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Tense, Voice and *Aktionsart*
in Tungusic

Another Case of »Analysis to Synthesis«?

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Avant-propos

In non-specialized literature, Tungusic usually echoes Ewenki and Manchu. Ewenki (*ewenkii*, with <w> = [β], hence the inappropriateness of the now more popular orthographical variant <Evenki>) is without a shadow of a doubt the most prominent Tungusic language of current times as it is still widely spoken and enjoys official status both in Russia and China. The literary variant, based on the Southern Poligus sub-dialect, may be viewed as the most successful attempt at normalization among the Tungusic languages, though the history of the process does not lack episodes of hard work and curious situations (for further details see Bulatova 1992). This fact is not to be underestimated for Ewenki dialectology is very complicated, with more than 50 recognized variants. Even today dialectal sensitivities are very much alive. But Ewenki is not an isolated language. A dozen different languages occupy a much smaller area of land and enjoy almost no political prominence: Ewen (& Arman), Negidal, Solon, Udihe, Nanay, Ulcha, Oroch, Oroch, and Kili (& Kilen). For further details on those languages see §1.1 and Table 1.

On the other hand, Old (i.e. pre-dynastic) & Classical and Literary Manchu is held in high regard by tungusologists, general linguists and philologists as it is the only Tungusic language with a literary tradition, one which is in fact very long and venerable, dating back to the 16th century. We must bear in mind that Manchu served as the official language of the 清 Qīng (1644-1911) and pre-Qīng states of Manchuria, China and the whole eastern region of Central Asia. Heilongjiang Manchu, named so after the main location where the language was found until recently, i.e. 黑龙江 Hēilóngjiāng, is the preferred term to call the modern, spoken—but by now theoretically vanished—Manchu language. Jurchen, the historical predecessor of Manchu (*manju* is the new denomination some Jurchen populations decided to be called at the beginning of the 17th c., so Nurhaci's son Hong Taiji published an imperial edict in 1635 to that effect), offers even earlier documentation starting from the twelfth century. Two historical variants are to be distinguished: Jin (or Chin, depending on the author's preferred Chinese transliteration) Jurchen and Ming Jurchen, used and spoken during two Manchu/Chinese dynasties, namely the 金 Jīn (1115-1234) and the 明 Míng (1368-1644). Last but not least, we must mention Sibe, the historical continuation of Northern Manchu dialects now with full

language status in China, where it is exclusively spoken. Until the 康熙 Kāngxī period, Sibe speaking populations, although reunified with other tribes by the ruler Nurhaci [1559-1626], were under the control of different Mongolian confederations, and only with their departure from Manchuria to Xinjiang in the second half of the 18th c. they got rid off the Mongolian yoke). Sibe is a Tungusic language with the most speakers by far (twice the number of Ewenki speakers). Jurchen, Manchu and Sibe conform to a sequence of linguistic stages although these are still to be described in proper terms, which are most attractive to historical linguists and of paramount importance for the description of Proto-Tungusic.

Being as it may, Ewenki and Manchu are very frequently quoted as the epitome of the more than obvious opposition existing within the Tungusic family between “more agglutinative” and “less agglutinative” languages (*vid. i.a.* Cincius 1949: 17-27, Lopatin 1958: 435-7), the latter exemplified by Ewenki, the former by Manchu. The position of Manchu within Tungusic languages has been always regarded as especial, if not slightly marginal (*vid. §1.2-3*). The traditional interpretation of such differences dictates that Manchu underwent many changes due to the influence of Chinese and Mongolian, among them its tendency towards analysis, in sharp contrast to the synthesis found in the rest of components of the family. For decades, the historical interpretation of these descriptive facts stated that Manchu was an innovative member, while the other Tungusic languages [= Common Tungusic] were more conservative, logically retaining more characteristics of the Proto-Tungusic [= Manchuric + Common Tungusic] period. While the effects of the contact with Chinese can hardly be denied in some areas of the Manchu grammar (leaving aside massive lexical borrowings, see Gorelova 1997 for uncontestable syntactical traits), many others await detailed research, something to be even more desirable when taking into account the plethora of available documentation. In the very same vein, Mongolian influences, though well motivated, still await to be properly described in a systematic fashion.

In this study I will try to offer some evidences speaking against this traditional position by bringing into discussion morphological issues. Many of the (verbal) analytical formations typical of Manchu could be Proto-Tungusic retentions which in the Common Tungusic stage evolved into suffixes. This would explain why they are not attested in Common Tungusic historical languages, or they are but only partially. My

presentation will greatly profit from Steever's program of Compound Verb Contraction (Steever 1993). Steever shows step by step the changes some analytic constructions undergo in forming suffixes. He initially conceived this program to treat Dravidian data, but it can be safely stated that its application is fairly universal and can be adapted for any other language(s). The Compound Verb Contraction program distinguishes several phases which the analytic construction goes through before becoming a full, autonomous suffix: formation (1), contraction, morphotactic adjustments, final re-analysis, formation (2). Introducing as input the "formation (1) = analytic structure" one gets as output "formation (2) = synthetic structure". I will present goals and methodology in greater detail in §1.4. For diachronic typological control I benefit mainly from the achievements of several works by J. Bybee: on one hand, the description of different grammaticalization paths from a cross-linguistic perspective, and on the other, the implications of frequency in the evolution of specific forms and constructions.

In this work I deal initially with three sets of CT suffixes vs. Manchu(ric) analytic formations. The first set comprises the CT FUTURE marker */-ŋaa-/ vs. the pM MOVEMENT-FUTURE construction */-mA gene-/ 'to go to V' (*vid.* §2). The second involves the CT RECIPROCAL-DISTRIBUTIVE */-maat(i)-/ vs. pM */-mA o(-mbi)/ (*vid.* §3), and the third one the CT CONTINUOUS-HABITUAL */-w~paat(i)-/ vs. pM CONTINUOUS */-mA bi(-)/ (*vid.* §4). The last two CT suffixes are "compound" suffixes, wherein the PT CONTINUOUS */-t(i)-/ may be extracted without problems. However, there is no convincing explanation for the resulting */-maa-/ and */-w~paa-/ segments respectively.

I will present first the pertinent information about the grammar of the synchronic forms: allomorphs, exact function, etc. (synchronic viewpoint) and I will discuss previous attempts to etymologize them (diachronic viewpoint). In doing so, I will have to bring into the picture other suffixes that could contribute valuable information, especially as far as the CT FUTURE marker */-ŋaa-/ is regarded, whose interaction with the CT & PT COMPLETIVE and/or HABITUAL suffixes */-ŋna-/ & */-naa-/ is obvious, while at the same time very problematic. Northern Tungusic COMPLETIVE */-maa-/ shall prove useful in discussing the origins of the CT RECIPROCAL-DISTRIBUTIVE */-maat(i)-/. By the same token, I will have to go deeper in the analysis of some points in (Literary) Manchu grammar, for they are in general terms not enough clear in spite of their potential relevance to historical and comparative issues. It is my understanding that

contrary to Lightfoot's "Ebeling Principle", according to which the more exotic a language and the fewer the linguists who have analyzed it, the more tractable and self-evident its grammar, Literary Manchu still offers some interesting challenges to the seasoned linguist. I cannot see better occasion than a historical treatise to discuss, at least some of them.

I will devote an individual chapter to general discussion in order to integrate all the conclusions drawn in previous chapters into a more compact picture (*vid.* §5). There I should basically argue that the opposition between synthesis vs. analysis within the Tungusic framework could have been frankly exaggerated. It is time to re-consider not only the Manchuric position, but also that of the Common Tungusic languages in relation to each other and to Proto-Tungusic. Here I will profit from Austerlitz's intriguing thoughts about the linguistic types in Eurasia and their possible historical settlement. In the conclusions (*vid.* §6) I will summarize the results of the present study and I will formulate a proposal for future research.

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