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Proto-Turkic Causative in *-g-?

\[\text{Od przybytku głowa nie boli.}\]
(a Polish proverb)

\[\text{The more the merrier.}\]
(an English proverb of not quite the same meaning)

1. The category of causative is commonly treated in the Turkic languages as one of the elements of voice (diathesis, genera verbi), i.e. it is put on a par with passive, reflexive or reciprocal-cooperative.\(^1\) Unlike the other categories, however, the formation of the causative is far from being automatic and one is inclined to place it in the realm of derivatives rather than among grammatical categories. Thus, for instance, in Modern Turkish the following suffixes are used to build the (more or less) regular

\(^1\) Strictly speaking, the cooperative is not a voice but a manner of action (Aktionsart), since it does not change the syntactic relation between the agent and the patient, i.e. their functioning as the subject and the object in a sentence, which has rightly been pointed out by M. Stachowski (2007, 244/13.1.c). The reciprocal, on the other hand, does introduce a specific relation between the two, namely one wherein several beings perform simultaneously both functions, and hence it can be counted among voices. Yet the problem is that – in contrast to Mongolian for example (cf. Poppe 1974, 62–63/232–234) – in the Turkic languages the cooperative and the reciprocal are usually regarded as one category on the basis of their formal coincidence.
1.1. passive: -il-, e.g. sev- ‘to love’ → sev-il- ‘to be loved’
1.2. passive-reflexive: -(i)n-, e.g. yıka- ‘to wash’ → yıka-n- ‘to be washed, to wash oneself’
1.3. reciprocal-cooperative: -(i)ş-, e.g. vur- ‘to hit’ → vur-uş- ‘to fight each other’.

By contrast, the causative is formed by means of a vast array of morphemes, their choice not being governed by any strict rules – even if it is possible to discern some general tendencies. Taking again Modern Turkish as an example, the suffixes in question are as shown (for some details of their distribution, see Ersen-Rasch 2004, 193–196/18.3; Stachowski 2007, 250–257/13.5):
1.4. causative:

- dir-, e.g. ye- ‘to eat’ → ye-dir- ‘to feed’
- t-, e.g. hatırla- ‘to remember, to recollect’ → hatırla-t- ‘to remind’
- it-, e.g. kork- ‘to fear’ → kork-ut- ‘to frighten, to scare’
- ir-, e.g. düş- ‘to fall’ → düş-ür- ‘to drop, to let fall’
- er-, e.g. git- ‘to go’ → gid-er- ‘to remove’

others (isolated), e.g. em- ‘to suck’ → em-zir- (~ em-dir-) ‘to suckle, to nurse’.2

2. Old (and Middle) Turkic had at its disposal still greater a set of causative morphemes, which can be listed as follows (Brockelmann 1954, 206–211/151; Erdal 1991, II, 706–847; Gabain 1974, 80–83/155, 161, 165–167; Şervaşidze 1986, 38–43; cf. also Räsänen 1957, 153–159):
2.1. -(u)r- -tur- -gur-
   -(X)t- -gXt-
   -(X)z- -tXz- (~gXz-).

What made this early Turkic category even less regular than in Modern Turkish is the fact that some verbs combined with more than one suffix (sometimes in different chronological layers, sometimes merely on a synonymous basis), e.g.:

2 As for the unreliability of any formulated rules, cf. e.g. seç- ‘to choose’ → seç-tir- ‘to cause to choose’ vs geç- ‘to pass, to go through’ → geç-ir- ‘to move, to transfer’, or ak- ‘to flow’ → ak-ıt- ‘to let flow, to pour’ vs çık- ‘to go out’ → çıkt-ar- ‘to take out’. That the causative can be an absolutely regular grammatical category is confirmed by Japanese, where it is formed from virtually any verb by means of one suffix only, -(s)ase- (synonymous colloquial variant: -(s)as-).
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2.2. öl- ‘to die’ → öl-ür- ~ (later) öl-dür- ‘to kill’

ölur- ‘to sit’ → olur-t- ‘to seat’

tut- ‘to hold, to grasp’ → tut-üz- ‘to entrust’
amryl- ‘to be at peace, to calm down’ → amryl-tür- ‘to calm, to pacify’

bil- ‘to know’ → bil-tür- ~ bil-tiz- ~ bil-düz- ‘to make known, to inform’

bul- ‘to find’ → bul-tür- ~ bul-duz- ‘to make/let find’

az- ‘to go astray, to lose one’s way’ → az-gur- ‘to lead astray’

tod- ‘to be full/satiated’ → tod-gur- ‘to satiate, to satisfy’

kör- ‘to see’ → kör-gür- ~ kör-git- ~ kör-güt- ~ (Middle Tk) kör-güz- ‘to show’

jat- ‘to lie down’ → jat-gür- ~ (Middle Tk) jat-gyz- ‘to make lie down’.

It seems most reasonable to analyse the formatives -tur- and -tXz-, together with Modern Turkish -zir- (cf. em-zir- in 1.4 above) as compound suffixes in which two causative morphemes have been accumulated, i.e. as -t-ur-, -t-Xz- and -z-ir-, respectively, yet not – as might be expected – with a double causative meaning, but with a single one. Such accumulations can be observed at other stages of linguistic development and in other Turkic languages too; in Karaim (KRPS, s.vv.) and Modern Turkish, for instance, one encounters the following derivatives:

2.3. ax- ‘течь, струиться’ → aγ-yz- ~ aγ-yz-dyr- ‘лить, выливать, проливать’

em- ‘сосать’ → em-iź- ~ em-iź-dir- ‘кормить грудью, давать сосать’

atłan- ‘сесть на коня’ → atłan-dyr- ~ atłan-yyz-dyr- ‘сажать на коня’

2.4. de- ‘to say’ → (de-dir- ~) de-dir-t- ‘to make/let say’.

The etymologically double-causative nature of -t-ur- and -t-Xz- was already noticed by G. J. Ramstedt (1912, 28/32, 48–49/59) and it has later been acknowledged by many other scholars. Accumulation of isofunctional morphemes without adding to their meaning is after all nothing unusual among the languages of the world, be it for the phonetic or semantic attribution, or any other reasons. To cite but a few examples without going into details as to the causes for their origin:

2.5. English children = child-re- (< Middle English child-re < late Old English ʾcild-ru; cf. German Lämm-er ‘lambs’) + -(e)n (cf. English ox-en)
Spanish conmigo ‘with me’ = con- (< Latin cum ‘with’) + -mi-go
(< Latin me-cum ‘with me’)

Bulgarian вода ‘in the water’ vs гора ‘in the forest’;

Polish wniwecz ‘[to reduce] to ashes / to rubble’ = w- (< *vō ‘into’) +
niwecz (< *ni-vō-čō ‘into nothing (lit. not-into-what))

Japanese kodomo-tachi ‘children’ = ko-domo- ‘child(ren)’ (< Old
Japanese ko₁-do₂mo ‘children’ = ko₁- ‘child(ren)’ + -do₂mo plural)
+ -tachi plural

Japanese omikuji ‘fortune slip (paper slip drawn at a shrine or temple
to tell one’s fortune)’ = o- honorific prefix + -mi- honorific prefix +
-kuji ‘lot, lottery, draw, raffle’.

By the same token one could easily analyse Old and Middle Turkic -gur-,
-gXt- and -gXz- into -g-ur-, -g-Xt- and -g-Xz-, respectively, the second
element of which would be the already mentioned causative formatives in
-ur-, -Xt- and -Xz-.

3 Nonetheless, it does not yet decide the original function of the mor-
pheme *-g- itself. Thus for G. J. Ramstedt (1912, 19–20/22, 27–28/31)
the suffix goes back to proto-Altaic passive – which although not entirely
senseless, seems little probable, for causative passive formations are rather
closer to simple verbs than to causatives themselves (cf. Modern Turkish
daya- ‘to lean sth against, to base sth on’ → daya-n- ‘to lean against, to
be based on’ → daya-n-dır- ‘to lean sth on’).

A. v. Gabain (1974, 393/27), on the other hand, interprets this *-g- as
the suffix forming deverbal nouns, involving also -tur- in her elucidation:

Die Entstehung des fakt. -γur- ist aus -γ+u-r- zu denken, da auch
ein -γut- belegt ist: kör-γüt- (Mait. 36) „erleben lassen“ < -g+ü-t-;
ebenso ist -tur- aus -t+u-r- entstanden.

One would have to assume here the existence of deverbal substantives in
-g and -t (both attested as such already in Old Turkic, cf. Gabain 1974,
70/109, 75/131), then of verbs formed from these nouns by means of the
suffix -u- (again, attested in Old Turkic, cf. Gabain 1974, 66/85), and only

3 Even more expanded is Japanese omiotsuke ‘soup made from miso (fermented soy-
bean paste) [polite equivalent of miso-shiru]’ = o- honorific prefix + -mi- honorific
prefix + -o- honorific prefix + -tsuke ‘addition’, although an alternative etymology
has also been offered (see KKGJ, s.v.).
then would the causative morphemes come into play. Such an etymology, however, requires a long derivational chain, whose individual links are scarcely to be found, if traceable at all.

Lastly, C. Brockelmann explains the *-g-* very much like A. v. Gabain does, as far as the suffix -gur- is concerned, i.e. seeing here the deverbal nominal -g (Brockelmann 1954, 206–207/151.c,e). Yet, for reasons not stated explicitly, in -gXz- he prefers to single out the gerund, or participle, in -gu (Brockelmann 1954, 210/151.k; for -gu see, e.g., Gabain 1974, 71–72/115, 117/225). In either case, however, he would like to have the causative morphemes -(u)r- and -(X)z- attached directly to those nominal forms, which in the Turkic languages is simply impossible (not to mention the phonetic discrepancy between the vowels in -gu and -gXz-).

4. Since all other attempts at explaining the element *-g-* have failed (or at least remain unconvincing), it seems most advisable to place it among causative suffixes, although unlike the rest of them it was unproductive already at the Old Turkic stage. This idea was for the first time expressed – still with extreme caution – by W. Bang (1919, 16/13);4 also W. Kotwicz’s (1953, 167–168) statement, again not voiced very clearly, can be so interpreted. Some years later I. N. Šervašidze (1986, 41, 43) did not have any more doubts:

Он [= -gur-] является сложным образованием и представляет собой слияние мертвой для стадии языка ТРН [= тюркских рунических надписей] морфемы -g- и активного форманта -ür- [...] Суффиксы -tur-, -tür- и -tïz-, равно как и -gür-, являются составными: -tur/-tür- < -t- + -ur/-ür-; -tïz- < -t- + -ïz-; -gür- < -g- + -ür-. [...] В этих образованиках явно пристают элементы -t-, -r-, -g-, которые и следует признать древнейшими показателями понудительности.

Of exactly the same opinion is also A. N. Kononov (1980, 181/324.4), and the list of its supporters does not probably end with his name (cf. furthermore Kormušin 1978, 43–53/9–10).

4 The actual passage in W. Bang’s article reads (loc. cit.): “A priori wird man also geneigt sein, auch in -γ’r und -γ’z gehäufte Bildungen zu vermuten, obwohl bei dieser Annahme der erste Komponent vorläufig in Dunkel gehüllt bleibt (vgl. die mongol. Bildungen in Anm. 1)”, and in the said footnote he enumerates Mongolian “Faktitivformantien -ga, -ge, -lga, -lge und -gul, -gül”.
5. Finally it is worth mentioning that G. J. Ramstedt (1912, 10–16/9–16; 1952, II, 173–175/85) once proposed reconstructing a proto-Altaic causative morpheme of the shape *-ga- ~ *-ka-. He was later followed by N. Poppe (1973, 123–128/I.1–3), who modified the reconstruction to *-gā-. The suffix would be best attested in Mongolian, where -γa- ~ -ge- forms regularly factitive, or causative, verbs (Kalużyński 1998, 86–88; Poppe 1974, 61–62/223–228):5

5.1. bol- ‘to become’ → bol-γa- ‘to cause to be(come), to make (into)’
sur- ‘to learn, to study’ → sur-γa- ‘to teach, to instruct’
una- ‘to fall (down/off/out)’ → una-γa- ‘to throw off/down, to overthrow’
bütü- ‘to be(come) formed/fulfilled’ → bütü-ge- ‘to fulfil, to materialise’
ködel- ‘to move, to be moved’ → ködel-ge- ‘to set in motion, to move’.

In the Tungusic languages it would be documented rather scantily, although one can cite e.g. the following Evenki derivatives in which -γa- (~ -kā-) is used to convert intransitive verbs into their transitive counterparts (Kormušin 1978, 64–68/13; Poppe 1973, 123–125/I.1; Sunik 1962, 119):

5.2. umu- ‘установиться, устроиться, образоваться’ → umu-γa- ‘подготовить, собрать, наладить’
mam- ‘привыкнуть (к работе); научиться, приучиться’ → mam-γa- ~ mam-kā- ‘учить, приучать’.

As the Turkic comparandum G. J. Ramstedt (1952, II, 175/85) himself suggested “aktivierendes -q- ~ -k-”, present e.g. in Modern Turkish ya-k- ‘to light, to ignite, to set on fire’ : ya-n- ‘to burn, to be on fire’, cf. further ya-l-ım ~ ya-l-ın ‘flame’ (see also Räsänen 1957, 155). One could moreover adduce Old Turkic so-called “intensive verbs” in -(X)k-, a category put forth by some scholars (DTS, 660, s.v. -q-; Gabain 1974, 82/160; Kormušin 1978, 41–43/8; Tekin 1995, 181/6; cf. Räsänen 1957, 164–165), but almost all these formations are highly questionable (see Erdal 1991, II, 524, 645–651, especially 650–651; 2004, 228–229/408) and they are thus better left out of consideration.

It seems, however, that the proto-Turkic causative *-g- reconstructed above would be – if accepted – much better a candidate for comparison with the Mongolian and Tungusic suffixes. The credit for the first mention of this idea must again be given to W. Bang (see fn. 4).

Bibliography


DTS = Древнетюркский словарь. Edited by Наделяев, В. М.; Насилов, Д. М.; Тенишев, Э. Р.; Щербак, А. М. Ленинград 1969: Наука, xxxviii + 676 pp.


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