

Inalienable Possession in Ṭuroyo: A Corpus Study

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Objective

Our objective was to examine the distribution data on two pairs of possessive NPs in the Neo-Aramaic language Ṭuroyo, using the corpus of approx. 0.5 million tokens.

Introduction

- **Data:** Ṭuroyo language (Semitic → Neo-Aramaic, South-Eastern Turkey), oral literature and oral history texts (1960s-1990s)
- Two adnominal possessive constructions with a nominal possessor —head-marked construction (HMC) in (1a) and independent construction (IC) in (1b):

- (1) a. *aṭt-e d-u malko*
wife-EZ.MS of-ART.MS king
'the king's wife'
- b. *i aṭto d-u malko*
ART.FS wife of-ART.MS king
'the king's wife'

- There are also two sets of pronominal possessive suffixes (PPSs). Set 1 is the general and more frequent one (see Figure 3), while the use of Set 2 is restricted to nouns ending in *-a*, *-to*, *-to* (of Aramaic origin or adapted to the Aramaic morphology) and is less frequent.

	Set 1	Set 2
3 m.s.	-ayde	-e
3 f.s.	-ayda	-a
3 pl.	-aṭte	-ayye

Jastrow 1968 provides a list of 85 nouns which can be used with Set 2 (and in fact, in the HMC). According to him, the two sets can be used interchangeably with these nouns. Most nouns in the list belong to three semantic classes:

- Body parts (*raḡlo* 'leg', *qarṣo* 'head')
- Inherent properties: (*ṣumro* 'age', *qumṭo* 'height')
- Kinship terms (*emo* 'mother', *aḡuno* 'brother')

Later research by Y. Takashina (Takashina 1980) has questioned Jastrow's claim about interchangeability, using the elicitation data. It turned out that for most nouns in Jastrow's list the use of Set 1 was not possible and for some nouns two sets were in complementary distribution.

Acknowledgements

This presentation was created using \LaTeX , *beamer* package with *Jacobs Landscape Poster* template. Analysis was conducted in R, and graphs were produced using the *ggplot2* and *tmap* packages.

General Picture

- Set 1 and construction (1b) are diachronically newer possessive constructions.
- Set 2 and construction (1a) are being gradually ousted. For forms with pronominal possessors the continuum is the following (the left being the most stable category): **body parts & inherent properties > ascending kin relations > descending kin relations & non-kin terms > other.**
- Kinship terms are the most complex group with respect to the distribution of the constructions.

Body Parts & Inherent Properties

- Rarely used with Set 1 and in an IC, usually when a term is used in its non-basic, more abstract meaning: *lišon-i* 'my tongue' vs. *u lišon-aydi* 'my language', and (2) below:

- (2) a. *raḡl-e d-u zlam*
leg-EZ.MS of-ART.MS man
'the man's leg/legs'
- b. *i raḡlo d-u taxt*
ART.FS leg of-ART.MS bed
'the leg of the bed'

- For some nouns, plural and singular forms with PPSs are identical: *ṣarš-ux* 'your tooth' or 'your teeth'.
- Examples where the use of Set 1 may signal the change in ALIENABILITY are extremely rare:

- (3) a. *Ṣaṣr-a ko-mkase-ø*
hair-POSS.INALIEN.3FS PRES-COVER.PRES-3MS
ḥaṣ-a
back-POSS.INALIEN.3FS
'Her hair covered her back' (RT II 75:55)
- b. *Ha kele u ṣaṣr-ayda, qəṣ-li*
Here is ART.MS hair-POSS.3FS cut.PRET-1S
m-ak kazi-y-at-ayda
from-ART.PL lock-PL-POSS.3FS
'Here is her hair, I have cut it from her locks' (RT II 66:244)



Figure 1: Turkish province Mardin, the historical habitat of Ṭuroyo

Kinship terms

- Two sets of PPSs are almost in complementary distribution for kinship nouns:

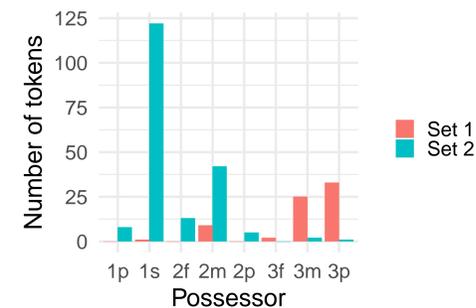


Figure 2: Frequencies of the two sets for *emo* 'mother'

- Frequency of Set 2 on kinship nouns varies within the group:

	mother	uncle	brother	grandfather	son	daughter
0.994	0.971	0.905	0.879	0.535	0.334	

Table 1: Proportions of 1st and 2nd person suffixes of Set 2 on kinship nouns

- *abro* 'son' and *barto* 'daughter' by suffix frequencies belong to the group of nouns denoting non-kin relations: *ḥawro* 'friend' (0.583), *aṭto* 'wife' (0.393), *gawro* 'husband' (0.25).
- When the possessor is nominal, the picture is different: 'son' and 'daughter' are used more frequently than other kinship terms in the HMC: 'father' (0.086), 'son' (0.355), 'daughter' (0.214).

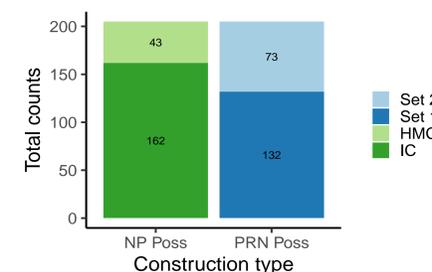


Figure 3: Frequencies of four constructions, from a corpus sample, n = 205 examples for each pair

Discussion

Two pairs of constructions (HMC, Set 2 and IC, Set 1) follow well-known cross-linguistic generalizations on this type of possessive NPs (see Nichols 1988, Haspelmath 2017):

- Set 1 of PPSs is morphologically more complex than Set 2. For nominal possessors, there is a tighter formal connection of two elements in a HMC than in an IC.
- The choice of the construction or the suffix for a noun is lexically determined. The nouns which can be used with Set 2 and in an HMC form a closed set.

The significant language-particular properties of these constructions in Ṭuroyo are:

- A number of nouns denoting inherent physical and abstract properties of animate beings constituting a third semantic class, which can be 'inalienably' possessed.
- The split between 1st and 2nd person PPSs, on the one hand, and 3rd person PPSs, on the other hand, for kinship nouns.

The synchronic picture in Ṭuroyo resembles that of modern Arabic dialects, e.g. **Maltese** and **Morocco Arabic** (see Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1996). In Arabic, the opposition is between the old *construct state* NPs and new analytical constructions, and the development of the latter has probably been triggered by the loss of case markers. In Eastern Aramaic languages, to which Ṭuroyo and its ancestors belong, the change likely started when the postpositive definite article, a distinctive feature of the Aramaic branch, had lost its grammatical functions. The construction with **head-marking** has apparently come to being as means of expressing the definiteness of a possessive NP. The appearance of the new definite article and the corresponding construction (1b), however, started the process of its gradual replacement and fossilization.

References

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Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 —1st, 2nd, 3rd person; ART —article; EZ —ezafe (head-marking); FS, MS —feminine/masculine singular; PL —plural; POSS —possessive; PRES —present; PRT —preterite; s —singular