HOLISTIC QUANTIFICATION IN ADYGHE

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The aim of this talk is to present a hitherto undescribed construction of Adyghe (West Circassian) used to express holistic quantification (as in English *the whole X*), as well as to put forth a preliminary hypothesis concerning its diachronic origins. In the construction in question the noun or noun phrase denoting the quantified entity/set is turned into an adverbial clause/secondary predicate (see Vydrin 2008) with its normal argument position often filled by what presumably is a null pronoun, as in (1b):

(1a) *š'e-r*   **zere**-*stakan-ew*   *jə-s-ŝʷə-ʁ*
       milk-ABS   HOL-glass-ADV   LOC-1SG.A-drink-PST
       'I drank the whole glass of milk.'

(1b) **zere**-*še-stakan-ew*   *jə-s-ŝʷə-ʁ*
       HOL-milk-glass-ADV   LOC-1SG.A-drink-PST
       idem.

Entities or sets thus quantified can belong to a wide range of semantic types: cumulative and quantized entities, groups of individual objects, spatial and temporal intervals, etc.:

(2) **zere**-*l-ew*   *s-šxə-ʁe*
     HOL-meat-ADV   1SG.A-eat-PST
     'I ate all the meat'.

(3) *se*   **zere**-*brjəgad-ew*   *s-e-ŝe*
     I   HOL-crew-ADV   1SG.A-DYN-know
     'I know everybody in the crew.'

(4) **zere**-*bjəbljəwetjek-ew*   *mə*   *txəłə-r*   *če-ł-ep*
     HOL-library-ADV   this   book-ABS   LOC-lie-NEG
     'In the whole library this book is not present.'

(5) *se*   **zere**-*kjəlwemjetr-jə-pŝ-ew*   *λes.ew*   *qe-s-ḳʷ-ə-ʁ*
     I   HOL-kilometer-LNK-ten-ADV   by.foot   DIR-1SG.A-go-TR-PST
     'I have covered the whole 10 kilometers on my way here by foot.'

(6) *mə-š'*   *dež'ə-m*   *se*   **zere**-*səhat-jə-ṭʷ-ew*   *sə-š'ə-sə-.*
     this-ERG   at-ERG   I   HOL-hour-LNK-two-ADV   1SG.ABS-LOC-sit-PST
     'I have spent the whole two hours sitting here.'

(7) *tə-***zere***-nebgər-jə-pλ-ew*   *psəχʷe-m*   *tə-ḳʷa-ʁ*
     1PL.ABS-HOL-person-LNK-four-ADV   river-ERG   1SG.ABS-go-PST
     'All four of us went to the river.'

While fairly complex nominal expressions can appear in the *zere-…-ew* construction (8), certain restrictions do apply. Participles/nominalizations are prohibited; also, for reasons not quite understood, possessed and plural nominals can not take *zere-…-ew*. The latter fact, illustrated in (9), shows that the construction in question has not advanced so far along the universal path from 'whole' to 'all' (Haspelmath 1995: 364-367) as examples like (7) might suggest.

(8)　**zere**-*sene-pλǝž'-steč'an-ǯ'ed-ew*　　*r-jǝ-ŝʷǝ-ʁ*
　　　HOL-wine-red-glass-big-ADV　　　　LOC-3SG.A-drink-PST
　　　'He emptied (=drank down) the large glass of red wine.'

(9)　**š'e-r*　　　**zere**-*steč'an-x-ew*　*jǝ-s-ŝʷǝ-ʁ*
　　　milk-ABS　　　HOL-glass-PL-ADV　LOC-1SG.A-drink-PST
　　　expected: 'I drank all the glasses of milk'.

　　　Notably, the discussed construction implies that the quantified entity/set is definite, cf. English *the whole X* vs. *a whole X*, Russian *ves' X* vs. *celyj X*, etc.. If the quantified entity/set is not uniquely identifiable by the speech act participants, various adverbs of quantification are used instead.
　　　Adyghe is peculiar in that it employs morphosyntactic, rather than lexical, means to encode the idea of 'whole'. This language possesses a whole family of constructions involving the prefixal component *zere-*, which, as we have shown elsewhere (Gerasimov & Arkadiev 2007; Arkadiev & Gerasimov 2009), can be linked together by well-established "diachronic bridges", i.e. patterns of semantic change, despite versatility of their meanings. The holistic quantification construction discussed in the present talk is superficially very similar to two constructions from this set, those of similative comparison (10) and relative tense (11):

(10)　**zere**-*s-txǝ-ʁ-ew*　　　　*p-txǝ-š't-ep.*
　　　ZERE-1SG.A-write-PST-ADV　2SG.A-write-FUT-NEG
　　　'You won't (be able to) write like I have written.'

(11)　*č'ale-r*　　**zere**-*čǝj-ew*　　*wǝne-m*　*r-a-xǝ-ʁ*
　　　boy-ABS　　RES-sleep-ADV　　house-OBL　LOC-3PL.A-carry-PST
　　　'While the boy was sleeping, they carried him out of the house.'

We hypothesize that the holistic quantification construction should be analyzed as semantic extension (and diachronic descendant) of the construction denoting relative tense. A rough literal translation for (1b) would thus be something like 'As it was a glass of milk, I drank it'. However, more typological parallels, from Caucasus and beyond, are desirable to make a firm conclusion. While for major branches of the Indo-European language family there are well-established etymologies of 'whole'-words (Haspelmath 1995: 367-368), overall typology and diachrony of holistic quantification expressions still remains a topic for future research.

References:

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