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Titel: Traces of a Turkic copula verb

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Traces of a Turkic copula verb

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The article discusses possible traces, mainly in Oghuz Turkic languages, of the old copula verb *er-* 'to be', namely in third person plural copulas *-ler*, first person copulas *-(y)lm* and *-(y)lɪz*, converbs of the type **-A + er-gen*, archaic present tense forms with an *-y-* element (*<er-*) and denominal suffixes going back to combinations of *er-* + *-DIK*.

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The verb *er-* 'to be' is an old Turkic copula verb that has vanished in most modern languages, often ceding its place to the verb *tur-* 'to be' < 'stand'. Several relics of *er-* are well known, e.g. *e(r)di / idi* 'was' (past), *erse / ise* 'if ... is' (conditional), *iken* 'while' (temporal), *e(r)ken / imiş* 'obviously is / was' (indirective). The copula verb *er-* has, however, left far more traces. The following brief comments mainly concern some traces in Oghuz Turkic and adjacent varieties.

The third person present tense form *erür* 'is' is found in the East Old Turkic Tunyuuq inscription: *Ben °η bođ °n °m anda erür* 'My people is there'.¹ The same form is frequent in subsequent Turkic written languages such as Ancient Uyghur, Karakhanid, Khwarezmian Turkic and Chaghatay. Rather early, however, there is a tendency to use *turur*, present tense of *tur-* 'to stand', as the third person copula. Modern Khalaj, spoken in Central Iran, is unique in having maintained *er* 'is' < *erür* (Doerfer 1989).

Certain West Oghuz varieties exhibit traces of *er-* in third person plural copula forms ending in *-ler* regardless of the quality of the preceding vowel, e.g. *yapar-ler* 'they do'. Some forms found in Ottoman and Azerbaijanian transcription texts, Balkan dialects of Ottoman, Khorasan Turkic, etc., may let us suppose earlier forms with a front element preceding the plural suffix, e.g. **yap-ar i-ler*, with *i-* developed from **erür* (Johanson 1981). Brendemoen (1997) shows that the third person plural copula has also remained a front suffix in the dialects of Trabzon. A modern form such as *gel-miş-ler* 'they have come' would thus go back to a pattern similar to Khalaj *kelmiş el-ler* (Johanson 1981: 16). Note that the plural copula suffix also

¹ Since the intraterminal in *-Vr / -yUr* is not yet defocalized at this stage, there is no reason to render *erür* as 'will be'; Tekin 1968: 286. For defocalization of intraterminal viewpoint (aspect) operators, see Johanson 2000: 99-101.

differs from the normal plural suffix *-lEr* by being incapable of carrying high pitch. Compare the relationship between the unaccentable *idi* ~ *-(y)dI* 'was' and the accentable simple past marker *-DI* in Turkish.

Forms of *er-* may also have played a role in copula elements of the first and second persons. The modern Turkish first person non-past copula forms *-(y)Im* 'I am' and *-(y)Iz* 'we are' exhibit a postvocalic element *-y-*, e.g. *burada-yım* 'I am here'. These forms are traditionally explained as developed from the personal pronouns **ben* and **biz*.² The *-y-* element is often claimed to be a so-called 'connective consonant', a highly dubious assumption. Also in this case, it seems more appropriate to suppose earlier forms with a front element preceding the personal element, e.g. **iy-im*, **i-sin*, with *i(y)-* developed from **erür*. In some of the dialects of Trabzon and Rize, which in general have maintained rather archaic structures, free copula elements exactly of this shape are found: *iyim* 'I am', *isin* 'you are', *iyik* 'we are', etc., e.g. *çocuG iyim* 'I am a child'. The suffixed forms display *-y-*, e.g. *-ysin*, 'you are' (Brendemoen 1997, Günay 1978: 182). Compare standard Turkish *idin* 'you were' ~ *-(y)dIn* etc. The older forms *isin* etc. seem to have developed further in other Turkish varieties, e.g. **(y)sIn* > *-sIn*.

As Brendemoen (1997) shows, Trabzon dialects exhibit the form *idur* > *-ydur* 'is' in the third person, obviously a combination of a form of *er-* with *turur*. It may have been common in older stages of Oghuz Turkic. For example, Salar, whose speakers left the main bulk of Oghuz at the end of the 14th century and settled in Western China, still displays *i-dər* 'is'.

Many Turkic languages possess complex intraterminal participles of the type *-A* + *tur-yan*, expressing habituality etc. (cf. coalesced forms such as Uzbek *-digan*, Noghay *-ayan*). An older construction, which has similar iterative and habitual meanings but employs *er-* instead of *tur-*, is still present in some languages, e.g. Kumyk *barayan*, Khakas *pariyan* 'going'. Some languages only exhibit lexicalized forms, deverbal intensive adjectives, e.g. Turkish *çalış-qan* 'diligent' (< **çalış-ayan*), Uzbek *bil-ayān* 'experienced'. We may reckon with an old participial distinction *bar-yan* 'gone' (non-intraterminal) vs. *bar-a-yan* 'going' (intraterminal), the latter form going back to **bar-a er-gen*, i.e. intraterminal converb *-A* + *er-gen* (cf. Johanson 1996, 1998b: 117).

The similar roles of *tur-* and *er-* bring us to the formation of present tenses. Most Turkic languages, e.g. the Kipchak ones, use the auxiliary *tur-* according to the pattern intraterminal converb *-A* + *turur*, e.g. *yaz-a turur* 'is writing' (< 'stands writing'). It is probable that *erür* once played a similar role as an auxiliary. At least, the occurrence of present tense forms without *turur* is very old in some languages. In

² According to Korkmaz 1965, *-(y)Im* and *-(y)Iz* go back to Old Anatolian Turkish *-vAn* and *-vUz*. On analogy in the development of Ottoman personal suffixes, see Hazai 1973: 408-424.

some dialects of the eastern Black Sea coast, Brendemoen (in print) has found present tense forms, *bilüyim* 'I know', *bilüysin* 'you know', *bilüy* 'knows', *bilüyuk* 'we know', etc., which may be analyzed as combinations of an intraterminal converb (with a final vowel) and a following -y- element. The latter may go back to the copula verb *i-* (< *er-*). This type may represent an old kind of present tense formation that has been replaced by *turur* and *yorür* periphrases in modern languages. Cf. Adamović 1985: 146; for the Azerbaijani type *-eyr* ~ *-eyir*, see Johanson 1989 and 1997: 94.

Certain Turkic languages possess deverbal suffixes of the type *-DIK*, e.g. Turkish *bil-dik-ler-i* 'that / what they know'. However, some also exhibit denominal suffixes that are seemingly of the same shape, e.g. Turkmen *aya-m-diyi* 'his being my brother', *gel-en-diy-i* 'his having come'. The deverbal and denominal suffixes cannot possibly be historically identical forms. The denominal ones obviously go back to combinations of the copula verb *er-* 'be' + *-DIK*, e.g. **i-dig-i* etc. (cf. Johanson 1998a: 60). Compare the Ottoman form *i-düg-i*, which is no longer used in modern Turkish (except in the stereotype *ne idügü* 'what it is').

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