

# ON THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MONGOLIC, TUNGUSIC, AND ESKIMO-ALEUT LANGUAGES

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This paper is an attempt at a contrastive typological analysis of selected structural features of three language families: Mongolic, Tungusic, and Eskimo-Aleut (EskAleutic). While Mongolic and Tungusic, together with Japanese (Japonic) and Korean (Koreanic), are known to share many structural features in the context of the so-called Altaic phenomenon, many of these features are not particularly diagnostic and might even be regarded as coincidental with perhaps the single exception of obviative person marking. This is a feature attested also in Eskimo-Aleut. The present paper offers a somewhat more detailed discussion of this, as well as of other typological similarities and differences between the three language families in the areal context of the North Pacific region.

Данная статья является попыткой сопоставительного типологического анализа некоторых особенностей монгольских, тунгусских и эскимосско-алеутских языков. Как известно, монгольские и тунгусские языки, а также японский и корейский языки, имеют немало общих черт в контексте так называемого алтайского феномена, но многие из них не имеют особенно большого диагностического значения и могут быть даже случайными. Исключением является обвиативное лицо, которое встречается и в эскимосско-алеутских языках. Эта черта, а также некоторые другие типологические совпадения и расхождения между названными группами языков рассматриваются в статье в контексте Северо-Тихоокеанского региона.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Kazama (2003) I attempted to contrast typologically three so-called Altaic language groups (Turkic, Mongolic, and Tungusic), together with the Korean and Japanese languages. I endeavoured to contrast these languages in detail, dealing with as many features as possible. However, I could not find any characteristic grammatical similarities that could not be considered coincidental. The only similarity which seemed to be truly diagnostic and idiosyncratic was obviative person marking, observed in Mongolic and Tungusic (as discussed below). Most interestingly, this feature is also present in Eskimo.

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In the course of further research, I have found additional similarities between the Mongolic, Tungusic, and Eskimo-Aleut (EskAleutic) languages. Setting aside the issue of genetic relationships, it has to be concluded that these similarities have relevance from the point of view of the typological profiles of the languages concerned. Among possible reasons for the similarities there may be both universal tendencies and areal contacts within the framework of the Northeast Asian and North Pacific region.

In the present paper, the focus will be on the similarities between Mongolic-Tungusic and Eskimo-Aleut, though in a separate section some of their main differences will also be discussed. The linguistic data for Mongolic will be illustrated by examples from Khalkha Mongolian, while data for Tungusic will be quoted from Nanai, Uilta, and Ewen. Eskimo-Aleut will be exemplified by Central Alaskan Yupik. Other languages will be considered whenever relevant.

## 2. SIMILARITIES

Below, following some general remarks concerning the morphological systems of the languages concerned, we shall proceed to discussing in more detail the feature of obviative person, the functions of non-finite verbal forms, the nominal character of locational elements, the reference system of causative constructions, and the marking of interrogative sentences.

### *The morphological systems*

Compared to phonology and syntax, morphological systems are generally thought to be conservative. The languages of the three groups in question are basically similar with each other with respect to the fundamental character of their morphological systems. This is visible from the following circumstances:

(i) In all the three groups, morphological processes are by suffixation only; virtually no prefixes are observed.

(ii) No compounding and therefore no incorporation is observed. On this point the languages of the three groups differ from the neighbouring language families (Chukchee-Kamchadal, Ainu, Nivkh, and Japanese). In Mongolic we can find “compounds” in the synchronic structure, but morphologically they are nothing but sequences of two juxtaposed nominals, as in Khalkha *er em* ‘a couple’, from *er* ‘man’ + *em* ‘woman’ (Ichinose 1992: 284).

(iii) Reduplication is used sparingly and selectively for a limited range of functions, including, in particular, onomatopoeia, intensity, plurality, distributivity, and repetition.

The great difference between Mongolic-Tungusic and Eskimo-Aleut is in the degree of synthesis. In Eskimo – as well as in some Uralic languages – transitive verbs are marked for both the subject and the object. In Tungusic, however, verbs agree only with the subject (with the exception of Manchu, which has lost the personal conjugation). Mongolic, finally, has originally no person marking on the verb (though secondary systems of personal forms have developed in several Western and Northern Mongolic languages).

Eskimo also has a very rich system of derivational suffixes, which represent its “polysynthetic” character. But, as Sapir (1921: 128) says, “a polysynthetic language illustrates no principles that are not already exemplified in the more familiar synthetic languages [...] the three terms (analytic, synthetic and polysynthetic) are purely quantitative [...] and relative.” Derivational suffixes similar to those of Eskimo are observed also in Tungusic languages (Kazama 2011) but the frequency and productivity of the Tungusic derivational suffixes are very limited compared to those of Eskimo. Below are some examples from Tungusic (the capital letters represent variation due to vowel harmony):

- N > N: Ewenki *-nʃA* ‘big’ (augmentative), *-kAAʌn* ‘small’ (diminutive)  
 N > V: Udihe *-ʃisi-* ‘to make’  
 V > N: Udihe *-ʃku* (nomen instrumenti), *-kčĭ* (nomen loci actionis)  
 Nanai *-mʃi* (nomen actoris)  
 V > V: Nanai *-(k)ičA-* ‘to want to do’, *-lO-* ‘to begin to do’ (inchoative)

### ***Obviative person marking***

In English the following sentence (1) is ambiguous and can be interpreted in two ways (1’ and 1’’).

- (1) *He likes his child.*  
 (1’) *‘He likes his (own) child.’*  
 (1’’) *‘He likes his (= another’s) child.’*

But in the Mongolic, Tungusic, and Eskimo-Aleut languages (1’) and (1’’) are strictly distinguished, as if we had in “pseudo-English” (2) something like:

- (2’) *He likes own child.*  
 (2’’) *He likes his child.*

Compared with English, these languages have a more complex marking system of possession, which comprises possessive markers for both obviative (indirect or disjunct) and reflexive (direct or conjunct) possession. Nanai, for instance, has the following paradigm of possessive suffixes:

	SG	PL
1	- <i>ji/-bi</i>	- <i>pO</i>
2	- <i>si</i>	- <i>sO</i>
3	- <i>ni</i>	- <i>či</i>
REFL	- <i>ji/-bi</i>	-( <i>w/b</i> ). <i>Ari</i>

Therefore, the above sentences are expressed in Nanai as follows; all of the Nanai examples below were elicited from a speaker born in Najkhin in 1938:

Nanai (Tungusic)

- (3') *saasa piktə-ji uləssi-i-ni*  
 [name] child-REFL.SG like-PTCP.IMPRF-3SG  
 'Sasha likes his own child.'

- (3'') *saasa piktə-wə-ni uləssi-i-ni*  
 [name] child-ACC-3SG like-PTCP.IMPRF-3SG  
 'Sasha likes his (another's) child.'

A similar system is present in both Mongolic and Eskimo-Aleut. All of the Khalkha Mongolian examples below (Romanized from the Cyrillic orthography) were elicited from a speaker born in Övörxangaj Xajrxandulaan in 1988, while the Central Alaskan Yupik examples and analysis are from Miyaoka (2012):

Khalkha Mongolian (Mongolic)

- (4') *dorž xüüxd-ee xajrla-dag*  
 [name] child-REFL like-PTCP.HAB  
 'Dorzh likes his own child.'

- (4'') *dorž xüüxd-ijg n' xajrla-dag*  
 [name] child-ACC 3 like-PTCP.HAB  
 'Dorzh likes his (another's) child.'

Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut) (Miyaoaka 2012: 723)

(5') *may'a-m*            *pani-ni*                            *assik-aa*  
 [name]-REL.SG      daughter-ABS.3REFL.SG.SG      like-IND.3SG.3SG  
 'Mayaq likes his own daughter.'

(5'') *may'a-m*            *pani-a*                                    *assik-aa*  
 [name]-REL.SG      daughter-ABS.3SG.SG      like-IND.3SG.3SG  
 'Mayaq likes his (another's) daughter.'

This type of system seems to be unattested elsewhere in North-East Asia and is perhaps relatively rare among the languages of the world. Of course, many well-known European languages, like Slavic and Scandinavian, do make a corresponding distinction by using separate obviative-possessive vs. reflexive-possessive pronouns. In the languages discussed here, however, we have only suffixal markers for the two types of possession.

It may be added that there are also differences in the principles of obviative person marking between Mongolic, Tungusic, and Eskimo-Aleut. For one thing, for diachronic reasons, the marker of 3rd person obviate possession in Mongolian may synchronically be analyzed as a clitic, though the marker of reflexive possession is a true suffix, as are also the equivalent markers in Tungusic and Eskimo. Also, in modern Mongolian, the functions of the original 1st and 2nd person possessive markers have developed deictic and discursive functions different from possession. Further, the reflexive marker in Eskimo is exclusively a 3rd person reflexive (similar, for example, to the reflexive pronouns in Scandinavian), while the reflexive markers in Mongolic and Tungusic are used for all coreferential subjects (similar to reflexive pronouns in Slavic).

Incidentally, Ikegami (1968) claimed that "the third person pronoun" *nooni* in Uilta is better analyzed as an obviative pronoun. Kazama (2008) pointed out that the situation is similar for Nanai and Udihe, in which the so-called 3rd person pronouns (Nanai *ñoani* and Udihe *nuani*) may also be viewed as obviative pronouns. This indicates that the feature goes back to Proto-Tungusic. The distinction between obviative and reflexive possession in the suffixal markers in Tungusic must therefore be a related phenomenon.

### *Non-finite verbal forms*

In most Indo-European languages, such as English, the verbal morphosyntax is dominated by finite forms, whose frequency is very high. By contrast, the

frequency of non-finite forms, such as participles, verbal nouns, and gerunds, is considerably lower. The verbal character of participles is fairly limited and the process of forming participles is close to derivation. In complex sentences, the finite forms are used with conjunctions and relative pronouns to form narrative chains (i.e. sequential actions) in which relative and subordinate clauses play an important role.

On the other hand, in languages of the Altaic type, the frequency of non-finite verbal forms, such as participles and converbs, is very high and the use of finite forms is entirely limited to the sentence-final predicate position. Non-finite verbal forms strongly retain their verbal character, taking modifiers to their left side. The participial forms are used to form “relative clauses”, while the converbial forms are used for both “subordinate clauses”, such as conditionals, and “co-subordinate clauses”, that is, narrative chains. Importantly, Altaic-type participial forms are also used in the position of finite predicates, a role in which they replace the forms of the actual finite paradigm of the verb. (Historically, participles have been the main source of finite forms in languages of the Altaic type.)

Morphologically and morphosyntactically, participles and converbs are integral parts of the inflectional system of verbs. Together they may be viewed as tools of a syntactic category that may be termed “dependentness”, characteristic of many East, Central, and North Eurasian languages. In this system, converbs, also called “the Asian converbs” (Bickel 1998), have a wide range of functions, both subordinate and co-subordinate. Phrases with participles (or verbal nouns), on the other hand, fill the function of relative clauses, also called “the Asian attributive clause” (Comrie 1998), and form sentential complements with a nominal head (so-called “fact-S constructions”).

In Eskimo, we find exactly the same typological characteristics as in languages of the Altaic type. For reasons of grammatical tradition, the system of inflexional forms reflecting the category of “dependentness” in Eskimo is termed “mood”. The verb in the participial “mood” can be used both as the main verb of the sentence and as a verbal noun. The “relative clause” is formed by apposition of a participle/verbal noun to a noun.

Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut)

Head noun (Miyaoaka 2012: 600)

- (6) [cuka-luten    atu-llr-e-n]                      assiit-uq  
 fast-APP.2SG    sing-VN<sub>nm</sub>-EP-ABS.2SG.SG    bad-IND.3SG

‘Your (SG) having sung [too] fast is not good.’

“Relative clause” (Miyaoaka 2012: 492)

- (7) [*neqe-m nere-llr-i*]                      *ciissi-t*]                      *mik-lini-ut*  
 fish-REL.SG    eat-VN<sub>1</sub>-ABS.3SG.PL    worm-ABS.PL    small-EVD-IND.3PL  
 ‘(I now see that) the worms that the fish ate are small.’

Nanai (Tungusic)

Head noun

- (8) [*sii jari-xa-si*]                      *čukin*  
 2SG    sing-PTCP.PRF-2SG    bad  
 ‘Your (SG) singing was not good.’

“Relative clause” and sentence-final predicate

- (9) [*təi sogdata sia-xa-ni*]                      *kolaan*]                      *nuuci bi-či-ni*  
 that    fish                      eat-PTCP.PRF-3SG    worm                      small    be-PTCP.PRF-3SG  
 ‘The worms that the fish ate were small.’

Khalkha Mongolian (Mongolic)

Head noun

- (10) [*činij duul-san čin’*]                      *muu baj-san*  
 2SG.gen    sing-PTCP.PRF 2                      bad    be-PTCP.PRF  
 ‘Your (SG) singing was bad.’

“Relative clause” and sentence final predicate

- (11) [*ter zagas-ny id-sen*]                      *xorxoj žižigxen baj-san*  
 that    fish-GEN    eat-PTCP.PRF    worm small                      be-PTCP.PRF  
 ‘The worms that the fish ate were small.’

In Eskimo, verb chaining is expressed by using the relative “mood” or the appositional “mood”. In Nanai and Khalkha Mongolian verb chaining is expressed by using a sequential converb.

Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut) (Miyaoaka 2012: 902)

- (12) *tuqute-rraar-luku amii-llru-ar-put*  
 kill-PRC-APP.3SG    strip-PST-IND-ABS.1PL.SG  
 ‘We killed it, and then stripped off its skin.’

Nanai (Tungusic)

- (13) *čawa waa-raa nanta-wa-ni ač̣o-xa-po*  
 that.ACC kill-CVB.SEQ skin-ACC-3SG strip-PTCP.PRF-1PL  
 ‘We killed it, and then stripped off its skin.’

Khalkha Mongolian (Mongolic)

- (14) *ter xon-ijg al-aad ar’s-yg n’ övč-sön*  
 that sheep-ACC kill-CVB.SEQ skin-ACC 3 strip-PTCP.PRF  
 ‘(We) killed that sheep, and then stripped off its skin.’

### *Locational elements*

In all three language groups locative expressions with a concrete local point are formed with the help of locational nouns (also known as spatial nouns, or spatial). Such locational nouns normally take a local case ending. In Mongolian, however, the case ending can be synchronically absent (though this depends on how the synchronic structure is analyzed).

Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut) (Miyaoaka 2012: 287)

- (15) [*imparpi-i-m quka-ani*] *qikertar-tangqer-tuq.*  
 sea-EP-REL.SG middle-LOC.3SG.SG island-there.be-IND.3SG  
 ‘There is an island in the middle of the sea.’

Nanai (Tungusic)

- (16) [*namo tokon-do-a-ni*] *əm boaçaan bi-ni.*  
 sea middle-DAT-OBL-3SG one island be.PTCP.IMPRF-3SG  
 ‘There is an island in the middle of the sea.’

Khalkha Mongolian (Mongolic)

- (17) [*dalaj-n töv-d ~ dund*] *aral baj-dag.*  
 sea-GEN middle-DAT ~ middle island be-PTCP.HAB  
 ‘There is an island in the middle of the sea.’

It may be added that the numerals in the three language groups are also basically nominal words. Adjectives, however, are nominal only in Mongolic and Tungusic, while in Eskimo they are verbal (a feature linking Eskimo-Aleut with several other languages of the North Pacific Rim, including, in particular, Nivkh).

### *Causative constructions*

The causative in Eskimo is often used to indicate a switch of reference without actual causation being involved. The same type of causative use is occasionally observed in Tungusic (Kazama 2004), while in Mongolic it is less common, though attested in, at least, Middle Mongolian. In Modern Mongolian, the causative often has the function of a passive. The examples below are from Ikegami (1997: 60) for Uilta, Ozawa (1997: 68, in his transcription) for Middle Mongolian, Umetani (2008: 103) for Khalkha Mongolian, and Miyaoka (2012: 1420) for Central Alaskan Yupik.

Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut)

- (18) *tangrr-aqa*      *nere-vkar-luku*  
 see-IND.1SG.3SG    eat-CRF(CAUS)-APP.3SG

‘(When) I saw her, she was eating (literally: I had her eat).’

Uilta (Tungusic)

- (19) *jee-wi*              *pəlim-bəə-či-mi*              *ərkəullee-ni*  
 partner-REF.SG    hasten-CAUS-DUR-CVB.SIM    do.slowly.PTCP.PRS-3SG

‘Though his partner hurries (lit. he has his partner hurry), he is doing it slowly.’

Middle Mongolian (Mongolic)

- (20) *edüge*      *man-i*      *tarqa-gūlu-gād*  
 now            1PL.EXCL-ACC    scatter-CAUS/PASS-CVB.SEQ

*eke*      *degüü-ner-iyen*              *eri-n*              *od*  
 mother    younger.brother-PL-REFL    look.for-CVB.SIM    go.IMP

‘When we have scattered, go and look for your mother and younger brothers.’

Khalkha Mongolian (Mongolic)

- (21) *ene ceceg*    *xümüüs-t*    *gišg-üül-eed*              *xugar-čixa-ž*  
 this flower    people-DAT    step.on-CAUS/PASS-CVB.SEQ    snap-COMP-IND.PST

‘This flower is stepped on by people and snapped.’

*Interrogative sentences*

In Eskimo there is an interrogative “mood”, distinct from other “moods” in the verbal paradigm. This interrogative “mood” is used in sentences containing an interrogative word (interrogative pronoun), for example, in Wh-questions, while it does not appear in Yes/No-questions. Yes/No-questions (polar questions) are expressed with the help of another interrogative marker (the particle *#qaa*).

Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut) (Miyaoaka 2012: 1351)

- (22) *ki-na tai-ga*  
 who-EX.ABS.SG come-INT.3SG  
 ‘Who is coming (on his way)? / Who came (and is here)?’

- (23) *maani#qaa uita-lar-tu-ten*  
 here#INT remain-REG-IND-2SG  
 ‘Are you living here?’

In a similar way, Mongolian has two interrogative markers (particles), one (the interrogative proper) used in Yes/No-questions and the other (also known as the corrogative particle) used in Wh-questions. Both markers are obligatory in modern Mongolian.

Khalkha Mongolian (Mongolic)

- (24) *xen ir-sen be*  
 who come-PTCP.PRF INT  
 ‘Who came?’
- (25) *či end am'dar-dag uu*  
 you here live-CVB.HAB INT  
 ‘Are you living here?’

Among the Tungusic languages, Uilta distinguishes particles for Wh-questions and Yes/No-questions. This is probably connected with the areal interaction of Uilta with Nivkh, which has a similar system.

Uilta (Tungusic) (Ikegami (1994: 96, 97)

- (26) *əri yui xulda-ni=ga*  
 this who box-3SG=INT  
 ‘Whose box is this?’

- (27) *tari taagda=i*  
 that white-INT  
 'Is that one white?'

### 3. DIFFERENCES

Against the typological similarities, as listed above, there are also features for which the Eskimo-Aleut languages substantially differ from Mongolic and Tungusic. Such features include word order, case alignment, and the system of negation, as well as several others. Some of these differences may be secondary, due to recent historical changes, but, then, this may also be true of some of the similarities listed above.

#### *Word order*

Mongolic and Tungusic have a consistent head-final word order, that is, SOV in the sentence and GAN in the nominal phrase. In the Northern Tungusic languages, especially Siberian Ewenki and Ewen, freer word orders are occasionally observed, but these may be connected with recent Russian influence.

Eskimo, by contrast, has a largely free word order. Although the SOV order may be regarded as unmarked, it is not uncommon that the head precedes the dependent. The word order of Aleut is described as being of the OV-type, and in the sentence both SOV and OVS are attested (Ooshima 1988: 514).

It may be noted that the switch-reference system, observed in the Eskimo causative constructions (as discussed above), has sometimes been considered a characteristic feature of SOV languages. If this is so, it is possible that Proto-Eskimo once had a more rigid SOV and head-final word order than today.

#### *Case alignment*

A very important difference between Eskimo-Aleut and Mongolic-Tungusic is that the basic argument structure of the former languages represents the ergative-absolutive type, while the latter languages belong to the nominative-accusative type. The ergative case in Eskimo functions also as genitive (or vice versa), and is called the "relative" case.

It is possible, however, that the ergative system in Eskimo-Aleut is secondary. Originally, genitive subjects may have been used only in combination with subordinated verbal nouns, but with the promotion of verbal nouns to the function of finite predicates, the genitive subjects could have come to be used also in main

clauses. On the basis of morphological evidence, Johns (1987: ii) claims that a transitive construction of the type *The boy sees the dog* in Eskimo is constructed along the lines of *The dog is the boy's seen one*. Johns (1987: 45–77) also pointed out that the transitive agreement in Eskimo is similar to the head-marking possessive construction. This situation prevails also in Tungusic for the head-marking possessive construction and general finite subject agreement, which is indicated by possessive suffixes on the verb.

In Mongolic, in spite of the general nominative-accusative alignment, subordinated clauses often have the subject in the genitive (or alternatively, accusative). In some Tungusic varieties, notably Ulcha and the Southern dialect of Uilta, only the 1st and 2nd person pronouns can appear as genitive subjects.

### Negation

The systems of negation are different in all three language groups under discussion. In most Tungusic languages (with the principal exception of Manchu) verbal predicates are negated by a negative auxiliary verb, a system dating back to Proto-Tungusic. On this point, Tungusic is similar to Uralic. Originally, the conjugated forms of the Tungusic negative verb, *\*e-* : *\*e-si-*, were followed by the semantic main verb in a fixed non-finite (infinite) form (the connegative form), a construction still preserved synchronically in, for instance, Ewen. The Ewen example below was elicited from an informant born in Talaja in 1935. However, in Nanai (and a few other Tungusic idioms, including some dialects of Ewenki), the word order has been changed, and the negative verb has merged with the negated verb into a single negative form of the verb.

Ewen (Tungusic)

- (28) *ə-sə-m*                      *xaa-r*  
 NEG-IND.PRS-1SG    know-INF

‘I do not know.’

Nanai (Tungusic)

- (29) *mii*    *saa-rasim-bi* < *\*saa-ra+ə-si-m-bi*  
 1SG    know-NEG.PRS-1SG

‘I do not know.’

In Middle Mongolian verbal negation was expressed by a negative particle preceding the verb. One of the particles used in this function was *ese*, which had inflectional forms like *ese-bēsü* ‘if not; otherwise’ (conditional converb) and

(*oči-qu*) *ese-kü* ‘(to go or) not to (go)’ (futuritive or non-past participle), suggesting that *ese* was originally an auxiliary verb (like its counterpart in Tungusic).

Middle Mongolian (Mongolic) (Ozawa 1997: 141)

- (31) *ese*    *ög-be*  
 NEG    give-PST  
 ‘(He) did not give (it).’

In modern Mongolian, verbal negation is expressed by a cliticized negative particle (originally a privative noun) combined with nominal forms of the verb.

Khalkha Mongolian (Mongolic)

- (30) *bi mede-x=güj*  
 I    know-PTCP.NPST=NEG  
 ‘I do not know.’

In Eskimo, meanwhile, verbal negation is expressed by a suffix placed after the verbal stem and before other inflectional suffixes.

Central Alaskan Yupik (Eskimo-Aleut) (Miyaoaka 2012: 1281)

- (32) *qane-nrit-uq*  
 speak-NEG-IND.3SG  
 ‘He did not speak.’

### *Other differences*

Among other typological differences between Eskimo-Aleut and Mongolic-Tungusic, the following may be mentioned:

(i) Noun-verbs (*nomina-verba*), that is, stems functioning both as nominals and verbals, are common in Eskimo, especially in the basic vocabulary, while they are considerably less common (though not entirely absent) in Mongolic and Tungusic.

(ii) The grammatical category of number in Eskimo-Aleut is based on the three-fold opposition of singular vs. dual vs. plural, a feature in which Eskimo-Aleut parallels Uralic. Mongolic and Tungusic, by contrast, exhibit only an opposition between singular (unmarked) and plural (marked). Moreover, especially in Mongolic (but also in some varieties of Tungusic), singular (basic) forms are often used in the function of generic plurals.

(iii) In Eskimo the copula of nominal (equative) sentences is expressed by a suffix. Aleut, by contrast, has an independent copular stem (*a-*). Mongolic and Tungusic also have copular verbs, though they can be omitted, especially in Mongolic, in unmarked (present affirmative) contexts. Modern Mongolian has additionally developed a number of other copular words.

Eskimo has a rich set of demonstrative stems amounting to about 30 in total. Mongolic and Tungusic, by contrast, have basically only the binary opposition between ‘this’ (proximal) and ‘that’ (distal), though the synchronic systems are complicated by the presence of additional distinctions reflecting a variety of grammatical and discursive functions (for instance, emphatic and spatial demonstratives).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that the Eskimo-Aleut languages (here mainly exemplified by Central Alaskan Yupik) share a number of important typological properties with Mongolic and Tungusic (as well as with the other languages of the Altaic type). Some of the similarities, like the obviative person system and the switch-reference uses of causative constructions, are rather specific and potentially diagnostic in the context of areal typology. Other similarities, like the systems of non-finite verbal forms (participles and converbs) and the presence of locational nouns (spatials) are perhaps less significant and may be explained by universal tendencies of linguistic structures.

Since the present paper is only a first draft on the topic, it makes no claim of being an exhaustive typological analysis of the three language groups. A more comprehensive treatment would necessarily require the consideration of the internal variation within each language group (the different Mongolic, Tungusic and Eskimo-Aleut languages) as well as their neighbours in Northeast Asia (especially Nivkh, Yukaghir, and Chukchee-Kamchadal). The historical background of each language group should also be examined in greater detail. Only after these steps will it be possible to proceed towards understanding the reasons behind the typological similarities and differences discussed above.

## ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	INF	infinit(iv)e
2	second person	INT	interrogative
3	third person	LOC	locative
ABS	absolutive	NEG	negative
ACC	accusative	NPST	non-past
AL	alienability	PRF	perfective
APP	appositional	OBL	oblique
CAUS	causative	PASS	passive
COMP	completive	PL	plural
CRF	coreferential	PRC	precedence
CVB	converb	PRS	present
DAT	dative	PST	past
DUR	durative	PTCP	participle
EP	epenthetic vowel	REG	regularity
EVD	evidential	REFL	reflexive
EX	root expander	REL	relative
EXCL	exclusive	SEQ	sequential
GEN	genitive	SG	singular
HAB	habitive	SIM	similative
IMP	imperative	VN	verbal noun
IMPRF	imperfective	VN <sub>nm</sub>	nominalizer
IND	indicative	VN <sub>rl</sub>	relativizer

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