

On the reflexive-possessive markers in the Dongxiang language

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Dongxiang is a language mainly spoken in the Autonomous District of southwest Gansu Province, People's Republic of China. The Dongxiang nationality (東鄉族), as they are officially called, represents about 300,000 speakers. The Dongxiang language is one of the peripheral Mongolic languages spoken in the Gansu-Qinghai area, also known as the Shirongol group. These languages have been isolated from the other Mongolic languages and have been influenced by the surrounding Chinese dialects to a greater or lesser degree. They have common typological forms inherited from Middle Mongolian as well as features which have been induced by language contact. In this paper, I shall discuss the reflexive possessive markers in the Dongxiang language with a special focus on the suffix *-nugvun*. I shall show that the functions and use of Dongxiang reflexive possessive markers *-ni* and *-ne* are similar to those of the common Mongolic markers **-ni* and **-xAn*. The reflexive possessive marker *-nugvun* seems to be found in Dongxiang only and its origin remains unclear. In sources available from the 1980s to the 2000s, it is found associated with a restrictive number of pronouns, nouns, and idiomatic expressions and is highly grammaticalized. However, in more recent sources, it is found associated with a greater number of nouns and seems to have more semantic implications. Moreover, it is also found in a role which could be associated with that of a pronoun, and which can receive a plural and reflexive morphology. *Nugvun* can be used completely independently and is probably a calque of the Chinese dialect of Linxia 個家 *ge⁴² jia²⁴³*. This shows that it is most probably an innovation developed from the original suffix.

Keywords: Dongxiang, reflexive markers, calque, Linxia, linguistic innovation

1. Introduction and context

Dongxiang, also referred to as Santa,¹ is a language mainly spoken in the Autonomous District of Dongxiang (東鄉族自治縣) in southwest of Gansu Province² in the People's Republic of China. The Dongxiang nationality (東鄉族 *Dōngxiāng zú*), as they are officially called, represents about 300,000 speakers and is of Muslim faith. The Dongxiang language, along with Shira Yughur, Bonan, Mangghuer, and Mongghul, is one of the peripheral Mongolic languages spoken in the Gansu-Qinghai area, also known as the Shirongol group. These languages have been isolated from the other Mongolic languages and have been influenced by the surrounding Chinese dialects to a greater or lesser extent. They have common typological forms inherited from Middle Mongolian as well as features which have been induced by language contact (lexical loans, calques, grammatical borrowings, etc.). Although they are geographically quite close to each other, these languages are not mutually intelligible. Other languages of this region include Sinitic (Linxia, Tangwang, Wutun, Gangou, Qinghai Mandarin), Bodic (Amdo Tibetan), and Turkic languages (Western Yugur and Salar); they have been in contact for a long period of time and have influenced each other, resulting in mutual linguistic feature transfer and borrowing. Thus, this region is often described as a linguistic area or *Sprachbund* by researchers (Dwyer 1992; Slater 2003a; Janhunen 2007) and these languages are often the subject of comparative study (Delige'erma & Bo 2006; Nugteren 2011).

Dongxiang has been studied as from the second half of the 20th century mainly from a typological perspective and remains an understudied language. It includes language material (Todaeva 1961; Buhe 1987; Lefort 2012a; Hashengerile 2014), concise grammars (Liu 1981; Buhe 1986; Kim 2003), and studies on contact-induced change (Bao 2006; Lefort 2012a, 2012b, 2015a, 2017). The most complete description available today on the Dongxiang language remains Field's (1997) unpublished grammar of Santa Mongolian, which focuses on an internal description of the language and gives an analysis of contact-induced change, mainly from a phonological and lexical point of view. In addition, as far as I am aware, there is only

1. Some researchers refer to the Dongxiang language as Santa, in reference to the nationality's self-designation. However, the Dongxiang people refer to any Muslim person with the word Santa regardless of the language spoken. Hence I shall refer to the language the Dongxiang people speak as the Dongxiang language.

2. Dongxiang is also spoken in the Yili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture (伊犁哈薩克自治州) in Northwest Xinjiang by about 50,000 Dongxiang people who migrated there in the 1950s, but our main focus for this paper will be the Dongxiang language spoken in Gansu.

one Dongxiang-Chinese dictionary available, which has been compiled by Ma & Chen (2001).

The Dongxiang language has been in contact mainly with the dialect of Linxia (臨夏話), which has influenced it and has induced changes visible in all aspects of the language through a borrowing and calquing process. Linxia is a Chinese variety which has also been influenced by the surrounding Turkic and Mongolic languages leading to a very peculiar verb final clause structure (SOV) and to other features that are usually absent in Chinese languages (suffixal morphology, nominal plural markers, voice markers, finite temporal-aspectual markers, and non-finite verbal markers). It is possible that metatypy has occurred in Linxia (Lefort 2015b) leading to language restructuring so as to mirror the Mongolic and Turkic languages' structures spoken in the region.

The Dongxiang language, like Mongolic languages generally, has a strict verb final clause structure with suffixing and agglutinative morphology. As mentioned, most of the phonological, lexical, and syntactic elements have been inherited from 13th century Mongolian, a fact that makes researchers think that the formation of the Dongxiang language dates back to that period. However, under the influence of Chinese and through heavy lexical borrowing, other elements such as vowel harmony and vowel length have not developed (or have been lost) in Dongxiang whereas it is considered a common feature shared by Mongolic languages by researchers.³ Phonological archaisms have been widely studied by Nugteren (2011), while lexical correlation with middle Mongolian has mainly been studied by Chinese scholars (Ma 2016; Ma 2017). Other works on Dongxiang language's archaism include Yu's (1994) preliminary discussion on Dongxiang language and the linguistic features of the 13th century *The secret history of the Mongols*.

Language contact between the Dongxiang language and Chinese can be distinguished as being either historical or modern. The historical contacts refer to contacts with the Chinese dialect of Linxia, spoken by the neighboring Hui community living in the town of Linxia mentioned above, that have occurred at least since the 15th century and have been constant until today. Modern contacts refer to recent contacts with other Chinese varieties spoken in the region (classified as Northwest Mandarin dialects) and the standardized variety of Putonghua. These contacts started in the 1990s and have been encouraged by social factors including mobility of workers, development of education, and economic growth. These varieties being very different syntactically from the Dongxiang language and Linxia, their influence on Dongxiang syntax is more evident.

3. Poppe (1965) states that vowel harmony and vowel length are characteristics common to all Altaic languages in general and to Turkic and Mongolic languages in particular.

In this paper, I shall discuss the reflexive possessive markers in the Dongxiang language with special focus on the suffix *-nugvun*. I shall show that the functions and use of Dongxiang reflexive possessive markers *-ni* and *-ne* are similar to those of the common Mongolic markers **-ni* and **-xAn*, even though a few exceptions can be found in Dongxiang. However, the reflexive possessive marker *-nugvun* seems used in Dongxiang in a particular way and its origin remains unclear. In sources available from the 1980s to the 2000s, it is found associated with a restrictive number of pronouns, nouns, and idiomatic expressions, and is highly grammaticalized. However, in Lefort's corpus (unpublished 2012a dissertation), it is associated with a greater number of nouns and seems to have more semantic implications. Moreover, it is also found in a role which could be associated with that of pronoun, possibly inherited from middle Mongolian and which can receive a plural and reflexive morphology. This shows that it is completely independent and is possibly a calque on the Chinese dialect of Linxia 個家 *ge⁴² jia²⁴³*.

For this paper, I have used four linguistic materials for comparing data on the Dongxiang language, i.e. Buhe's (1987)⁴ linguistic material, Field's (1997)⁵ dissertation's examples and language samples, the textbook for bilingual teaching experimental class of Narisi Primary School in the Dongxiang Autonomous County (which will be referred to as Dongxiang Primary Bilingual School Material and abbreviated DPBSM hereunder (Chen 2002)), and Lefort's unpublished dissertation material (2012a). The DPBSM⁶ has been mainly used in the experimental bilingual school of the *zhen* of Narisi from 2002 to 2008 and has been compiled under the supervision of Yuanlong Chen (see Chen 2002). Other examples have been taken from corpus collected during two fieldwork trips in 2009 and 2010, conducted in the context of Lefort's (2012a) dissertation. The corpus was recorded among a network of speakers living in Suonanba (鎖南壩) and Maomao (毛毛), which are villages both situated in the Dongxiang Autonomous District in Gansu Province. It comprises 30 texts (14 dialogues and 16 narratives), all of spontaneous

4. Buhe's (1987) linguistic material was collected in 1981 and 1982 and consists of an introductory section comprising 47 pages (20 short chapters) of Chinese to Dongxiang translation sentences, a collection of 10 proverbs and 26 riddles, and 27 narratives of various lengths.

5. Field's (1997) dissertation is based on 23 folktales and narratives from various sources and data (including Buhe's) and data he collected himself in Linxia and Lanzhou in 1990 and 1991; they include 8 narratives and folktales.

6. The DPBSM is a set of learning materials in Dongxiang including short stories from which I selected 12 texts and which I used as comparative material for this paper.

speech and represents about 1,800 sentences.⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the examples of the Dongxiang language are from Lefort's (2012a) corpus.

2. Reflexive possessive in the Mongolic languages

Reflexive possessive markers are found in all Mongolic languages and share more or less the same functions. There are specific forms for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd persons that can be added to nouns. There are mainly two other reflexive markers with forms which vary from one language to another, the reflexive possession **-ni* and possessive reflexive **-xAn*.

In modern Chakhar, the official standard variety of Mongolian spoken in the People's Republic of China, the possessive suffix for the third person *-n* is used to indicate an association with a third person possessor, as in Example (1) (both singular and plural). The possessor can be omitted in the sentence:

- (1) *ed-nee ber-n suman deer ajil-tai.*
 3PL-GEN daughter.in.law-REFL.POSS arrow on work-COM
 'Their daughter-in-law works at the arrow (centre).' (Sechenbaatar 2003: 48)

In addition, the reflexive marker *-aang* (*-aa* in Khalkha) and its variants⁸ are used as a reflexive marker which relates the noun to the subject of the sentence without being attached to a noun, functioning as the subject itself. It can be added directly to the noun or to a noun suffixed by a case:

- (2) *bi ter ödör bogc-oong tanaid martčix-sang beekuuyuu.*
 1SG DEM day bag-REFL.POSS 2SG.LOC forget-PST to.be
 'I think I left my bag at your home that day.' (Sechenbaatar 2003: 50)

In the other Mongolic languages of the Gansu-Qinghai family, the form of the reflexive possessive marker is usually the same as the genitive-accusative case, which is referred to as the connective case.

7. For this paper, I have used Ma & Chen's (2001) and Chen's (2002) transcriptions for the Dongxiang language, which is partially based on Chinese pinyin with the following conventions: *y* = [j], *gh* = [ç], *kh* = [q], *h* = [χ], *gv* = [β], *hh* = [h], *j* = [dz], *q* = [tɕ], *x* = [ç], *zh* = [dz], *ch* = [tʂ], *sh* = [ʂ], *z* = [dz], *c* = [ts]. Standalone vowels *i* and *o* are transcribed *yi* and *wo* respectively. Initial diphthongs *ia*, *ie*, *iao* are transcribed *ya*, *ye*, *yao* and *ua*, *ui*, *uai* are transcribed *wa*, *wi*, *wai*. In this paper, the reflexive pronoun *woron* has been transcribed to distinguish it from the noun *oron* 'place'.

8. ᠪᠠᠨ ban/ben ᠶᠠᠨ *iyān* /*iyen* in written form, *aan*, *een*, *oon*, *öön* in oral communication.

In Bonan, there is only one form of reflexive possessive, which is the third person possessive suffix *-ne*. It can be added to the basic nominal stem or to the plural markers and the case endings (Wu 2003); e.g. *muzhe-ne rkurce* ‘his cat is dead’. It is in its form identical to the syncretic connective case ending *-ne*. The two suffixes can be combined:

- (3) *more-ne-ne*
 horse-CONN-3SG.REFL.POSS
 ‘of his horse’ (Wu 2003: 334)

In Shira Yughur, in addition to the basic possessive forms *-(i)ni*, there is another reflexive-possessive suffix */y-AAAn*, which refers to the subject of the verb, whichever grammatical person this may be:

- (4) *bu xwaacigh-aan jiiighajige-we.*
 1p bag-REFL.POSS loose-IMPER
 ‘I lost my bag.’ (Nugteren 2003: 274)

Mongghul also features a third person possessor *-ni* which follows the case ending and is of the same form as the connective case and also a distinctive marker *-naa* which is a reflexive possessive marker with reference to the subject of the sentence:

- (5) *qigulong bu aaga-de-naa gesnenge jur-wa.*
 last.night 1SG uncle-DAT-REFL.POSS letter write-PERF
 ‘Last night I wrote a letter to my uncle.’ (Georg 2003: 299)

In Mangguer (Slater 2003a; 2003b), the forms of the possessive and reflexive (possessive-reflexive) markers are *-ni* and *-nang*. The reflexive possessive suffix *-nang* appears with noun phrases and can be found with any case marking:

- (6) *disantian-ni Madage jie-nang xige-jiang.*
 the.third.day-POSS Madage self-REFL.POSS watch-PERF
 ‘On the third day, Madage himself kept watch.’ (Slater 2003a: 90)

In Dongxiang, there are three different markers *-ni*, *-ne*, and *-nugvun*, to which I shall return in the next section.

3. Reflexive possession in the Dongxiang language

Along with the first and second possessive suffixes (*-mini/-chini*), there are three different possessive reflexive markers in Dongxiang, namely the third person

reflexive possession marker *-ni*, the reflexive possession marker *-ne*, and the reflexive possessor marker *-nugvun*.

The connective marker *-ni* is used as the third person marker as in other Mongolic languages, with reference to the possessor. It is usually attached to the possessed noun phrase and not to the possessor, and can also be used when the possessor is suffixed with the genitive:

- (7) *ingie kun-ni qioron-se-ni gaga-le baozhe-zho.*
 then man-GEN head-ABL-3SG.REFL elder.brother-INSTR fall-PROG
 ‘Then the man’s head fell (from him) to the elder brother’s (feet).’

The noun phrase is often omitted in a sentence when it has been already mentioned earlier in the discourse:

- (8) *kieli-ni fugie fugie qingen olu da-ne.*
 belly-3SG.REFL big big at.last give.birth could.not-IMPER
 ‘Her belly was extremely big but she could not give birth.’

The marker *-ne* may derive from the suffix **-Xan* (Delige’erma & Bo 2006) and differs from the marker *-ni* as it is affixed to the possessed noun phrase and not to the possessor. It can be used with first, second, or third person (Field 1997). It indicates that one owns X where X is the possessed noun phrase. It is used in the same way in Lefort’s corpus, as in Examples (9), (10):

- (9) *chi bu jinda, bu weila, chi hai-ne sayi-zhi arugva, bi*
 2SG NEG panic NEG cry 2SG shoe-REFL.POSS clean-SIMUL wash 1SG
sagvi-ne.
 wait-IMPER
 ‘Do not panic, do not cry, clean the (demon’s) shoes, I shall wait.’
- (10) *jiao-de-ni holu-zhi echi-dene gang-de-ni kha-ne*
 kitchen-LOC-ACC run-SIMUL go-SUC jar-LOC-ACC hand-REFL.POSS
wagva-zhuo.
 wash-PROG
 ‘Then, (the demon) ran to the kitchen to wash his hands in the jar.’

In Dongxiang, as in other Mongolic languages, *-ne* is often used with the reflexive pronoun⁹ *guazha*¹⁰ ‘himself-herself, which is a borrowed Chinese pronoun:¹¹

9. Reflexive pronouns in the Gansu-Qinghai area are derived from Mongolic **ejen* ‘master’ (Shira Yughur: *ejen*; Mongghul: *njeen*; Mangghuer: *jie*) or borrowed from Chinese (Bonan: *gozhe*; Dongxiang: *guajia*).

10. Also found under the forms *guajia* and *goye*.

11. See §4 below.

- (11) *khara olu yihou shi ene kun guazha-ne nie mutun*
 black become after to.be DEM man himself-REFL.POSS one tree
zhengtou-la wo.
 pillow-INSTR to.have
 ‘Once it became dark, this man took a tree as a pillow for himself.’

It can also be used with other cases and after any case marking except the connective case, which is often omitted. In the examples below, it is used with the locative (12) and the instrumental case (13):

- (12) *fugierei bogvon-de-ne nie kozi bazhi khiche-gva-dene, ese*
 cow buttocks-LOC-REFL one CLF defection get.out-CAUS-SUC NEG
baozhe-gva-zhuo gie-ne.
 fall-CAUS-PROG to.say-IMPER
 ‘A poop came out of the cow’s buttocks but did not fall.’
- (13) *ingiese Faguo urou-ghala-ne khirei-se mejie-wo be.*
 then France letter-INSTR-REFL.POSS get.out-CAUS know-PERF DM
 ‘Then she writes with the French letters of her (computer) and she understands.’

Kim (2003: 357) gives the following contrastive examples between *-ni* and *-ne*:

- (14) a. *hhe oqinjio-ni-ni nie egvi-wo*
 3SG elder.sister-GEN-3REFL one to.hit-PERF
 ‘He hits his (someone else’s) sister’
- b. *hhe oqinjio-ne nie egvi-wo*
 3SG elder.sister-GEN-REFL.POSS one to.hit-PERF
 ‘He hits his (own) sister’

The third person suffix *-ni* can sometimes be used as a reference to a noun phrase which is not of the third person but of the first person in indirect speech in reference to the quoted speaker:

- (15) *woron shi zhenzhenji waiguokun bushuo¹², wori ana-ni*
 1SG.REFL to.be really foreigner not.to.be 1SG.REFL.GEN mom-3SG.REFL
bushuo,¹³ ada-ni enbe-ne.
 not.to.be-IMPER dad-3SG.REFL to.be-IMPER
 ‘I am not a real foreigner, my mom is not, but my dad is.’

12. Contraction of *bushi-wo* not.to.be-PERF.

13. Ibidem.

In other sources (DPBSM, Chen 2002), the difference between *-ni* and *-ne* is sometimes unclear and it seems that one can be used for the other. In the example below, the two markers are associated with the reflexive pronoun *goye*¹⁴ ‘one.self’:

- (16) *goye-ne sumula-dane nie kiele, tongxue-la-le nie taolin gie.*
 oneself-REFL.POSS think-SUC one speak classmate-PL-INSTR one discuss do
 ‘Think about it and give your opinion, discuss (about it) with your classmates.’
 (Chen 2002)

- (17) *goye-ni sumula-dane, tongxue-la-le kiele-zhi chenlie-gva*
 oneself-3SG.REFL think-SUC classmate-PL-INSTR speak-SIMUL listen-CAUS
ashigvala nie pinji.
 every.body one criticize
 ‘Think about it, make your classmates hear (it) and criticize (it) together.’
 (Chen 2002)

In addition to the Chinese borrowed reflexive pronoun *goye*, there is another reflexive pronoun *woron*¹⁵ in Dongxiang of Mongolic origin, developed from Proto-Mongolic **öxer* > **öör* ‘oneself’ which has lost most of its reflexivity and is used as a first personal pronoun in reported speech¹⁶:

- (18) *ingiese, "woron xiongmao kere-ne".*
 then 1SG.REFL panda vouloir-IMPER
 ‘Then, “I want a panda” (she said).’

Possessive reflexive suffix *-ni* (19) can also be added to it:

- (19) *woron-ni zhangwang sangi gie-wo.*
 1SG.REFL-3SG.REFL flavorless porridge do-PERF
 ‘I make flavorless porridge (she said).’

The reflexive suffix *-nugvun* differs from *-ni* and *-ne* in that it is affixed to the possessor noun phrase and not to the possessed noun phrase, which does not follow the possessor noun phrase. The meaning of this marker is that something belongs to the possessor noun phrase.

In Ma & Chen (2001), *-nugvun* is not considered as a marker but rather as a lexicalized element used with first and second person pronouns (*minugvun* ‘mine’, *chinugvun* ‘yours’) and reflexive pronouns (*goyenugvun* ‘oneself’ and

14. Also found as *guazha* and *guajia*, see §4 below.

15. And its derived forms *wori* when genitive case is added.

16. This pronoun could be associated to a logophoric one to some extent, further research should be conducted about it.

*woronnugvun*¹⁷ ‘mine’). It is not found for the 3rd singular person *hhe* or *tere* (**hhenugvun* / **terenugvun*), but with its plural form *hhelanugvun* ‘theirs’. It is also found with other nouns *kewonnugvun* ‘of the children’, *kunnugvun* ‘of the people’.

In Buhe (1987), *-nugvun* is used with forms derived from personal pronouns employed with the connective case (which corresponds to the above mentioned forms *mini*, *chini*, *tereni*, etc.) but also with other nouns, e.g. *gaga-nugvun* ‘belonging to the elder brother’ and pronouns *kien-nugvun* ‘belonging to someone’. However, as Field (1997) mentions, the sentences where the marker *-nugvun* appears with possessive forms of the pronouns (lesson 1 in the pedagogical section) seem to be contrived and not very natural, e.g.:

- (20) *hhe shi nie benzi shu wo. Chi-nugvun wo nu?*
 that to.be one CLF book to.be 2SG-REFL.POSS to.be Q
 ‘That is a book, is it yours?’ (Buhe 1987: 3–4)

Even though the nouns that the suffix *-nugvun* can be combined with are restricted to those referring to people, it seems that its function is closer to that of an inflectional suffix rather than being a derivational one. Hence, in my opinion, these items should not be considered as lexical items but rather analyzed as noun suffixes. Moreover, *-nugvun* does not seem to be derived from the classical forms shared in most Mongolic languages.¹⁸

According to Liu (1981) the reflexive possession marker *-ne* cannot be added directly after the connective case. *-nugvun* would then be the form derived from the combination of the connective case *-ni* and the suffix *-gvun* (derived from *-XAn*) which is meant to transform the meaning of the original noun into what it possesses. Hence, the suffix *-nugvun* needs to be added to the noun and then be followed by the reflexive marker. He gives the following example:

- (21) *chi gie-nugvun-ne agi-zhi ire!*
 2SG house-GEN-REFL.POSS to.give-SIMUL come
 ‘Take your home’s belongings!’

In the example above, *gie-nugvun-ne* would be a contracted form of *gie-ni-gvun-ne* house-GEN-gvun-REFL. It is true that the form noun-connective **-ni-nugvun* does not occur in earlier sources, which seems to suggest that the connective case is integrated in the marker *-nugvun*. Liu probably bases this assumption on sim-

17. Transcribed *orunnugvun* in their dictionary.

18. Even though similar lexicalized forms are found in other Mongolic Languages with first and second singular persons (e.g. in the Ordos dialect *minogei* ‘mine’ and *chinogei* ‘yours’, Soulié 1923), I have not found similar occurrences with reflexive pronouns and nouns.

ilar phonological changes existing in other Mongolic languages where phonetic connective elements *g*, *k*, or *x* sometimes need to be inserted after stem case forms ending in a long vowel (or a diphthong) or *ng* (e.g. Chakhar) when using the reflexive marker *-aan*.¹⁹

As far as I am aware, *-gvun* alone is not an existing suffix in Dongxiang and would be effectively a connective element between the genitive and the reflexive marker. However, the combination *noun-nugvun-ne* as Liu (1981) describes does not appear in the Buhe corpus and only once in Lefort (2012a). All other occurrences appear with *-nugvun* with no additional suffixation:

- (22) *chi-nugvun ye sidira-gva, woron-nugvun-ne se*
 2SG-REFL.POSS also inflame-CAUS 1SG.REFL-REFL.POSS-REFL.POSS NEG
sidara-gva-zhuo.
 inflame-CAUS-PROG
 'I also set your stuff on fire, but not mine.'

In addition to its suffixal functions, *nugvun* appears as an independent stem in Lefort's corpus (2012a), which suggests that it has diversified its functions.

4. Semantic value of marker *-nugvun*: A calque?

In Lefort (2012a), *nugvun* is found as a marker after pronouns and nouns, and as an independent stem with the meaning of 'the people'. From their semantic point of view, these two elements seem to be somehow related. However, it is unclear if it is the marker *nugvun* that has been lexicalized or if it is the pronoun (originally a noun?) which has been grammaticalized.

When it is used as a marker, it is used as Field (1997) describes it and in the same way as it is found in Buhe's material (1987). However, it can be also be used with a larger spectrum of pronouns and nouns as in Lefort (2012a). Its function is for the most part that of a possessive reflexive marker but its semantic value is sometimes stronger than what is found in the other sources. Lastly, *nugvun* is also found as an independent noun which – as far as I can tell – has never been described in any other research study.

19. In fact, *-nugvun* could be traced back to proto-Mongolic GEN-NOM **-n.u-kU.n* which is better known from regular Mongolian as *-n.ai-xe/n* (with other allomorphs). In this suffixal complex Dongxiang *-gvun < -kU/n* corresponds to regular Mongolian **-ki/n > -x.e/n*, which is a nominativizing element added to some other case forms, including the genitive. The phonetic correspondence of Dongxiang (and other Shirongolic) *-U-* with regular Mongolian *-i-* in this suffix remains so far without an explanation (Janhunen 2003).

The marker *-nugvun* can be used after the same set of possessive forms of pronouns, but also after other pronouns such as *ta*, the polite form of first person pronoun:

- (23) *Zaide, ta-nugvun gie-se taoyi khura-gva-ne.*
 Zaide 2PL-REFL.POSS house-ABL reject get.out-CAUS-IMPER
 ‘Your (people) will have to make Zaide go away from the house.’

In this example, it is not clear whether the personal pronoun is unmarked or if the possessiveness is somehow absorbed by the marker *-nugvun*. Possessiveness is expressed in a metaphorical manner where the word “belonging” refers to the people of ‘you’.

It is also often used with other nouns, including proper nouns, where the possessiveness refers to anything that belongs to the person (23), literally or metaphorically. In the example below it refers to the person’s village (24) and the person’s cartilage (25):

- (24) *ali oron-nugvun ulie mejie-ne.*
 which place-REFL.POSS NEG know-IMPER
 ‘I don’t know where (to what village) they belong.’
- (25) *enei cuigu han, Nebiu-nugvun hhe shihou-de ne ingie*
 DEM cartilage not.good Nebiu-REFL.POSS 3SG moment-DAT DEM this.way
bai-zhuo, nie coyi-de khi-gva-ne.
 to.be-PROG un rub-CAUS go.out-CAUS-IMPER
 ‘This cartilage is very bad, at that time Nebiu’s (cartilage) was like this, it started going out as soon as you rubbed it.’

Morphologically, *-nugvun* can follow the genitive case which seems to contradict Liu’s hypothesis mentioned above:

- (26) *hhe-ni-nugvun gaza²⁰-zhiwo!*
 3SG-GEN-REFL.POSS reduce-PROG
 ‘His is getting smaller!’

In all the other cases where it occurs, *-nugvun* seems to have a stronger semantic value with reference to the members of the family, the household or even the people that belong to the noun (proper noun or not) it is attached to. In the example below, *-nugvun* is added to a proper name and refers to the person’s family members and by extension to his house:

20. Alternative form of the verb *gashi*.

- (27) *Enese-nugvun, hhe be, jiu yan gie-se?*
 Enese-REFL 3SG DM so what do-PST
 ‘Then what did they do at Enese’s?’
- (28) *bi udu hon kielie-zhuo, Ma Zhenguan shida, ene Abudu bijien-de*
 1SG last.year talk-PROG Ma Zhenguan side DEM Abudu 1PL-LOC
Zhongguo-nugvun wida-zhuo, Faguo-nugvun uduru torei-zhuo.
 China-REFL.POSS loose-PROG France-REFL.POSS bring stroll-PROG
 ‘Last year I said, (they were) at Ma Zhenguan’s and Abudu (said he) would
 bring along a French person, not a Chinese person, and just drop in at our
 house.’

In the Example (28), it is quite clear that *-nugvun* is not only a simple possessive marker but has a lexical value ‘to the people belonging to X’ where X is a country (France or China) and not a person. With the same semantic value, *-nugvun* is found with locatives, plurals (29), and sometimes with a combination of both (30):

- (29) *like-nugvun-la ede shuoshihua de,²¹ bijien-de Zhongguo-ni*
 scientific-REFL.POSS-PL now in.truth PART 1PL-LOC China-GEN
gudai-ni lishi-la jibenshang ulie mejie-ne.
 ancient-GEN history-PL almost NEG know-IMPER
 ‘To be honest, we, the scientific people, hardly know anything (know almost
 nothing) about ancient China’s history.’

In this example, the item *like-nugvun-la* can be translated by ‘those belonging to science’, or the ‘people belonging to science’.

- (30) *man-nugvun-la-de jin sobatu mobatu.*
 1PL.POSS-REFL.POSS-PL-DAT always short.and.stocky
 ‘In our family, we have always been short and stocky.’

At last, *nugvun* appears in a restricted number of occurrences as an independent item that could possibly be identified as a pronoun. The meaning of *nugvun* is then ‘the people’, ‘the family’, ‘the household’, which corresponds to Chinese 人家 *ren jia* (lit. people-house) and can be translated in the same way. This suggests that there are two distinctive functions of the same form that are semantically linked:

21. The segment *shuoshihua de* is completely Chinese (說實話的 *shuo shihua de* say-truth-PART ‘in truth’) and is a code-mixing insertion.

- (31) *nugvun-la ese kielie-zhuo ma*²²?
 people-PL NEG speak-PROG Q
 ‘People did not tell you?’

In these two examples, *nugvun-la* seems to be a calque of Chinese 人家 *renjia*, the use of which is similar to a third indefinite pronoun. The sentences can be almost translated word-for-word into standard Chinese with corresponding elements:

- (32) 人家 沒 說 了 嗎?
renjia mei shuo le ma?
 people NEG tell PTCL Q
 ‘People did not tell you?’

In Linxia but not in standard Chinese, it is possible to add a plural marker to *ren jia* 人家 ‘one person’ in order to distinguish it from *ren jiamen* 人家們 ‘the people’. Therefore, the addition of the plural marker *-la* to *nugvun* in Dongxiang seems naturally to mirror its Linxia Chinese counterpart. In the following example, *nugvun* seems to have the same semantic value. It is preceded by the borrowed Chinese adjective *suoyou* (from Chinese *suo you* 所有 ‘all’). Again, this construction is most probably a calque from Linxia *ren jiamen* 人家們:

- (33) *suoyou nugvun-la man gao wo.*
 all people-PL all good to.be
 ‘Everybody did well.’

One possible explanation would be that the origin of this form of *nugvun* differs from the possessive reflexive suffix *-nugvun*. It could possibly be inherited from middle Mongolian *nekün* ᠨᠢᠭᠦᠨ ‘family’, ‘people’ (É’erdengtei et al. 1980: 136) and then the lexical value would have been transferred to the suffix *-nugvun*. As Dongxiang has completely lost (or has never developed)²³ its vowel harmony, *nekün* could have evolved to the actual form of *nugvun*. However, this would be an irregularity as intervocalic middle Mongolian *k* is usually conserved as is in Dongxiang (e.g. **nökür* ‘friend, spouse’ > *nokie*). In principle, the form *nugvun* could possibly be derived from Proto-Mongolic **nögöō* ‘other’, but this is semantically unlikely. Therefore, the use of *nugvun* as an independent stem is more likely to be an innovation from an element that was originally only suffixal.

As mentioned above, Dongxiang features a reflexive pronoun, *guajia*, borrowed from Linxia, *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家 lit.: classifier.for.people-household. In Linxia,

22. From Chinese question particle *ma* 嗎.

23. Researchers have developed different hypotheses regarding this matter. See for example Bao (2006).

*ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家 means ‘own’ or ‘oneself’²⁴ and can be used alone (34) and/ or can follow another pronoun (35).²⁵

- (34) 個 家 的 事 個 家 操 心 著 唄。
*ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ *di* *shi*⁴² *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ *cao*²⁴³ *xing*²⁴³ *zhe* *be*.
 own PTCL matter own worry PROG DM
 ‘Worry about your own matters.’ (mind your own business)

- (35) 這 個 事， 你 個 家 最 清 楚， 旁 人 阿 們
zhe *ge*⁴² *shi*⁴², *ni*⁴³ -*ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ *zuei*⁴² *qing*²⁴³ *chu*⁴³, *pang*²⁴³ *ren*²⁴³ *ameng*
 this CLF matter 2SG -REFL most clear others how
 知 道？
*zhi*²⁴³ *do*⁴²?
 know

‘You are the most aware about this matter, how would others know?’

Moreover, plural *men* 們 is optionally used after *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家 when it follows plural personal pronouns: *nge*⁴³ *men* *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 我們個家 / *ngə*⁴³ *men* *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ *men* 我們個家們 ‘ourselves’.²⁶ Linxia *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家 is similar to other forms in the Northern dialects. For example, the two reflexive pronouns in Lanzhou, *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家 and *zija* 自家, can be followed by plural marker *men* 們. However, as far as I am aware, unlike their use in Linxia, those pronouns cannot be employed after other pronouns as reflexive markers. Therefore, the use of *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家 in Linxia resembles that of *nugvun* when it is used as an independent item in Dongxiang, which strongly suggests it is a calque.

In Dongxiang, *guajia* is used as Chinese *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家 as a reflexive pronoun. It can be used alone (36), followed by reflexive marker *-ne* (37) or even by marker *-nugvun* (38), but is never found as a reflexive marker:

- (36) *amin yan? amin yan? amin shi guajia nuli! jiu shi amin a!*
 destiny what destiny what destiny to.be own endeavour so to.be destiny DM
 ‘What about destiny? What about destiny? Destiny depends on one’s own efforts! This is destiny!’

24. *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家 is in standard Chinese the counterpart or equivalent for *ziji* 自己 ‘oneself’.

25. Hereunder examples from *Linxia fangyan* (The Linxia dialect research group of the School of Chinese Languages and Literatures, Lanzhou University 1996). It is also found in other Chinese dialects of the Gansu-Qinghai region such as Wutun *-gejhai-jhai*.

26. The addition of plural after pronoun *ziji* is not possible in Standard Chinese.

- (37) *alima nie qila-zho ogi-dene guajia-ne ijie agi-wo.*
 fruit one pull-PROG give-SUC OWN-REFL.POSS eat give-PERF
 ‘He picked a fruit and ate it himself.’
- (38) *guajia-nugvun sidara-gva wo ne?*
 OWN-REFL.POSS inflame-CAUS be PTCL
 ‘Did he burn his own?’

In contrast to the above examples from Dongxiang, in all the other Mongolic languages of the Gansu-Qinghai area, reflexive pronouns either of Mongolic origin or Chinese borrowing, cannot be used as reflexive markers except in Shira Yughur where *-jen* can follow pronouns meaning ‘self’ (Nugteren 2003: 273), and which is also a possible calque from Chinese.

It is possible that *nugvun* used as a pronoun has first “cohabited” with *guajia*, which has since completely replaced it. The occurrences found in Lefort’s corpus would then be remnants of this cohabitation. But *guajia* is not used after nouns, unlike *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家, so it is possible that *nugvun* has calqued its functions when it is used after nouns in order to fill the functional gap, with first a stronger semantic value (e.g. when used in reference to the family members or the people), but being afterwards fully grammaticalized to a possessive reflexive marker.

5. Conclusion

In Dongxiang, the reflexive possession markers *-ni* and *-ne* are similar to the commonly shared markers in Mongolic languages, third person possessive marker **-ni* and reflexive possessive marker **-xA/n*. In addition, a third marker, *-nugvun*, which seems to have developed in Dongxiang as an independent suffix and possibly a pronoun, is a possible calque of Chinese *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ 個家.

The connective marker *-ni* is used for the third person reflexive and is usually attached to the possessed noun with reference to the possessor. The marker *-ne* is affixed to the possessed noun phrase and not to the possessor. Besides in isolated occurrences, the functions of these markers are not different from what is found in other Mongolic languages. However, the marker *-nugvun* is more puzzling, as it seems to be having a more restricted set of functions and a stronger semantic value than the two other markers.

Nugvun can be also used independently, possibly as something that could be associated to a pronoun, with the meaning of ‘household’ or ‘family’. When used as such, it is often found with plural suffix *-la*, which makes it resemble the Linxia counterpart and can also be combined with a plural marker *ge*⁴² *jia*²⁴³ *men* 個家們. This combination of *nugvun* with plural *-la* is most probably a calque.

When used as a marker, *-nugvun* is added to the possessor and not the noun phrase. It can be combined with a restricted number of nouns and proper nouns, and it has a strong semantic value ‘the.people.belonging.to’ in addition to possessiveness. When added after pronouns *nugvun* seems to be more grammaticalized and expresses possessiveness of the possessor without specific lexical value.

The origin of the marker *-nugvun* itself is most probably inherited from proto-Mongolic, while the origin of *nugvun* when used as a pronoun remains unclear, but is likely to be an innovation. However, if inherited from middle Mongolian, it is possible that *nugvun* has first been used as a noun, which has been replaced by the Linxia-borrowed pronoun *guajia* (from 個家 *ge⁴² jia²⁴³*).

As *guajia* is never used as a possessive marker in Dongxiang, it is possible that *nugvun* has started to be used as a reflexive possessive marker in order to copy and calque its Chinese counterpart *ge⁴² jia²⁴³* 個家, which can be combined after personal pronouns. On the other hand, as *nugvun* is more likely to be an innovation developed from the original suffixal marker *-nugvun*, it is possible that Dongxiang has calqued the pronominal functions of *ge⁴² jia²⁴³* 個家. The connection would have been at first the literal meaning of the two words (*nugvun* ‘the people’ and *ge⁴² jia²⁴³* 個家 ‘the people’) which has encouraged the calquing of the grammatical functions of *ge⁴² jia²⁴³* 個家 to Dongxiang *nugvun*. Another hypothesis would be that the original calque was from Dongxiang to Linxia, where *ge⁴² jia²⁴³* 個家 has calqued *-nugvun* suffixal functions. It is also possible that Dongxiang’s *nugvun* has calqued back the pronominal functions of *ge⁴² jia²⁴³* 個家.

In any case, the process where functions of Linxia and Dongxiang syntactic stems share part of their original semantic value, and where the origin of the calque itself is difficult – if not impossible – to trace is not unusual.

Abbreviations

ABL	ablative case	LOC	locative case
ACC	accusative case	NEG	negation
CAUS	causative	REFL	reflexive
CLF	classifier	POSS	possessive
COM	comitative case	PST	past
CONN	connective case	PERF	perfective
DAT	dative case	PL	plural
DEM	demonstrative	prog	progressive
DM	discourse marker	PTCL	particle
DPBSM	Dongxiang Primary Bilingual School Material	Q	question marker
GEN	genitive case	SG	singular
IMPER	imperfective	SIMUL	simultaneous converb
INSTR	instrumental case	SOV	verb final clause structure
		SUC	successive converb

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