Inalienable possession in Ṭuroyo: A corpus study

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In our study, using the corpus of oral literature and dialogues (ca. 0.5 million tokens), we investigate the distribution of two sets of pronominal possessive suffixes in Ṭuroyo. The first set (general, frequent) suffixes can be attached to most nouns of the Ṭuroyo lexicon, while the second set (limited, less frequent) suffixes are used only for a closed set of nouns. In the focus of our study are those nouns of the closed set which can be used with both suffixes.

Table 1: Two sets of possessive suffixes for 3rd person possessor

	Set №1	Set №2
3 m.s.	-ayḏ-e	-e
3 f.s.	-ayḏ-a	-a
3 pl.	-aṯṯe	-ayye

In his grammar of Ṭuroyo, Jastrow (1967) adduces a list of 85 nouns which constitute the closed set. Most of these nouns can be split into three groups: body parts (*ʕayno* 'eye', *raḡlo* 'foot'), kinship terms (*emo* 'mother', *aḥuno* 'brother'), and inherent properties (*ʕumro* 'age', *gawno* 'colour').

On the basis of the corpus data we summarize the general trend for all three groups: body part nouns are the most resistant group and only rarely and under special conditions can take the general set of suffixes. They are followed by nouns denoting inherent properties most of which also use the limited set. Finally, for kinship terms and other nouns the encroachment of the general set is much stronger.

For body parts the use of the series №1 is usually possible when a word is used in its non-basic, or historically secondary, meaning, like in (2):

(1)   Lišon-i
        tongue-POSS-1S
        'my tongue'
(2)   Lišon-ayḏ-i
        language-POSS-1S
        'my language'

The kinship terms are the most interesting group. As can be seen from table 2 below, using *emo* 'mother', the two sets are almost in complementary distribution: 1st and 2nd persons vs. 3rd person.

Table 2: Frequency of possessive suffixes for emo 'mother'

	1 s.	1 pl.	2 m.s.	2 f.s.	2 pl.	3 m.s.	3 f.s.	3 pl.
Set №1	1	0	0	0	0	25	2	33
Set №2	122	8	42	13	5	2	0	1

Two terms within the kinship class behave differently: *abro* 'son' and *barṯo* 'daughter'. The use of the general set is more common with these two nouns, and the forms with 1st person possessor, *abr-i* 'my son' and *barṯ-i* 'my daughter', are mostly used while addressing a person. This can be further compared with the frequencies for other animate nouns, and the hierarchy we have is the following: kinship terms of ascending generation → son, daughter → non-kin relations (friend, wife, husband).

To sum up, we argue that Ṭuroyo still has a strong opposition between inalieanble and alienable possession, and the choice of the suffix is lexically determined. Kinship terms and other nouns, such as *šuġlo* 'work' and *xabro* 'word', are the ones most penetrated by the innovative suffix series. The sharp split between 1st and 2nd person vs. 3rd person for kinship terms is probably due to the egocentric nature of 1st and 2nd pronouns and pronominal elements, especially in combination with kinship terminology (Dahl and Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001).

References

Dahl, Östen and Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001), Kinship in grammar, in I. Baron, M. Herslund, and F. Sørensen (eds), (2001), *Dimensions of Possession*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 201-226.

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