-MALA 'FINISH' DERIVED PERFECT(IVE) PREFIXES IN UNGUJA DIALECTS OF SWAHILI

MAKOTO FURUMOTO

The functional properties of a cognate morpheme often vary between languages or dialects. The prefix *me-* in the Swahili dialects, derived from Proto-Sabaki *-mala* 'finish' (Proto-Bantu *-màd-*), is one such case. In this article, I discuss the functional differences and similarities of this prefix between Kimakunduchi, the dialect spoken in the southern part of Unguja, and Kiunguja, the prestigious dialect of Swahili originally spoken in Zanzibar Town and environs. *Me-* has been labelled both 'perfect' and 'perfective'. I maintain, however, that the former should be assigned to Kimakunduchi *me-*, the latter to Kiunguja *me-*, based on the contexts in which they are used. This contrast not only sheds light on the difference in the TA (tense-aspect) system for anterior reference between the dialects, but also suggests that *me-* in the Swahili dialects has taken a diachronic path from perfect to perfective, a cross-linguistically observable tendency. The process of diachronic functional change can be shown more clearly with the *me*-cognate *ma-* in the Kitumbatu dialect spoken on Tumbatu island off the northwest tip of Unguja. Kitumbatu *ma-* occurs almost in the same contexts as Kimakunduchi *me-*, but differs in co-occurrence with hodiernal temporal adverbials, which supports the claim that the restriction on temporal closeness relaxes in parallel with the change from perfect to perfective.

1. Introduction

In some dialects of Swahili, there is a verbal prefix *me-*, derived from the Proto-Sabaki[1] verb *-mala*[2] 'finish' (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993, see also Whiteley 1955, Nurse 1982a, Racine-Issa 2002). While, in descriptions of the standard variety, *me-* has been labelled 'perfect' (Perrot 1957, Wilson 1985, Drolc 1992, Mohammed 2001) or 'perfective' (Polomé 1967, McGrath & Marten 2003), functional differences and similarities between the dialects have not previously received any attention. The primary purpose of this article is to describe the differences in the function of *me-* between the Kimakunduchi (also known as Kihadimu and Kikae) and Kiunguja dialects of Swahili spoken in the Unguja island of Zanzibar.

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[1] Proto-Sabaki is the hypothetical proto-language of a group of related Bantu languages including Swahili reconstructed by Nurse & Hinnebusch (1993).

[2] While the verb *-mala* 'finish' is the reflex of the Proto-Bantu *-màd-* (Guthrie 1971, Bastin & Schadeberg 2003) in Proto-Sabaki (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 600), the same verbal form is attested in Büttner (1894: 9), see also Miehe (1979: 228), Marten (1998: 142). Note that the final vowel *-a* is added to their citation form *-mal-* to match the format used in this article.

(1a) and (1b) are examples from Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja, respectively. While the form of the subject prefixes differs, verbs are marked with the prefix *me-* in both.[3]

(1) a. *ke-me-cheka*[4]   [Kimakunduchi]
    CL1.SM-ME-laugh[5]
    'S/he has laughed.'

  b. *a-me-cheka*   [Kiunguja]
    CL1.SM-ME-laugh
    'S/he laughed.'

Verbs marked with *me-* denote completed events (i.e., events that are no longer ongoing at reference time) in both Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja. However, they are used in different contexts, which is illustrated by the English translation *has*. In Kimakunduchi, *me-*marked verbs are used in the context of a prototypical perfect, which is, for example, covered by the English present perfect formed with the auxiliary *has* + past participle. In contrast, Kiunguja *me-*marked verbs appear rather in perfective contexts, which, while this is not always the case, can be translated with the English Simple Past.

The functional description and comparison of *me-* in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja reveals not only that this prefix, although formally identical, functions differently between the dialects, but also that their respective TA (tense-aspect) systems of verbal inflections can encode different classes of anterior events between the dialects: Kimakunduchi has an inflectional marker which functionally corresponds to Kiunguja *me-*, whereas Kiunguja lacks a functional equivalent to Kimakunduchi *me-*. Furthermore, past tense is encoded by verbal inflection in Kiunguja but not in Kimakunduchi. Thus, 'perfect' and 'perfective' are formally distinguished in Kimakunduchi, while 'perfective' and 'past' are distinguished in Kiunguja.

The functional differences between Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja *me-* can be linked to cross-linguistic tendencies in functional change. First, considering that cross-linguistically, perfect markers tend to develop into perfective ones (Dahl 1985, Bybee *et al.* 1994, Heine & Kuteva 2002), *me-* in the Swahili dialects can be presumed to have taken this path. On such a view, functional differences between the dialects can be correlated to being at different stages of this diachronic process. Second, gradual relaxation of the degree of recentness required for use of

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[3] All of the examples in this article are, unless otherwise noted, from native speakers of each dialect, who are listed in the acknowledgements.

[4] Examples are primarily transcribed using the orthography of Standard Swahili in this article, although the following points are changed: aspiration and nasal syllabicity are marked, the first characters of examples are written with a small letter, and periods are not added at the end of sentences.

[5] In this article, *me-* in Kiunguja and Kimakunduchi, and *ma-* in Kitumbatu are glossed as ME and MA, respectively, while other functional morphemes are glossed by abbreviations listed at the end of this article.

me- has probably occurred in parallel with the functional development from perfect to perfective (cf. Comrie 1976). This claim is backed, not only by differences between Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja in co-occurrence of *me-* with temporal adverbials, but also by the functional characteristics of the cognate prefix *ma-* in Kitumbatu, another Swahili dialect spoken on Unguja island. While Kitumbatu *ma-* almost overlaps with Kimakunduchi *me-* functionally, they differ in their co-occurrence with hodiernal temporal adverbials.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: In Section 2, I present basic information on the dialects. In Section 3, I explain verbal morphological structures, focusing on ways of encoding TAM (tense, aspectual or modal) information. In Section 4, I describe in which contexts *me-*marked verbs can be used, showing that *me-* functions as perfect and perfective markers in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja respectively, and that strategies for encoding anterior events by verbal inflection differ between the dialects. In Section 5, I discuss the functional differences between the cognate prefixes in Kimakunduchi, Kiunguja and Kitumbatu from a diachronic perspective. In Section 6, I summarise the discussion and present remaining issues.

2. On the dialects of Swahili

In the coastal areas of Eastern Africa, there are several language varieties regarded as local dialects of Swahili (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993). Kimakunduchi, Kiunguja and Kitumbatu, discussed in this article, are three of these Swahili dialects, all spoken on the Unguja Island of the Zanzibar archipelago.

Kiunguja, originally the local dialect of Zanzibar Town and environs, on the western coast of Unguja, is now widely used in the island as the socially prestigious dialect of Swahili. In contrast, Kimakunduchi and Kitumbatu are the dialects used in the suburbs of Unguja. Kimakunduchi is spoken in the southeastern part of Unguja such as the Makunduchi District, while Kitumbatu is mainly spoken on Tumbatu Island, off the northwest tip of Unguja.

Assuming the division of the coastal Swahili dialects into Northern and Southern Dialects, Kimakunduchi and Kitumbatu are classified as Southern Dialects (Nurse 1982a, Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993). As for Kiunguja, its phonological characteristics are close to those of the Southern Dialects, but its verbal inflectional morphology is, in contrast, similar to that of the Northern Dialects, which is probably a result of language (dialect) contact (Nurse 1982a: 189-190). Note that Kiunguja forms the basis of Standard Swahili, and thus shares almost all of its linguistic properties with Standard Swahili (Whiteley 1969: 79ff., Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 12).

3. Verbal inflectional marking

In the Swahili dialects discussed here, the inflected verb form is composed of a stem conveying a lexical meaning and prefixes encoding grammatical information, as generalised in (2).

(2)　　(Negative) –Subject – (TAM) – (Object) – Stem[6]

TAM (tense, aspectual or modal) information can be encoded through the use of a TAM prefix, such as Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja *me-* and Kitumbatu *ma-*. I also discuss functional properties of the following TAM prefixes: Kiunguja, Kimakunduchi and Kitumbatu 'imperfective' *na-*, Kimakunduchi 'completive' *si-*, and Kiunguja 'past' *li-* and 'completive' *(me)sha-*.

　　Another way of encoding TAM information is stem modification. This includes the inflectional form for anterior reference in Kimakunduchi, which is not accompanied by a TAM prefix and characterised by a "vowel-copied" (henceforth VC) stem. The VC stem ends on the same vowel as the verbal stem's penultimate syllable (cf. Nurse 2008: 84, 271, 318) in contrast to the stems of most other inflectional forms, which end on *a*. This is shown in example (3) from Kimakunduchi.

(3) a. *ke-me-cheka*　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[Kimakunduchi]
　　　 CL1.SM-ME-laugh
　　　 'S/he has laughed.'

　　 b. *ka-cheke*
　　　 CL1.SM-laugh
　　　 'S/he laughed.'

In (3a), the verbal stem *-cheka* 'laugh' is marked with the TAM prefix *me-* and ends on *a*, while in (3b), the underlined penultimate vowel *e* is "copied" as the final vowel.[7]

　　The details of the other verbal prefixes can be summarised as follows: Subject and object prefixes show agreement with subject and object, respectively. Therefore, different prefixes occur in these slots according to person and number or noun class[8] of the subject and object.

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[6]　While verbal stems are generally divided into a base (or root) and a "final vowel" in Bantu linguistics (Meeussen 1967: 11, Nurse 2008: 37-38, Hyman 2009: 178-179), I will not show them separately. As for the morphological analysis of the Kimakunduchi verbal stem, see Furumoto (2016).

[7]　For more on the exceptional and irregular cases of vowel copying in Kimakunduchi, see Furumoto (2016).

[8]　In this article, I follow the standard noun classification of Swahili in which nouns are classified into noun classes numbered from 1 to 18 (12-14 are missing) (Meinhof 1932: 128). When glossing, the noun class information of nouns is parenthesised and those of modifiers are noted after their meanings without parenthesis.

Subject prefixes are mandatory,[9] while object prefixes are optional. The prefix encoding negation occurs in the first slot of the template.

4. The function of *me-* and TA systems for anterior reference

Co-occurrence with past time adverbials indicates functional differences between *me-* in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja. Verbs marked with *me-* can co-occur with *jana* 'yesterday' in Kiunguja, but not in Kimakunduchi, as shown in (4). This also holds for other temporal expressions such as *unju*/*asubuhi* (Kimakunduchi/Kiunguja) 'in the morning', and *mwaka jana* 'last year'. In sum, *me-* co-occurs with past adverbials for any temporal interval in Kiunguja, but not in Kimakunduchi.

(4) a. **ke-me-nunua*   *baskeli* *jana*[10]   [Kimakunduchi]
      CL1.SM-ME-buy bicycle yesterday

   b. *a-me-nunua*   *baskeli* *jana*   [Kiunguja]
      CL1.SM-ME-buy bicycle yesterday
      'S/he bought a bicycle yesterday.'

Although *me-* is generally labelled 'perfect' or 'perfective', the difference observed in (4) makes the label 'perfect' for *me-* seem presumably more suitable in Kimakunduchi than in Kiunguja, considering that prototypical perfect markings are incompatible with past time adverbials (Dahl 1985: 139, Bybee *et al.* 1994: 61-62). I will investigate this assumption in the first part of this section.

Comrie (1976) gives the widely accepted (see also Bybee *et al.* 1994: 54) definition of the perfect: "[T]he perfect indicates the continuing present relevance of a past situation" (Comrie 1976: 52).

While this definition seems to be purely intuitive and therefore unfalsifiable (cf. Schwenter 1994a: 84, Klein 1992: 531, Schwenter & Cacoullos 2008: 4), contexts in which the inflectional markings called 'perfect' can prototypically be used have also been proposed.[11] I will use these as tests for perfect, determining whether or not *me-*marked verbs in each dialect can be used in

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9 Subject agreement is realised with a portmanteau when the subject is a first or second person singular or a class 1 noun and negation is encoded, or when the subject is first person singular and the verb is marked with particular TAM prefixes such as *na-* 'imperfective'.

10 While in this article, the asterisks mark unacceptability, without specifying whether this is due to ungrammaticality or due to pragmatic infelicity, examples marked with asterisks are chosen to be unacceptable regardless of context.

11 The relation between the definition of the perfect and contexts where 'perfect' markers prototypically can be used is not discussed in this article.

the following contexts, which are generally listed as typical for the perfect (Comrie 1976, Dahl 1985, Bybee *et al.* 1994, Ritz 2012); the perfect of result, experiential perfect and perfect of persistent situation.[12]

4.1 Perfect of result

The most prototypical use of perfect form is expressing the 'perfect of result', which, taking into account some minor discrepancies between authors, can roughly be defined as a past event whose result or consequences hold at the present (Comrie 1976: 56, Dahl 1985: 133-135, Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988: 15, Bybee *et al.* 1994: 61, Ritz 2012: 883).

In Kiunguja, *me*-marked verbs can simply denote a past event. In contrast, not only do the Kimakunduchi *me*-marked verbs express a past event, but they also imply a current situation which resulted from the past event. In other words, past events depicted by *me*-marked verbs are necessarily connected to the situation at utterance time in Kimakunduchi, but not in Kiunguja. This is exemplified in (5) and (6).

(5) a. *simu   yangu   ku-me-i-ficha   wapi*   [Kimakunduchi]
     phone (CL9)   my.CL9   2SG.SM-ME-CL9.OM-hide   where
     'Where have you hidden my phone?'

   b. **simu   ino   ku-me-i-vata   wapi*
     phone (CL9) this.CL9   2SG.SM-ME-CL9.OM-get   where
     Intended: 'Where did you find this phone?'

(6) a. *kisu*[13]   *changu   u-me-ki-ficha   wapi*   [Kiunguja]
     knife (CL7)   my.CL7   2SG.SM-ME-CL7.OM-hide   where
     'Where have you hidden my knife?'

   b. *kisu   hichi   u-me-ki-pata   wapi*
     knife (CL7) this.CL7   2SG.SM-ME-CL7.OM-get   where
     'Where did you find this knife?'

Examples (5a) and (6a) show that, in both dialects, *me*-marked verbs can be used to ask about a place where some item (a phone and knife) has been hidden. However, inquiring about where an item was found with a *me*-marked verb is possible only in Kiunguja as shown in (5b) and (6b). The difference between these two cases is whether the item's present location is relevant to question or not. More generally, (5a) and (6a) inquire not only about a state of affairs in the

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[12] The perfect of recent past, also listed as one of the prototypical uses of the perfect (Comrie 1976: 60), will be discussed in Section 5.

[13] While some nouns such as *kisu* 'knife' are generally segmented into the prefix and stem (e.g. *ki-su*), they will not be shown separately in this article.

past but also about the present situation, whereas (5b) and (6b) only inquire about a past event. From the unacceptability of (5b), it can be concluded that *me-* encodes the perfect of result in Kimakunduchi, whereas this is not always the case in Kiunguja.[14]

Note that while the perfect of result is also sometimes labelled 'resultative' (cf. McCoard 1978, Michaelis 1994, Kiparsky 2002, Schwenter 1994b, Dahl & Hedin 2000),[15] I differentiate between these two categories, defining the resultative as a "[state] which presuppose[s] a preceding event" (Dahl 1985: 133, see also Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988: 6). On this view, the resultative differs from the perfect of result in that the former focuses on a present state rather than a past event (or action). Verbs can co-occur with adverbial expressions meaning 'still' when they denote the resultative, but not when they denote the perfect of result (Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988: 15). In Kiunguja, *me*-marked "change-of-state" verbs such as *-lala* 'fall asleep'[16] can be used to depict not only past completed events as in (7), but also resultative situations in the same way as in the standard variety of Swahili (Ashton 1947: 16, Contini-Morava 1989: 87-92),[17] which is not possible in Kimakunduchi, as exemplified by its unacceptability when co-occurring with *bado* 'still' in (8).

(7)   *jana*   *usiku*   *ni-me-lala*   *saa*   *tatu*   [Kiunguja]
       yesterday   night   1SG.SM-ME-fall_asleep   hour   three
       'Yesterday night, I fell asleep at 9 o'clock.'[18]

(8) a. *bado   *ke-me-lala*   [Kimakunduchi]
       still   CL1.SM-ME-fall_asleep

    b. *bado*   *a-me-lala*   [Kiunguja]
       still   CL1.SM-ME-fall_asleep
       'S/he is still asleep.'

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[14] There are some controversial cases where past events denoted by Kiunguja *me*-marked verbs also seems to have current relevance, which will be discussed in Section 5.

[15] While Michaelis (1994: 145) and Kiparsky (2002: 132) use the test in (5) and (6) to show that the "resultative reading" of the English present perfect is excluded unless the wh-adverbial relates to the result state, their 'resultative' is rephrased as 'perfect of result' here.

[16] While there is a class of verbs corresponding to change-of-state verbs in many Bantu languages (Nurse 2008: 97), their characteristics and behaviour differ between languages as suggested by Roth (2018). Details of change-of-state verbs in the Swahili dialects in question will be discussed in future work.

[17] More precisely, only motion change-of-state verbs such as *-lala* 'fall asleep', *-kaa* 'take a seat' can describe past completed events as well as resultative situations when marked with *me-*; other change-of-state verbs such as *-choka* 'get tired', *-shiba* 'get satisfied' cannot.

[18] There is a gap of 6 hours between the real time and the time represented by a number.

4.2 Experiential perfect

Cross-linguistically, the inflectional markings used to express the perfect of result often also indicate "that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present" (Comrie 1976: 58-60, see also Bybee *et al*. 1994: 62, 64, Schwenter 1994a: 82, Montaut 2016: 423). This is called the 'experiential perfect'.[19] In Kimakunduchi, but not in Kiunguja, *me*-marked verbs can express the experiential perfect. This generalisation is supported by the fact that adverbials expressing frequency can co-occur with *me*-marked verbs in Kimakunduchi, but not in Kiunguja as shown in (9).[20]

(9) a. *ke-me-kwenda   pemba mara   tʰatu*   [Kimakunduchi]
       CL1.SM-ME-go PN   time(s) three

  b. **a-me-enda   pemba   mara   tatu*   [Kiunguja]
       CL1.SM-ME-go PN   time(s) three
       'S/he has been to Pemba three times.'

4.3 Perfect of persistent situation

Inflectional markings called 'perfect' can also be used to describe a state or action that started in the past but continues (persists) into the present, which is labelled the 'perfect of persistent situation' (Comrie 1976: 60, Dahl 1985: 136-137, Bybee *et al*. 1994: 64, Ritz 2012: 883). In Kimakunduchi, the compound prefix *me+na-* encodes this (Racine-Issa 2002: 121-122). (10) is an example of the verb *-katʰa* 'cut' marked with *me+na-*.

(10)   *ke-me+na-katʰa*   *kʰuni*   [Kimakunduchi]
       CL1.SM-ME+IPFV-cut firewood
       'S/he has been cutting firewood.'

The prefix *me+na-* can apparently be decomposed into *me-* and *na-* 'imperfective', which encodes progressive situations as well as habitual situations as in (11).

(11)   *ka-na-vika*   [Kimakunduchi]
       CL1.SM-IPFV-cook
       'S/he is cooking/cooks.'

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[19] Whether the perfect of result and experiential perfect are different readings resulting from a central meaning such as 'current relevance' (cf. Comrie 1976, McCoard 1978) or two different meanings tend to be encoded in a particular form (cf. Dahl: 1985) is put aside in this article.

[20] The test for the experiential perfect with the adverbial expressing frequency is proposed by Dahl (1985: 140).

If *me-* is analysed as a perfect marker, it turns out that *me+na-* corresponds to the English form expressing a persistent situation, composed of the Present Perfect (*have* + past participle) and Progressive (*be* + present participle) such as the English translation of (10). In other words, *me-* in Kimakunduchi is similar to the English Present Perfect in that it indicates the perfect of persistent situation in combination with a progressive marking. If we assume that the English Present Perfect is a de facto functional prototype of perfect, as suggested in typological studies (Lindstedt 2000: 259, see also Comrie 1976, Dahl 1985, Bybee *et al.* 1994), this similarity backs up the claim that Kimakunduchi *me-* functions as a perfect marker. In contrast, Kiunguja lacks such a combined prefix, even though it has a progressive-denoting prefix *na-* just like Kimakunduchi. The absence of *me+na-* can be attributed to a functional difference between Kiunguja *me-* and the English Present Perfect.

It is important to note that situations described by *me+na-*-marked verbs can be divided into two phases: event inception and continuation. If event continuation is encoded by progressive-denoting *na-*, inception must be attributed to *me-*. This function appears to be incompatible with that of *me-* in isolation because *me-* naturally encodes event completion, rather than initiation. In (12), the *me-*marked -*lya* 'eat' is used to describe a completed event.

(12) A: *mbona   ha-na-kulya*[21]   [Kimakunduchi]
        why   NEG:CL1.SM-IPFV-eat
        'Why isn't s/he eating?'

     B: *ke-me-kulya*
        CL1.SM-ME-eat
        '(This is because) S/he has eaten.'

However, an example in which *me-* apparently encodes event inception was also accepted by my informant. In (13), the *me-*marked verb -*lya* 'eat' denotes the completion of the inception of the event (eating), rather than the completion of the event, reflected by the persistive expression 'he still keeps eating'.

(13)   *ke-me-kulya   na bado a-ngali   a-ka-lya*   [Kimakunduchi]
        CL1.SM-ME-eat and still CL1.SM-COP.PER   CL1.SM-CONS-eat
        'S/he has started eating, and still keeps eating.'

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[21] While I will not show them separately, monosyllabic verbal stems such as -*lya* 'eat', -*ja* 'come' and -*nywa* 'drink' are preceded by the empty morph *ku-* in the Swahili dialects in question when they are marked with a particular prefix such as *me-* and *na-*. Note that the Kimakunduchi and Kitumbatu *ku-* can optionally be omitted. The Kimakunduchi *ku-* is optional when verbs are followed by another constituent in the same clause, whereas the condition of omission of the Kitumbatu *ku-* is unclear.

In sum, while I will not investigate the reason for its multiple meanings, *me-* in isolation has possibly both completive and inceptive functions, the latter of which is reconcilable with that of *me-* included in the compound prefix *me+na-*.

4.5 Discussion

4.5.1 The functional area covered by *me-* in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja

I have described the functional characteristics of the prefix *me-* in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja, using a number of tests. The results are summarised in Table 1. The + and − in the table show whether or not *me-*marked verbs are licit in the respective contexts, while the ± indicates that their use is not affected by the context.

Table 1: Differences of *me-* between Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja

	Past adverbial	Perfect of result	Experiential	Persistive	Resultative
Kimakunduchi	−	+	+	+	−
Kiunguja	+	±	−	−	+

Based on the observations so far, I first argue that the label 'perfect' is more suitable for *me-* in Kimakunduchi than in Kiunguja. The fact that *me-* in Kimakunduchi can denote the perfect of result, experiential perfect and perfect of persistent situation in line with prototypical perfect markings and its incompatibility with past time adverbials support this argument. Note that, although Kimakunduchi *me-* and the English Present Perfect occur in similar contexts as shown in Table 1, they differ in that *me-* appears to be underspecified for tense. The reference time of situations described by Kimakunduchi *me-*marked verbs is not necessarily utterance time, but can also be a future point in time as in (14).

(14) *hata   mwakani   ke-me-poa*   [Kimakunduchi]
      even   next_year   CL1.SM-ME-cure
      'In the next year, he will have cured.'

As for Kiunguja *me-*, a suitable label still needs to be found. While 'perfect' is easily ruled out because Kiunguja *me-* does not occur in contexts prototypical of perfect as shown in Table 1, 'perfective' and 'past' remain as options, given that Kiunguja *me-* can denote event completion in the past, which is not only compatible with 'past' but also 'perfective' markers (Bybee *et al*. 1994: 54-55). The key to deciding on a suitable label is the resultative, which *me-* can convey in Kiunguja as shown in (8b), which is repeated here as (15).

(15)   *bado   a-me-lala*   [Kiunguja]
       still   CL1.SM-ME-fall_asleep
       'S/he is still asleep.'

Bybee *et al*. (1994) explain one of the differences between 'perfective' and 'past':

> [P]erfectives seem to interact with the lexical semantics of the verb more than pasts
> do, ... when perfectives do apply to stative predicates, the effect is usually to signal
> a present state, not a past one, despite the fact that perfectives are usually past.
> (Bybee *et al*. 1994: 92)

Here, the resultative has been defined as a state presupposing a preceding event. This resultative 'state' is a present one unless there is a special context indicating a past or future time. When marked with *me-*, change-of-state verbs, but not dynamic verbs, can describe resultative states. Thus, there is certainly an interaction between lexical semantics of the verb and aspectual properties of *me-*. Summing up, the fact that *me-* in Kiunguja can encode not only completed events, but also resultative states, suggests that its functional properties are prototypical of 'perfective' rather than of 'past'.[22]

4.5.2 TA systems for anterior reference in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja

Kiunguja lacks any inflectional markings that can functionally correspond to Kimakunduchi *me-* 'perfect'. However, it does have a prefix *li-* which has generally been labelled 'past' in descriptions of the standard variety of Swahili (Ashton 1947, Perrot 1957, Polomé 1967, Wilson 1985, Mohammed 2001, McGrath & Marten 2003). Verbs marked with *li-* differ from those marked with *me-* in that they make reference to a past situation, regardless of the lexical semantics of the verb. This can be seen in (16), which shows that the change-of-state verb *-kaa* 'have a seat' marked with *li-* expresses a past state.

(16)   *a-li-kaa*   *hapa lakini   a-mesha-ondoka*   [Kiunguja]
       CL1.SM-PST-have_a_seat   here   but   CL1.SM-COMPL-leave
       'S/he was sitting here but has left.'

The prefix *li-* differs from *me-* in that it can convey not only perfectivity, but also imperfectivity. This is exemplified by two distinct interpretations of the verb *-kaa*, which is generally interpreted as 'be sitting' with a *me-* 'perfective', and as 'be living' with a *na-* 'imperfective'. When it is marked with *li-*, both interpretations are available. The perfective interpretation is shown in (16), the imperfective one in (17).

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[22] While they are not always called 'perfective', many Bantu languages have an inflectional marking such as *me-* found in Kiunguja which denotes resultative situations with change-of-state verbs and past events with dynamic verbs (Nurse 2008: 97-98, see also Botne & Kershner 2000, Botne 2010, Persohn 2017, Dom *et al*. 2018).

(17) *a-li-kaa* *nyumba-ni* *kwangu* *lakini* *a-mesha-hama* [Kiunguja]
CL1.SM-PST-live house-LOC my.CL17 but CL1.SM-COMPL-move
'S/he lived in my house, but has already moved.'

If it is the (im)perfectivity of verbal inflections that brings out these two readings of *-kaa*, then a *li*-marked *-kaa* can presumably receive either reading because *li-* is underspecified for aspect.

As for in Kimakunduchi, even though Racine-Issa (2002: 112) calls the VC (vowel-copied)-form *passé affirmatif* (affirmative past), it is functionally close to *me-* 'perfective' in Kiunguja, rather than *li-* 'past'. The examples in (18) show that the Kimakunduchi VC-form is similar to Kiunguja *me-* in that it can co-occur with past time adverbials, and express the resultative, but not the experiential perfect.

(18) a. *ka-nunuu* *baskeli* *jana* [Kimakunduchi]
CL1.SM-buy.PFV bicycle yesterday
'S/he bought a bicycle yesterday.' (Co-occurrence with past time adverbials)

b. *a-ngali* *ka-lala*
CL1.SM-COP.PER CL1.SM-fall_asleep.PFV
'S/he is still asleep.' (Resultative)

c. ?*k-ende* *pemba* *mara* *tʰatu*
CL1.SM-go.PFV PN time(s) three
Intended: 'S/he has been to Pemba three times.' (Experiential perfect)[23]

The Kimakunduchi VC-form differs from Kiunguja *me-* only in that it can denote non-resultative states with stative verbs such as *-ijua* 'know', *-kaza* 'please (like)' and *-chukia* 'displease (hate)',[24] which, in Kiunguja, are expressed by verbs marked with *na-* 'imperfective'. In the Kimakunduchi example (19a), *-chukia* 'displease (hate)' appears in the VC-form, while in the Kiunguja example (19a), *-chukia* is marked with *na-*.[25]

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[23] An informant of this study judged that the VC-form can also co-occur with temporal adverbials expressing frequency, but preferred *me*-marked verbs to the VC-form in an experiential context.

[24] Kimakunduchi stative verbs are similar to change-of-state verbs in that both describe states in the VC-form, but differ from change-of-state verbs in that they cannot be marked with *na-* 'imperfective'. This is likely to result from the semantic incompatibility between *na-* and stative verbs. Stable states conveyed by stative verbs differ from temporary states conveyed by change-of-state verbs in that transition to a state can hardly be captured and occur repeatedly, which is described by *na*-marked change-of-state verbs (cf. Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1983: 4).

[25] In the Kimakunduchi stative verbs *-kaza* 'please (like)' and *-chukia* 'displease (hate)', the experiencer argument is an object, and the theme argument is a subject, while in Kiunguja the corresponding verbs *-penda* 'like' and *-chukia* 'hate' take the experiencer as a subject and the theme as an object.

(19) a. *ndizi*   *i-ŋ-chukii*   [Kimakunduchi]
     banana (CL9) CL9.SM-1SG.OM-displease.PFV

    b. *na-chukia*   *ndizi*   [Kiunguja]
     IPFV:1SG.SM-hate banana (CL9)
     'I hate bananas.'

In summary, the systems for encoding anterior events differ between Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja, in that the former formally distinguishes 'perfective' (vowel copying) and 'perfect' (*me-*), while the latter distinguishes 'perfective' (*me-*) and 'past' (*li-*) as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: The systems of verbal anteriority in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja

	Kimakunduchi	Kiunguja
'perfect'	*me-*	——
'perfective'	vowel copying	*me-*
'past'	——	*li-*

It should be noted that the absence of inflectional forms specialised to the perfect and past in Kiunguja and Kimakunduchi, respectively, does not entail that perfect or past situations are indescribable in the dialects. In Kiunguja, some situations described with the use of *me-* 'perfect' in Kimakunduchi are also covered by *me-*, while others are not. For example, recently completed events are referred to with *me-*-marked verbs in both dialects. The examples in (20) show that, in both dialects, when *-ja* 'come' is marked with *me-*, it is compatible with a situation where the speaker finds a person they have been waiting for.

(20) a. *baba*   *ke-me-kuja*   [Kimakunduchi]
     father CL1.SM-ME-come

    b. *baba*   *a-me-kuja*   [Kiunguja]
     father CL1.SM-ME-come
     'My father has come.'

On the other hand, the experiential perfect is not encoded with only *me-*, but with the verb *-wahi* 'be in time' marked with *me-* (or *li-, sha-*) and verbs marked with the infinitive prefix *ku-* in Kiunguja, while it can be simply encoded with *me-* in Kimakunduchi, as shown in (21).

(21) a. *ke-me-kwenda   pemba   mara   tʰatu*   [Kimakunduchi]
     CL1.SM-ME-go   PN   time(s)   three

   b. *a-me-wahi   ku-enda   pemba   mara   tatu*   [Kiunguja]
     CL1.SM-ME-be_in_time   INF-go   PN   time(s)   three
     'S/he has been to Pemba three times.'

Past marking in Kimakunduchi is realised periphrastically with the past form of the copula rather than with verbal inflection. For example, in Kiunguja, the change-of-state verb *-kaa* 'take a seat' is simply marked with *li-* to express a past state which no longer persists at utterance time, as in (16) repeated here as (22).

(22) *a-li-kaa   hapa   lakini   a-mesha-ondoka*   [Kiunguja]
     CL1.SM-PST-take_a_seat   here   but   CL1.SM-COMPL-leave
     'S/he was sitting here but has left.'

In Kimakunduchi, the similar situation can be described by combining the VC-form *-kaa* 'take a seat' with the past form copula *-evu* as in (23). If there is no auxiliary copula (or special context) indicating a past or future time, the VC-form *-kaa* 'take a seat' depicts a present state.

(23) *k-evu   ka-kaa   baraza-ni*   [Kimakunduchi]
     CL1.SM-COP.PST   CL1.SM-take_a_seat.PFV   stone_seat-LOC

     hea   sasa   ha-ko
     but   now   CL1.SM:NEG-COP

     'S/he was sitting on the stone seat, but s/he isn't there now.'

5. Analysis of the functional differences from a diachronic perspective

5.1 Perfect to perfective

The prefix *me-* is generally assumed to have grammaticalised from Proto-Sabaki *-*mala* 'finish' (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 376, 600, see also Meinhof 1932, Miehe 1979). The functional differences between Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja *me-*, shown above, allow for a more precise picture of this diachronic process. Assuming that cross-linguistically, perfect markers tend to develop into perfective or past ones (Dahl 1985: 139, Bybee *et al.* 1994: 81-87, Heine & Kuteva 2002: 231-232), the synchronic differences in the function of *me-* between the two dialects appear to suggest that *me-* in the Swahili dialects has probably followed this diachronic route. In other words, it is conceivable that Kimakunduchi *me-* 'perfect' has not yet shifted its role to

perfective, whereas Kiunguja *me-* 'perfective' has undergone such a functional change from perfect to perfective.

Although I demonstrated in Section 4.1 that *me-* in Kiunguja can denote past events regardless of their current relevance, there are examples such as (24) which seemingly indicate that the use of *me-* is not allowed in Kiunguja when referring to past events without current relevance, as also observed in the standard variety of Swahili (Contini-Morava 1989: 84). (24a) not only shows that *me*-marked *-enda* 'go' denotes that the person in question went, but also implies his/her continued absence. In a context where s/he has already come back, *-enda* 'go' is marked with *li-* 'past' rather than *me-*, as shown in (24b).

(24) a. *a-me-enda   *skuli*   *lakini*   *a-mesha-rudi*   [Kiunguja]
         CL1.SM-ME-go   school   but   CL1.SM-COMPL-come_back

     b. *a-li-kwenda*   *skuli*   *lakini*   *a-mesha-rudi*
         CL1.SM-PST-go   school   but   CL1.SM-COMPL-come_back
         'S/he went to school, but s/he has already returned.'

The observation above suggests that Kiunguja *me-* obligatorily encodes the perfect of result (i.e., past events whose result holds at the present) in the same way as Kimakunduchi *me-*, which conflicts with the result of the test in Section 4.1. How can these seemingly contradictory observations be accounted for? If it is assumed that the current relevance requirement is gradually reduced in the grammaticalisation process from perfect to perfective (Fleischman 1983, Dahl & Hedin 2000), then Kiunguja *me-* could conceivably be at an intermediate stage in this process and thus exhibit hybrid properties that may appear puzzling at first.

Bybee *et al.* (1994: 78) point out that forms which are used for both what they label 'anterior' and the resultative are, regardless of their origin, semantically more grammaticalised than those expressing only one or another of them. Their 'anterior' can be paraphrased as "a past action with current relevance" (Bybee *et al.* 1994: 61), corresponding to the perfect of result. In Kiunguja, *me-* encodes the perfect of result and resultative, whereas in Kimakunduchi, only the perfect of result. This contrast between the dialects is definitely compatible with Bybee *et al.*'s (1994) proposal, also suggesting that *me-* is at a former and later stage of diachronic development in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja, respectively.

5.2 Relaxation of the degree of recentness

As shown in the beginning of section 4, *me-* co-occurs with past adverbials for any temporal interval in Kiunguja, but not in Kimakunduchi. This is exemplified by (4), repeated here as (25).

(25) a. *ke-me-nunua   baskeli jana   [Kimakunduchi]
       CL1.SM-ME-buy bicycle yesterday

    b. *a-me-nunua*   *baskeli* *jana*   [Kiunguja]
       CL1.SM-ME-buy bicycle yesterday
       'S/he bought a bicycle yesterday.'

This contrast in co-occurrence with past time adverbials could also possibly be related to this grammaticalisation process. As pointed out by Comrie (1976: 60), the perfect tends to be associated with 'recentness', which is also referred to as the 'perfect of recent past': "In many languages, the perfect may be used where the present relevance of the past situation referred to is simply one of temporal closeness, i.e. the past situation is very recent."

It has generally been proposed that the restriction on temporal closeness becomes gradually relaxed as the functional change from perfect to perfective or past proceed, as exemplified by the Present Perfect construction derived from the present tense of Latin *habere* 'have'/*esse* 'be' + past participle in Romance languages (Harris 1982, Fleischman 1983, Schwenter 1994a, see also Comrie 1976: 61). If the degree of recentness is reflected in temporal adverbials as assumed implicitly by Comrie (1976: 60-61), it turns out that *me-* in Kiunguja, which can co-occur with past time adverbials regardless of temporal intervals, has extended to more remote temporal context[26] and is at a later stage of the grammaticalisation process than *me-* in Kimakunduchi.

The above proposal regarding recentness is well compatible with data taken from the Kitumbatu dialect of Swahili. In Kitumbatu, there is a prefix *ma-*,[27] which is cognate with *me-* and also denotes event completion. (26) is an example of the verb *-(ku)nya* 'rain' marked with *ma-*.

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[26] Kiunguja *me-* is possibly used more frequently in recent temporal contexts in the same way as in the standard variety of Swahili (Contini-Morava 1989: 83-84), which shares most of its linguistic properties with Kiunguja.

[27] Although Whiteley (1959: 45, 54) states that in the rural Unguja dialects including Kimakunduchi, *ma-* is attested instead of *me-*, which is taken up by Nurse & Hinnebusch (1993: 413, 518), *me-* was probably used in Kimakunduchi at the moment of his research. This is due to the following three reasons. First, Whiteley also presents an example of a Kimakunduchi *me-*marked verb marked (Whiteley: 1959: 58). Second, Chum (1962-1963: 66) presents an example of the *me-*marked copulative verb *-wa* in Kimakunduchi. Third, *me-* is also observed in a song of the traditional circumcision ceremony as in the example below, which is from a speaker born in 1940's (author's fieldnotes).

E.g. *u-me-kucha=o*   *usiku*
    CL11.SM-ME-dawn=that.CL11   night (CL11)
    'It has dawned.'

(26) *vula   i-ma-kunya*[28]   [Kitumbatu]
       rain (CL9) CL9-MA-fall
       'It has rained.'

The prefix *ma-* in Kitumbatu is almost functionally congruent with *me-* 'perfect' in Kimakunduchi. (27) shows that the use of *ma-* is limited to denoting past events with current relevance (the perfect of result). (28) and (29) show that *ma-*marked verbs can describe the experiential perfect, but not the resultative.[29]

(27) a. *simu   yangu   u-ma-i-ficha   wapi*   [Kitumbatu]
        phone (CL9) my.CL9 2SG.SM-MA-CL9.OM-hide where
        'Where have you hidden my phone?'

    b. **simu   hii   u-ma-i-pata   wapi*
        phone (CL9) this.CL9 2SG.SM-MA-CL9.OM-get   where
        Intended: 'Where did you find this phone?' (Perfect of result)

(28) *ka-ma-kwenda pemba mara   tʰatu*   [Kitumbatu]
       CL1.SM-MA-go PN   time(s) three
       'S/he has been to Pemba island for three times.' (Experiential perfect)

(29) **bado ka-ma-lala*   [Kitumbatu]
       still   CL1.SM-MA-fall_asleep
       Intended: 'S/he is still asleep.' (Resultative)

There is, however, a slight difference in co-occurrence with past time adverbials. Kitumbatu *ma-*marked verbs can only co-occur with past time adverbials indicating a hodiernal point in time, as in (30).

(30) *ka-ma-ja   {lelo/*jana}*   [Kitumbatu]
       CL1.SM-MA-come   today/yesterday
       'S/he came today/*yesterday.'

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[28] In Kitumbatu, the sounds transcribed as *l* such as in *vula* 'rain', *-lala* 'fall asleep' and *lelo* 'today' are realised as (advanced) palatal lateral approximants rather than alveolar lateral approximants as in most Swahili varieties when they occur immediately before *a, o, u, w* although they are always alveolar lateral approximants in apparent loanwords.

[29] Additionally, Kitumbatu *ma-* is similar to Kimakunduchi *me-* in that it can form the prefix *ma+na-* with *na-* 'imperfective' to describe persistent situations in the same way as Kimakunduchi *me-* forms *me+na-* with *na-* (Miyazaki & Takemura, this volume; author's fieldnotes).

Based on the difference in temporal adverbials, it is conceivable that Kitumbatu *ma-* can make reference to slightly more remote past situations than Kimakunduchi *me-* and is at a slightly later stage in the grammaticalisation process.

6. Concluding remarks

6.1 Summary

In this article, I have first focused on the functional characteristics of the prefix *me-* in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja. While *me-* in each dialect has, at first sight, confusing aspectual properties, comparing contexts where *me-* can be used in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja suggests that *me-* is a perfect marker in the former dialect and a perfective marker in the latter. This not only casts doubt on the assumption that *me-* functions in the same way regardless of dialects, implicitly made in previous studies (Miehe 1979, Nurse 1982b, Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993, Güldemann 2003), but also reveals differences in the TA systems for reference to anterior situations between dialects such as Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja, both of which have specialised inflectional markings for perfective, but lack such marking for past and perfect, respectively.

From a diachronic perspective, I have argued that *me-* in each dialect is at different stage of the development from perfect to perfective, a frequent cross-linguistic process, based on functional differences of *me-* between Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja. This also hints at a possible synchronic difference between the cognate prefixes, *me-* in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja and *ma-* in Kitumbatu. These prefixes differ from each other in terms of co-occurrence with temporal adverbials, which makes it possible to assume that the degree of recentness changes in parallel with diachronic change from perfect to perfective.

6.2 Remaining issues

In this section, I summarise the remaining issues that emerged throughout the discussion in this article. First, the functional characteristics of recently developed inflectional markings also need to be investigated in order to complete the synchronic description of the TA systems for anterior reference in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja. For example, there are prefixes derived from Proto-Sabaki *-isha* 'finish' in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja.[30] In example (31a) from Kimakunduchi, the prefix *si-*, which is reduced from the VC-form of *-isa* 'finish',[31] occurs between

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[30] Although Nurse & Hinnebusch (1993) transcribe this verbal form in Proto-Sabaki as *-išya*, I transcribe it as *-isha* using the Swahili orthography.

[31] The Kimakunduchi reflex of *-isha* 'finish' is not *-isha*, but *-isa*, the VC-form of which, *-isi*, has been reduced to *si-* in (31a).

a subject prefix and object prefix. The Kiunguja example (31b) shows the verb -*choka* 'get tired' marked with *sha-*[32], a prefix which presumably traces back to *-*isha* (Marten 1998).[33]

(31) a. *vyakulya   ṇ-si-vi-lya*   [Kimakunduchi]
   food (CL8) 1SG.SM-COMPL-CL8.OM-eat
   'I've finished eating the food.'

  b. *u-sha-choka*[34]   [Kiunguja]
   2SG.SM-COMPL-get_tired
   'Have you already gotten tired?'

While I have roughly labelled both Kimakunduchi *si-* and Kiunguja *sha-* as 'completive', a systematic functional comparison with the other inflectional markings for anterior situations such as *me-* is necessary. Kiunguja *sha-*, in particular, might functionally overlap with Kimakunduchi *me-*, labelled 'perfect' here. Marten (1998) presents the Kiunguja example shown in (32), in which *sha-* "appears to mean not the completion of the event, but rather the cursory nature in which the event took place or maybe the completion of the inception (beginning) of the event" (Marten 1998: 158).

(32) *ni-sha-soma   kitabu (kwa ku-pitia   tu)*[35]   [Kiunguja]
  1SG.SM-COMPL-read book with INF-pass.APPL only
  'I have already read the book (in browsing).' (Marten 1998: 158)

As explained in Section 4.3, while *me-* in Kimakunduchi is generally used to denote event completion, it might also be able to covey an inceptive meaning as shown in (13) repeated here as (33).

(33) *ke-me-kulya   na   bado a-ngali   a-ka-lya*   [Kimakunduchi]
  CL1.SM-ME-eat and still   CL1.SM-COP.PER   CL1.SM-CONS-eat
  'S/he has started eating, and still keeps eating.'

That is, Kiunguja *sha-* is similar to Kimakunduchi *me-* in that both (possibly) convey event initiation, at least partially covering a gap in the part of the Kiunguja TA system encoding perfect.

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[32] The prefix *sha-* is observed in Kitumbatu as well (Takemura 2008).

[33] More precisely, the Kiunguja completive markers *sha-* and *mesha-*, see (16), (17), (22) and (24), have plausibly been derived from *me-kwisha* (ME-finish) (Marten 1998: 142-146).

[34] Interestingly, although *sha-*marked verbs are often observed, such verbal forms are sometimes regarded as 'incorrect' and rephrased as *mesha-*marked forms by some Kiunguja native speakers.

[35] The transcriptions and glosses of (32) have been modified to match the format used in this article.

Second, while the formal characteristics of inflectional markings have been described to some extent in most dialects of Swahili, it is also necessary to investigate the functional areas covered by each inflectional marking and to compare the TAM systems of each dialect in the same way as this article analyses those of *me-* within the TA systems for anterior reference in Kimakunduchi and Kiunguja. For example, verbs marked with *na-* 'imperfective' can describe progressive, but not habitual situations in Kitumbatu as in (34), whereas they describe both situations in Kimakunduchi as in (35).

(34) a. *mbona   ku-na-nywa   maji   mengi*   [Kitumbatu]
      why   2SG.SM-IPFV-drink   water (CL6)   many.CL6
      'Why are you drinking so much water?' (Progressive)

   b. *kula   u-ka-lya   samaki   kw-a-nywa   maji   mengi*
      every 2SG.SM-COND-eat   fish   2SG.SM-HAB-drink   water(CL6) many.CL6

   c. **kula   u-ka-lya   samaki   ku-na-nywa   maji   mengi*
      every 2SG.SM-COND-eat   fish   2SG.SM-IPFV-drink water(CL6) many.CL6
      'You drink much water every time you eat fish.' (Habitual)

(35) a. *pandu   vino   sasa   ka-na-lya   ṃpunga*   [Kimakunduchi]
      PN   this.CL8   now   CL1.SM-IPFV-eat   rice
      'Pandu is eating rice now.' (Progressive)

   b. *pandu   kila   siku   ka-na-lya   ṃpunga*
      PN   every   day   CL1.SM-IPFV-eat   rice
      'Pandu eats rice everyday.' (Habitual)

In Kitumbatu, *na*-marked verbs can describe progressive situations as in (34a), whereas verbs marked with the prefix *a-* (or *hu-*)[36] are used for habitual situations as in (34b-c). In contrast, Kimakunduchi *na*-marked verbs can describe both progressive and habitual situations as in (35). This means that the functional range covered by *na-* differs between these dialects.[37] These examples also show that the imperfectivity, analysed to include 'progressive' and 'habitual' as its subcategories (Comrie 1976: 24ff.), is encoded differently between Kitumbatu and

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[36] The use of *a-* is restricted to 1st or 2nd person subject. When the subject is 3rd person, verbs are marked with *hu-*, which does not accompany the subject prefix.

[37] Considering the cross-linguistic tendency that progressive markers develop into general imperfective markers covering habitual as well progressive situations (Bybee *et al.* 1994: 141, 158, Heine & Kuteva 2002: 93), Kimakunduchi *na-* is conceivably at a later stage of functional change than that in Kitumbatu.

Kimakunduchi: The former has distinct progressive and habitual markers (*na-* and *a-* or *hu-*), while the latter uses a single marker (*na-*) for both.[38]

For the diachronic analysis, further investigation into the function of *me-* in other dialects is needed. In the diachronic formation of *me-* from *-*mala* 'finish', the suffix *-*ịle*, which is also labelled 'perfect' or 'perfective' is assumed to be involved as shown in (36) (Meinhof 1932: 124, Miehe 1979: 225-230, Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 376, Marten 1998: 142).

(36) The diachronic formal change from *-*mala* to *me-*
　　　*-*mala* + *-*ịle* > *-mele* > *-mee* > *me-*　(Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 376)

Based on this assumption and the fact that suffixes derived from *-*ịle* are observed only in Northern Dialects of Swahili, but not in Southern Dialects such as Kimakunduchi, it has been proposed that *me-* formed in some Northern Dialects first, and was then borrowed into Kimakunduchi from Kiunguja, which more closely resembles Northern Dialects in its verbal morphology (Miehe 1979: 225-230, Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 418, Güldemann 2003: 187). If *me-* has spread in this way, there might be traces of *me-* functioning as a perfect marker before in Northern Dialects, as well. To find such data, investigation needs to be undertaken into the synchronic function of *me-* in Northern Dialects such as Kiamu, Kisiu, Kipate and Kitikuu (cf. Nurse 1982b: 103, 123) as well as its use in the historical documents of Kiunguja and Northern Dialects needs to be investigated. In fact, assuming that the prefix *me-* has formed more recently than the Northern Dialects *-*ịle* derived suffixes and Kimakunduchi VC-form (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 373, 408), Northern Dialects resemble Kimakunduchi in that both have an older form as well as *me-* for anterior reference. Considering this resemblance, while both are labelled 'perfect(/stative)' by Nurse (1982), the Northern Dialects *me-* and *-*ịle* derived suffixes possibly function as a perfect and perfective marker, respectively, in the same way as *me-* (perfect) and the VC-form (perfective) in Kimakunduchi.

Lastly, the diachronic formation of Kitumbatu *ma-* should also be reviewed, which is seemingly not yet discussed in any previous studies (cf. Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 375, 418). Kitumbatu *ma-* probably formed independently of *-*ịle*, assuming that *-*ịle* is involved in the vowel change from *-*mala* to *me-* (Marten 1998: 142). If this proposal is on the right track, could Kitumbatu *ma-* point towards another grammaticalisation path from *-*mala* to an aspectual prefix independent of *-*ịle*? Or does this cast doubt on the involvement of *-*ịle* in the grammaticalisation process from *-*mala* to *me-*? Furthermore, are the functional similarities between the cognate prefixes of Kimakunduchi *me-* and Kitumbatu *ma-* an accidental result of the diachronic change or are they related to the fact that Kimakunduchi and Kitumbatu are spoken in geographically close areas and are regarded as forming "a kind of unity vis-à-vis

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[38] Strictly speaking, Kimakunduchi verbs are also marked with *hu-*, expressing habitual situations. In other words, there are multiple markings for habitual situations in Kimakunduchi.

Kiunguja" (Nurse & Hinnebusch 1993: 522)? In any case, the diachronic change from *-*mala* to *me-* or *ma-* is seemingly not as simple and straightforward as previously assumed.

Abbreviations

1	first person		IPFV	imperfective
2	second person		LOC	locative
APPL	applicative		NEG	negative
CL	noun class		OM	object marker
COMPL	completive		PER	persistive
COND	conditional		PFV	perfective
CONS	consecutive		PN	proper noun
COP	copula		PST	past
HAB	habitual		SG	singular
INF	infinitive		SM	subject marker

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