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On the suffix of alienability in Tungus languages

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0. Introduction.

The possessive construction of Tungus languages is of the Head marking type (except in Manchu, Sibe, and Solon).

If N(oun)2 is inalienable, the construction is N1 N2 -person

If N(oun)2 is alienable, the construction is N1 N2 -alienable-person

(1) naj ĵili-ni

man head-3sg. "A man's head"

(2) naj ĵili-ŋgo-ni

man head-alienable-3sg. "A head which a man has (such as the head of an animal)"

1. Previous research.

Boldyrev(1976) divided nouns into three groups.

Group A are nouns which never take the suffix of alienability. Group A includes subgroups as below.

A1-Kinship terms, A2-Locational nouns, A3-Commodity, A4-Parts of objects, A5-Abstract nouns.

Group B are nouns which may take the suffix of alienability.

B1-Body parts, B2-Occupation or social status, B3-Plants, B4-Wild animals, B5-Nouns of places, B6-foods, B7-nouns of time, B8-Heavenly bodies and natural phenomena.

Group C are nouns which always take the suffix of alienability.

C1-Proper nouns, C2-Adjectives which used as nouns casually, C3-Numerals,

C4- Demonstrative pronouns, C5-Verbal nouns.

2.1. Udehe

The following examples are from an unpublished Udehe text-corpus which I collected. The numbers are those of the examples.

B2(75) B4(37) B6(31) B3(13) C4(9) B5(5) C1(3) C2(2) B1(1) B7(1)

2.2. Nanay

The following examples are from Kazama(1991, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98).

B2(47) B4(40) B6(35) B3(31) B5(14) C2(12) C1(6) C4(3) B7(2)

2.3. Uilta(Orok)

Following examples are from Ikegami(1984).

B2(12) B4(10) B6(5) B5(5) C4(4) B3(1) B7(1) B8(1) C1(1) C(2)

3. Consideration

3.1. The groups of nouns which take the suffix of alienability

When I examined the examples of C2, C3, C4, and B3, I found these sentences have the meaning of *selection* from the set of the members of the same quality. I supposed that this is one of the reasons why these nouns take the suffix of alienability.

3.2. The groups of nouns which never take the suffix of alienability

Locational nouns(A2) and Kinship terms(A1) have semantically relative (as opposed to absolute) character. Here I supposed that this is one of the reasons why these nouns never take the suffix of alienability.

4. Final remarks.