Adstrate Influence in Sri Lanka Malay: Definiteness, Animacy and Number in Accusative Case Marking

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Abstract
Sri Lanka Malay is a creole-like language spoken by the descendents of soldiers, exiles and slaves brought to Sri Lanka by the Dutch from Java and their possessions in the Indonesian archipelago in the 17th and 18th centuries and by recruits brought by the British from the Malayan Peninsula and elsewhere in the 19th century. Various authors have noted the influence of indigenous languages on the structure of Sri Lanka Malay but disagreement has arisen over the source and mechanism. An examination of the interaction of definiteness, number, animacy and the accusative case in Sinhala, Tamil, and Sri Lanka Malay nominal inflection shows that Sri Lanka Malay aligns more closely here with Tamil than with Sinhala. The pattern of accusative case marking, in particular, can be attributed to Tamil influence. Moreover, the ubiquity of accusative case marking in Sri Lanka Malay together with its obscure origin and the absence of recent cataclysmic social events to trigger rapid linguistic change indicate that this alignment is of long standing, rather than a recent development.

Keywords
creoles; language contact; minority languages; South Asia; Malay; Sinhalese; Sprachbund; Tamil

1. Introduction

The Dutch seized control of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) from the Portuguese in a series of operations between 1638 and 1658. During the 140-odd years of Dutch rule, annual contingents of troops from Java and other Dutch possessions in the Indonesian archipelago were brought to Sri Lanka. Slaves and exiles were also brought, the latter being a significant enough category to

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1 The informal script of an earlier, conference version of this paper (Smith 2003) has been cited by a number of scholars; the linguistic analysis here remains essentially the same, but I have made numerous minor changes throughout to correct, update, clarify, and streamline.
spawn the Indonesian verb *disailankan* ‘to be exiled to Ceylon’ (Hussainmiya, 1976: 12). Despite the heterogeneous origins of the Sri Lanka “Malays”, a common language, based on Vehicular Malay developed among them. (See section 4 for clarification of Vehicular Malay). It is my view that the language was creolized through close contact with Tamil (Hussainmiya, 1986: 28-29), particularly as many of the soldiers found wives among Sri Lanka’s existing Tamil-speaking Muslim community (known as ‘Moors’) and opted to settle in the island after their period of service (Hussainmiya, 1986: 21). When the British in turn ousted the Dutch at the end of the 18th century, many of the Dutch Malay troops decided to remain on the island, and the British established the 1st Ceylon Regiment (renamed the Ceylon Rifle Regiment in 1827) as an ethnically Malay unit. During the course of the 19th century, they brought new recruits from former Dutch possessions temporarily under British control and subsequently from Java, the Malayan peninsula and elsewhere (Hussainmiya, 1990: 65-66) until the regiment was disbanded in 1873.

The view of Sri Lanka Malay as a creole has been challenged by Ansaldo (e.g. 2008, 2009: 137-143) and Nordhoff (2009) who propose the alternative view that the language developed via convergence/metatypy, i.e. by the Malay-speaking community’s knowledge and extensive use of dominant local languages, Sinhala and Tamil. They argue that evidence for early intermarriage with the Moors is lacking, and that the family groups brought to Sri Lanka established a self-perpetuating community. This alternative view is well worth considering, but it is equally unsupported by demographic facts and, at least in the case of Ansaldo, driven in part by an ideology that eschews the use of the term ‘creole’ as a general category. I believe that there is a place for the term ‘creole’ in the typology of languages. Creoles occupy that corner of the typological universe where language transmission has been most disrupted as the extreme result of mass untutored second language acquisition (cf. Siegel, 2008). Creoles are viewed not as a mysterious ‘exceptional’ language development; indeed, there is a cline between creole and non-creole. Note that the lack of a clear boundary does not negate the existence of a category (Rosch, 1978: 35-36, citing Wittgenstein, 1953). In this context, an interesting

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2 “Besides suggesting an inaccurate evolutionary scenario (Ansaldo 2008), classifying a variety as a Creole in fact has a significant impact on the type of shift that may occur in a community.” (Ansaldo, 2009: 123). “Though there is good reason to believe that ‘creolization’ does not refer to a specific diachronic process nor to a specific set of extraordinary sociolinguistic conditions....” (Ansaldo, 2009: 141). “If we view creolization as a predominantly socio-historical concept of disenfranchised vernaculars developed in European plantation environments (e.g. Mufwene 2000, 2001), we clearly encounter problems of historical accuracy and social nature.” (ibid.)
question to answer with respect to Sri Lanka Malay is to what extent the following two processes influenced its development:

- A second language acquisition when (mostly) speakers of Tamil learned Malay and became part of the Sri Lanka Malay community, and
- B the influence of Sinhala and Tamil as a second language on Malay speakers’ mother tongue due to their intensive and extensive bilingualism in these languages, to use Nadkarni’s (1975) terms.

Neither of these processes precludes the other. Indeed, second language influence on mother tongue Malay (i.e. B) is to be expected, particularly for a small minority group. Pressure from Sinhala became particularly intense after 1956 when nationalist language policies favouring Sinhala were enacted. But the influence of others’ mother tongues in acquiring Malay as a second language (i.e. A) is also likely, given that soldiers constituted the overwhelming bulk of the early Malay population in Sri Lanka. While married soldiers generally brought their wives with them (Hussainmiya, 1990: 47) the proportion of unmarried soldiers, who would have sought Sri Lankan wives is unknown, but Hussainmiya remarks:

In any case, as the number of women arriving from the East Indies was limited, a good proportion of ‘Malay’ soldiers had to find their wives among the local women from the Sinhalese, Tamil or Moor communities. It appears, however, that the Malay Muslims preferred to marry the local Moor women because of their common religious ties. (1990: 48)

Unearthing such early demographic data would paint a clearer picture of the extent to which social conditions favoured untutored second language acquisition influence in the formation of Sri Lanka Malay.

Sri Lanka Malay is endangered, but now well documented, thanks in particular to Nordhoff (2009). Estimates of the number of remaining speakers of Sri Lanka Malay suffer from a lack of hard information. The number of respondents who reported Malay ethnicity during the 2001 census sets an upper limit of about 48,000 (Sri Lanka 2001 census). But reports of language

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1 Hussainmiya’s claim of preference for wives from the Tamil-speaking Moor community has been disputed by Ansaldo (2008). Ansaldo’s evidence has in turn been questioned by Slomanson (2010).

2 An anonymous reviewer argues that “Creoles are generally not associated with mixed marriages.” While true of plantation creoles, this statement is not correct for settler/fort creoles. Sri Lanka Portuguese, which is structurally very similar to Sri Lanka Malay, is a prime example of a Portuguese-based creole spoken by a mixed-race community. Indeed, Portuguese colonial practice encouraged the formation of mixed-race communities. (Cf. Holm, 1989: 259-298).

3 The 2001 census was only partial. Due to the civil war, Tamil-dominated districts in the north and east of the island were not enumerated. This omission is likely to have had little effect.
shift are already seen as early as 1970 (Murad Jayah, cited in Saldin, 1996: 30). Bichsell-Stettler reports that the [urban middle class] Malays in the Colombo area are in the process of losing Malay in favour of Sinhala and English (1989: 31), but in the village of Kirinda in south-eastern Sri Lanka the language remains viable and is still being passed on to children in the home (Ansaldo 2008).

Various authors have noted the influence of indigenous languages on the structure of Sri Lanka Malay; for example see Hussainmiya (1986), Adelaar (1991), Bakker (2006), Slomanson (2006), Nordhoff (2009), Smith, Paauw and Hussainmiya (2004), Smith and Paauw (2006), Slomanson (2011). As Hussainmiya points out, “It is difficult to determine which local language, if it is Sinhala … or Tamil, was largely responsible for structural changes which SLM underwent over the years in the past.” (1986: 21). The difficulty arises from the fact that Tamil and Sinhala are themselves similar in structure. All three languages share left-branching structures (word orders SOV, Demonstrative-Adjective-Noun, Standard-Marker-Comparative, NP-P, Clause-Complementizer, Relative Clause-Head; case suffixes/enclitics); as well as features such as quotative constructions; relative clauses that lack relative pronouns, and similar nominal and verbal categories (Smith, Paauw and Hussainmiya, 2004). In all these characteristics the three languages differ from both Standard and Vehicular Malay (Smith and Paauw, 2006). Hussainmiya argues that on sociolinguistic grounds Tamil is likely to have had the greater influence. The “Malays”, being predominantly Muslims, had greater contact, including considerable intermarriage, with the island’s pre-existing Muslim community, whose language is Tamil (1986: 21, 1990: 18). The linguistic evidence Hussainmiya cites, however, does not distinguish Tamil from Sinhala influence. Bakker (2000a, 2000b) similarly claims Tamil influence but does not consider parallel structures in Sinhala. De Silva Jayasuriya (2002), on the other hand, appears to claim Sinhala influence without considering parallel structures in Tamil.

A second controversy surrounds the timing of indigenous influence. Bakker (2000a, 2000b) concluded that it was comparatively recent - sometime in the early 20th century. Smith and Paauw (2006) argue that the 19th C Sri Lanka Malay documents on which this analysis was based are in a high variety which does not represent the spoken variety of the time. Consequently, the lack of earlier documentation of the spoken language means that one has to rely on

on the estimation of the Malay population, which is more concentrated in the south of the Island.

This paper represents an initial attempt\(^6\) to look at the linguistic evidence for Tamil, as opposed to Sinhala, influence on Sri Lanka Malay and also to establish the timing of this influence. I focus here on an area of nominal marking in which Tamil and Sinhala differ, namely the interaction of definiteness, number, animacy and the accusative case. I will show that Sri Lanka Malay aligns more closely here with Tamil than with Sinhala and I will argue that this alignment developed as part of the early formation of the language rather than subsequently.

The first section below presents an overview of the Sinhala and Tamil noun marking systems in order to highlight their differences. The noun marking system of Sri Lanka Malay is then presented, and the fact that it aligns with Tamil rather than Sinhala is illustrated through examples of actual usage. Noun marking in Vehicular Malay, the lexifier of Sri Lanka Malay, is examined in order to demonstrate that the grammar of accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay results from Tamil influence. Finally, I argue that these characteristics are more likely to have arisen early rather than recently.

2. Nominal Marking in Sinhala and Tamil.\(^7\)

The categories of definiteness, number and animacy feature in the nominal marking of both Sinhala and Tamil, but they are deployed somewhat differently and have a different interaction with accusative marking. We will look at the two systems in turn in order to highlight the differences. Both languages mark several cases morphologically, but since the focus here is on the interaction between definiteness, number, animacy, and accusative marking, cases other than the nominative and accusative will be ignored.

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\(^6\) I.e. in 2003.

\(^7\) Standard abbreviations are used as prescribed by the Leipzig glossing rules. Additional abbreviations are as follows: adjz (de-verbal) adjectivalizer, an animate, cp conjunctive participle, hes hesitation marker, inan inanimate, mkr marker, MT Muslim Tamil, S Sinhala, SLM Sri Lanka Malay, tag.eh discourse particle pointing out shared information. In order to facilitate the parallel presentation of three languages, I have strayed somewhat from the strict requirements of the Leipzig glossing rules. In particular, some morphologically complex forms are not fully decomposed where they differ in the three languages but are irrelevant to the point being illustrated in the example. In transcriptions of Tamil, allophonic voicing of stops is shown for the convenience of the reader, following Schiffman (1999) and others; word-final a and e are distinguished even though most speakers lack a surface contrast. (The distinction does appear in
Table 1 illustrates the relevant inflectional forms in Sinhala. The salient points for this discussion are: first, the obligatory definite/indefinite marking in the singular of all nouns, together with the absence of such marking in the plural; second, the obligatory singular/plural distinction; and third, the fact that overt accusative marking (-va) is optional for animate nouns but prohibited for inanimate nouns. The cells which exhibit variability are shaded.

Table 2 illustrates noun inflection in Tamil. The forms are taken from the Sri Lanka Muslim variety called [ʃoːnam] by its speakers, but the case marking facts are widespread. The important points are: first, the lack of a unifunctional definiteness marker; second, the obligatory accusative marking for definite or specific objects; third, the variability of plural marking and fourth; the variability of accusative marking for indefinite or non-specific objects. Again, cells exhibiting variability are shaded, but instead of listing all possibilities, the table shows only the most common variant according to the literature. Thus, as a general rule, animate objects are marked accusative even when indefinite/nonspecific, while inanimate objects are usually not marked (cf. Schiffman, 1999:36-7, referring to Indian Tamil). Examples of unmarked nonhuman indefinite animates are cited by Asher, however, who adds that the particular verb may also be a factor (1985: 107, referring to Indian Tamil).

Table 1 Sinhala noun inflection (NOM & ACC)

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sandhi with a following vowel.) No standard transcription system of Sri Lankan Malay exists and there is disagreement on its phonology. I indicate vowel length but not allophonic length differences between homorganic nasal-stop clusters; ny is used for [ŋ], sh for [ʃ], ē for [ə]. Examples taken from other sources are cited in the orthography of the original.

Many nouns have a zero marker in the nominative/accusative plural, but an overt marker appears in the oblique cases.
Animates are also more likely to be marked for plural than inanimates. For both accusative and plural marking, the influence of High Tamil (where both are obligatory) cannot be ruled out for individual speakers on certain occasions. There may also be unplumbed regional and social differences.

Although determinants of the variation in both languages need further investigation (This would be fruitful ground for a variationist study.), there are nevertheless three clear differences between the Sinhala and Tamil noun-marking systems:

1. In Sinhala, singular nouns are obligatorily marked ±definite; in Tamil no unifunctional definiteness marker is found.
2. In Sinhala, all nominals have an obligatory singular/plural distinction; in Tamil number marking is optional, though it generally occurs more frequently with nouns higher on the animacy hierarchy.
3. Animate direct objects of a verb may optionally be marked accusative in Sinhala; in Tamil object marking is obligatory for definite/specific objects and is variable for indefinite/nonspecific objects, with a stronger tendency to mark animates.

### Nominal Marking in Sri Lanka Malay

Noun inflection in Sri Lanka Malay is shown in Table 3. Accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay has a number of variants, of which the most common

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**Table 2** Sri Lanka Muslim Tamil noun inflection (nom & acc): dominant pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NOM</th>
<th>DEF/INDF</th>
<th>‘woman’ (ANIM)</th>
<th>‘book’ (INANIM)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>DEF/INDF</td>
<td><em>pomba</em>ye</td>
<td><em>postagam</em></td>
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<td>ACC</td>
<td>DEF</td>
<td><em>pomba</em>ye</td>
<td><em>postagatt-e</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>INDF</td>
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<td><em>pomba</em>ye</td>
<td><em>postagam</em></td>
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<td>PL</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>DEF/INDF</td>
<td><em>pomba</em>ye</td>
<td><em>postagam</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>DEF</td>
<td><em>pomba</em>ye</td>
<td><em>postagatt-e</em></td>
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<td>INDF</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>pomba</em>ye</td>
<td><em>postagam</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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9 For a different interpretation of accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay (based on somewhat different data), see Ansaldo (2009: 128-137).
The variant -na, homophonous with the dative marker, is reported by Hussainmiya (1986), and Smith, Paauw and Hussainmiya (2004), based on the speech of a single speaker. Robuchon (2003) also finds accusative -na, again based on the speech of a single (but different) speaker. Nordhoff and Slomanson have not found this variant despite extensive fieldwork and both believe that a consistent formal difference between dative and accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay are the same as in Tamil.

Romola Rassool, however, reports -na in the speech of others as well as occasionally in her own speech (p.c. 2011).

The variant -yang is homophonous with the clause nominalizer (Bourdin and Jaffar, 2010). Slomanson (2006) also reports variants -nyang and -æng.

It is evident that Sri Lanka Malay follows the Tamil pattern, though the data on indefinite animate objects is unclear. We will now look at some examples to illustrate the differences with Sinhala and to show that the factors affecting the variability of plural and accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay are the same as in Tamil.

The Sri Lanka Malay examples are drawn from two sources: (1) – (3) are elicited; (4) – (7) are taken from a recorded natural conversation made in the village of Kirinda, South-eastern Sri Lanka in the mid 1970s. The village was established by the British administration in the early 19th century in order to employ Malays to exploit local salt pans (Hussainmiya, 1990: 63). Although the village is located in a Sinhala-dominant area, all the villagers were fluent in Tamil; some may also have known Sinhala. Peter Slomanson (p.c.) reports that Sinhala is now widely known. For each Sri Lanka Malay (SLM) example, elicited Muslim Tamil (MT) and Sinhala (S) equivalents are given.

Table 3 Sri Lanka Malay noun inflection (nom & acc): dominant pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘man’ (anim)</th>
<th>‘book’ (inanim)</th>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
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<td>def/indf</td>
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10 The variant -na, homophonous with the dative marker, is reported by Hussainmiya (1986), and Smith, Paauw and Hussainmiya (2004), based on the speech of a single speaker. Robuchon (2003) also finds accusative -na, again based on the speech of a single (but different) speaker. Nordhoff and Slomanson have not found this variant despite extensive fieldwork and both believe that a consistent formal difference between dative and accusative is found (Nordhoff 2009: 328; Slomanson, 2006: 150). Romola Rassool, however, reports -na in the speech of others as well as occasionally in her own speech (p.c. 2011). The variant -yang is homophonous with the clause nominalizer (Bourdin and Jaffar, 2010). Slomanson (2006) also reports variants -nyang and -æng.

11 I am indebted to B. A. Hussainmiya for providing the recording and assisting with its transcription.
Examples (1) and (2) contrast the obligatory accusative marking of definite objects and the near ungrammaticality of accusative-marked objects in Sri Lanka Malay and Muslim Tamil. In (1) the accusative markers -nya (Sri Lanka Malay)/-e (Tamil) are required because the object pĕkajan (Sri Lanka Malay)/veelay (Tamil) ‘work’ is definite. In Sinhala the object is definite but cannot be followed by the accusative marker -va because it is inanimate. In (2) the object is indefinite and accusative marking in both Sri Lanka Malay would be highly unusual. Accusative marking in Sinhala is again ungrammatical because the object is inanimate.

(1) ini pĕkajan -nya ke tĕra-kinja [SLM; elicited]
inda veelay - e sari feyya ille [MT]
mea vədə [DEF] (*-va) vat kolee näe [S]
this job -ACC even NEG-do NEG
‘He didn’t even do this job.’

(2) atu pĕkajan (*?-nya) ke tĕra-kinja [SLM; elicited]
oru veelay (*?-e) sari feyya ille [MT]
eka vədə ak [INDEF] (*-va) vat kolee näe [S]
one job -ACC even NEG-do NEG
‘[He] didn’t do a single job.’

Both Sri Lanka Malay and Tamil mark plural by suffixation. Example (3) shows the usual absence of such plural marking when the noun is non-human. Sinhala, by contrast, has an obligatory number distinction. The noun mal ‘flower’ has a zero-marked nominative/accusative plural, seen here, which contrasts with the singular mal-ak (indefinite)/mal-a (definite). (An overt plural suffix appears in the oblique cases, e.g., pot-vala-ʈ ‘to (the) books’.) As with the previous example, accusative marking would be very uncommon in Sri Lanka Malay and Tamil, and ungrammatical in Sinhala.

(3) itu dari kumbang (*-nya) mĕtaaro-na tĕra-boole joo.na [SLM; elicited]
ad -aale puu (*v-e) poəd-a eel-aad ee [MT]
eek -eʃ mal [PL] (*-va) daanna baae nee [S]
that-INST flower ACC pull-INF can.NEG TAG.eh
‘With that one [i.e. sewing machine], [you] can’t do embroidery [lit. put flowers], you know.’

Because of their conversational origin, examples (4) – (7) are full of ellipses and false starts (indicated as #), but the grammar of nominal marking is unaffected. In (4) and (5), we see the obligatory accusative marking of a definite inanimate direct object contrasted with the ungrammaticality of such marking in Sinhala.
(4) kitan -nang yangkaasi boot -nya le
engal - ukku ku ttka boot -ay um
apa -ta di pu bootu-ə [DEF] (*-wa) t
2PL -DAT give. ADJZ boat -ACC even
karang em.pii su-am bel baapi [SLM; conversational]
ippa em.pii ko ngu pooy-tt-aar [MT]
den mantri.tumaaa aray giyaa [S]
now MP take.cp go
‘Now [our] M[ember of] P[arliament] has even taken away the boat that was given
to us.’

(5) kitam -pe ruuma -pada -nya subaakar [SLM; conversational]
enga -da uu[u -val] -e pattaa veccanga [MT]
ap -ee ge -val (*valva) ginitiibha [S]
2PL -GEN house -PL -ACC burn. PST
‘They torched our houses.’

Example (6) illustrates the plural noun ikan (Sri Lanka Malay)/miin (Tamil) ‘fish’ unmarked for number as contrasted with the obligatory number distinction in Sinhala.

(6) itu fishing -pe [GEN] datangan biilan tu-boole
adu fis -də [GEN] varuma nênam solla eel-aadu
ee malu.elliim -etj [DEF.INST] aadaayama kiyama bae
hes fishing -MKR income say can.NEG
itu ikang daapat sangke joo #
adu miin kəde-kər-rə mattum taan #
ee malu [PL] hambavenne tarama -ta -yi
hes fish get. ADJZ extent -DAT FOC
datangan -pe banyak… [SLM; conversational]
varuma nênam -də aəauv…. [MT]
aadaayama hambavenne… [S]
income -GEN level get. FOC
‘Well, you can’t say what the income from fishing [is]; that is, it is the extent to which fish are available that [determines] the level of income.’

Finally, (7) provides a rare example of the the omission of plural marking on the human noun aanak (Sri Lanka Malay)/pilla (Tamil) ‘child’ contrasting with the obligatory plural marking in Sinhala.

(7) dac müssim -pe # ayndaatang brintii ooram-pada #
dac kualatt -adə # vand irunda aal-geə
dac kaal -ee [DEF] # avilla bitiya minissu [PL]
Dutch time -GEN come. CP stay. ADJZ people-PL
ini # aanak -pe aanak, aanak -pe aanak,
inda # pilla -də pilla, pilla -də pilla,
mee # lamay -n -ge lamay [PL], lamay -n -ge lamay [PL],
hes child -PL -GEN child child -PL -GEN child
aanak -pe aanak ayn-daatang duuduk [SLM; conversational]
pilla -da pilla vand iru-nd-aanga [MT]
lamay -n-ge lamay [pl] avilla tibunaa [S]
child -pl -GEN child come:CP AUX

“The Dutch time’s # the people who came and stayed # [their] children's children
['s] children’s children ['s] children ['s] children had come [to this place].’

To recapitulate, three characteristics of Sri Lanka Malay nominals agree with Tamil and differ from Sinhala: they (i) lack a unifunctional definiteness marker, (ii) are optionally marked for plural, and (iii) are marked for accusative as in Tamil. Clearly Sinhala has not influenced the development of these three characteristics in Sri Lanka Malay; it remains to be seen whether Tamil can be shown to have played a role. In the next section we will investigate how these features developed in Sri Lanka Malay.

4. The Origin of Nominal Marking in Sri Lanka Malay

What kind of Malay was spoken by the Javanese and other diverse peoples who were brought to Sri Lanka from the Dutch East Indies? It could hardly be anything other than the Vehicular Malay which had for centuries served as a lingua franca of what is now the Indonesian archipelago, Malaysia and Brunei. This lingua franca was/is based on spoken low Malay rather than the high varieties which gave rise to the national standards Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia (cf. Hussainmiya, 1986: 20; Adelaar and Prentice, 1996: 674-675; Paauw, 2003). The term “Bazaar Malay”, which has also been used to refer to this variety, implies a much narrower domain of use than the language actually had (and continues to have) and is also used in other senses (Paauw, 2003); hence the term Vehicular Malay is to be preferred. Vehicular Malay was not and is not a monolithic variety, and there was clearly some regional differentiation. In particular, among the varieties of Vehicular Malay brought to Sri Lanka, the Malay of Jakarta (then Batavia), would have been strongly represented, since Batavia was the main source of recruits bound for Ceylon (Hussainmiya, 1990: 81, citing evidence from De Haan, 1922). Jakarta (Batavia) was a multiethnic city quartering substantial numbers of residents from various parts of the East Indies Archipelago, but Jakarta (Vehicular) Malay was undoubtedly influenced by Betawi, the variety of low Malay indigenous to the area. Adelaar (1991) finds a number of features linking Sri Lanka Malay to Moluccan Malay, esp. North Moluccan, but this does not preclude the possibility of influence from Jakarta Malay; moreover, Paauw (2004) argues for influence on the lexicon of Sri Lanka Malay from Jakarta Malay and Javanese.
The pattern of inflection in Betawi-influenced Vehicular Malay is seen in Table 4. There is no formal distinction between nominative and accusative nor between definite and indefinite; plural marking is optional for all nominals. Actually, most varieties of Vehicular Malay have no plural marking at all, but *pada* features as a preverbal marker indicating a plural subject, in Betawi (and Jakarta Malay) and has its origins in Sundanese (Scott Paauw, p.c.). Clearly this pre-verbal *pada* is the source of the Sri Lanka Malay plural marker. The reanalysis of a preverbal marker as a nominal suffix would be a small step in the absence of material intervening between subject and preverbal marker.

Since Vehicular Malay did not mark nominals for definiteness, the lack of a unifunctional definite marker in Sri Lanka Malay cannot be attributed to Tamil influence. Similarly, the optionality of plural marking in Vehicular Malay is similar enough to that found in Sri Lanka Malay that it must be treated as a retention, and therefore not subject to Tamil influence. A strong argument can, however, be made for Tamil influence in the development of accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay: clearly Vehicular Malay had no such marker (nor does any other variety of Malay) and the obligatory marking of definite nominals and optional marking of others in Sri Lanka Malay matches the distribution found in Tamil.

If Tamil is the source of accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay as a category, what is the source of its form (*-yang/-nya* etc.)? It is clearly not borrowed from Tamil (*-e*) or Sinhala (*-va*), nor (as we have pointed out) is there an accusative marker in Vehicular Malay. Saldin (1966) takes it to be identical with the Malay relative marker *yang*. This derivation is phonologically attractive, particularly since *yang* is one of the variant forms of the accusative marker. Slomanson posits that WH-questions involving the extraction of passivized objects in Jakarta Malay provided a pragmatic context which would facilitate the recruitment of *-yang* as a definite object marker (2006: 149). Another possible source is the Malay suffix *-nya*, one of whose many functions¹² in Indonesian and

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**Table 4** Betawi influenced Vehicular Malay noun (nom & acc) and preverbal plural marker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'man' (AN)</th>
<th>'book' (INAN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SG (nom/acc def/indef)</strong></td>
<td>orang</td>
<td>buku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PL (nom/acc def/indef)</strong></td>
<td>orang (...)pada</td>
<td>buku (...)pada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
some other varieties is to mark a [definite] noun (usually in non-subject position) possessed by a third person (usually a subject). Example (8) has the same morpheme order as the corresponding Bahasa Indonesia expression, though this order is marked in Sri Lanka Malay.14

(8) de pooton tangan -nya [ACC] [SLM; Saldin, 1996:70]  
   dia memoton tangan -nya [REFL-POSS] [Bahasa Indonesia]  
   avan vettīnaa kayy -e [ACC] [MT]  
   3SG cut hand -MKR  
   ‘He cut his hand.’

Even though -nya is not normally used in most varieties of Vehicular Malay, it is common in Betawi and Jakarta Malay (Scott Paauw, p.c.). Thus it is possible that expressions of this sort were used by soldiers who came to Sri Lanka from the Dutch East Indies and were reanalyzed by their Tamil-speaking wives and children. This derivation is adopted by Ansaldo (2009: 129) but rejected by Slomanson on the grounds that -nya is also used for subjects in Indonesian varieties of Malay, but not in Sri Lanka Malay (2006: 150); the highly restricted context he invokes for the reinterpretation of the relative marker does not seem superior, however. In fact, a single source is not required; the likelihood is that both sources played a role and reinforced each other. A dual origin would also explain the variation in form, though perhaps superfluously, given that -yang > -nya is easy to motivate as a phonological reduction in an unstressed affix.

5. Dating Tamil Influence on Sri Lanka Malay

I now turn to the question of when Tamil-like accusative marking developed in Sri Lanka Malay. There are three arguments supporting an early appearance of Tamilized accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay.

First, accusative marking in Sri Lanka Malay is distributed widely among the island’s Malay-speaking communities and reflected in the growing literature on the language; thus (8) from Saldin, as noted, (9) from Slomanson, and (10) from Robuchon (morph-by-morph gloss provided). See also Nordhoff (2009: 328-334).
An anonymous reviewer points out that the widespread distribution of accusative marking may also indicate that the Sri Lanka Malays earlier formed a single community.

In creole genesis speakers of the lexifier are typically in a socially superior position to the creole creators, whose L1s are therefore appropriately termed substrates. Here I use the term adstrate rather than substrate on the assumption that the Malays were not in a strongly superior social position compared to the local population.

It does not seem plausible that such a widespread feature could have developed only recently. Although, Bakker argues that small speech communities can implement changes rapidly (2000b: 614-15), the Sri Lanka Malay community is widely dispersed, and dialectal differences are reported (Saldin, 1996: 39, 58-59); apart from a weekly Malay language radio broadcast, there are no mass media which might help to disseminate innovations; and many Sri Lanka Malays are desperately poor, subsisting in rural communities and unable to travel regularly; consequently, the community does not appear to be of the type in which innovations spread rapidly to all speakers.

Second, if accusative marking developed recently in Sri Lanka Malay, its source should not be so puzzling. Most of the grammatical morphemes of Sri Lanka Malay and of languages recognized as creoles are sourced from their lexifiers or from a “substrate” language. If -yang/-nya derived recently from a feature of Vehicular Malay, its source should not have become hidden from us so quickly. The two most likely suggestions for an etymology indicate a Java-based source. If it does indeed derive from a feature of Jakarta Malay, there is all the more reason to expect an early appearance in Sri Lanka Malay, as Java-based regional peculiarities could not have lasted long in Sri Lanka, particularly once the British took over and stopped recruitment from Java.

Finally, rapid linguistic change is usually associated with radical social change. The only major social event in the late 19th C is the disbandment of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. However wrenching this may have been for the

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15 Corrected from original ikan-na.
16 An anonymous reviewer points out that the widespread distribution of accusative marking may also indicate that the Sri Lanka Malays earlier formed a single community.
17 In creole genesis speakers of the lexifier are typically in a socially superior position to the creole creators, whose L1s are therefore appropriately termed substrates. Here I use the term adstrate rather than substrate on the assumption that the Malays were not in a strongly superior social position compared to the local population.
18 According to Hussainmiya’s (1990) account the short-term effects on the community as a whole were not severe. For many years the number of Malays willing to enlist in the Ceylon Rifle
Regiment had been declining – indeed this decline was one of the reasons for discontinuing the Ceylon Rifle Regiment – and less than four hundred soldiers remained at the time of disbandment (103). Many former soldiers found related work in the police department which increased recruitment in order to take over most of the civil duties of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment (escorting prisoners, guarding government installations and property, etc.). Others found employment in the Prisons Dept., fire brigade and possibly in the private sector (as e.g. watchmen on plantations) (104).

The long-term consequences were more severe – the dispersal of the large military cantonments in favour of smaller more widely-distributed police detachments, the loss of the Regimental schools – left the community without support for Malay literacy and with no cultural centre around which group cohesion could be maintained (104).

6. Conclusion

We have seen that Sri Lanka Malay and Tamil agree in the optional marking of plurality, in the obligatory accusative marking of definite/specific objects irrespective of their animacy and in the variable marking of indefinite/nonspecific objects according to their animacy. In these characteristics they differ from Sinhala, which obligatorily distinguishes between plural, singular definite and singular indefinite, and in which accusative varies dialectally as well as within individual speakers (Gair, 1970: 28 fn. 2, 1998: 67); accusative marking in Sinhala is restricted to animate objects only and has not been shown to depend on definiteness/specificity.

Both optional number marking and the lack of distinction between definite and indefinite appear to have been inherited from Vehicular Malay; consequently we can only note the lack of Sinhala influence, rather than positive Tamil influence, with respect to these features. Accusative marking is not found in Vehicular Malay, however; thus the case for Tamil, rather than Sinhala, influence here is strong.

The fact that accusative marking is widely attested in the Sri Lanka Malay community, even among speakers from Sinhala dominant areas who have no knowledge of Tamil argues for an early origin for the feature. Moreover, the most promising etymologies for the Sri Lanka Malay accusative marker point to a likely Java-based origin in varieties which would have been short-lived in Sri Lanka. Finally, the relatively stable social history of the Sri Lanka Malay
community argues for the appearance of Tamilized features during the early contact period rather than as a result of subsequent rapid change.

More generally, the approach taken here is to examine a specific area of grammar where Tamil and Sinhala differ and to see whether either language has influenced developments in Sri Lanka Malay. In order to argue for influence it is necessary to show that shared features are not inherited from Vehicular Malay. The focus on a small area of grammar has both illustrated the approach and permitted a detailed examination of the relevant data.

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