

# Implications of mbi as me+bi Hypothesis in Manchu's Finite Verb Paradigm

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# An Introduction

Traditional analyses of Manchu (Tungusic, Northeast China) divide verbal endings into three groups, namely **Participles**, **Converbs**, and **Finite** forms.

None of these terms are clearly defined in Manchu-specific literature, particularly “**converb**”, which tends to be used as a placeholder for not-quite-participles cross-linguistically.

# The Manchu Participle

Manchu has a perfective and imperfective participle. They can both act as the main verb of a sentence (1), as the modifier of a noun (2), or as case-assigned argument another verb (3).

(1)

si ere bithe be ara-**ha**  
you this book ACC make-**PV.PRT**  
'You wrote this book.'

(2)

ce sini ara-**ha** **bithe** be hūla-mbi  
they you.GEN make-**PV.PRT** **book** ACC read-IPV.FIN  
'They are reading the book you wrote.'

(3)

bi bithe be hūla-**ra** **de** si buda be je-ke  
I book ACC read-**IPV.PRT** **DAT** you rice ACC eat-PV.PRT  
'I was reading the book while you ate a meal.'

# The Manchu Participle (cont'd)

In all of these cases, the verb can be negated with the particle “**akū**” placed after the participle, which usually merges with the participle to form “**-rakū**” or “**-hakū**”.

(4)

bi manju gisun be taci-**ra-kū**  
I Manchu language ACC study-**IPV.PRT-NEG**  
'I am not learning/will not learn Manchu.'

(5)

niyalma be sa-**r-kū** de jobo-mbi  
people ACC know-**IPV.PRT-NEG** DAT be.distressed-IPV.FIN  
'I will be afflicted that I do not know men.'

# The Manchu Converb

Unlike participles, converbs cannot be used alone as the matrix clause of a sentence, and act as a modifier of a verb, either with an adverbial flavor (6), or as a subordinate clause with a conditional meaning (7).

(6)

bi bithe be    hala-**me**            ara-ha

I    book ACC change-**IPV.CV** write-PV.PRT

'I revised the book.' Lit: 'I, with changing the book, wrote.'

(7)

si    gene-**ci**            bi inu    gene-mbi

you go-**COND.CV** I    also go-IPV.FIN

'If you go, I'll go too.'

# The Manchu Converb (cont'd)

Converbs can act as the main verb in a clause only when accompanied by the copula “**bi**”, the exclamatory particle “**kai**”, or by the interrogative particle “**o**”.

(8)

tere-i                      jurgan                      aisi    i              ilgabun    be    sa-r-kū  
that-GEN                      righteousness profit GEN difference ACC know-IPV.PRT-NEG  
o-fi                      kai  
become-PV.CV EXCLAM

‘We don’t know how they distinguish righteousness from profit.’

(9)

age sini                      ere    gisun,              majige              tašara-bu-ha-kū                      se-me-o  
sir    you.GEN this language somewhat err-CAUS-PV.PRT-NEG say-IPV.CV-Q

‘Do you not find even a slight problem with what you said?’

# The Manchu Converb (cont'd)

Furthermore, the Manchu converb cannot be negated, and negations of converbs are simply the negated participle form (10) (with matching aspect), with certain converbs (such as conditionals) following the verb 'become' (11).

(10)

jilgan šan de lakca-**ra-kū** dosi-nji-mbi  
sound ear DAT cease-**IPV.PRT-NEG** enter-**VEN-IPV.FIN**  
'The noise ceaselessly entered his ear.'

(11)

suwe gasa-**ra-kū** o-ci uthai joo kai  
you.PL complain-**IPV.PRT-NEG** **become**-**COND.CV** then enough **EXCLAM**  
'If you don't complain then it will be fine!'

# The Manchu Finite Verb

Manchu finite forms include **optatives**, **imperatives**, and **indicatives**. These forms, along with participles, can be found as the matrix verb. Finite forms cannot be embedded unless by the help of the verb “**sembi**”, meaning “to say” or “to think”. The most common of these forms is “**-mbi**”, which is the **imperfective finite** form, or dictionary form.

(12)

bi cimari      mukden de    gene-**mbi**  
I   tomorrow Mukden DAT go-**IPV.FIN**  
'I am going to Mukden (Shenyang) tomorrow.'

(13)

bi goro    ba-ci          ulin          buta-**mbi**      **se-me**          ji-he  
I   distant place-ABL property catch-**IPV.FIN** say-IPV.CV come-PV.PRT  
'I came from a distant place in order to gain property (make a fortune).'



## -mbi as me + bi

Gorelova et al. (2002) describes the “-mbi” form as a fusion of the imperfective converb “-me” and the copula “bi”. This can be seen in composite sentences where “bi” is modified by multiple converbs.

(14)

tere-i      dunggu de      te-he-bi                      sehe                      be      ferguwe-**mbi**  
this-GEN hole      DAT live-PV.PRT-COP say-PV.PRT ACC be.amazed-**IPV.FIN**  
“That this (man) lived in a hole astonished them.”

(15)

yargiyan-i      gaika-**me**                      ferguwe-**me**                      **bi**  
really-GEN praise-**IPV.CV** be.amazed-**IPV.CV** **COP**  
“He is really very much astonished.”

Adopting this assumption, we will now take a look at how this effects our analysis of Manchu’s verbal paradigm.

# The Indicatives

There typically considered five finite indicative forms. They are all formed through stacking of **imperfective converb** “**me**”, **imperfective participle** “**ra**”, **perfective participle** “**ha**”, **copula** “**bi**”, and **negative particle** “**akū**”.

Name	Surface		Analysis	
	Affirmative	Negative	Affirmative	Negative
Imperfective Finite	-mbi	-rakū	me-bi	ra-akū
Past Indefinite	-habi	-hakūbi	ha-bi	ha-akū-bi
Past Perfect	-ha bihe	-hakū bihe	ha-bi-ha	ha-akū-bi-ha
Past Continuous	-mbihe	-rakū bihe	me-bi-ha	ra-akū-bi-ha
Past Habitual	-mbihebi	-rakū bihebi	me-bi-ha-bi	ra-akū-bi-ha-bi

# Observations

- ① The copula is retained in the negative when following a participle in the affirmative, but not retained when following a converb in the affirmative
- ② Negation combines with the innermost participle.
- ③ Of these forms, only those which end in a participle can be assigned case.
- ④ Word boundaries are enforced after participle-(negation) morphemes, unless this results in a stranded copula.
- ⑤ None of these forms can be used to modify a noun.
- ⑥ Except for case assignment, all of these forms can only be embedded through the verb “**sembi**”
- ⑦ All forms can take the emphatic “**kai**” and interrogative “**o**”

## Double Support “bi”

The first three observations suggest that the difference between **converbs** and **participles** carries over into the way they are employed in larger, more compounded finite forms.

It seems like the copula following **converbs** acts as a way to allow it to be a finite verb, whereas the copula following **participles** adds a **semantic meaning** which changes the aspect/tense.

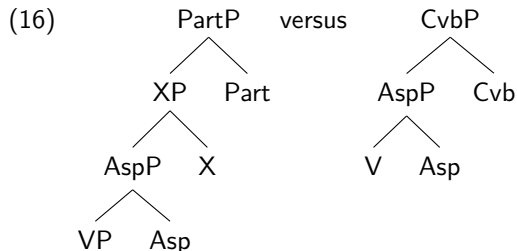
The result is that when negated, the “bi” in **converbial** constructions is no longer needed, as the verb must become a participle, whereas it is retained in **participial** constructions because it provides aspect/tense information.

It also seems that **participles** and their negative forms can have **nominal** interpretations, but that this interpretation is blocked by **subsequently merged copulae**.

# Questions

What is the underlying structure behind Manchu's verbal paradigm such that converbs and participles have the restrictions they do?

We might want to assume that the participle and converb contain different amounts of VP structure.



This is something that should be teased out by looking at which adverbs can be embedded in participial and converbial clauses, and is a next step in this project.

Thank You!



# Bibliography

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## Appendix: Past Indefinite

(17) a.

tere ba-de      emu amba gurun    i      ejen te-**ke-bi**  
that place-DAT one big country GEN ruler live-**PV.PRT-COP**  
'The ruler of a large country used to live here'

b.

tere bayan niyalma i      moo olho-me      buce-**he-bi**  
that rich man GEN tree dry-IPV.CV die-**PV.PRT-COP**  
'that rich man's tree dried up and died'

c.

sini      gurun    efuje-me      waji-**ha-bi**      kai  
you.GEN country ruin-IPV.CV end-**PV.PRT-COP** EXCLAM  
'Your country has been completely destroyed!'

d.

aihu bira wesi-hun      eye-fi      dergi mederi de    dosi-**ka-bi**  
Aihu river up-direction flow-PV.CV then sea    DAT enter-**PV.PRT-COP**  
'The Aihu river flows eastwards where it meets the sea'



## Appendix: Past Perfect, Continuous, and Habitual

(18) a.

i gemun hecen de amban o-**ho** bi-he  
he capital city DAT official become-**PV.PRT** COP-**PV.PRT**  
'He had been an official in the capital'

b.

bi harbin de gene-**he-kv** bi-he  
I Harbin DAT go-**PV.PRT-NEG** COP-**PV.PRT**  
'I had not been to Harbin'

(19)

sula sa-be, manju gisun, manju bithe taci-bu-**mbi-he**  
idle PL-ACC Manchu language Manchu book study-**CAUS-IPV.FIN-PV.PRT**  
'The unemployed were made to study the Manchu language and script'

(20)

hūwangheo beye nimala fata-**mbi-he-bi**  
empress self mulberry pick-**IPV.FIN-PV.PRT-COP**  
'It used to be that empresses themselves picked mulberries'