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Revisiting Old Turkic noun-verb pairs

DORIAN PASTOR

Université PSL – École Normale Supérieure (ED 540)



1. Introduction

Purpose

- Study of noun-verb (N-V) pairs in Old and Middle Turkic
 - Will suggest that Old Turkic has had a productive system of zero-derivation corresponding to the “ergative pattern” (a term introduced by ERDAL 1991).

example of a pair: e.g. *aç* ‘hunger’ / *aç-* ‘to be hungry’

Zero-derivation: a definition

- “a derivational process linking lexemes of the same form but belonging to different word-classes” (BAUER & VALERA 2005: 8)
- i.e. change of a form from a given word-class to another word-class without suffixation
- Examples:
 - French *garde* [gard] ‘guard’ vs. *gard-* ‘(to) watch’
 - English *permit* vs. *(to) permit*

Zero-derivation in Old Turkic

- Usual derivational process of Turkic: suffixation to a base (JOHANSON 1998: 37–38), e.g. Old Turkic *yaş* ‘green’ → *yaş+ar-* ‘to become green’
- Cases of zero-derivation in Turkic:
 - Referred as to “noun-verb roots” (Turkish “*isim-fiil kök*”, e.g. TEKİN 1973), “paired roots” (Turkish “*ikili kök*”, e.g. HATİBOĞLU 1970)
 - Some authors: “an old model of noun-verb formation” (e.g. SEVORTJAN 1978: 229–230)

Old Turkic zero-derivation in authoritative works

- Not fully discussed:
 - JOHANSON (1998: 37): “homophonous stems”;
 - ERDAL (2004: 228): zero-derivation “cannot be excluded”
 - Not discussed in ERDAL (1991)

Earlier discussions

- HATİBOĞLU (1970): inventory of Turkish/Old Turkic N-V pairs;
 - Conclusion: directionality of derivation from noun to verb.

- TEKİN (1973):
 - Presumed cases of zero-derivation often turn out to be suffixal derivatives historically involving the loss of the last syllable.

TEKİN (1973)'s criteria to identify real N-V pairs

- (1) Morphological : N-V pairs should not go back to suffixal derivatives with phonological erosion

Table 1. Not real N-V pairs: Nouns with suffix

nominals	from	verbs
<i>ağrı</i> 'pain'	< <i>ayrıy</i>	<i>ağrı-</i> 'to suffer'
<i>boya</i> 'paint'	< <i>boduy</i>	<i>boya-</i> 'to paint'
<i>damla</i> 'drop'	< <i>damlay</i>	<i>damla-</i> 'to drop'
<i>kuru</i> 'dry'	< <i>qurıy</i>	<i>kuru-</i> 'to dry'
<i>yama</i> 'patch'	< <i>yamay</i>	<i>yama-</i> 'to patch'
<i>yasa</i> 'law'	< <i>yasay</i>	<i>yasa-</i> 'to legislate'

TEKİN (1973)'s criteria to identify real N-V pairs

- (2) Vocalic: N-V pairs should not differ in vowel length (e.g. *tōz* ‘dust’ / *tǒz-* ‘to become dust’)
- (3) Semantics: N-V pairs should be semantically close:

Table 2. Non-matching semantics

nominals	verbs
<i>kit</i> ‘end’	<i>kit-</i> ‘to go’
<i>öd</i> ‘time’	<i>öd-</i> ‘to disappear’
<i>ög</i> ‘mother’	<i>ög-</i> ‘to think’
<i>sal</i> ‘raft’	<i>sal-</i> ‘to move’
<i>soq</i> ‘envious’	<i>soq-</i> ‘to beat, to crush’
<i>sin</i> ‘tomb’	<i>sin-</i> ‘to break’
<i>uç</i> ‘extremity’	<i>uç-</i> ‘to fly, to die’
<i>yaz</i> ‘summer’	<i>yaz-</i> ‘to spread’

TEKİN (1973)'s conclusion

- TEKİN (1973) concludes that real N-V pairs are very rare:

Table 3. Pairs retained by TEKİN (1973) as real N-V pairs

nominals	verbs
<i>aç</i> ‘hunger’	<i>aç-</i> ‘to be hungry’
<i>köç</i> ‘migration’	<i>köç-</i> ‘to immigrate’
<i>qari</i> ‘old’	<i>qari-</i> ‘to become old’
<i>qoş</i> ‘pair’	<i>qoş-</i> ‘to unite’
<i>oy</i> ‘hole, cavity’	<i>oy-</i> ‘to hollow out’
<i>siş</i> ‘swelling’	<i>siş-</i> ‘to swell’
<i>tin</i> ‘breath’	<i>tin-</i> ‘to breathe’
<i>toη</i> ‘frozen’	<i>toη-</i> ‘to freeze’
<i>tuş</i> ‘meeting’	<i>tuş-</i> ‘to meet’

2. A New Approach:

Analysing N-V pairs through ergative pattern

Ergative pattern: definition

- “Ergative pattern” (ERDAL 1991): corresponds to an ergative structure involving:
 - transitive verbs → object nouns
 - intransitive verbs → subject nouns
- e.g. *kürä-* ‘to desert’ (intransitive) → *küräg* ‘deserter’ (subject noun)
- Several suffixes concerned (listed in ERDAL 1991: 172–355)

Ergative pattern: definition

- Data adapted from ERDAL (1991: 182, 196):

Table 5. Ergative pattern in Old Turkic: Suffixal derivation with $-(X)g$

verbs	valency		nominals	category
<i>ba-</i> ‘to bind’	transitive	→	<i>bay</i> ‘bundle, bale’	object noun
<i>ur-</i> ‘to hit, to put’	transitive	→	<i>uruy</i> ‘seed’	object noun
<i>kürä-</i> ‘to desert’	intransitive	→	<i>küräg</i> ‘deserter’	subject noun
<i>öl-</i> ‘to die’	intransitive	→	<i>ölüg</i> ‘dead, a corpse’	subject noun

Ergative pattern in zero-derivation: verb → noun

- Category of the noun and valency of the verb in N-V pairs:
- *ton*- ‘to be frozen hard’ (itr.) vs. *ton* ‘frozen’ (subject adj.)
- *qari*- ‘to become old’ (itr.) vs. *qari* ‘old’ (subject adj.)
- *kes*- ‘to cut’ (tr.) vs. *kes* ‘piece, part’ (object noun)
- *oy*- ‘to hollow out’ (tr.) vs. *oy* ‘hole, cavity’ (object noun)

Ergative pattern in zero-derivation: verb → noun

- I propose that N-V pairs follow the ergative pattern;
- Correspondence between the category of the noun and the valency of the verb:
 - *bük-* ‘to bend’ (transitive)
 - *bük* ‘corner’ (object noun, i.e. ‘what has been bent’)
- According to the ergative pattern: *bük-/bük*: verb → noun

Ergative pattern in zero-derivation

- Zero-derivation corresponds to the ergative pattern;
- Only verb \rightarrow noun:

(tr./itr.) verb \surd - \rightarrow (obj./subj.) noun \surd

3. Other cases

3.1 Zero-derivation: noun → verb

- Non concerned by the ergative pattern
- Not numerous
- Original form known as a noun:
 - *us* ‘intelligence’ (< Khwarezmian ‘*ws*’, TEZCAN 1997: 164)
 - *us-* ‘to think’
- Semantics suggesting the directionality:
 - *öyük* ‘quicksand’
 - *öyük-* ‘to sink (in the quicksand)’
 - Semantically, ‘quicksand’ cannot be derived from ‘to sink (itr.)’

3.2 Vowel length and ergative pattern

Table 6. Ergative pattern and N-V pairs with different vowel lengths

verbs	valency	nominals	category
<i>ě̃n-</i> ‘to come down’	itr.	<i>ē̃n</i> ‘sloping downwards’	subject adj.
<i>qǎ̃m-</i> ‘to wave’	itr.	<i>qō̃m</i> ‘wave’	subject noun
<i>tǎ̃z-</i> ‘to become dust’	itr.	<i>tō̃z</i> ‘dust’	subject noun
<i>yǎ̃n-</i> ‘to return’	itr.	<i>yā̃n</i> ‘hip; side, flank’	subject noun
<i>qǎ̃ṣ-</i> ‘to unite’	tr.	<i>qō̃ṣ</i> ‘pair’	object noun
<i>yǎ̃r-</i> ‘to split’	tr.	<i>yā̃r</i> ‘cliff, cleft’	object noun

3.2 Vowel length and ergative pattern

- Correspondences between vowel length and the ergative pattern
 - Short vowel: verb, e.g. *qǒm-* ‘to wave’ (intransitive)
 - Long vowel: noun, e.g. *qōm* ‘wave’ (subject noun)
- Derivational process: quantitative apophony
- Tekin’s criteria vowel length is thus not absolute

4. Conclusion

Conclusion

- Several N-V pairs correspond to the ergative pattern
 - i.e. tr./itr. verbs vs. obj./sbj. nouns
- Direction: verb → noun

Conclusion

- Other cases as zero-derivation: noun → verb
 - e.g. *us* ‘intelligence’ → *us-* ‘to think’
 - very few instances
 - does not follow the ergative pattern
- Cases of derivation through quantitative apophony
 - *qōm-* ‘to wave’ (itr.) → *qōm* ‘wave’ (sbj. n.)
 - follows the ergative pattern

Conclusion

- This suggests that zero-derivation in Old Turkic:
 - Consistent way of derivation which seems to have belonged to morphological system of Turkic
 - But not very productive: obsolete already in Old Turkic
 - Might go back to an older stage (i.e. Proto-Turkic)
- Derivation through apophony also existed
 - To be distinguished from zero-derived N-V pairs

Thank you very much



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