Tévas dirbta?! — A misinterpretation

William R. Schmalstieg

Since the participle *-ta* is always etymologically intransitive the author would never propose a sequence *tévas dirbta* with the putative meaning 'father worked'. The author explains *tévo būta* as analogical to *tévo dirbta*.

Once a misinterpretation takes root in the world of linguistics its extirpation becomes practically impossible, but in this brief note I should like to reiterate a statement that I have already made in my review of V. Ambrazas' excellent and thought-provoking book, *Sravnitel'nyj sintaksis pričastij baltijskix jazykov* (Schmalstieg 1991:77-79). I am taking this opportunity because the misunderstanding was repeated in A. Holvoet's review of the same book which appeared in the first issue of *Linguistica Baltica*.

Holvoet (1992:243) writes: "Eine wichtige und interessante Streitfrage ist der Ursprung des Passivs intransitiver Verba (vom Typ *tévo dirbta / guléta*) im Litauischen. Zu Schmalstiegs Hypothese des ergativen Ursprungs solcher Konstruktionen stellt sich der Verfasser ablehnend auf. Insbesondere hebt er hervor, daß der "agentive" Genitiv des Baltischen seinem Ursprung nach offensichtlich ein possessiver Genitiv ist, wie aus der Verwendung der possessiven Pronominalformen (*mano, tavo*) hervorgeht. Zweitens setzt Schmalstiegs Ergativitätshypothese für die gegenwärtige Konstruktion *tévo dirbta* ein Vorstadium mit dem Nominativ (etwa **tévas dirbta*) voraus (das intransitive Subjekt wird ja bei ergativer Kasusmarkierung formal mit dem Patiens der transitiven Konstruktion identifiziert); weder aber das postulierte Vorstadium mit dem Nominativ, noch die spätere Substitution des Nominativs durch den Genitiv sind nachweisbar".

Ambrazas' first objection, viz., that I consider the genitive case the same as the original Indo-European ergative case is at least a correct interpretation.

I do not find it to be a very serious objection, however, since, as M. Saxokija (1985:11) has pointed out, the same case that functions for possession can be used as a verbal agent in a number of languages, e.g., Eskimo, Aleut, Hungarian, Malayo-Polynesian, Uralic, Northern Caucasian, etc.

The second objection, viz., that I would posit a proto-sentence with the syntactic structure *tévas dirbta* rests on a fundamental misconception of my position. I would only perhaps admit the (highly unlikely) possibility of a sentence of the type *tévas dirbta* if it had the improbable (impossible?) meaning 'father was worked (?!)' or 'someone worked on father (?!)', a sentence which would in no case be replaced by *tévo dirbta* 'father worked'. The natural original sentence would be of the type *darbas dirbta* 'the work was completed' with the possible addition of *tévo* 'by father' as an agentive complement. Under no circumstances would I consider *tévas dirbta* with a transitive verb as a precursor of *tévo dirbta*. On the other hand I would consider sentences such as *tévas eita(s)* and *jis būta(s)* with intransitive verbs as forerunners of *tévo eita* and *jo būta*. The fundamental difference is that the participles in *-to* and *-mo* originally marked intransitive which only later came to be understood as passive if an active counterpart appeared. I think that we can find typological parallels in which original agentives in two-argument constructions come to function as subjects of single argument predicates.

I agree with Holvoet's assessment (1992:244) that such Latvian constructions as *lapu vîstamais laiks* 'the time of the withering of the leaves' should originally have been understood as *lapu [vîstamais laiks]* 'of the leaves [withering time]' and only secondarily as *[lapu vîstamais] laiks* '[of the leaves withering] time'. Similarly *tēva sēti rudzi* 'the rye sown by father' is to be originally understood as *tēva [sēti rudzi]* 'by father [rye sown]'. I believe also that the Lithuanian counterpart *tévo sėta rugiaĩ* 'the rye has been sown by father' should be segmented as *tévo [sėta rugiaĩ]*. According to my theory such an original sentence as *tévo sėta rugiaĩ* only came to be interpreted as passive once the new active sentence *tévas* (nom.) *sėjo rugiùs* (acc.) 'father sowed rye' became possible in the preterit tense.

My notion is rather that the nominative (or absolutive) case functions as the original subject of an intransitive or non-diathetic verb or participle. I believe that the crux of the dispute lies in the existence of the type with the genitive functioning as the subject of the intransitive participle, e.g, Lith. *jõ būta* 'he was' (literally: 'of him, by him was'). In this case I think that

the introduction of the genitive case as a kind of subject here was formed by analogy with the agent marking encountered in the passive (originally ergative).

Typically in ergative languages the ergative is the agent only if the verb has two arguments. In verbs which have a single argument the subject is in the same case as the patient of two-argument verbs. Thus in the Georgian system one encounters:

txa(-i)	mo-	vid–	a		
(nom.)	(preverb-root-3rd sg. marker)				
goat		came			'The goat came'
txa-m	še-	č'am-	a	venax-i	
(erg.)	(preverb-root-3rd sg. marker)			(nom.)	
goat		ate		vine	'The goat ate the vine'

The case of the subject of the single-argument verb patterns with the case of the patient (traditionally object) of the two-argument verb (Boeder 1979:437). Now in western Georgian dialects the ergative sometimes replaces the nominative with intransitive verbs. Thus one might find:

k'ac-ma	mo-vid-a	
(root-erg.)	(preverb-root-3rd sg.)	
man	came	'The man came'

Thus in western Georgian dialects the ergative case expressing the notion of agency could be transferred from constructions with ergative syntax to the subject of intransitive sentences thereby replacing the absolutive or nominative case. I assume then that a similar phenomenon is to be observed in Proto-Baltic as expressed in the Lithuanian examples below.

tévo	eĩta
(gen.)	(neut. past passive participle)
father	came
jõ	būta
(gen.)	(neut. past passive participle)
he	was

The genitive here had its origin as the agent in ergative constructions. My earlier view expressed in (1976) is completely wrong. Thus I now agree with my critic Guido Michelini, who wrote (1980:54) that such constructions as Lith. *jõ bûta* 'he was' are probably due to analogy with the passive of active verbs. But instead of *passive* I would use the term *ergative*.

Indeed the parallelism between Lith. *jo visur būta* and Russian dialect *u nego vezde byto* 'he has been everywhere' is truly striking, as Holvoet (1992:245) says. Perhaps this is a Baltic substratum phenomenon, or perhaps the retention of an early Slavic syntactic pattern similar to that of Baltic. The Indo-European agentive genitive has in general been strengthened by *otъ* 'by, from' in Slavic, common in South Slavic, but perhaps not well attested in East Slavic, although even here we encounter such sentences as (Igor Tale, line 55, as reconstructed by Jakobson 1966:170):

Poskěpani	*sabljami kalenymi*	*šelomi Ovarъskii*	*otъ tebe,*
(past psv. part.)	(instr. pl.)	(nominative plural)	(genitive)
Cleft	with sabers tempered	helmets Avar	by you

Jarъ ture Vъsevolode!

Fierce Bull Vsevolod! 'Cleft with tempered sabers are [their] Avar helmets — by you, Fierce Bull Vsevolod!'

In addition Mrázek (1964:159) quotes the following sentence from Pushkin's *Kapitanskaja dočka*: *oblečennyj vlast'ju* (instr.) *ot samozvanca* 'clothed with authority by the impostor'. Perhaps in East Slavic the preposition *u* has replaced the older *otъ* in some agentive functions. Whatever the origin of the north Russian construction *u nego vezde byto* may be, I still suppose that Lithuanian constructions of the type *tévo eĩta* and *jõ bûta* are modeled on constructions of the type *tévo séta rugiaĩ*.

Wackernagel and Debrunner (1954:582) write that Patañjali quotes the three sentences:

1. *ihāhih*	= *iha + ahih*	*srptah*	
	(adv.) (nom. sg. masc.)	(nom. sg. masc.)	
	here serpent	crawled	'The serpent crawled here'
2.	*idam aheh*	*srptam*	

3. *ihāhinā*	(adv.) (gen. sg. masc.)	(nom.-acc. sg. neut.)	
	here serpent	crawled	
	= *iha + ahinā*	*srptam*	
	(adv.) (instr. sg.)	(nom.-acc. sg. neut.)	
	here serpent	crawled	

I assume that sentence 1. above with a nominative subject and an intransitive participle represents the earlier situation. Sentences 2. and 3. are later analogical models based on the same considerations as the Lithuanian constructions with a genitive plus intransitive participle.

Let us recall also Darius' statement:

ϑātiy	*dārayavauš*	*xšāyaϑiya*	*ima*	*tya*	*manā*	*kartam*	*pasāva*
(3 pres.)	(nom. sg. masc.)		(nom. sg.)	(nom. sg.)	(gen. sg.)	(nom. sg. neut.)	
says	Darius	king	this	that	by me	done	after
yaϑā	*xšāyaϑiya*	*abavam*					
(conj.)	(nom. sg.)	(1 sg. imperfect)					
[that]	king	I became					

(Kent 1953:117, 26-28) 'Says king Darius: This is what was done by me (= this is what I have done), after I became king'. (cf. Lith. *mano* [gen. sg.] *su-kurta* [< *-*krto*] 'by me created' = Old Persian *manā kartam* [< *-*krto*-]).

Horn (1898:148) writes that the two Pahlevi preterit constructions *am kart* 'von mir (ward) gethan, by me (was) done' and *man kart* 'mein Gethanes, my deeds' merged and gave the modern Persian preterit sg. 1 *man kardam* 'I did', 2 *to kardi*, 3 *u kard*, pl. 1 *ma kardim*, 2 *šoma kardid*, 3 *anha kardand*. With the exception of the 3 singular form the preterit paradigm consists of the etymological past passive participle *kard-* (< *kartam* < *-kr-to-*) plus the present conjugation of the verb 'to be': *am, i* (3 sg. *ast*), *im, id, and*. The interesting part from the typological point of view is the appearance of the old genitive as the fixed form of certain of the personal pronouns. Thus modern Farsi *man* 'I' can be compared with Old Persian (gen.) *manā* 'mine, of me', *to* 'you' (sg.) with the Avestan (gen.) *tava* 'your, of you', *u* 'he, she' with the Old Persian (gen. sg.) *avahya*, *ma* 'we' with Old Persian (gen. pl.) *amāxam* 'our', Avestan *ahmākəm*, Old Indic *asmākam*, *šoma* with Gatha Avestan (gen. pl.)

xšmākəm 'your' (Horn 1898:118-119). These etymological genitives *man, to, u, ma* and *šoma* have become the fixed forms, now used with present as well as preterit verbs, e.g., in such sentences as *man doktor am* 'I am a doctor', *to doktor i* 'you are a doctor', *u doktor ast* 'he is a doctor', *ma doktor im* 'we are doctors', *šoma doktor id* 'you are doctors'. Thus the substitution of an old agentive genitive into a position where it did not previously belong is not a surprising event.

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The Pennsylvania State University
Dept. of Slavic Languages
213 Sparks
University Park, Pa. 16802, USA   *William R. Schmalstieg*