

HEAD-MARKING NATURE OF KET: AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

0. Introduction

Ket is an isolate language, spoken in the north of Krasnoyarsk Province, along the Yenisey river. It belongs to the former Yeniseian language group and has no cognate genetic ties with neighbouring Indo-European, Uralic, Turkic, and Tungusic peoples.

Ket distinctive typological features:

- system of word tones
- grammatical ablaut in the basic vocabulary
- suffixal agglutination (in nouns)
- noun class system
- highly complex polysynthetic verb
- relics of active typology within a basically nominative-type language

Ket typological parallels

- the Na-Dene family (north-western North America)
- Burushaski (South Asia)
- Basque (south-eastern Europe)

1. Different approaches to description of Ket

Some ketologists place Ket among role-dominated languages.

"Being transparent on the syntax level, role-dominated languages do not have syntactic rules, which change basic, lexically controlled coding of nominal phrases such as voice transformations. Either they do not have restrictions on using such syntactic processes as relativization, complementation, sentence coordination, raising, reflexivization, or reference switching, defined in terms of the syntactic relations" [Kibrik 2003: 156].

"It must be assumed that principle of the direct marking of the semantic roles is in general incompatible with the category of case" [Vall/Kanakin 1990: 69].

(1) *oks'-danʦa* *ə-ə-n* *onaŋ*
tree-M.ADESS leaf.PL many
'There are many leaves on the tree'

(2) *oks'* *ə-ə-n* *danʦa* *onaŋ*
tree leaf-PL 3M.SG.ADESS many
'The tree, (there are) many leaves on it'

"Theme initial position is obligatory in Ket. It is mostly occupied by one of the noun phrases; semantic thematization in Ket may be manifested in total syntactic detachment of the thematic noun phrase, that means it is not a part of the sentence syntactic structure" [Grišina 1999: 74].

(3a) *sel'-de* *kiʔ* *qo-ŋ*
deer-M.GEN new horn-PL
'deer's fresh antlers'

[Ket-Russian dictionary: manuscript]

(4a) *ob-da qà bis'ep*
 father-M.GEN big brother
 'father's elder brother'

[I.I. Serkov: fn 2004]

(3b) **sel' ki' de-qo-ŋ*
 deer- GEN new 3M.SG-horn-PL
 'deer's fresh antlers'

(4b) **ob qà da-bis'ep*
 father big 3M.SG -brother
 'father's elder brother'

(5) *ap hi?p – p-hi?p* 'my son',
buda hi?p – da-hi?p 'his son',
atna hi?p– na-hi?p 'our son'.

[Werner 1997: 117]

(6) *hi?p* 'son'

(6a) *da-hi?p*,
 3M.SG.POSS-son
 'his son'

(6b) *hi?p-da bogdom*
 son-3M.SG.GEN rifle
 'the rifle of the son'

(6c) *da-hi?p-da bogdom*
 3M.SG.POSS-son-3M.SG.GEN rifle
 'the rifle of his son'

(6d) *ture bogdom hi?p-da-s'*
 this rifle son-3M.SG.GEN-NS
 'this rifle is of the son'

(6e) *ture bogdom da-hi?p-da-s'*
 this rifle 3M.SG.POSS-son-3M.SG.GEN-NS
 'this rifle is of his son'.

[Werner 1997: 118]

We proceed assuming that in Ket

1. there exist subject-object relations,
2. there exists the case system.

2. Ket: head-marking vs. dependent-marking

CONSTITUENT TYPE	CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE	
	HEAD	DEPENDENT
1. Adpositional phrase	adposition adposition	pronoun object noun object
2. Noun phrase	possessed noun possessed noun	pronoun possessor noun possessor

3. Clause	modified noun verb main verb	modifying adjective arguments/adjuncts auxiliary verb
4. Sentence	main-clause predicate	subordinate clause

2.1 Adpositional phrase.

HEAD	DEPENDENT			
adposition	pronoun	object		
adposition	noun	object		
(7) <i>bu</i>	<i>donarij</i>	<i>ob-da</i>	<i>s'ejbes'</i>	
3SG	he.came	father-M.GEN	instead	
	'he came in the father's stead'			[Šerer 1983: 7]
(8) <i>op</i>	<i>hib-as</i>	<i>assano</i>	<i>ojon</i>	
father	son-COM	hunt	he.went	
	'the father went hunting with the son'			[Z. Maksunova: fn 2004]
(9) <i>assano-t</i>	<i>qariya</i>			
hunt-N.GEN	after			
	'after the hunt'			[Werner 1997: 72]
(10) <i>bū-ŋ</i>	<i>oŋon</i>	<i>ətn-na</i>	<i>bin'amt</i>	
3-PL	they.went	2PL-GEN	without	
	'they went without us'			[Ket-Russian dictionary: manuscript]
(11) <i>ba:t</i>	<i>ker'</i>	<i>as'ka</i>	<i>oyotn</i>	
bear(ABS)	man(ABS)	like	he.go	
	'bear goes like a man'			[Šerer 1983: 7]
(12) <i>qonoks'</i>	<i>baŋdiŋa</i>			
morning(ABS)	till			
	'till the morning'			[Ket-Russian dictionary: manuscript]

serial postposition		case ending	
<i>əyət</i>	'on'	∅	Absolutive
<i>əyətdiŋel'</i>	'with'	<i>-diŋel'</i>	Ablative
<i>əyətkā</i>	'on'	<i>-ka</i>	Locative
<i>əyətbēs'</i>	'through, along, because of'	<i>-bēs'</i>	Prosecutive
(13a) <i>s'el'-da</i>	<i>əyətkā</i>		
	deer-M.GEN	astride	
	'astride the deer'		

(14a) *lem-d əyətbes'*board-N.GEN along
'along the board'

[Ket-Russian dictionary: manuscript]

(13b) *s'el'-da *əyət-ka*deer-M.GEN back-LOC
'astride a deer'(14b) *lem-d *əyət-bes'*board-N.GEN back-PROS
'along the board'

Ket PP patterns:

a) PP with pronoun object: Pronoun+^MCASE ^HPostposition.b) PP with noun object: Noun+^MCASE ^HPostposition.**2.2 Noun phrase.**

HEAD	DEPENDENT
possessed noun	pronoun possessor
possessed noun	noun possessor
modified noun	modifying adjective

(15) *op-da hip*father-M.GEN son (dependent)
'father's son'(16a) *bu-da hip*3SG-M.GEN son (dependent)
'his son'(16b) *da-hip*3SG.M.POSS-son
'his son' (head)(17) *bot de-en*old.man 3SG.M.POSS-daughter-in-law.PL
'The old man, his daughters-in-law went outside'*olet doŋolbetin*outside they.went
[Grišina 1999: 74](18) *u: ul'-as'*

2SG vodka-COM

bek

always

a:m-diŋa

mother-F.DAT (you).come

ta:jge

'You always come to (my) mother with vodka'

[Ket folklore and household texts 2001: 42]

Ket possessive NP patterns:

a) NP with dependent possessive pronoun: Pronoun+^MGEN ^HNounb) NP with dependent possessive pronoun: ^MPOS+^HNounc) NP with dependent possessive noun: Noun₁+^MGEN ^HNoun₂(19a) *aqta ket*good person
'a good person'

(19b) *aqta den*
 good person.PL
 'good people' [Ket-Russian dictionary: manuscript]

(20a) *qa ket*
 big person
 'a big person'

(20b) *ət qa den*
 we big person.PL
 'we (are) big people'

(20c) *ət qa-ŋ den*
 we big-PL person.PL
 'we (are) big people' [Ket-Russian dictionary: manuscript]

Ket attributive NP patterns:

d) NP with modifying adjective: Adjective ^HNoun (major)

e) NP with modifying adjective: Adjective+^MPL_N ^HNoun (minor)

2.3 Clause

HEAD	DEPENDENT
verb	arguments/adjuncts

Ket verb position model (by E.Vajda)

P8	P7	P6	P5	P4	P3	P2	P1	P0	P-1
valence	incorporant	valence	adposition	durative or valence	valence	past tense or imperative	valence	base	valence

(21) *dituŋ* [*d⁸-t⁸-t⁵-[a⁴]-uŋ⁰*]
 I.her.see [1SJ⁸-3F.SG.O⁶-SU⁵-[D⁴]-see⁰]
 'I see her'

(22) *at hangəs'* *dituŋ* [*d⁸-t⁸-t⁵-[a⁴]-uŋ⁰*]
 1SG(ABS) she-deer(ABS) I.her.see [1SJ⁸-3F.SG.O⁶-SU⁵-[D⁴]-see⁰]
 'I see a she-deer' [Ket-Russian dictionary: manuscript]

(23) *hiŋ-ən-dil'-gat s'úül'-aŋ dugdɔbil'teyin* [*du⁸-k⁵-d/a⁴-b³-il'²-tey⁰-in⁻¹*]
 male-PL-child-PL(ABS) sled-PL(ABS) they.it.dragged [3SJ⁸-ABL⁵-across/D⁴-3INAN.O³-PST²-drag⁰-SJ.PL⁻¹]
 'The boys dragged the sleds' [Ket-Russian dictionary: manuscript]

(24) *qim-dil dativi* [*da⁸-t⁵-b³-t⁸*] *qim-n-naŋa*
 woman-child(ABS) she.ask [3F.SJ⁸-MT⁵-AL³-ask⁰] woman-PL-AN.PL.DAT
 'The girl asks the women' [Vajda, in press]

(25) *ət uk-uŋa tsirabingutn* [*t⁸-sirab⁷-in²-gu¹-tn⁰*]
 1PL you.SG-DAT we.taught.you [1PL.SJ⁸-teach⁷-PST²-2SG.O¹-MOM.TR⁰]
 'We taught you' [Minaeva 2003: 49]

Ket CLAUSE pattern:

a) Clause: Noun₁+^MCASE Noun₂+^MCASE Noun₃+^MCASE Verb+^MAFF_{N1}+^MAFF_{N2}+^MAFF_{N3}

2.4 Summing up marking values

Table 1. Nichols 1986:

Constituent	PP	PP	NP	NP	NP	Clause
<i>Dependent</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>	<i>Noun</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>	<i>Noun</i>	<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Arguments</i>
Ket	H	H	H	H	(D)	2/2

The full total for Ket is 3/6 (the first number stands for dependent marking values / the second – for head marking values)

Table 2.

Constituent	PP	PP	NP	NP	NP	Clause
<i>Dependent</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>	<i>Noun</i>	<i>Pronoun</i>	<i>Noun</i>	<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Arguments</i>
Ket	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D//H</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>0//d</i>	2/2

The full total is 6/3

Table 3 Nichols 1992:

Constituent	D points	H points	F points	Total
NP with noun	1	1	0	2
with pronoun	1	1	0	2
with adjective	1	0	0	1
PP with noun	0	1	0	1
with pronoun	0	1	0	1
S with nouns	2	2	0	4
with pronouns	2	2	0	4
<i>Complexity</i>	7	8		15 13 (without PP)

Table 4.

Constituent	D points	H points	F points	Total
NP with noun	1	0	0	1
with pronoun	1	1	0	2
with adjective	1	0	0	1
PP with noun	1	0	0	1
with pronoun	1	0	0	1
S with nouns	2	2	0	4
with pronouns	2	2	0	4
<i>Complexity</i>	9	5	0	14 12 (without PP)

3. Typological correlations: the Ket evidence.

1. "Head marking is associated with low complexity, dependent marking with high complexity, this is a language universal" [Nichols 1992: 113].

The lowest – 2, the highest complexity – 15; Ket - 13

2. "Verb-initial order and lack of any determinate or stated order favor head marking, verb-medial and verb final order favor dependent marking" [Nichols 1992: 113].

WO in Ket:

- normal - SOV
- frequent SVO (Russian interference)
- less frequent OSV

3. The accusative alignment is equally compatible with head-marking, double-marking and dependent-marking patterns. The ergative alignment favours dependent marking morphology and the stative/active type strongly prefers head marking morphology [Nichols 1992: 100-101].

Ket exhibits:

- primarily nominative characteristics
- active relics

4. "The occurrence of a distinction between alienable and inalienable possession is exclusively bound to the head-marking pattern" [Helmbrecht 2001: 1431]. This correlation "...may be regarded as a probable universal" [Nichols 1992: 119].

Ket has no overtly expressed alienable and inalienable possession at the synchronic level.

(26) *ūl* 'pole' vs. *dūl* 'a handle (something's pole)' vs. *būl* 'a leg (someone's pole).

GLOSSING

ABL ablative case suffix; in finite verbs, this gloss marks a derivational morpheme denoting motion away or, less commonly, accompaniment

ABS zero-marked absolutive case head noun

ADESS adessive case suffix

AN animate class

AL applicative infix (specifies that a transitive action involves a second object or instrument of some sort, such as a tool or means of conveyance)

D durative marker (appears in many stative and activity verbs)

DAT dative case suffix

F feminine class (a subset of animate class)

GEN genitive case suffix

INTR intransitive

LOC locative case suffix

M masculine class (a subset of animate class)

MOM single event, rather than multiple event

MS morphotactic separator (connector element in finite verb forms)

MT classifier of mental states and attitudes

N neuter (=inanimate) class; either singular or plural

NOM nominalizing suffix (converts other stems into nouns or predicate nominals)

O verb-internal direct-object agreement affix, or direct-object pronoun

PL plural

PST past tense

POSS possessive clitic (proclitic on noun phrases; derived from genitive-case suffixes)

PROS prosecutive case suffix

SG singular

SJ verb-internal subject agreement affix, or subject pronoun

SU superessive adposition

TR transitive

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