

TRACES OF AUSTRALIAN-AMERINDIAN MORPHEME CATEGORIES IN EAST ASIA

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The following short notes do not pretend to treat in full the problem of analogies between languages 'on the periphery', that is to say languages surviving on the outskirts of civilization, by which I refer to those parts of the world which are far from the centers from which cultural impulses, affecting not only the material and spiritual life of nations and tribes but also their language, are known to have issued at various times and during various periods of the history of mankind, in the first place the great Asiatic mainland. If any analogies exist at all between the languages of other continents, such as America and Australia, as I have occasionally indicated elsewhere,¹ the former - in the main of a structural character - would not be due to direct contacts but rather to their residual nature.

1. THE DUAL-COMITATIVE

In *A New Approach to Australian Linguistics* (Oceania Linguistic Monographs No. 1. Sydney, 1962), Capell tabulates the occurrence and distribution of dual and plural suffixes in the Australian languages.² He especially points to the uniformity and permanency of the dual markers (generally some form of *-bula* or *-dara*).³ Now it is a singular fact that the majority of neighboring languages on the Asian mainland and Oceanic islands (I except those of New Guinea, as not being in any sense representative of a group) lack such morphological formatives: *cf.* Austronesian, Austroasiatic, Thai, Burmese, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese and - as far as dual suffixes are concerned - Dravidian. The nearest exponents of a linguistic type

embodying these morphological elements are to be found in America.

In the Amerindian languages we meet with the characteristic noun suffix *-k(i)*, which in Aleut and Eskimo marks the dual, in Algonquian, on the other hand, the plural (the latter languages lack a dual number). Although Eskimo and Aleut are often supposed to have certain 'Ural-Altaiic' features, the above suffix can hardly be identified in the latter group of languages (Ostyak Samoyed *-qi*, Vogul *-yi* which have a velar consonant, might be mentioned with doubt). On the other hand, I think traces of the Aleut-Eskimo dual suffix may be found in Ainu and Gilyak, whereby at the same time a bridge is found between the American Indian and Australian linguistic areas. (On the general character of Ainu and Gilyak, see in the second section of this paper.). Of course, in regard to Australia, I have merely the morphological category in mind (for which see further ahead), since the suffix *-ki* could hardly be found anywhere in the latter languages.

In dealing with Ainu, I refer to the suffix *-ki* or *-gi*, which occurs in certain nouns denoting parts of the body; *cf.* *kemaki*, *kema foot or feet*,⁴ *shiki eye(s)*, *teki hand(s)* (*cf.* Japanese *te, idem*), where an original dual sense may be suspected, but further also *amigi*, *am(u) nail(s)*, *imaki*, *ima tooth or teeth* where a plural (or generally collective) sense is more plausible. In Gilyak, the situation is quite different. This language certainly has plural suffixes (*-gu*, *-ku*, etc.), but no dual suffix in the usual sense of the term. It may, however, have existed, and in exactly the same form as in Ainu, as I shall try to show, but before taking up this problem it is advisable to have a look at the function of the Australian dual forms.

Capell has shown (*loc.cit.*) that Australian dual and plural suffixes have retained a concrete sense (the plural suffix *galaŋ*, for instance, meaning *people*). In my *On the History and Structure of the Australian Languages* (*cf.* Note 1, above), I point to a certain use of dual form in Australian languages, namely to express a connective and between nouns; *cf.* Aranda *'ara aranga țara the red kangaroo and the euro* (*op. cit.* p. 71). In Capell's texts, *The Wandarang and Other Tribal Myths of the Yabudurwa Ritual*, the construction *gađere gadju djadgora the grasshopper and the waterlily* occurs (to be interpreted as *the grasshopper, the waterlily, the two*)⁵. The construction is essentially the same as the Vedic *Mitrā-Varuṇā*

Mitra and Varuna (literally *Mitra (dual) - Varuna (dual)*) and this peculiar construction, according to which the dual form of either one (usually the last) or both nouns expresses a pair or two being joined together, apparently occurs in Gilyak. The dual suffix, then, is not a proper dual formative, but one which merely expresses combination or forming of a pair, thus having a more concrete character. This is what I believe to be the case in Gilyak.

In this language a suffix -ke or -ge placed at the end of each noun forming a pair,⁶ is used to denote that these nouns are to be combined as by means of our conjunction *and*. An example is found in *ralge náhrke the frog and the rat*, the title of a story occurring in E.A. Krejnovič, *Nivkhskej (giljackej) jazyk*⁷. A dialectal variant of the suffix is -kin or -xin (*cf.* Note 6 above), which has the same function, as in *huń ýćixkin, huń mámxin both this old man and this old woman*.⁸ As a matter of fact, Roman Jakobson refers to -kin as a 'dual suffix', pointing out at the same time that this suffix corresponds to the Aleut dual suffix (*sic*) -kin which signifies *both together*.⁹ For the similar usage of the 'Common Amerindian' -nt(i)- in Chukchi (plural), Koryak (dual), Quechua (*yayantin father and son*), Yamana (dual and comitative), I refer to my *Apuntes comparados sobre la lengua de los Yaganes (Tierra del Fuego)*, in *Revista de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias*, No. 10 (Montevideo, 1953), p.213, and to *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (BAE, Bull. 40), Part II, p.696.

2. THE PREFIX VOWEL SYSTEM

A feature shared in common by the northern Australian languages, the so-called 'Prefix Languages', and the American Indian languages, namely as regards the incorporation of noun stems into a verbal complex, according to the 'polysynthetic' principle, was pointed out by Capell in *Languages of Arnhem Land* (yet without implying any connection between the two linguistic groups).¹⁰ In my *On the History and Structure of the Australian Languages* (see Note 1, above), I have dealt with further analogies of this kind between the Amerindian and the Australian Prefix Languages, holding that such analogies must necessarily depend on the existence of an ancient common structural system.¹¹ This view would be more acceptable if some connecting link could be found, for instance in eastern Asia (the languages of New Guinea are still not considered, for the reason that they appear

quite as isolated as the Australian languages and besides in many ways connected with those of Arnhem Land or the Kimberley area).

As the name 'Prefix Language' indicates, such a language is characterized by the entire or partial use of prefixes to express person in the conjugation of the verb or sometimes also in the possessive inflection of the noun.¹² An essential feature of the Prefix languages (now referred to by me as Type I), although not by any means a universal one, is the occurrence of so-called 'prefix vowels'.¹³ As a matter of fact, these morphological elements occur both in the languages of America and northern Australia in a similar function, that is to combine (consonantal) personal prefixes with a verbal or nominal stem (beginning with a consonant), often alternating with one another to express different types of functional relation between the prefix and the stem.

The existence of prefix vowels in Ainu has been shown by O.G. Tailleux, in an article in *Kuhn's Zeitschrift*, with the title *Sur une explication de l'ainou par l'indo-européen*,¹⁴ in which he points to structural analogies with Basque. The characterization of Ainu as belonging to a large group of languages, roughly corresponding to my Type I (see above) has been further elaborated by Tailleux in two other papers published at Lund,¹⁵ where reference is again made to the occurrence of prefix vowels. In an article in *Lingua* with the title *La place du ghiliak parmi les langues paléosibériennes* (1960:113-47). Tailleux again touches on the existence of this extensive linguistic group, within which he wants to include along with Gilyak such languages as Chukchi, Basque and those of the Caucasus.¹⁶ The affinities of Gilyak with the Amerindian languages have been suspected earlier,¹⁷ although it would be rash to attempt to include this language among the Amerindian languages, on a level with Chukchi, Koryak and Kamchadal. The interesting point is that a trace of the prefix vowels is found even in Gilyak.

I refer to the occurrence of the vowel *i*-prefixed to potentially transitive verb stems, to express that a direct object is not indicated (*cf.* in English *to act* and *to act a part*, etc.); one might say perhaps that it transforms transitive verbs into intransitives. Along with this kind of construction Gilyak (like the Australian Tiwi on Bathurst and Melville Islands, referred to by Capell; see Note 10, above) admits of noun incorporation. In this way we get the alternative constructions: *i-ńd' (he) ate* and *t'uz-ńid' (he) ate*

meat or e-smod' (he) loved and Nosk-smod' (he) loved Nosk (a dog's name)¹⁸. The process is described by Krejnovič in the work referred to (see Note 7, above);¹⁹ it is also mentioned by Roman Jakobson in his sketch in *Les langues du monde*.²⁰ The similarity in function of the vowel i- to one of the Ainu prefix vowels is inevitably observed, namely in such cases as Kotánk'eś-un niśpa i-ku *the rich man of Kotankeś smoked* beside oháčisujè nejaxka támbaku ku *the Empty-House-Devil also smoked tobacco*, found in Pilsudski's materials,²¹ where we have an opposition ku *drink (smoke)* ~ i-ku *drink (smoke) something*.

The function of the prefix vowels in the various languages of Type I rather much differs in the different languages. One may however find the above signification of i- in a number of American Indian languages. I shall only point to the following cases. In the languages of Chibcha stock on the Isthmus of Panama we find verbal forms in which an i- is prefixed to the (transitive) stem in order to denote the absence of a direct object. So in Bribri and Rama, as in (Bribri) i-džuǝk *do or make (something)*,²² and so also in Cuna: i-makka- *make (something)*.²³ In this way we get the same pairs of alternative constructions as in Gilyak and Ainu; cf. Cuna i-makka- (see above) ~ kor-makka- *make a sound*, yaa-makka- *make a hole, to gap* or i-saa- *do something* ~ inna-saa- *make strong drink*.

Now, as for the Australian languages, I have indicated the existence of different prefix vowels in the group of languages referred to as of 'Prefix type'.²⁴ To the examples stated there an interesting one might be added, which precisely illustrates the use of the vowel i-; this is an instance from the Maung language (Goulburn Islands), quoted by Capell in his *The Classification of Languages in North and North-West Australia*.²⁵ The forms in question are: ŋ-a-winbuŋ *I wash him* (prefix vowel a-) and ŋ-i-winbuŋ *I wash myself* (prefix vowel i-). Although it may depend on a coincidence, it is striking that the same vowels are used in Georgian in exactly the same functions: cf. v-a-c'vam *I dress him* and v-i-c'vam *I dress myself*. The reflexive-intransitive function of i- may perhaps be said to be rather typical in the various languages; I might remind that the prefix vowel i- (which is rare in Basque in comparison with a- or e-) occurs in such a verb as d-i-rudi *he appears* (as if *shows himself*?). Of course, what I have said about prefix vowels in America and Australia and various other parts, does not regard or stress any concrete analogies (which may be coincidental) as much as the occurrence of the system as such in languages which we have every reason to reckon, as far as the structure goes and without any implication of cultural values, among the most 'primitive' in the world.

N O T E S

1. See, for instance *On the History and Structure of the Australian Languages* (Australian Essays and Studies, vol. III. Upsala, 1963), pp.96-97; *Oceanic Semantics* (Australian Essays and Studies, vol. V. Upsala, 1966), pp.60-61.
2. *Op.cit.*, pp.61-63.
3. *Op.cit.*, p.63.
4. Batchelor's statement that the forms in -ki, -gi are plural forms is dubious, since Ainu, which merely shows traces of an earlier different linguistic type (*cf.* section 2 of this paper), shares the main characteristics of Japanese, where proper dual or plural forms of nouns are wanting.
5. See *Oceania*, vol. XXX, No. 3, p.216.
6. The form of the suffix depends on the character of the final sound of the noun stem.
7. In *Jazyki i pis'mennost' narodov severa*, edited by E.A. Krejnovič (Moscow, 1934), p.220. The transcription has been somewhat simplified by me.
8. See L.J. Šternberg, *Obrazcy materialov po izučeníju giljackago jazyka i fol'klora* (Bull. de l'Académie Impériale des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg, 5th series, vol.XIII. 1900) p.434. Šternberg explains that -kin...-xin corresponds to our *both...and* (Russian i...i), but adds that they should more properly be considered as a dvojnoj poslělog (a *double postposition* ?), expressing rather *with* or *together (with)*.
9. See *The Palaeosiberian Languages* (in *American Anthropologist*, vol. 44. 1942), p.604, Note 7.
10. See *Oceania*, vol. XIII, No. 1, p.24.
11. See *op.cit.* pp.51-54, especially p.53, regarding *prefix vowels*.

12. For a more exact definition of the term *prefix* and *suffix* languages, see my analysis in Holmer, Uesson and Smedberg, *On Linguistic Types, Blood Groups and Culture Areas* (Lund, 1961), on the pages 8-10 (with the Note 8), and further in *The General Structure of Language* (Lund, 1966), pp. 54-56 (§§9.1-2).
13. For a definition, see for instance my old paper *Ibero-Caucasian as a Linguistic Type* (Lund, 1947), pp.27-31.
14. ZfVSP, n.s. vol. 77, fasc. 1-2 Göttingen, 1961), pp. 1-30 (especially the pages 17 and 25).
15. *L'aïnou indo-européen de force ou le mépris de la linguistique comparative* (SprB, vol. 4, No.16. Lund, 1961) and *Rectifications à des interprétations basques, ouraliennes, altaïques, aïnoues, etc.* (Årsbok 1959/1960. Lund, 1964).
16. *Lingua*, vol. IX, Part 2 (1960), pp.113-147 (especially p.144 and the Summary on p.113). In the same direction he argues in *Un îlot basco-caucasien en Sibérie: Les langues iénisséiennes* (Orbis, vol. VII, Part 2. 1958), pp.415-27 (without references to Gilyak or Ainu).
17. See L. Sternberg, *Bemerkungen über Beziehungen zwischen der Morphologie der giljakischen und amerikanischen Sprachen* (XIVth International Congress of Americanists. Stuttgart, 1906).
18. The occurrence of a different vowel here does not indicate an alternation of prefix vowels (*cf.* above), but merely the influence of the stem vowel -o-, whereby i- is 'leveled' to e- (*cf.* my paper *On Vowel Leveling in Chukchi and Austronesian*, in SprB, vol. 3, No. 14. Lund, 1960).
19. *Op. cit.*, p.208.
20. *Op. cit.*, p.415.
21. B. Piłsudski, *Materials for the Study of the Ainu Language* (Cracow, 1912), p. 78.
22. See Walter Lehmann, *Zentral-Amerika*, Part I (Berlin, 1920), p.285; Lehmann says 'i- erscheint wenn ein bestimmtes Objekt fehlt' and renders the Bribri verb form by 'machen (allgemein, etwas).'

23. See my *Critical and Comparative Grammar of the Cuna Language* (Göteborg, 1947), p.120, and *Cuna Chrestomathy* (Göteborg, 1951), p. 52 (§13).

24. See the work referred to and quoted in Note 11, above, p.53.

25. *Oceania*, vol. X, No. 3, p.269.