

# **Genitive case in Altaic languages and in some languages of Southeast Asia**

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This article continues the line of research on the structure and material features common to the Altaic languages (Mongolian for the most part) and to a number of languages of Southeast Asia (SEA), which probably are of Central Asian origin. In previous publications, as well as in reports given at a number of conferences on Altaic and Mongolian studies, some common features in the lexicon and grammar of these two language groups have already been discussed.

Our interest in revealing the common grammatical features and, principally, the common features in morphology of these language groups was inspired some time ago by the works of W. Kotwicz, who repeatedly undertook analysis of morphological elements in the Altaic languages.<sup>1</sup> For many years the authors of this article studied the common morphological elements found in Altaic languages and in the languages of SEA. We consider the studies of this kind as an investigation of the distant relations of the Altaic and, first of all, Mongolian languages. We seek for relations of these languages beyond the limits of the Altaic unity.

An encouragement for continuing the search for common grammatical features in the SEA and Altaic languages we find in the paper of R.A. Miller (Miller 1990), in which he stressed the necessity for analysis to be made not only of the lexicon, but also of the specific features of morphology and syntax of the Altaic languages. According to Miller, the neglect of grammatical facts is the weakest point in the theoretical schemes both of the pro -and the anti-Altaicists. In that paper he has also proposed the idea of the necessity of treating the specific problems of Altaic languages in the light of the data on other languages, such as Japanese and Korean, which he attested as "outer languages". This appeal by Miller assures us that our chosen approach, based on comparative studies of features of the above-mentioned language groups, should not be regarded as absolutely absurd.

In this article an attempt is made to compare the markers of the genitive case (markers of the genitive and possessive) in Mongolian and some other languages with the corresponding markers in one of the Austroasiatic SEA languages, namely the Taoih language (see "The materials of the Soviet-Vietnamese linguistic expedition"). This language is spoken in Vietnam and Laos. It was studied in 1984 by the Soviet-Vietnamese linguistic expedition which still continues the investigation of languages of the peoples living in Vietnam. In this language there

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<sup>1</sup> According to W. Kotwicz the Mongolian and Turkic languages have up to 50% of their morphological elements in common. So in this respect the Mongolian languages may be regarded as belonging to the Altaic languages.

are present many elements of the old morphology, which, as is known now, existed in the past in the languages of this region. In many of the languages this morphology has disappeared completely, in some it still exists today. Compared to other languages Taoih seems to have preserved to a greater extent the remains of entire blocks of the old morphology which coexists in Toaih along with the new morphology of another type. The old morphology is mostly represented by inflectional or near-inflectional forms. The new morphology is characterised by the agglutinative or analytical forms that predominate in the majority of SEA languages.

It is within the frame of the old morphology that we find the genitive case form which we are interested in. Contrary to most other SEA languages, Taoih has kept to a large measure the morphological case forms of pronouns (personal, interrogative and demonstrative alike). These forms constitute a certain case paradigm, the genitive being one of its members. In Taoih the genitive case form is constructed with the help of the prefix  $\text{ʔəŋ=}$ . This prefix is not in full measure productive, yet it is significant that it is widely used not only with the pronouns, but also with words belonging to other parts of speech of a non-nominal nature as a substantivizer and also as a marker of the attributive relations. This will be discussed later. But now let us compare this prefix with the genitive suffixes used in the Mongolian languages. We should not be confused here that the Taoih prefix is compared with the suffixes of the Mongolian languages. As we have already noted in other articles and papers, even in cognate languages the same element may take different positions relative to the stem or the root. As an example we can compare the use of the reflexive post-verbal particle  $=\text{c}\text{я}$  in Russian with the corresponding pre-verbal particle *se* in Czech (for instance, Russian *ymonumьcя* 'to drown oneself' and Czech *seutopiti* 'to drown oneself') and also the use of the reflexive particle  $=\text{si}=(\text{s})$  in Lithuanian in verbs with the same root either in the post-root or the pre-root position: *riñktis* 'to choose' and *pasiriñkti* 'to have chosen' according to the absence or presence of the prefix *pa=*.

The Mongolian language is known to have about ten genitive suffixes, including:  $\text{ε}\text{ы}$ ,  $\text{ε}\text{и}\text{ў}$ ,  $=\text{н}$ ,  $=\text{ын}$ ,  $=\text{ийн}$ ,  $=\text{чийн}$ . In the Buryat language there are found variants of the same suffix:  $=\text{иин}$ ,  $=\text{ын}$ ;  $=\text{аў}=\text{оў}$ ,  $\text{э}\text{ў}$ ;  $=\text{н}$ ; in Kalmyk there are:  $=\text{ин}$ ,  $=\text{н}$ ,  $=\text{а}=\text{ə}$ ; in Old Mongolian:  $=\text{yin}$ ,  $=\text{un}/=\text{ün}$ ,  $=\text{u}$ ; in Baoan:  $=\text{нэ}$  (Todaeva 1964).

In the opinion of the well-known researcher of the Mongolian languages, Ts. B. Tsydendambaev (Tsydendambaev 1979), all the above-mentioned suffixes in the Mongolian languages originated from two auxiliary elements, which have served as the starting point in the development of all these variants of the suffixes. These auxiliary elements, as Ts. B. Tsydendambaev writes, are "the following: a) the 3rd person possessive particle  $\eta'$  which is far from being always pronounced with palatalization and which, provided that it loses its property of indicating the person, could become and actually became the means of expressing a case meaning; b) the historical pronoun of the 3rd pers. sing.  $*i$  which existed in former times in the language of the Mongols and, probably, after conversion into a demonstrative particle and losing its property of denoting the person, also could and eventually has come to express the meaning of a case (Tsydendambaev 1979:49).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> We plan to treat this second auxiliary element in the following publications.

It was G. J. Ramstedt who noted in due time that in general in the Altaic languages the genitive case ending "initially was *n*" (Ramstedt 1957:33). For instance the Turkish languages use suffixes that include *n*: =*нн* /*ын*. The element *n* is specific for the corresponding forms in the Tungus languages.

Concerning the origin of this element, several hypotheses have been proposed, none of which are recognised as being proved (on this account see Kotwicz 1962). In connection with this it is interesting to cite one more consideration of Tsydendambaev. He has pointed to the fact that in the Mongolian languages the genitive case markers originated from the personal possessive particle, namely, from the 3rd per. particle *n*'. Tsydendambaev notes that the impersonal possessive particles present in the Mongolian languages also originated from "almost the same pronouns" (Tsydendambaev 1979:78) and that "in the written language the reflexive possessiveness in itself without any later additions has the form =*an*/=*en*" (Tsydendambaev 1979:77).

As to the last particle, its genesis, in his opinion, is not clear due to its earlier appearance in the language (Tsydendambaev 1979:78). "To this we should add" writes Tsydendambaev, "that probably, in the old days, this particle existed with the connecting consonant -*γ*-. , i.e., in the form—\**γan* (Tsydendambaev 1979:77). (However, W. Kotwicz offers a somewhat different viewpoint).

As may be seen from the aforesaid, the Taoih genitive case marker *ʔəŋ=* is materially close to the original *n* found in all the Altaic languages and is especially close to the Mongolian reflexive possessive particle =*an*/=*en*. Besides this material resemblance, the genitive case marker in Taoih also reveals a functional and semantic similarity with the corresponding markers in a number of Mongolian languages. This fact may be the evidence either of old contacts of Taoih with the Altaic languages or of its possible genetic affinity with the latter.

Here it is important to point out that Taoih along with all the languages of the Austroasiatic group, possesses a large number of elements from the old morphology, which are materially similar and functionally identical to the morphological elements and auxiliary words in the Austronesian languages. As one of these common or identical elements, we may consider the Taoih genitive case marker discussed here. Both by sound and functions (as a substantivizer and attributive particle), this marker is close to the auxiliary word *jang* in the Indonesian language, which researchers in this language, among them N.F. Alieva, define as "a relative auxiliary word with an attributive and prosubstantive meaning" (Alieva 1971:221). The Taoih marker *ʔəŋ=* also is similar in sound to the marker of attributive function, namely to the particle *na/ng* in Tagalog (Shkarban 1982). Another investigator of the Tagalog language, I.V. Podberezskiy, defines the particle *ng* as a marker of the possessive relation (Podberezskiy 1971:236).

Let us note that in Japanese the attributive possessive marker, =*но*, which practically coincides with Baoan =*нэ*, also includes the phoneme *н*.

In this situation, as we see it, the hypothesis may be proposed that the "original *n*" is a common element for the whole vast region, for the Altaic languages and for some non-Altaic Asian languages, for it is used in the same way: as a marker of the genitive, as a substantivizer, and as a marker of the attributive and

possessive functions. The presence of the "original *n*" in different languages is an obvious fact. But its presence and the wide use in different languages need a special explanation, which we do not offer yet. Here we only note that the hypothesis of the common *n* fits in with the existing theories of the genesis of the Austronesian languages. A number of scholars, in particular in Vietnam, suggest that the speakers of these languages in ancient times inhabited the region of the Yangtze river, i.e. not far from Central Asia.

Now let us examine in more detail the problem of the functional proximity of the Taoih marker ?əŋ= to the corresponding markers in the Altaic languages. The markers in these two language groups demonstrate a commonness of behaviour, particularly in the so-called *izafet* structures. The *izafet* constructions may be subdivided into three types. In the *izafet* of type I the relation between nouns—the attribute and the determined member - is expressed only by means of adjoining, for instance: Azerbaijani *δ<sup>ə</sup> мир гапы* 'iron gate' (literally, iron+gate). The *izafet* construction of type II in the Turkic languages is characterised by the "presence of the possessive affix of the 3rd pers., attached to the determined noun" (Linguistic dictionary 1990:172), for instance: Turkish *türk dil-i* 'the Turkish language'. In the type III *izafet* construction a 3rd pers. possessive affix is attached to the determined noun and a genitive affix is attached to the attribute, for example: Turkmen *ат-ын олум-и* 'death of a horse'.

W. Kotwicz notes that the *izafet* structures of type I are most specific for the modern Mongolian languages. The *izafet* of type II is found mostly in old scripts. As classical example, he cites the phrase *арун үге ману* 'Argun, our word' (Kotwicz 1962:339). In his opinion, "the only difference between the Mongolian and the Turkish phrases is the use of a personal pronoun in the genitive instead of a suffix, which as well as the Turkish pronoun suffix also appears after the determined noun" (Kotwicz 1962:342).

In the opinion of Kotwicz, for all the Tungus languages, both north and south, (the Gold, Olcha, etc.) the most commonly used are the type II *izafet* constructions, which are made up in the following manner: Tung. *oror iyeltin* 'reindeers, antlers their', i.e. 'antlers of reindeers' *tatkit žun* 'school, building its', i.e. 'a school building' *ekun hutun* 'who, son his', i.e. 'whose son', *mo dugen* 'a tree, top its', 'top of the tree' (Kotwicz 1962:3401), the markers being accordingly =*in*, =*un*, =*en*.

Two types of *izafet* exist in Taoih. Comparing the structure of the *izafet*-like (or even *izafet* proper) constructions in the Taoih with the *izafet* constructions of the Altaic languages, we find they have much in common with the Mongolian *izafet* type II construction used in the old scripts. The Taoih type II *izafet* construction is close to the Mongolian one as a means of expressing attributiveness. Similar to the Mongolian construction, in the Taoih *izafet* structure instead of the pronoun suffix there is used a personal pronoun in the genitive, which is placed after the determined noun. But the Taoih *izafet* structure is somewhat different from the Mongolian one. The difference is that the Mongolian construction can take all personal pronouns (in genitive form), but the Taoih *izafet* construction can take

only the 3rd pers. sing. pronoun in the genitive *ʔo* 'he, she' *ʔəŋʔo* 'his, her' (*ʔəŋ* = being the genitive case marker).<sup>3</sup>

To cite examples of the Taoih *izafet* constructions: *mammac ʔəŋʔo jɣy Tkɣy* 'face of a friend' (literally, face-his -friend); *ikən andial ʔəŋʔo ikan* 'mother's daughter' (literally, child- feminine-her-mother). The type II *izafet* constructions in Taoih and in Mongolian are also semantically close: they predominantly express the meaning of possession.

Let us consider one more set of similar functional features of the genitive case markers in the Mongolian languages and in Taoih. In Taoih, as previously stated, the marker of the genitive can be used as a substantivizer with words belonging to such parts of speech as adjectives, demonstratives and numerals.

As a substantivizer, this marker in Taoih has several conditioned allomorphs (*am=*, *an=*, *a=*). To give examples of substantivized forms: *ambea* '(something) little' (compare to English 'a little one') from the adjective *bea* 'little'; *ambok* '(something) white' ('a white one') from the adjective *bok* 'white'; *atomme* '(something) new' from the adjective *tomme* 'new'; *anna* ('this one') from demonstrative *na* 'this'; *ʔəŋjɣy* '(something) old' ('an old one') from the adjective *jɣy* 'old'. The substantivized form of the adjective in the Taoih can be used both within the attributive structures and independently as an anaphora with the corresponding classifier. Adjectives in this form cannot serve as predicates.

Similarly, in a number of Mongolian languages there are personal possessive particles (or a possessive suffix, as in Baoan, for instance), which themselves have been derived from the genitive case forms of the personal pronouns and have in turn given birth to the marker of the genitive. It is well known that "in the Mongolian written language the markers of the possessive category are still in the stage of emerging: by their form they do not differ from the genitive of the corresponding personal pronouns...and in the Buryat and Kalmyk languages they are considerably distorted" (Tsydendambaev 1979:74-75). The possessive form has also been deformed in the Baoan language, as it is clear from the material given by B. Kh. Todaeva (Todaeva 1964). So for instance, "in the Mongolian language personal possession is expressed by postpositions: *минь* for the 1st pers. sing., *мань* for the 1st pers. plur., *чинь* for the 2nd pers. sing., *мань* for the 2nd pers. plur. and *=нь* for the 3rd pers. of both numbers" (Tsydendambaev 1979:74). In Buryat these particles appear in the modified form: the particles *=ми*, *=м* and *=ни* are used for the 1st pers. sing., *=мнай* *=най*, for the 1st pers. plur., *=шн*, *=ш* for the 2nd pers. sing.; *=тнай* for the 2nd pers. plur. and *=нь*, *=ынь*, *=гынь*, for the 3rd pers. of either number. In Kalmyk the following corresponding particles are used: *=м* for the 1st pers. sing., *=мдм* for the 1st pers. plur.; *=чн* for the 2nd pers. sing.; *=тн* 2nd pers. plur.; *=нь* for the 3rd pers. of either number. In Baoan there is only one particle *=нэ*, which is used exclusively with the personal pronouns of the 3rd pers. of either number and is not used with the pronouns of the 1st and 2nd pers. It is evident from the foregoing that the common particle in the same material form for all the above mentioned

<sup>3</sup> We should note that the Taoih 3rd pers. pronoun *ʔo* materially matches the old Oghuz, old Kirghiz and old Uigur 3rd pers. pronoun *o* (Baskakov 1962).

languages is the particle =НЯ/=Н for the 3rd pers. of either number. These particles (or the suffix in Baoan) are used as substantivizers with adjectives, demonstrative pronouns and numerals. Here are examples from Buryat where the personal possessive particle of the 3rd pers. is used, which is close to the original *n*: *ума* (nominal stem) 'long' + =НЬ=*умань* 'length'; *ундэр* (nominal stem) 'high' + =ЫНЬ = *ундэрынь* 'height'. (Tsydendambaev 1979:74).<sup>4</sup>

Having received the possessive suffix =НЭ, the adjectives and numerals in Baoan become substantives and acquire the capacity to serve as the subject of a sentence. It is worth noting that in this case Todaeva considers the suffix =НЭ to be also the marker of the subject.

Thus Baoan demonstrates the presence of at least four functions of the suffix =НЭ i.e. the genitive case marker, means of expression of possession, the substantivizer and the marker of the subject for the substantivized parts of speech—adjectives and numerals. In Manchu similar functions are carried by the suffix =ᠨᠡ (=ᠨᠡᠭᠡ) and by the particle =ᠨᠢᠭᠡ, which as Kotwicz writes, transfer the function of the noun to the adjective and to the participle. In this case they no longer have the specific meaning of possession and they correspond to the Mongolian particles *inu* and *anu* used for indicating the subject (Kotwicz 1962:121). As for the above mentioned particles *inu* and *anu*, according to a personal communication from M. N. Orlovskaya, they represent the genitive case forms of the 3rd pers. pronoun *i*:: *inu* sing. and *anu* plur., which were used in the Classical and Pre-classical Mongolian texts.<sup>5</sup>

In Taoih we also find cases of using the 3rd pers. pronoun in the genitive form as the subject with inactive verbs as well as with existential verbs in the predicates. Thus here again a similarity is found in the functions of the genitive case forms in the languages of these two groups. But such use of the genitive case forms is beyond the scope of this article. It will be analysed in following publications, keeping in mind that in a number of Austronesian languages, and in Tagalog in particular, there is a special subject-theme marker *ang* (Shkarban 1982).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that the 1st pers. possessive particle МУНЬ used in the old written Mongolian language, coincides materially with the 1st pers. sing. and plur. pronoun in a number of Viet-Muong languages. So in Vietnamese *minh* is used as a 1st pers. sing. and plur. pronoun, and also as a reflexive and as a possessive pronoun. In Ruc the 1st pers. sing. and plur. inclusive pronoun *miṅ<sup>2</sup>-men<sup>2</sup>* also serves as the possessive and reflexive pronoun. In Muong *men<sup>1</sup>* is a 1st per. sing. and plur. inclusive pronoun. Moreover the Tungus languages are well known also to have the pronoun МУНЬ. Such a coincidence of pronouns offers us an additional proof of existence of certain relations between the SEA languages and Altaic languages, especially the Mongolian ones.

<sup>5</sup> Kotwicz himself writes that "the forms *inu* and *anu* gave birth in living Mongolian dialects to the suffix = *ni*, which the Mongolists, starting from A. Popov and A. Bobrovnikov, consider to be the marker of the subject" (Kotwicz 1962:79).

<sup>6</sup> In Japanese as N. A. Syromyatnikov notes with reference to the Japanese researcher Yukodzava, the marker = *no* after the subject is usually used in *sōmono-in*, the Japanese commentaries to the Chinese classical books (Syromyatnikov 1965:183). *Sōmono* is recognised as the most important manuscript of the Japanese language of the 16th to 17th centuries, and in Yukodzava's opinion it is based on the spoken language of that epoch.

As we have already said, the causes for using the "original *n*" in the genitive and possessive forms need to be explained. This requires consideration of additional data on different Altaic languages where this element is found. According to a personal communication from L. M. Gorelova, the Manchu element *n(н)* is also found in the possessive forms. There is also a need of supplementary data on non-Altaic languages which use the element *n(н)* in the genitive forms or in expression of possessivity. We should also consider the historical, ethnographic and archaeological evidence on the spreading and possible contacts of peoples speaking the languages we are interested in. The common nature of the "original *n*" may be either the consequence of ancient but sufficiently long contacts, or may be vestiges of the most ancient cognate relationship, perhaps going back to the nostratic period.

Here we may mention a curious fact, which obviously is not related to a cognate relationship, but possibly is the result of ancient contacts of the Proto-Slavic language with the Proto-Turkic and Proto-Mongolian languages that we have no reliable evidence of. The case in point is that among the Russian genitive case forms with a predominant possessive meaning there is the suffix =*н*: *сестрн* 'sister's', *мам н*. 'mother's', *папн* 'father's', *Камн*. 'Ctherin's', *Фед н* 'Theodor's', etc. It is of interest that this suffix is used almost exclusively with proper names and kinship terms, and also with some names of various living beings: *зайкн*, 'the hare's' (coming from the diminutive. *зайка*, but not *зайцн*), *сойкн* 'the jay's' (coming from the name of the bird - *сойка*), etc. The narrow usage of this suffix and its closeness to the corresponding Mongolian and Turkic suffixes enable us to suggest it to have a non-Slavonic origin. It might be considered to be a borrowing from Turkic-Mongolian languages. Whatever it may be, we find the "original *n*" in the genitive and possessive forms and among the substantivizers over a vast territory, well beyond the limits of the Altaic world (but in the territories adjacent to it) from Eastern Europe to East and Southeast Asia. This fact is interesting in itself.

In conclusion, we should make the following remarks. It should be noted that summing up the result of analysis of the possessive and personal suffixes, Kotwicz stated that "in Mongolian the possessive and personal suffixes go back to pronouns. The first have developed from the genitive case forms of the personal pronouns and somehow replace the attributes; the last represent the indefinite case (*casus indefinitus*) of the same pronouns..." (Kotwicz 1962:164). Investigation of the origin of the possessive and personal suffixes in the Turkic languages, in his opinion, is "more difficult" as compared to the Mongolian ones [op.cit.], for, as he concludes, "the Turkic suffix system has developed *independently from the Mongolian ones* and was already formed by the time the Mongolian languages only began their formation. Therewith it is noteworthy—the researcher continues—that the Mongolian system started its formation from the reflexive possessive suffixes which had never existed in the Turkic languages. Their absence is one of the major features of the Turkic languages, which distinguish them from the other Altaic languages" (Kotwicz 1962:164-165). The facts presented here, as we see them, not only demarcate a border between Altaic languages, but to some degree also bring together the Mongolian and the Tungus-Manchu languages with the languages of peoples living in the Far East and in Southeast Asia, i.e., to the east and to the south of the Mongolian-speaking peoples.

From the above, it follows that notwithstanding the considerable morphological similarity of the Turkic and Mongolian languages, stated by Kotwicz himself, the Mongolian languages exhibit to a somewhat greater degree their distant relations with languages spoken beyond the traditional Altaic world.

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