Some Aspects of Verbal Morphology in Timucua and the Gulf Languages

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1 Introduction

Timucua is an extinct language isolate, formerly spoken in Florida. Its connections to other Native American languages are unclear. The only recent discussion of Timucua is that of Granberry (1993), who suggests that Timucua has an origin as a South American creole.

In this paper, I outline an aspect of the verbal morphology which is not described in Granberry (1993), the verbal suffix -ta. I will argue that it shows a number of striking similarities to a participial marker (or same-subject switch-reference marker) in Muskogean.

In combination with previous work on the person marking system of the language (Broadwell 1995) and the auxiliary system (Broadwell 1996), I suggest that the behavior of this morpheme strengthens the arguments of Swanton (1929), Haas (1951), and Crawford (1988), that Timucua has, probable genetic connections with the Gulf languages of the Southeast (Muskogean, Natchez, Tunica, Atakapa, Chitimacha).

2 The suffix -ta

The Timucua corpus contains a very frequent suffix -ta which serves to link clauses together. Sequences of [clause 1]-ta [clause 2] have the following properties:

a) the verb of clause 1 is not marked for person or tense and the person marking of clause 2 is interpreted as applying to clause 1 as well
b) -ta links both two main verbs and the sequence of a main verb followed by certain auxiliaries
c) the two clauses have the same subject
d) when followed by certain auxiliaries inflected for 2nd person, the suffix appears as -le rather than -ta

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2.1 Person and tense marking

1) "Biro-leqe uqua-ta pueno ni-ca-la.
   male-noun take-ss come 1s=suff
   'I bring males.' (Lit. 'I take males and come')

2) "Cuyu ubua-ta qibe-n-co yuqui-so-ta ni-qua,
   fish catch-ss first-nsuff-top place?-tr-ss i-if
   cuyu aro-ta ubua-haue-le" man-ta quoso-bi
   fish increase-ss catch-irr-1sg:affinn think-ss do-pt
   ch-o?
   2-q
   'Thinking "If I catch fish and place the first one [near the new fishpond], I will increase (the number of) fish I catch", did you do so?' (f1:25)

   [Original translation: "Did you place the first fish close to it (the new fishpond), to make come a large quantity by the next tide?"]

3) Mine Diosi-maqua ino-so-talord God-nsuff serve-tr-ss
   numa abo orabo-noma ni-mi-hero
   heaven above joy-in I-go-desid
   'If I serve the lord God, I will go to heaven above in joy' (g3: 494)

4) Afata-co siapu-co quene-ma palmetto:berry-top and-nsuff
   naliqui mbo-so-ta laurel continue-tt-ss
   ituhu-so-bi ch-o?
   pray-tt-trns 2-q
   'Did you pray, gathering chestnuts and palmetto berries, and continuing with laurel?' (f1:29)

   [Original translation: 'In gathering chestnuts and palmetto berries, did you perform with the laurel and while praying, the ceremony which had come out of use (que soIia deshazer)?']

2.2 -ta before auxiliaries

I argued in Broadwell (1996) that a certain class of morphemes seem to act like auxiliaries in Timucua, and that the person markers appear on them in preference to the main verb. Frequently
these auxiliaries are preceded by the -ta suffix:

The auxiliary -qe, -qua 'if':

5) Mine Dicali-maqua ino-so-ta ni-qua
lead God-suff serve-suff 1-if

sum aho orabo-noma ni-ni-hero
heaven above joy-is I-go-dad

'If I serve the lord God, I will go to heaven above in joy' (g3: 494)

The auxiliary he 'do(?r

6) Tapolo-baca qibe-ma inihu-su-ta he-bi ch-o?
pray-tt-ss do?-ns 2-q

'Did you think over the first corn?' (g129)

[Original translation: 'Did you think it sinful not to pray over the first maize of the crop?']

The auxiliary -te 'question': 2.3 What counts as 'same subject'?

7) Hote-sinta inifi-nano man-ta habasote ch-a?
spouse-suff marry-suff want-ss

heto-so-te ch-o?
accept-te 2-q

'Do you accept him as your promised husband?' (g2:502)

The auxiliary quoso 'do (?r

8) Caramaba piliso-ta hiti hebua-noma ituhe-ta quoso-bi ch-o?
turtle catch-ss demon speak-vsuff pray-ss do-ns 2-q
gently 2-rub-because penis-2 stand-pt

'Catching turtles, did you pray, speaking to the Devil?' (g131)

[Original translation: 'For the seeking the turtle and catching it did you pray?']

9) Cani abinoma niye namocosono-leqe abiqiti anoco m-homa-nisi-haue
hat herb 1sg-love-vsuff-itt

man-ta boho-ta quoso-bi ch-o?
think is believe-ss do-pret 2-q

'Did you believe "If my hat is tinged with herbs, someone will fall in love with me"?' (g133)

[Original translation: 'Did you think that tinging your hat in that intention somebody would get enamored of you (as otherwise)?']

Quoso also appears as an independent verb, with the apparent meaning 'make':

10) Eta balu-ta maa chale quoso-bi ch-o?
confinement live-as fire new make-pt 2-q

'(After) living in confinement, did you make a new fire?' (g133)

2.4 -te before an auxiliary inflected for 2nd person

11) Nia-co nahe-bu-si-sin-te chi-qua
woman-top near-got-refl-suff 1-if

yanacu tipa-sin-ta yanacu hue-ma nahi-bi-ta
or embrace-suff-as or hang-suff hold-suff-as

came chi-pali-qe quoso-ye irbo-bi?
gently 2-span-because penis-2 stand-pt

'If you went near a woman, did you get an erection (lit. did your penis stand) because you embraced her, or held her hand, or because she rubbed you gently?' (g212)

[Original translation: 'Speaking with someone or embracing or holding the hand, were you aroused?']

It may be that further examination of the Timucua corpus will yield other examples like this.
Truncation of the verb before -ta:

A number of common verbs show a truncated form before the -ta suffix. The truncated form generally shows deletion of the final vowel before this suffix. Adam and Vinson (1886:xxxii) noted this alternation and wrote:

"... il ne semble que la différence est purement formelle: /puentu-/ doit être contracté de /penuota-/ et cette forme a simplement le /-ta/ suffixe... De même le groupe /sta/ serait pour /sota/ /ista/ "dit", /iposta/ "acheté", etc."

[It seems to me that the difference is purely formal. /puentu-/ must be contracted from /penuota-/ and this form simply has the /-ta/ suffix. In the same way, the group /sta/ will be [used] for /sota/ /ista/ "say", /iposta/ "buy", etc.]

Truncation of quoso 'do':

14) Abotosiro man-da quos-ta nasi-so-bi cho? angry think ss do ss punish-tr pt 2 q

"...Thinking angrily, have you punished anyone?" (f 186)

Truncation of the suffix -sini

This suffix is of unclear meaning, but is perhaps associated with highly volitional verbs.

18) Ite-ye in-sini-bi cho? father-2s fight-vuuff-pp 2 q

"Did you fight with your father?" (Conf 204)

19) Iglesia oyo ma huta-sini-bi chi-en? church in-nsuff have sex-vuuff-pp 2 s aux

"Did you have sex in the church?" (213)

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1 In this context, the -ss suffix often shows up as -ts, suggesting some phonological rule in operation.
20) Eahabemage toomana patsbo-sini-no chuquosa chi-ca?  
have-sex-vsuff-part how:many 2s-aux

‘After being engaged to marry, how many times did you have sexual intercourse?’ (212)

21) Nia-co nahe-bua-si-sin-te chi-qua  
woman-top near-go?-refl-vsuff-ss 2-if

‘Have you spoken, calling to (another person)? (£213)

3 Similarities to Muskogean

Other truncation types

A few forms seem to show deletion of a final syllable, rather than a final vowel. Consider first the alternation between dəfə and də 'whistle'.

23) Ibi abagala-ta nayeno tico-ma pilu-(h)abe-ti-leqe  
water paddle-ss canoe-nsuff upset-irr-neg-if

‘When paddling in the water, in order that the canoe not overturn, did you whistle, believing “By whistling at the water, I won’t overturn.”?’ (F131)

A similar alternation is seen between two forms of the verb ‘go’ – fa and faye:

24) Nana-cu uns oquo-mano utina-leno  
thus-top body-nsuff power-nsuff

‘His body was united with the Godhead itself.’ (gt 494)

25) Chi-glabo-tanimano paha chaleca ucu-nu-leqe  
you-sick-when? house new make?-vsuff-if

‘If you went near a woman, did you get an erection (lit. did your penis stand) because you embraced her, or held her hand, or because she rubbed you gently?’ (£212)

[Original translation: ‘Speaking with someone or embracing or holding the hand, were you aroused?’

‘When you were sick, did you build a new house, [saying] “Going to it, I will be happy but going from it, I will die.”’ (F185)

[Original translation: Having fallen sick, did you construct a new house, declaring “Here I shall live and die?”

3 Similarities to Muskogean

Timucua also shows some strikingly similar to the Proto-Muskogean *-t same-subject morpheme which links verbs together.

3.1 Choctaw /-t/ ‘participial’

Let us consider the following the morphosyntax of this suffix in Choctaw in some detail. In Broadwell (in press), I treat / -t/ as marking a participial. Following the analysis of Munro (1983, 1984), / -t/ appears to be as relic of the same-subject switch-reference marker which no longer contrasts with a different-subject marker.

Choctaw /-t/ is used to link main verbs with each other, as in the following examples:

26) Dəfi chagfa-3-ta  
cut-PART fell-3s1-PT

‘I cut it down.’

or ‘I felled it by cutting.’

vowels and the consonants /b, l, s, sh, h/. It appears that this sort of contraction is always optional, so in addition to short forms like ballit, it is also possible to say ballisite.

In addition to the deletion of /-tl/, there are also other, more sporadic stem truncations before the /-tl/ suffix. Consider the examples in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participle form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pit</td>
<td>seeing</td>
<td>pinb</td>
<td>to see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hlii</td>
<td>starting from</td>
<td>hlii:ub</td>
<td>to stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suktant</td>
<td>starting from</td>
<td>suktant:ub</td>
<td>to rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gil</td>
<td>towards there</td>
<td>gil:ub</td>
<td>to arrive there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pit</td>
<td>towards there</td>
<td>pit:ub</td>
<td>to send, throw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illi</td>
<td>towards here</td>
<td>illi:ub</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gil</td>
<td>towards here</td>
<td>gil:ub</td>
<td>to go along</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tit</td>
<td>with (instrumental)</td>
<td>tit:ub</td>
<td>to take, get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but</td>
<td>looking for</td>
<td>but:ub</td>
<td>to seek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayt</td>
<td>with (accompaniment)</td>
<td>ayt:ub</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this chart shows, some of the contracted participles do not have clear parallels in uninflected verbs. Speakers disagree, for example, about the etymologies of the directional particles illi, pit, gil, and gi. It seems safe to say that they are synchronically underived.

3.2 Irregular participles

Many participles show some sort of phonological reduction of the verb stem. The most frequent change is the loss of the prefix /-li/, marker of transitive verb stems, before participial /-tl/ (Nicklas 1974: 258, Ulrich 1986: 270-276). The following chart shows some examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participle form</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baliit</td>
<td>baliilub</td>
<td>to turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>msit</td>
<td>msit:ub</td>
<td>to chop, cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tapt</td>
<td>tapt:ub</td>
<td>to cut (in two)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiniit</td>
<td>kiniit:ub</td>
<td>to sit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ohit</td>
<td>ohit:ub</td>
<td>to chop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

/-li/ deletion applies only to unassimilated /-li/, and /-li/ in its unassimilated form appears after
34) Ma isf hump-i-l a o-a. that dog eat-LS-5S AUX-INDIC
'That dog is eating.'

It also seems that at least some of the truncation processes found in Choctaw must be reconstructable for earlier stages of Muskogean. For example, Alabama shows the following irregular forms before the *t suffix (Booher 1980:237, citing Swanton 1922-23):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participle</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Source Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>išt</td>
<td>'arriving here'</td>
<td>is 'arrive here'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>išt</td>
<td>'instrumental'</td>
<td>išt 'take'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ošt</td>
<td>'arriving there'</td>
<td>ošt 'arrive there'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as in Timucua, Proto-Muskogean must be reconstructed with a pattern in which a number of the most frequent verbs show truncated stems before *t-.

4 Conclusion

Taken together with data on person marking (Broadwell 1995) and auxiliaries (Broadwell 1996), these three aspects of the verbal morphology show similarities to the morphology of the Gulf languages that are strongly suggestive of a genetic relationship between Timucua and Gulf. This evidence thus supports the proposals of Swanton (1929), Hass (1951), and Crawford (1988) for genetic links between Timucua and Gulf, while casting doubt on a South American connection.

5 Bibliography


Martin, Jack. ms. A grammar of Muskogee (Creek). With the assistance of Margaret Mauldin, Juanita McGirt, and Alice Snow.


Munro, Pamela. 1983. When 'same' is not 'not different'. In Switch-reference and universal grammar, edited by John Haiman and Pamela Munro, 223-244. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.


