

E. Körtvély, Verb Conjugation in Tundra Nenets, Szeged 2005 (Studia Uralo-Altaica 46). 178 pp.

The aim and purpose of the book by Erika Körtvély is to synchronically describe and diachronically explain the Tundra Nenets verbal conjugation. The author offers a fine systematic overview of Uralic languages focusing on the number of conjugations in each one of them. In all, there may be three conjugations in Uralic languages known by various terms. E. Körtvély prefers the terms *indeterminative*, *determinative* and *reflexive-medial*, which in her opinion best carry the nature of conjugations (p. 13). Below in this text the same terms are going to be used to avoid misunderstanding. However, for a long time Uralistics has known the same conjugations as *subjective*, *objective* and *reflexive*. Likewise, the terms *indefinite*, *definite* and *medial* have been used.

Based on the use of various conjugations E. Körtvély distinguishes four types in Uralic languages (pp. 27–42). 1) With only one conjugation. Actually, the determination of respective languages is rather problematic. It is quite common in both determinative and reflexive-medial conjugations that a language does not have a full paradigm. They have only some and often regional verb forms which signal the (at least partial) existence of the conjugation. E. Körtvély writes that the only Uralic language with just one conjugation is Lapp (Saamic). However, E. Körtvély will also consider the Finnish, Karelian, Mari and Permic languages as belonging to this group. 2) Distinguishing between indeterminative and determinative conjugations: Mordvin, Ob-Ugric, Southern Samoyedic languages (Selkup, distinct Kamass, Mator). 3) Distinguishing between indeterminative and reflexive-medial conjugations: some Finnic languages, and more clearly Southern Estonian and Veps. 4) Distinguishing between all three conjugations: Hungarian and the Northern Samoyedic (Nenets, Enets, Nganasan).

According to E. Körtvély in Tundra Nenets all verbs can be grouped on the basis of their conjugations into the four

classes: intransitive, transitive, transitive-reflexive and reflexive-medial ones. Intransitive verbs can only take indeterminative personal suffixes and reflexive-medial ones — only reflexive-medial suffixes. Transitive verbs can be conjugated in both determinative and indeterminative paradigms. Transitive-reflexive verbs can be conjugated in any of the three paradigms, depending on the speaker's intentions and the speech situation (pp. 5–6.)

Following the traditional Uralistic style, E. Körtvély attempts to find out which stages in the process of evolution of the Uralic language group the distinction between the conjugations reaches: which of them go up to Proto-Uralic, which up to intermediate proto-languages, which — individual languages. Repeatedly she speaks about an original separation of the Samoyedic language group from the rest of the Uralic languages. Here I would like to draw attention to the fact that no such original separation need ever have taken place: as opposed to it, Samoyedic languages were supposed to have evolved in the way that a group of the non-Uralic-speaking (probably Paleo-Siberian-speaking) population took gradually over some kind of (probably a westward) Finno-Ugric language form (see for it also Künnap 2002 : 15–18, 23–25). E. Körtvély believes that of the three Tundra Nenets conjugation types all three — the determinative, the indeterminative and reflexive-medial conjugations — have Proto-Uralic antecedents (see p. 160).

E. Körtvély is convinced, in the same traditional style, that the personal inflections of the Uralic verbal conjugation have mainly been adopted from personal pronouns (see pp. 43, 108, 159). For a long time already I have not supported the supposition about the descent of Uralic personal suffixes from personal pronouns. I would think that in the olden times the Uralic language group involved both personal pronouns

and personal suffixes in parallel. The clarification of the reasons for phonetic similarities of the consonant matter in personal pronouns and personal suffixes is not quite possible at present. Neither does Ulla-Maija Kulonen (2001a; 2001b) believe that common Uralic possessive suffixes and personal inflections could have formed by agglutinating respective personal pronouns with the preceding noun and verb stems as Uralic personal pronouns are too irregular for that. She claims that personal pronouns as lexical items may be relatively recent innovations. Personal suffixes are not necessarily a product of pronoun stem agglutination: the actual course of development may even have proceeded in the opposite direction. I would note that Angela Marcantonio has also referred to a considerable irregularity of Uralic personal pronouns and even more does she emphasise the irregularity of Uralic personal suffixes (Marcantonio 2002 : 225–228).

Besides I believe that in case of the Uralic 3P personal suffix it would be more important to take into account the descent from two independent old demonstrative pronouns **sV* and **tV*. It should be viewed in connection with its determinative function in case of a possessive suffix and the use as a personal inflection of the determinative conjugation and its **s*-initiality in Finno-Permic languages and **t*-initiality in Ob-Ugric and Samoyedic languages (in Hungarian the consonant matter is either *j* or lacking altogether). In the forms of **sV* and **tV* those are demonstrative pronouns that Juha Janhunen has reconstructed for Proto-Uralic. For intermediate proto-languages he has reconstructed Proto-Finno-Permic ? **sa-* (e.g. Finnish *se*) ~ Proto-Samoyedic **sV-* and Proto-Finno-Permic **tV(-)* (e.g. Finnish *tämä, tuo*) ~ Proto-Samoyedic **tV(-)* (Janhunen 1981 : 269) (about the possible use of the demonstrative pronouns here see e.g. Hajdu 1985 : 328).

I believe that on the one hand such a supposition leads to the determinative function of the 3P possessive suffix as a more indigenous one (see for it also Künnap 2004 : 137–140) and also to an enig-

matic consonant alternation of the Finno-Permic *s* ~ Ob-Ugric and Samoyedic *t* that in Uralistics is usually explained by the change of *s* > *t* (see also Künnap 2004 : 137–140), although language-typologically the latter is a rare case. On the other hand, the fact why Finnic and Lapp have introduced the use of the 3P possessive suffix (as a determinator with a broader meaning) instead of 1P and 2P possessive suffixes (and not the other way round), as well as certain differences between the use of the 2P and 3P possessive suffixes in the determinative function in a number of other Uralic languages (3P possessive suffix is the determinator of a more general type) becomes considerably clearer (see also Künnap 2004 : 137–140). Likewise, a possibly closer connection appears between the element **-se-* of the 3PSg verbal inflection **-ksen* of the Finnic reflexive-medial conjugation with a number of other Uralic **s*-type verbal inflections (see also Künnap 2004 : 139–140).

At the same time it should be mentioned that László Honti has recently considered it possible to suppose in case of congruity of the Finnic-Permic **s* and the Ugric and Samoyedic **t* the descent of both these sounds from an earlier common source — a voiceless dental fricative *θ* (e.g. **θulka* > Finnish *sulka* ~ Hungarian *toll* 'feather') (Honti 2004). If L. Honti's idea is true, then we'll have an option that the **s*- and **t*-initial variants of the 3P personal suffix in Uralic languages are mutually etymologically related, and both may be descending from the original **θV*.

Discussing the Tundra Nenets indeterminate conjugation 1PSg verbal inflection *-dm* E. Körtvély writes, "Accordingly to Künnap (1973 : 195–196), it can be traced back to **-tVmVn* [---] I have to add that Künnap holds this position despite the fact that there is no linguistic element in either Nganasan or Selkup that would point to present or past existence of the entire complex inflection." (p. 82). However, later I have supposed the suffix *-δəm* in Nganasan as a possible equivalent to the Tundra Nenets inflection *-dm* (Künnap 1978 : 39)

and besides Irén N.-Sebestyén's supposition about the relationship of the derivational suffix *-t(V)*- of the Nganasan verb with the Tundra Nenets inflection *-dm* (Künnap 1978 : 51).

Another problem is the 2PSg inflection *(*)n* that occurs in the Tundra Nenets indeterminative and reflexive-medial conjugations. E. Körtvély points out that the **n*-element can be demonstrated in this person and number in other Samoyedic languages as well and that here the element has begun to be used before the overloaded personal inflection **-tV* of a personal pronoun descent in order to better mark 2PSg (pp. 85–87). It leaves an impression as if it were a problem confined within Samoyedic languages. The problem is broader, actually, extending also to Finno-Ugric languages. When summarising the 2PSg *(*)n*-material verbal inflections in Uralic languages, we get the following picture (see also Künnap 2002 : 32–38):

Udmurt	<i>n</i> (?) (? < <i>*-nt</i>)	Nenets	<i>*nt</i>
Komi	<i>n</i> (? < <i>*-nt</i>)	Enets	<i>*nt</i>
Hungarian	–	Nganasan	<i>ŋ</i> (? < <i>*n</i>)
Khanty	<i>n</i>	Selkup	<i>(*)nt</i>
Mansi	<i>n</i>	Kamass	–
		Mator	<i>ŋ</i> (?)

So attention should also be paid to the problem of the exceptional 2PSg *(*)n*-element verbal inflection in some other Uralic languages.

Juha Janhunen reconstructs the 2PSg verbal inflection in Proto-Uralic in the form of **-n* ~ **-t* and continues, "An important point of dissimilarity between the systems of possessive suffixes and verbal personal endings exhibit a duality in the suffix consonant. Most of the present-day Uralic languages point to an original dental stop **-t*, while in the eastern periphery (Komi, Ob-Ugric, Samoyedic) the dental nasal **-n* is met. The nasal variant of the suffix obviously implies previous existence of a 2nd person pronoun with initial nasal, although only uncertain traces of the pronoun stem itself have otherwise been preserved (in Ob-Ugric only)." (Janhunen 1982 : 34–35).

In case of Samoyedic languages Juha Janhunen stated, "From the proto-

Uralic point of view, one of the most interesting features is that the second-person singular predicative ending seems to have been **n* in proto-Samoyedic, as opposed to **t* in most sub-branches of Finno-Ugric. The simple shape **n* is, however, preserved only in Nganasan, while the other Samoyedic languages have **n-t-ø*, possibly as a result of the influence of the corresponding possessive suffixes." (Janhunen 1998 : 471).

In case of Samoyedic languages we find the 2PSg inflection *-q* in the Nganasan verb paradigm — above all in the indicative of the indeterminative and reflexive-medial conjugations. Eugen Helimski has regarded the occurrence of the same inflection as possible — although only in one case — also in Mator (Helimski 1997 : 166). Based on E. Helimski's oral information, the origin of the Komi 2PSg inflection is supposed to have been the consonant cluster **nt* because otherwise the development in this language, just as in Udmurt, might not be *n*. E. Helimski admits that a similar origin would not do for the Nganasan respective suffix *-q* because the Nganasan consonant cluster **nt* has generally been well preserved. He supposes that a possible origin for the respective Nganasan possessive suffix might really be *-n* because the language has a development *-n* > *-q*.

In case of Ob-Ugric languages the suffix *-n* under consideration has been associated with the *n*-initial personal pronoun. On my part, I regard the *n* here as original, apart from the fact that the personal pronoun mentioned has been preserved. In case of Nenets, Enets and Selkup one has to proceed from **nt*. Still a possibility remains that it is a Common-Uralic 2PSg marker *-t*, in front of which there appeared a homorganic nasal as is often the case in Samoyedic languages. Principally, it has not been excluded that the Nganasan and Mator *-q* may have been adopted from **-n* and thus group together with the other 2PSg personal *n*-suffixes in Uralic languages (but in Nganasan and Mator the **nt* cannot phonetically be reduced to **n* as is the case with some other Samoyedic languages).

At the same time one cannot be certain that here all over in case of *(*)nt* it means raising expressiveness of the personal inflection *(*)-tV* by means of the element *(*)n* as supposed by E. Körtvély, although principally it cannot be excluded. Probably these *(*)n*-instances of various Uralic languages are at least in the main part mutually related and explanations of their origin obviously more complex than supposed by E. Körtvély.

The general 2PSg possessive suffix in Turkic languages is *-q ~ -n*, restrictedly used also as an inflection of a verb. Turkologists habitually derive the possessive suffix from the 2P personal pronoun, cf. e.g., the Old Turkic *sän* 'you'. Such a derivation is very speculative and I for one tend to think that probably *-n ~ -q* is the original single-consonant 2PSg possessive suffix in Turkic languages. It is not certain if the double-form Turkic suffix is a result of the development *-n > -q* but such a development is, at least, not excluded (see also Künnap 2002 : 35). Eskimo-Aleut languages, too, are familiar with the 2PSg possessive suffixes *-n* and *-q* while Knut Bergsland supposes the development *-n < *-nt* (see also Künnap 1997 : 99).

The most intriguing part in E. Körtvély's book contains information about the choice between the Tundra Nenets indeterminative and determinative conjugations. First she states that the views about that choice spread in Samoyedology are erroneous by nature already. It was an explanation by Matias Aleksanteri Castrén already that in transitive situation in case the object of the action is definite, the indeterminative conjugation is used. In those instances where the object of an action is indefinite but is of a definite number, the determinative conjugation is used. E. Körtvély indicates that the above statement is most likely a result of misunderstanding (pp. 114–115.)

In Natal'ja Tereščenko's view the indeterminative conjugation is used if the sentence contains a direct object that receives what she calls "logical emphasis". If the verb, that is, the action, is the one

that receives a logical emphasis, the determinative conjugation is used. In her later examples illustrating the use of the conjugation types, we can see that there is a direct object and the determinative conjugation is used but if it contains a logical emphasis, it is not on the verbal part of sentence but on the object. Elaine K. Ristinen does not use the notion "logical emphasis" but that of a syntactical focus which she clearly equates with the former. She emphasises that the nature of the direct object probably has nothing to directly do with the use of indeterminative and determinative conjugations in Samoyedic. Juha Janhunen, too, speaks about focus-conjugation in connection with Nenets. According to János Pusztay the use of the determinative conjugation is vascillating in Nenets and, in all probability, it can be used even when the sentential object is "very definite" or when the logical emphasis is on the predicate.

E. Körtvély asked three speakers of Tundra Nenets to evaluate the 556 example sentences which contained a determinative verb and a direct object as well. The speakers marked the sentences which, in their opinion, contained or at least possibly contained an extra emphasis. They rated 210 of these 556 sentences as not containing any extra emphasis at all. E. Körtvély concludes that the use and function of determinative and indeterminative conjugations cannot be unequivocally connected with the stress relations of the sentence (pp. 118–122.) Further on she demonstrates that in Tundra Nenets there are some grammatical rules, too, which permit and others that prohibit the occurrence of the determinative or indeterminative conjugations in the sentence (pp. 122–127). E. Körtvély emphasises that most of the questions raised in connection with the use of the various conjugation types have not been answered satisfactorily (p. 144). But the author believes that the higher the transitivity of the situation in which the verb occurs, the greater the probability that it will be conjugated in the determinative conjugation (p. 152). Until further investigations provide new and more reliable

findings, E. Körtvély suggests that just the high level of transitivity in Tundra Nenets be accepted as the explanation for the use of the determinative conjugation in a linguistic situation (pp. 157, 160). If the details of the linguistic situation are not revealed, the starting point of the action or happening is not separated from the end point and the transitivity in the context is of medium level,

and the verb is likely to occur in the reflexive-medial conjugation (p. 160).

Thanks to a number of novel conclusions and its general extensive linguistic background Erika Körtvély's book is a valuable addition not only to the research on Tundra Nenets but to the research into the verbal conjugation of all Uralic languages.

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