FURTHER THOUGHTS ON GENITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS*

In a series of thought-provoking and thoughtful articles Holvoet (1995, 181; 1994, 139) suggests that the passive voice arose only in the separate history of the Baltic languages. I have written elsewhere (1995) about the agentive use of the genitive case in various Indo-European languages, but I should like to repeat here and expand a little bit on the notions expressed in my earlier publication.

Now according to Holvoet (1995, 174): “In Latvian an agentive complement, expressed by the mere genitive, can be added only to adnominal passive participles”. Note the following example¹:

(1) mātes adīti cimdi
   (gen. sg.) (nom. pl. masc. -t- part.) (nom. pl.)
   by mother knitted gloves
   ‘gloves knitted by mother (mother-knitted gloves)’

The sequence of agentive genitive and participle may also be transferred to the predicate, yielding a resultative passive, thus:

(2) cimdi (ir) mātes adīti
    (nom. pl.) (3rd pres.) (gen. sg.) (nom. pl. masc. -t- part.)
    gloves (are) by mother knitted
    ‘the gloves have been knitted by mother’

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¹ It was interesting for me to learn that Prof. Juris Dragns (who, however, has lived in the United States many years) finds that the omission of no ‘from’ before the agent is a purism and not natural. In addition he finds that without the obvious contextual implication he could understand mātes adīti cimdi as a possessive ‘mother’s knitted gloves’.
Holvoet writes further that the dainas have no full passive construction with an agenteive complement, but that such was introduced by German authors on a German model with Latv. no ‘from’ reflecting German von, e.g.,

(3) cimdi tika adīti no mātes
    (nom. pl.) (3rd pret.) (nom. pl. masc. -t- part.) (prep.) (gen. sg.)
gloves were knitted by mother

Such constructions have been ousted from the literary language mainly on the authority of Endzelīns, according to Holvoet.

In his book on the syntax of the Latvian dainas Gāters (1993, 296) writes that, as with the agentless passive, the copula is only used if a special tense, mood or the negative must be expressed, e.g.:

(4) Laba, čakla tā meitiņa,
    (nom. sg. fem.) (nom. sg. fem.) (nom. sg. fem.) (nom. sg.)
good, diligent that maiden
Kas nav mātes lutināta
    (nom. sg.) (3rd pres. neg.) (gen. sg.) (nom. sg. fem. -t- part.)
who is not by (her) mother spoiled

‘That maiden is good and diligent who is not (has not been) spoiled by her mother’.

(5) Tāda biju triju teikta,
    (adj.) (1st sg. pret.) (gen. pl.) (nom. sg. fem. -t- part.)
Such I was by three praised
Tāda piecu izvaināta
    (adj.) (gen. pl.)
Such by five censured

‘Such was I (when) praised by three, such was I (when) censured by five’.

According to Gāters (1993, 296) one encounters sporadically the expression of agent by no ‘from’ plus the genitive. The same meaning can be expressed by the Baltic genitive so that after the weakening of the original possessive meaning of the genitive with the passive participles it became possible to replace this with a prepositional phrase.

Examples from Gāters (1993, 297):

(6) Želi raud sērdienīte. No hajārabildināma
    (adv.) (3rd pres.) (nom. sg.) (prep.) (gen. sg.) (nom. sg. fem. pres. psv. part.)
bitterly sobbs orphan girl, by boyar courted

‘Courted by the boyar, the orphan girl cries bitterly’.
tricėja sërdieniête, No bajāra bildināta
(3rd pret.) (nom. sg.) (prep.) (gen. sg.) (nom. sg. fem. -t- part. part.)
trembled orphan girl, by boyar courted
‘Courted by the boyar, the orphan girl trembled’.

In Old Lithuanian also one encounters examples of the genitive of agent supported by the cognate preposition nuo ‘from’ (Fraenkel 1947, 66):

pastatitas nuog Pona Christusa
(nom. sg. masc. -t- part.) (prep.+ptcl.) (gen. sg.) (gen. sg.)
established by Lord Christ

Similarly in contemporary Lithuanian dialects we find:

čią tū gyvénsi nuo výro mylēta
(adv.) (nom. sg.) (2nd sg. fut.) (prep.) (gen. sg.) (nom. sg. fem. -t- part.)
here you will live by husband loved
‘Here you will live loved by your husband’ (LKG II 601). It is usual to ascribe the Lithuanian use of nuo to Polish influence, but this seems the natural development of the preposition coming to support the case. In the Lithuanian and Latvian use of the cognate preposition to express the agent we may see the influence of Polish and German respectively as a catalytic agent crystallizing the natural tendency of many Indo-European languages to replace a simple case construction with a preposition plus case construction.

According to Holvoet (1995, 177): “In the Indo-European languages with a literary tradition of long standing (Greek, Latin, etc.), only the agentless passive occurs at the earliest recorded stage; the full passive with an agentive complement is a later development”.

This is true, but still such passives are attested and from the point of view of case assignment one can compare the ancient Greek example:

eí tis etimató hupó toú démou
(conj.) (nom. sg. masc.) (3rd sg. psv. aor.) (prep.) (gen. sg.)
if anyone was honored by the people
(Goodwin, Gulick 1958, 261).

with a possible Lithuanian translation:

jejigu kās buvo tautős pàgerbta
(conj.) (nom. sg. masc.) (3rd pret.) (gen. sg.) (neut. nom.-acc. sg. -t- part.)
if anyone was by people honored
In Greek the agentive genitive case has been strengthened with the addition of the preposition *hupó* much as the East Baltic genitives were sometimes strengthened by (Lith.) *nuo* and (Latv.) *no* respectively. The early use of the genitive case in agent function without a preposition is attested in such ancient Greek compound adjectives as *diósdotos* ‘given by Zeus, Zeus-given’. Phonologically the Greek 3rd sg. middle aorist ending -*to* corresponds exactly to the Lithuanian -*ta*, which is called a neuter participle, although I see no reason not to connect it directly to the Greek ending -*to*. I ascribe both of these apparent passives to an original ergative construction, which only came to be interpreted as passive with the advent of the active voice in the preterit tenses.

Holvoet (1995, 175) notes Ambrazas’ criticism that the occurrence of a genitive subject in intransitive -*t-* participial constructions does not correspond to the expected case distribution in ergative languages. This is, of course, true, but there is at least one parallel for this in Western Georgian dialects, where the ergative has come to function as the subject of an intransitive verb (Boeder 1979, 443; Schmalstieg 1995, 18). Undoubtedly the Georgian dialect situation is a later development from the more original ergative situation in which the ergative case functioned as the agent only with transitive verbs. Nevertheless the situation furnishes a parallel to the Lithuanian development where the genitive, in my view, originally restricted to agency with (apparent) passivized transitives, comes to be used as the subject of intransitives. I see a parallel to this also in Old Armenian where the genitive subject (agent), which was originally limited to use with transitive verbs in the perfect tense, comes to be used as the subject of intransitives (see Schmalstieg 1995, 15–16). This common and parallel development could be used as an argument that subjecthood plays an inherent role in human languages and there tends to be a leveling out of the morpho-syntactic classes by which subjects are expressed in transitive and intransitive constructions. See also Michelini (1981, 54) with his completely justified criticism of my 1978 publication in which I expressed the erroneous view that the use of the genitive with an intransitive participle is of early date. According to Michelini: “Costruzioni di questo tipo sono, più probabilmente, dovute ad ‘analogia’ sulle costruzioni passive corrispondenti ad attive con verbo ‘transitivo’”. Thus I give up completely the ideas expressed in 1978 and now agree with Michelini’s criticism.

In addition I am inclined to reject the objection that there is no evidence that the intransitive -*t-* participle constructions at an earlier epoch had a nominative subject. I would say that there is indeed evidence that not only in Lithuanian but in other ancient Indo-European languages the grammatical subject could agree in case, num-
ber and gender with an intransitive -t- participle. Note the following syntactic collocations in which there is agreement in case, number and gender with the subject of the intransitive -t- participle:

(12) Pràeitas
(nom. sg. masc. -t- part.)
Past
time

(= Lat. praeteritum tempus with a cognate intransitive -t- participle)

(13) Pràeitą
(acc. sg. fem. -t- part.)
Last
nàktį
(3rd pret.)
night
pasnigo
it snowed

(LKŽ II 1100).

On the other hand a later genitive subject could give such a collocation as:

(14) Pràeita
(neut. sg. -t- part.)
Passed
tik
(adv.)
only
valandòs
(hour)

‘Only an hour passed’.

The difference is somewhat reminiscent of the possible Old Indic collocations ascribed by Wackernagel, Debrunner (1954, 582) to Pāṇini:

(15) gato (mrto)
(nom. sg. masc. -t- part.)
went (died)
‘yam
(nom. sg. masc.)
this one
(cf. [12] above)

as opposed to;

(16) gatam (mṛtam)
(nom. sg. neut. -t- part.)
went (died)
anena
(instr. sg. masc.)
this one

Collocation (16) can be compared with collocation (14) above, although the subject in the Old Indic example is in the instrumental rather than the genitive. The old original syntactic agreement between the -t- participle and the modified word can be illustrated by the Lithuanian collocation (to be compared with [15] above):

(17) tetušėli
(acc. sg.)
father
radaũ
(1st sg. pret.)
I found
mištà
(acc. sg. masc. -t- part.)
dead

‘I found father dead’ (LKŽ VIII 269).
The later genitive subject can be illustrated by:

(18) jō nūmirta prāeitā rūdeni
     (gen. sg.) (neut. -t- part.) (acc. sg. masc. -t- part.) (acc. sg.)
     he died last fall

(LKŽ VIII 272).

This example is to be compared with Old Indic example (16) above, the difference being, of course, that in Old Indic the subject is in the instrumental case and that in Lithuanian in the genitive case. Note furthermore that in the respective collocations Old Indic mp-t- corresponds exactly to Lith. mūr-t- both in form and function.

In Old Indic, as we have seen above, there is evidence for etymological syntactic agreement between the subject and the -t- participle itself and the use of the instrumental with the neuter of the -t- participle. But there is also evidence for the use of the genitive (as in Lithuanian). Wackernagel, Debrunner (1954, 582) quote from Patañjali the following sentences:

(19) ihāhiḥ (= iha + ahīh) sṛptah
     (adv.) (nom. sg. masc.) (nom. sg. masc. -t- part.)
     here serpent crawled

(20) ihāhinā (= iha + ahinā) sṛptam
     (adv.) (instr. sg.) (nom.-acc. sg. neut. -t- part.)
     here serpent crawled

(21) idam aheḥ sṛptam
     (adv.) (gen. sg.) (nom.-acc. sg. neut. -t- part.)
     here serpent crawled

‘The serpent crawled here’.

The older construction is represented by sentence (19) with the subject in the nominative case and grammatical agreement with the -t- participle. Later, as evidenced in sentence (20), the instrumental, and, as evidenced in sentence (21), the genitive came to have subject function also (Schmalstieg 1997, 404–405).

But I think that many Lithuanian adjectives in -t- have their origin in participles, e.g. šāltas ‘cold’ (< šālī ‘to freeze [intr.]’) and šīltas ‘warm’ (< šīlti ‘to become warm’) in such expressions as (22) ŏras šāltas ‘the weather is cold’ and (23) ŏras šīltas ‘the weather is warm’, etc. It has been suggested to me that such an expression as:

(24) teņ āš ilgaĩ šalaũ
     (adv.) (nom. sg.) (adv.) (1st sg. pret.)
     there I for a long time froze

‘I froze there for a long time’;
could be paraphrased by:

(25) teñ mànɔ ilgai šálta
(adv.) (gen. sg.) (adv.) (nom.-acc. sg. neut. -t- part.)

Sentences (24) and (25), however, understand the first person singular pronoun as the experiencer of ‘freezing’. One can suggest that a sentence such as:

(26) àš esù šálta
(nom. sg.) (1st sg. pres.) (nom. sg. masc. -t- part.)
I am cold;

in which the first singular pronoun is not the experiencer, but the subject, i.e., the sentence means ‘I am a cold person (unfriendly, not easily approachable)’ retains the earlier syntactic relationships. In view of the phonological identity of the participles in -t- with the adjectives in -t- it seems to me likely that the two formants reflect an original common morpheme, which only in the course of time, in some cases came to have separate (but similar) meanings. The older meaning is retained in collocations (22), (23) and (26).

In addition I assume that the Indo-European participles were all originally intransitive and that the passive interpretation of some participles is a later development. This explains, for example, the fact that Old Indic bhuk-ta can denote either ‘one who has eaten a meal’ or ‘the thing eaten’ and that Latin potus can mean either ‘who has drunk’ or ‘what has been drunk’. Cf. also the apparently curious distribution of the Hittite participles in -ant-, viz. active for intransitive, but passive for transitive (see Schmalstieg 1995, 3–8).

According to Holvoet (1995, 176) “the Baltic agentive genitive is genetically a possessive genitive <…> And a possessive genitive dependent exclusively on an adjective does not seem probable”. But would the diós- in Greek diósδotos ‘given by Zeus, Zeus-given’ have been a possessive genitive? Note the following examples from Pindar:

(27) ὅταν ἀγάλα διόσδοτος ἐλθῃ
(conj.) (nom. sg.) (nom. sg.) (3rd sg. subj.)
whenever brightness Zeus-given comes

‘whenever Zeus-given brightness comes’ (Pythian Ode 8, line 96);

(28) οἶδεν δὲ διόσδοτον ἀργὰν
(3rd sg. perf.) (part.) (acc. sg.) (acc. sg.)
knows Zeus-given beginning (Fragment 137, line 3)

‘knows (its, i.e., life’s) Zeus-given beginning’.

29
Could one imagine that άχυρα διόσδοτος (= Lith. Diēvo dúotas ryškūmas, blizgesys) originally meant ‘Zeus’ (God’s) given brightness’ or that διόσδοτον ἄρχαν (= Lith. Diēvo dúotą prądžiaq) originally meant ‘Zeus’ (God’s) given beginning’?

Holvoet (1995, 177) continues that such a Latvian construction as (29) tavi duoti lakatīni does not mean ‘your given kerchiefs’, but rather ‘the kerchiefs you gave’. If I understand Holvoet correctly, he assumes here a semantic shift from possessive adnominal modifier to agentive modifier. But in Lithuanian at least it is possible to imagine a syntactically parallel sentence which is still ambiguous. Thus:

(30) Atněšk sàvo prirašytus lapûs,
(2nd sg. imperat.) (gen. sg. refl.) (acc. sg. masc. past psv. part.) (acc. pl.) bring your/by you having been written full papers
bût palik švariûs ant sûolo
(conj.) (2nd sg. imperat.) (acc. pl.) (prep.) (gen. sg.)

but leave clean on bench

The sentence can be translated either as: ‘Bring the papers which you have written on here, but leave the blank ones on the bench’; or as ‘Bring your papers which have been written on here, but leave the blank ones on the bench’.

I definitely agree with Holvoet’s (1995, 179–180) notion that the objective genitive with the participles is an innovation of Baltic. Thus, for example, he writes that such a construction as:

(31) lapu vîstamais laiks
(gen. pl.) (nom. sg. masc. pres. psv. part.) (nom. sg.)

of the leaves withering time

‘the time of the withering of the leaves‘ was originally analyzed as (32) [lapu [vîstamais laiks]] and as a result of a reinterpretation came to be understood as (33) [[lapu vîstamais] laiks] where lapu vîstamais is interpreted as a nominalization of (34) lapas vîst ‘the leaves are withering’.

In a similar vein Ambrazas (1990, 84–85) writes that participles from transitive verbs which define the means, place or time of an action can be combine with a genitive of object. He gives the following examples from Lithuanian:

(35) thekos mums sakomassasis Szodis
(gen. sg.) (dat. pl.) (nom. sg. masc. pres. psv. part.) (nom. sg.)
of truth to us telling word

‘the word telling us the truth’;
(36) gélmēs  jeszkomas  Szwinnas
(gen. sg.) (nom. sg. masc. pres. psv. part.) (nom. sg.)
of depth  seeking  lead

‘sounding lead’.

According to Ambrazas (1990, 85) such constructions, which correspond to each other exactly in Latvian and Lithuanian, are based on the ancient adnominal genitive, which with the deverbal adjectives in *-mo was reinterpreted as the object of the action denoted by them. This is evident from the possibility of the use of the genitive with and without the participles in similar constructions, cf. Latv.

(37) acu/mutes  mazgājamais  ūdens
(gen. pl.)/(sg.) (nom. sg. masc. pres. psv. part.) (nom. sg.)
of the eyes/mouth  washing  water

‘water for washing the eyes/mouth’.

Thus I agree completely with Ambrazas regarding the origin of the objective genitive².

Similarly the adnominal genitive which could be interpreted as the subject of the action expressed by the participle the genitive was turned into a genetivus auctoris. Thus Latvian:

(38) auzu  plaukstamā  lāikā
(gen. pl.) (loc. sg. masc. pres. psv. part.) (loc. sg.)
of oats  blossoming  at the time

‘at the time of the blossoming of the oats’;

(39) ap  rudzu  ziēdamu  lāiku
(prep.) (gen. pl.) (acc. sg. masc. pres. psv. part.) (acc. sg.)
about  of the rye  blossoming  time

‘about the time of blossoming of the rye’.

In these examples also, where the genitive is the performer of the action of an intransitive participle I would definitely agree with Ambrazas.

There are even examples (possibly of later origin) where a relationship of place is observed between the genitive of the noun and the participle, e.g.:

² Haudry (1977, 66) writes that the objective genitive is definitely secondary with regard to the subjective genitive. Certain objective genitives may derive from a subjective genitive through the reinterpretation of a subjective genitive corresponding to the subject of a passive. Thus an Old Indic sequence such as vṛdhē...aryāh ‘for the increase of the ari’ is ambiguous with regard to either the subjective interpretation, viz., *ari vacayate ‘the ari are increased’ (passive) or the objective interpretation *vārdhayatayarin ‘he increases the ari’ (active or causative).
(40) debess braucamā dienā
gen. sg. nom. sg. fem. pres. psv. part. nom. sg.
of heaven traveling day
‘day of traveling to heaven, ascension day’;

(41) tautās ejamā dienā
gen. sg. nom. sg. fem. pres. psv. part. nom. sg.
of the people going day
‘day when the bride leaves the parents’ household’.

Such collocations as those expressed in (40) and (41) assure us of the late nature of many of these genitives which seem to depend on the intransitive participle. Nevertheless in contemporary Lithuanian, at least, both the objective and subjective genitive can co-exist in a single collocation, note the correct translation of the slogan ‘exploitation of man by man’ is (42) žmogaus (gen. sg.) išnaudojimas žmogaus (gen. sg.), see Kruopas (1963, 24; 1998, 410).

It might be appropriate here to point out that Benveniste (1966, 180) tried to show that the meaning of the Old Persian perfect was possessive, thus he claims that (43) *manā (gen. sg.) pussa (nom. sg.) astiy (3rd sg. pres.) ‘of me is a son, I have a son’ is similar to (44) *manā (gen. sg.) krtam (neut. sg. -t- part.) astiy (3rd sg. pres.) ‘of me is done, I have done’. Disputing Benveniste, Cardona (1970, 2) gives an example of a finite passive verb accompanied by a genitive with agent function (Kempt 1953, 133):

(45) avaiy ūvjiyā arikā āha
nom. pl. masc. nom. pl. (nom. pl. masc.) (3rd pl. imperf.)
the Elamites unfaithful were
utā šām Auramazđa naiy ayadiya
conj. (gen. pl. masc.) (nom. sg. masc.) (neg.) (3rd sg. imperf. psv.)
and by them Ahuramazda not was revered

‘The Elamites were unfaithful and Ahuramazda was not revered by them’.

The genitive of agent strengthened with the preposition ote is also known with finite passives in the Slavic languages:

Note the Old Church Slavic example from Vaillant (1964, 195 [Matthew 3:6]):

(46) krjštaaxo sć ote nego
3rd pl. imperf. refl. ptc1. prep. gen. sg.
were baptized by him

‘They were baptized by him’.
In Old Russian one encounters the example (SRJ 177):

(47) Князь Дмитрий / postrigaj / v černici / i
      (nom. sg. masc.) (3rd sg. pret.) (prep.) (nom./acc. pl.) (conj.)

Prince Dmitri was shorn into monks and

vъ sximu ot episkopa Rostovskogo Ignatija
(prep.) (acc. sg.) (prep.) (gen. sg.) (gen. sg. masc.) (gen. sg.)

into schema by bishop of Rostov Ignatius

‘Prince Dmitri was admitted into the strictest monastic order (schema) by Ignatius, Bishop of Rostov’.

B e n v e n i s t e (1971, 159) compares Old Armenian:

(48) nora ĕ handerj
      (gen. sg.) (3rd pres.) (nom. sg.)

of him is clothing

Lat. eius est vestimentum ‘id.’ = habet vestimentum ‘he has clothing’ with;

(49) nora ĕ gorceal
      (gen. sg.) (3rd pres.) (participle)

of him is done

Lat. eius est factum ‘id.’ = habet factum ‘he has done’.

According to the rule in Old Armenian the intransitive perfect has a nominative subject and such a sentence as:

(50) na ekeal ĕ
      (nom. sg.) (past. part.) (3rd pres. aux.)

he come has (is) ‘He has come’;

is normal, whereas:

(51) nora ekeal ĕ
      (gen. sg.) (past part.) (3rd pres. aux.)

by him come has (is) ‘He has come’

(Weitenberg 1986, 10–11);

is exceptional, based on the transitive pattern, just as the use of the genitive as the subject of Lithuanian intransitive neuter participles is based on the transitive pattern. Thus, to illustrate with Latin morphology, one would say that (52) *is est ventus (cf. French il est venu) is more or less normal (L e u m a n n et al. 1965, 325), whereas (53) *eius est ventum is a later innovation encountered in Old Armenian, cf. (51) above and Lithuanian: (54) jō (gen. sg.) eita (neut. sg. -t- part.) ‘he went’.
Did the genitive case originally have two meanings, viz. agent and possession or did the first meaning develop from the second separately in the history of the various Indo-European languages? Saxokija (1985, 5–11) mentions an impressive number of languages in which the ‘logical subject’ (as she terms it) is expressed by particles or affixes which also express nominal possession, e.g., Eskimo, Aleut, Hungarian, the Malayo-Polynesian languages, Uralian, Northern Caucasian and some North American Indian languages. According to Haudry (1977, 409) the expression of the author of an action as the ‘possessor’ is, indeed, conceivable. Another possibility is that there is a common meaning in the notion of ‘source’ as suggested by Danylenko (forthcoming). Haudry (1977, 409) writes: “En fait, c’est à la source commune du génitif subjectif et du génitif d’appartenance qu’il faut faire remonter le génitif d’agent: c’est un génitif d’origine, qui auprès des participes passifs désigne l’auteur de l’action”. Since in the history of the languages of the world it is so common for the notion of possession to pass to the notion of source or origin of an action, it is impossible to know whether the widely attested agentive use of the genitive in the Indo-European languages is the result of separate parallel development or whether it is to be traced back to the common proto-language. The genitive use as a source of the action of the finite (passive) verb and the occurrence of the morpheme *-s to denote both the genitive and the nominative case, suggests to me that the agentive usage is early (see Schmalstieg, forthcoming). Quite possibly the use of the genitive to denote the performer of the action does not have a single etymological syntactic source.

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