*  
3SG Nikolai-DIM-ACC see-T3SG  
'He saw Nikolai.'
- (6) *tat emej-gi qaŋe-le a-m.*  
then mother-POSS porridge-INS make-T3SG  
'Then their mother made porridge.' (Nikolaeva 1997: 30)

Kolyma Yukaghir has SOV as the unmarked order. It has postpositions, and does not have prepositions. Noun modifiers, including an adnominal clause ('AC'), precede the noun they modify. Kolyma Yukaghir does not have adjectives proper as a word class. The concepts that may be expressed by adjectives in languages such as Japanese are often expressed by participles. A participle precedes the noun it modifies.

Kolyma Yukaghir does not have a written tradition. With the development of primary education in recent decades, however, a few introductory textbooks using "Yukaghir alphabets" (based on Cyrillic alphabets) have been published. Children are taught how to write and read them in primary schools in their village.

The data used in this paper were obtained from the spoken language. The data cited from previously published books and articles are indicated to that effect, while the ones I directly obtained from my language consultants during the field trips are not accompanied by any citation information.

#### 4. Types of clauses and sentences

##### 4.1 Verb-predicate and noun-predicate sentences

Kolyma Yukaghir has two major sentence types: verb-predicate sentence and noun-predicate sentence.

Examples of the verb-predicate sentence include (7) (transitive) and (8) (intransitive).

- (7) *tag foromo-pul parna: azu:-gele*  
that person-PL raven language-ACC  
*medi-nu-l'el-ŋa:*  
hear-PROG-EVID-T3PL  
'The people understood the language of ravens.'
- (8) *irki-n anil aj kies'*  
one-ATTR fish again come.I3SG  
'A fish came again.'

The subject is cross-referenced by the number-plus-person agreement marker on the verb in verb-predicate sentences. For the same person-plus-number, the marker alternates depending on whether the verb is transitive or intransitive. In glosses, the person-plus-number marker is preceded by 'T' if the verb is transitive (e.g. 'T3PL' in (7)), and by 'I' if the verb is intransitive (e.g. 'I2SG' in (10)).

Examples of the noun-predicate sentence include the following.

- (9) (The following is a conversation between Person A and Person B.)  
A: *tituön nem-dik?*  
here.this what-FOC  
'What is this here?'  
B: *tuön lunbuge-lek.*  
this pot-FOC  
'This is a pot.'
- (10) *kin o:-jek?*  
who be-I2SG  
'Who are you?'
- (11) *alme-ŋo-je.*  
shaman-be-I1SG  
'I am a shaman.'

In noun-predicate sentences, generally (though not always) the predicate includes a focus marker, which is attached to a noun or a pronoun, e.g. *nem-dik* 'what-FOC' in (9-A) and *lunbuge-lek* 'pot-FOC' in (9-B). In this case, the predicate does not include any person-number agreement markers. The focus marker in effect functions as the copula.

Focus markers indicate informational focus (essentially a new piece of information or contrastive focus). The focus marker on nouns has two

variants: (i) *-lek* (after vowels) ~ *-ek* (after consonants) and (ii) *-k* (after vowels) ~ *-ek* (after consonants). *-lek/-ek* is used if the noun is low in definiteness or referentiality, e.g. (9-B), while *-k/-ek* is used if the noun is high in definiteness or referentiality. The focus marker on pronouns is lexically conditioned, e.g. *nem-dik* ‘what-FOC’, cf. (9-A), *kin-tek* ‘who-FOC’, and *met-ek* ‘1SG-FOC’.

The same focus markers are used in verb-predicate sentences, as well. They concern the information status of the intransitive subject, e.g. (45), and the object, e.g. (46).

If the subject refers to the first or the second person, the copula verb *o:-* ‘be’ may appear with a person-number agreement marker, e.g. (10). Alternatively, the verbalizing suffix *-ɲo:* ‘be’, is attached to the noun, followed by a person-number marker, e.g. (11).

#### 4.2 Adnominal clauses

Kolyma Yukaghir has internal adnominal clauses (‘internal ACs’), but does not seem to have external adnominal clauses (‘external ACs’). See Teramura (1969) and Tsunoda (this volume-a, 7.2) for details of internal and external ACs. Roughly speaking, in internal ACs, the head noun corresponds to an argument or an adjunct of the AC. In contrast, in external ACs, the head noun is, so to speak, added from outside the underlying clause. It does not correspond to an argument or an adjunct of the AC. There are three ways to form internal ACs’: (i) a *-je* participle (4.2.1), (ii) a *-me* participle (4.2.2), and (iii) a verbal noun (4.2.3). These three types of ACs differ in terms of their accessibility on Keenan and Comrie’s (1977) hierarchy.

##### 4.2.1 ACs with a *-je* participle

A *-je* participle can be used to modify the subject, e.g. (12), and it is marginally acceptable for the direct object, e.g. (13), but it is not acceptable for any other position on the hierarchy; see (14) (indirect object).

- (12) *ekfil’ a:-je foromo*  
 [boat make-PTCP] person  
 ‘the person who made a boat’
- (13) *tiŋ foromo a:-je ekfil’*  
 [this person make-PTCP] boat  
 ‘the boat that this person made’
- (14) *\*met ču:l tadi-je foromo*  
 [1SG meat give-PTCP] person  
 Intended meaning: ‘the person to whom I gave meat’

##### 4.2.2 ACs with a *-me* participle

A *-me* participle inflects for person-and-number, and agrees with the subject of the AC. An AC involving a *-me* participle can be used to modify the direct object, e.g. (15), and the indirect object, e.g. (16). However, it cannot be used for any other position on the hierarchy; see (17) (subject).

- (15) *tij foromo a:-mele ekfil'*  
 [this person make-PTCP.3SG] boat  
 'the boat that this person made'
- (16) *met ču:l tadi-me foromo*  
 [1SG meat give-PTCP.1SG] person  
 'the person to whom I gave meat'
- (17) *\*ekfil' a:-mele foromo*  
 [boat make-PTCP.3SG] person  
 Intended meaning: 'the person who made a boat'

#### 4.2.3 ACs with a verbal noun

The verbal noun suffix is *-l*. It is suffixed to verb stems. Verbal nouns have three functions, one of which is to form ACs. In terms of Keenan and Comrie's hierarchy, the ACs involving a verbal noun have the widest range of possibilities among the three types of ACs. They can be used to modify the subject, e.g. (18), the direct object, e.g. (19), the indirect object, e.g. (20), the oblique object, e.g. (21), and the possessor, e.g. (22). However, they cannot be used to modify the object of comparison.

- (18) *ekfil' a:-l foromo*  
 [boat make-VN] person  
 'the person who made a boat'
- (19) *tij foromo a:-l ekfil'*  
 [this person make-VN] boat  
 'the boat that this person made'
- (20) *met ču:l tadi-l foromo*  
 [1SG meat give-VN] person  
 'the person to whom I gave meat'
- (21) *met modo-l nume*  
 [1SG live-VN] house  
 'the house in which I lived'
- (22) *arjje-gi embe-l foromo*  
 [eye-POSS be.black-VN] person  
 'the person whose eyes are black'

The possibilities discussed above of the three methods for forming ACs are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Possibilities of the three types of ACs

	Subject	Direct object	Indirect object	Oblique	Possessor
<i>-je</i> participle	OK	(OK)	*	*	*
<i>-me</i> participle	*	OK	OK	*	*
verbal noun	(OK)	(OK)	(OK)	OK	OK

NB (OK): elicited from language consultants but poorly attested in text data

## 5. Mermaid construction

### 5.1 Introductory notes

The structure of the prototype of the mermaid construction ('MMC') as proposed by Tsunoda (this volume-a) was shown in (1). Kolyma Yukaghir has two varieties of the MMC although they are not prototypical ones. No previous study has recognized the MMC in this language. The MMC involves a construction that is called the 'Periphrastic Past' by Maslova (2003: 179-181). (Nagasaki (2001), too, gives a description of the same construction.)

Maslova (2003) and Nagasaki (2001) note that the periphrastic past is of two types.

- (a) Type A involves an enclitic whose allomorphs are =*ben* and =*bed* (represented by =*ben*).
- (b) Type B involves a nominalizer suffix whose allomorphs are *-jo:n/-jo:d*, *-d'o:n/-d'o:d*, and *-t'o:n/-t'o:d* (represented by *-jo:n*).

(The allomorphs ending in *d* are used before vowels, and the allomorphs ending with *n* are used elsewhere.)

The Periphrastic Past is a marginal construction in the language. It does not occur frequently in folklore text collections, such as Nikolaeva (1989). We shall look at the MMC involving =*ben* in 5.2, followed by the MMC with *-jo:n* in 5.3.

### 5.2 MMC with the enclitic =ben

Although this construction does not fall into the major construction types of the language, it clearly contrasts with other constructions syntactically as well as semantically.



### 5.2.1 Morphosyntax

#### [1] Structure

This MMC has the structure shown below.

(23) (SUBJ) ... (OBJ) V(non-finite)=*ben*-FOC

Examples include (2) and:

- (24) *tudel tuda: mi:d'i:-le xonrof-mele=bed-ek*  
 3SG before sledge-INS break-PTCP.3SG=*ben*-FOC  
 'He broke a sledge before.' (Nagasaki 2001: 63)
- (25) *χa:χa:, tinla:æt lebeidi: ninge-j=bed-ek*  
 grandfather over.there berry many-PTCP=*ben*-FOC  
 'Grandfather, there are a lot of berries over there!'  
 (Nikolaeva 1989: 60)

#### [2] 'Predicate' of the 'Clause'

As shown in (23), the verb is non-finite. The forms employed are a *-je* participle, e.g. (25), (26), (27), or a *-me* participle, e.g. (24), (28), (29). Note that these two forms of verbs can be used for ACs, too (see 4.2). (A verbal noun can be used for ACs. It can also precede =*ben*, e.g. (37). It does not form MMCs, however.)

- (26) *tudel amde-j=bed-ek <...>*  
 3SG die-PTCP=*ben*-FOC  
 'She has died <...>!' (Maslova 2003: 180)
- (27) *tuda: unuŋ-gen ejre-j=bed-ek <...>*  
 before river-PROL walk-PTCP=*ben*-FOC  
 'He walked along the rivers before.' (Nikolaeva 1997: 52)
- (28) *pajpe-n pajlu:l-gele n'an'u:lben el*  
 woman-ATTR cunningness-ACC devil NEG  
*muddej-mele=bed-ek*  
 overcome-PTCP.3SG=*ben*-FOC  
 'The devil could not overcome the cunningness of women'  
 (Nikolaeva 1997: 23)
- (29) *met töwke juo-me=bed-ek*  
 1SG dog see-PTCP.1SG=*ben*-FOC  
 'I saw a dog' (Nagasaki 2001: 64)

The predicate of the 'Clause' of this MMC is non-finite, and consequently the 'Clause' by itself cannot be used as a sentence. For example, if =*bed-ek* is deleted from (24), the resultant form is not a correct, complete sentence.

- (30) \**tudel tuda: mi:d'i:-le xonrof-mele*  
 3SG before sledge-INS break-PTCP.3SG  
 Intended meaning: as (24)

A finite form needs to be used instead, e.g.:

- (31) *tudel tuda: mi:d'i:-le xonrof-u-m*  
 3SG before sledge-INS break- $\phi$ -T3SG  
 ‘(as (24))’

(The  $\phi$  in the gloss in (31) means the vowel in question is inserted for phonological reasons and that it does not have any meaning. The same applies to the similar examples below.)

Although the amount of data available is still limited, the general tendency appears to be for a *-je* participle to occur with intransitive verbs, and a *-me* participle with transitive verbs.

[3] This MMC does not contain the copula verb. The enclitic =*ben* is always followed by the focus marker *-k/-ek*, e.g. (24) to (29). (This focus marker is the one that is used for nouns that are high in definiteness or referentiality. See 4.1.)

[4] Case marking in the ‘Clause’

In terms of case marking, the ‘Clause’ of the MMC behaves like an independent sentence (cf. Section 3). The subject is consistently marked by the nominative (zero). The object generally has the accusative case marker, although it has no case suffix if the subject is the first or second person and the object is the third person. When both the subject and the object are third persons, the object is marked by the accusative case if it is definite, e.g. (5) (‘Nikolai-DIM-ACC’), and by the instrumental case if it is indefinite, e.g. (6) (‘porridge-INS’). The same applies to this MMC. The subject is always in the nominative case. In (29), the subject is first person. The object is the third person (‘dog’), and it has no case suffix. In (24) and (28), both the subject and the object are third person. In (28), the object (‘women’s cunningness’) is definite, and it is marked by the accusative case (‘cunningness-ACC’). In (24), it is indefinite, and it is marked by the instrumental (‘sledge-INS’).

### 5.2.2 Function

Nagasaki (2001: 63-64) points out that this construction basically describes past situations. She observes that an adverb which refers to the time of utterance cannot co-occur with this construction.

- (32) *met tuda: tet-ul jalbil-ŋin*  
 1SG before 2SG-ACC lake-ALL  
*peŋŋej-me=bed-ek.*  
 throw-PTCP.1SG=*ben*-FOC  
 ‘I threw you into the lake then.’ (Nagasaki 2001: 64)
- (33) \**met t’a:ŋet tet-ul jalbil-ŋin*  
 1SG now 2SG-ACC lake-ALL  
*peŋŋej-me=bed-ek*  
 throw-PTCP.1SG=*ben*-FOC  
 ‘I will throw you into the lake now!’ (Nagasaki 2001: 64)

(32) is appropriately taken as referring to the past, and it is acceptable. On the other hand, (33) contains the adverb *t'a:fet* 'now' which refers to the time of utterance, and it is not acceptable.

Furthermore, Nagasaki (2001: 63-64) points out that this construction also has a modal meaning, such as strong assertion. In this case, it can refer to present situations. This usage is, however, found very rarely, as Maslova (2003: 181) mentions. An example is (26).

### 5.2.3 Etymology and grammaticalization of =ben

#### [1] Etymology

Jochelson (1905) and Krejnovič (1979) suggest that =ben can be related to the independent word *pen*. The word is used to express various 'impersonal' situations, as follows.

(34) *pen emiče:j.*  
 thing become.dark-I3SG  
 'It became dark.'

(35) *pen poʃorχoʃi.*  
 thing dawn-I3SG  
 'It dawned.'

(36) *pen čelke:j.*  
 thing become.cold-I3SG  
 'It became cold.'

Jochelson suggests that the word *pen* basically means 'supernatural thing'. Specifically, he states that "[I]n olden times this word used to indicate the name of a deity embracing all nature, the universe. *Pon* [sic] indicates *something that is unknown*." (italics in the original) (Jochelson 1905: 406)

The verb forms employed in ACs (4.2) and those used in this MMC are almost identical (a *-je* participle and a *-me* participle), except that a verbal noun can be used ACs, but not in this MMC. This suggests that this MMC may have originated in ACs. In turn, this will lend some support to Jochelson's view that =ben was originally a noun.

It is relevant to mention that in Hindi (Imamura (this volume)) the 'Noun' slot of the MMC is occupied by the enclitic =*vaalaa*, and the MMC means (i) 'be about to' (an aspectual meaning), (ii) schedule, intention (a modal meaning), and (iii) the speaker's firm belief about the occurrence/non-occurrence of a situation (a modal meaning). The etymology of =*vaalaa* is suggested to be the Sanskrit noun *paalaka* 'guardian, protector, one who maintains or observes'. This suggested etymology is reminiscent of the suggested etymology of =ben. Both refer to something more than ordinary humans.

#### [2] =ben as an enclitic, and not a suffix

Maslova (2003: 179-181) regards =ben ('Relative Nominal form' in her terminology) as a suffix. In my view, however, it is more appropriate to regard it as an enclitic. The reason is twofold.

First, this element is attached to a *-je* participle, a *-me* participle

(‘Attributive’ in Maslova’s term) and to a verbal noun (-*l*) (‘Action Nominal’ in Maslova’s term). They are all fully inflected forms. An example with a verbal noun is as follows:

- (37) *taŋ uör-pe, titte emej ʃoʋuʃe-l=ben-pe*  
 that child-PL 3PL.POSS mother lose-VN=*ben*-PL  
 ‘those children, the ones who lost their mother.’

Although this is an example of a slightly complicated noun phrase, not an MMC, it clearly shows that =*ben* can be attached to a verbal noun. The fact that the element in question is attached to fully inflected forms indicates that it should be regarded as an enclitic, and not as a suffix (see Zwicky 1994: 576).

Second, as noted above, the forms of the verbs to which this element is attached are exactly the same as those employed in ACs. This suggests that this element occupies the structural position of a noun modified by an AC, that is, it occupies the structural position of the head noun.

To sum up, it is possible to say (although not definitively) that here we are dealing with an instance of grammaticalization of the noun (i.e. an independent word) *pen* ‘name of a deity embracing all nature, the universe’ to the enclitic =*ben*, which is used in a construction that (i) expresses past situations, or (ii) has a modal meaning, such as strong assertion.

### 5.3 MMC with the suffix -*jo:n*

Kolyma Yukaghir has a suffix whose allomorphs are -*jo:n*/-*jo:d*, -*d’o:n*/-*d’o:d*, and -*t’o:n*/-*t’o:d* (represented by -*jo:n*). This suffix is added to the stem of a verb. It is a nominalizer, e.g.:

- (38) *mere-jo:n*  
 fly-*jo:n*  
 ‘one who/which flies’  
 (39) *en-d’o:n*  
 live-*jo:n*  
 ‘one who/which lives; animal’

This suffix can be used in what may be considered a variant of the MMC. This construction has the following structure.

- (40) Subject: 1st person or 2nd person:  
 (SUBJ) ... V(stem)-*jo:n* Copula-AGR  
 (41) Subject: 3rd person:  
 (SUBJ) ... V(stem)-*jo:n*-(PL)-FOC

In (40) and (41), what may be regarded as the ‘Noun’ slot of the MMC (cf. (1)) is occupied by the nominalizer suffix -*jo:n*. The suffix is in turn added to a verb stem. The MMC discussed in 5.2 does not contain the copula verb

(although it contains the focus marker *-k/-ek*; this focus marker is the one that is used for nouns that are high in definiteness or referentiality. See 4.1.) In contrast, (40) contains the copula verb, which is followed by an agreement suffix. (41) contains the focus marker *-k/-ek*, which in effect functions as the copula, as is the case with noun-predicate sentences, e.g. (9-A, -B). Note that the plural marker can occur in (41), e.g. (44), but not in (40).

Recall that the MMC with the enclitic =*ben* (i) expresses past situations, and (ii) has a modal meaning, such as strong assertion. The MMC with the nominalizer suffix *-jo:n*, too, describes past situations. But it does not seem to have a modal meaning.

Maslova (2003) and Nagasaki (2001) note that only intransitive verbs appear in this construction.

An example of (40) is (42). Examples of (41) include (43) and (44).

- (42) *tet tuda: xon-d'o:n o:-d'ek.*  
 2SG before go-*jo:n* be-I2SG  
 'You went [there] before.' (Nagasaki 2001: 63)
- (43) *tij kni:ge omo-s'o:d-ek.*  
 this book be.good-*jo:n*-FOC  
 'This book was interesting.' (Nagasaki 2001: 63)
- (44) *tittel kie-t'o:n-pe-k.*  
 3PL come-*jo:n*-PL-FOC  
 'They came.' (Nagasaki 2001:62)

This construction may be considered a variety of the MMC, although admittedly it is not a prototypical one. The following facts are relevant.

(a) In one variety of the MMC in Japanese (see Tsunoda (this volume-b, 5.4.4)), the 'Noun' slot is occupied by the enclitic =*no*, which may be analyzed as a nominalizer. Note that (40) and (41) contain the nominalizer suffix *-jo:n* in what may be regarded as the 'Noun' slot.

(b) As Tsunoda (this volume-a, 4.1, 6.2, 6.3) notes, in the MMC in a number of languages, the 'Noun' slot is occupied by a suffix that was etymologically a noun. In this regard, it is worth noting Nagasaki's (2001: 62) suggestion that the nominalizer suffix *-jo:n* was formed through fusion of a *-je* participle and the enclitic =*ben*. Recall that =*ben* may have been etymologically a noun *pen*. Although more phonological data is needed to justify her analysis, this possibility cannot be discounted outright, in the case of languages like Kolyma Yukaghir that have no written tradition.

## 6. Comparison of the MMC with other constructions

We shall now compare the 'Clause' of MMC with independent sentences and ACs. Specifically, we shall compare the following.

- (a) Independent sentences.

- (b) MMC with =*ben* (5.2).
- (c) MMC with -*jo:n* (5.3).
- (d) ACs (4.2).

[1] Form of the verb

The predicate verb of independent sentences ((a)) has full inflectional possibilities (Section 3):

- (i) finite forms, which may inflect for aspect, mood, number-plus-person of the subject, and for focus on the subject and the object; and
- (ii) nonfinite forms: two participles and one verbal noun, and five converbs.

In the MMC of (b) and in ACs (d), the verb of the ‘Clause’ is non-finite. It may be a -*je* participle, a -*me* participle, or a verbal noun (available only for ACs). In the MMC of (c), the verb of the ‘Clause’ is a verb stem.

The verb of the ‘Clause’ of the MMC is in a non-finite form or a verb stem (and not an inflected form). Therefore, the ‘Clause’ cannot be used by itself as a sentence.

[2] Case-marking

In all of (a) to (d), the subject is marked by the nominative case (zero). The object is marked as follows.

In (a), (b) and (d), generally the object is marked by the accusative case, which has a non-zero suffix, although it has no case suffix if the subject is the first or second person and the object is the third person. When both the subject and the object are third persons, the object is marked by the accusative case (if it is definite), and by the instrumental case (if it is indefinite). Examples of (a) include (3), (4) and (5). Examples of (b) include (24) and (28). (d) differs from (a) and (b) in that the instrumental marking on the third-person object tends to be dropped. Examples of (d) include (12) and (16).

In (c), the object does not exist. As noted in 5.3, only intransitive verbs appear in this construction.

[3] Focus marking

In independent sentences, a focus marker can be attached to the object or the intransitive subject. It can also be attached to the complement, in effect functioning as the copula. For example:

- (i) Verb-predicate sentences: transitive, e.g. (46) (object).
- (ii) Verb-predicate sentences: intransitive, e.g. (45) (subject).
- (iii) Noun-predicate sentences, e.g. (9-A, B) (complement).

(45) *čomparna:-k mara:-l'el-u-l.*  
 raven-FOC fly-EVID- $\phi$ -VN  
 ‘A raven has flown (there).’

(46) *ugurčera:-k keč:-l'el-ŋile.*  
 willow-FOC bring-EVID-PTCP.3PL

‘They brought (some branches of) willow.’

Regarding the two types of the MMC ((b), (c)), Nagasaki (2001), Maslova (2003), the folklore texts in Nikolaeva (1997) and my data have yielded no example in which focus markers occur in the ‘Clause’ of the MMC. It seems that focus markers cannot occur in the ‘Clause’. This suggests that in this respect the sentencehood of the ‘Clause’ is low. Focus markers can occur outside the ‘Clause’ within the MMC, e.g. (24) to (29), (32), (43) and (44). In (d), no focus marking occurs.

The result of this comparison is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of the MMC with independent sentences and ACs

	Verb form	Subject	Object	Focus marker
(a) independent sentence	full inflectional possibilities	NOM	ACC, INS	+ (except transitive subject)
(b) MMC with = <i>ben</i>	- <i>je</i> participle, - <i>me</i> participle	NOM	ACC, INS	-
(c) MMC with - <i>jo:n</i>	stem	NOM	n/a	-
(d) AC	- <i>je</i> participle, - <i>me</i> participle, verbal noun	NOM	ACC, INS	-

In terms of the form of the verb, the MMC of (b) almost parallels ACs, except for the non-use of verbal nouns. However, the MMC of (c) resembles neither ACs nor independent sentences.

Regarding the absence of focus marker, both the MMC of (b) and the MMC of (c) are identical with ACs. In this respect, their sentencehood is low.

The MMC of (c) differs from the other constructions in that it does not (and probably cannot) contain the object.

In terms of the case-marking of the subject, both the MMC of (b) and the MMC of (c) are identical with both independent sentences and ACs. Concerning the case-marking of the object, the MMC of (b) parallel both independent sentences and ACs.

To sum up, the MMC of (b) behaves like ACs in terms of (i) the form of the verb (i.e. morphology) and (ii) focus marking (i.e. syntax). The MMC of (c) behaves like ACs regarding focus marking. That is, in the main, these two types of the MMC are more similar to ACs than to independent sentences.

## 7. Summary and concluding remarks

Kolyma Yukaghir has two constructions that may be considered varieties of the mermaid construction ('MMC'), although they are not prototypical MMC. The 'Noun' slot is not occupied by a noun. Both types of the MMC are marginal in the language.

In one type, the 'Noun' slot of this MMC is occupied by the enclitic =*ben*. The verb preceding this enclitic is in either of the two participle forms. This MMC (i) expresses past situations, and (ii) has a modal meaning, such as strong assertion. The etymology of this enclitic is not known for certain. Nonetheless, it has been suggested that it is related to the noun *pen* that means 'thing', or more precisely, 'supernatural thing'. This is reminiscent of the etymology of the enclitic =*vaalaa* used in the MMC in Hindi: the Sanskrit noun *paalaka* 'guardian, protector'. (The Hindi MMC indicates (i) 'just about to', (ii) intention, schedule, and (iii) the speaker's firm belief about the occurrence/non-occurrence of a situation.)

In the other type, the 'Noun' slot is occupied by the nominalizer suffix -*jo:n*, which is added to the stem of a verb. This construction describes past situations, but it does not seem to have a modal meaning. It is not known if etymologically this suffix derived from a noun.

In terms of both the morphological and syntactic aspects examined, these two types of the MMC are more similar to ACs than to independent sentences.

## Abbreviations and symbol

AC - adnominal clause; ACC - accusative; AGR - agreement marker; ALL - allative; ATTR - attributive; COP - copula; DAT - dative; DIM - diminutive; EVID - evidential; FOC - focus; FUT - future; I - intransitive; INS - instrumental; LOC - locative; NEG - negation; PTCP - participle; PL - plural; POSS - possessive; PROG - progressive; N - noun; NEG - negative; RELNR - relative nominal; RECP - reciprocal; SG - singular; T - transitive; VN - verbal noun;  $\phi$  - inserted vowel.

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