

Evidence of Proto-Munda Syntax in relation to other branches of Austroasiatic

Felix Rau
(University of Cologne)

The modern languages of the Munda branch of Austroasiatic are consistent in their verb-final word order. However, it is widely accepted that the SOV word order of Munda is a later development and that Proto-Munda featured an SVO word order (see Pinnow 1965, Donegan & Stampe 1983 among others).

Evidence from historical morphology allows a more detailed reconstruction of the basic clause template in Proto-Munda. Comparative evidence allows a reconstruction of eight syntactic positions:

SUBJ (MOD/ASP) NEG RECIP CAUS [VERB] ASP:VOICE OBJ

The markers that could occupy these syntactic positions can be reconstructed with different degrees of certainty. Markers such as the causative **O²p*, the reciprocal particle **kəl* or the negators **ə²t* and **Um* can be reconstructed with high certainty. The same is true for some of the aspect-voice formatives that occupied the postverbal position. The perfective **lə* and imperfective **tə* are well attested across the different Munda branches as is the middle voice marker **n*. The status of active voice **²t* as well as other aspectual-voice markers is still uncertain. Similarly, the evidence for the negative particle **ka* is more tentative than for the other negative markers. The most tentative part of the Proto-Munda predicate is the pre-negator mood-aspect position that is solely based on reflexes in a single language, Gorum, and its similarity to phenomena in Khasic and Palaungic languages.

The pre-negator mood-aspect position is not the only parallel between the reconstructed template and structures found in other branches of Austroasiatic. In fact, the reconstructed clause template bears striking similarity with the structures found in modern Palaungic and Khasian languages. In this paper I will compare the reconstructed clause template with structures found in other branches of Austroasiatic.