On the syntax of possession in Old Church Slavonic
(on the basis of historical corpora
Iliana Krapova (University of Venice Ca’ Foscari),
Tsvetana Dimitrova (Institute for Bulgarian Language, Sofia)

0. Introduction

1. External Possessor vs. Possessor Raising in contemporary Bulgarian

(1) a. Dade mi knigata. (He) gave me the book.
    Gave me.DAT book.DEF
b. Dade mu knigata mi. (He) gave him my book.
    Gave him.DAT book.DEF my.POSS

• Possessive dative clitics (as substitute for possessive genitive pronouns) are among the markers of the evolution of Bulgarian as an analytic (Balkan Slavic) language.
• First signs of the genitive-dative syncretism: around the 10th-11th c., further developments in Middle Bulgarian (12th-14th c.,); around the 16th c. (Mirčev 1978) the possessive genitive is already obsolete.

1.1. Two possessive constructions in Modern Bulgarian (cf. Cinque & Krapova 2009):
Possessor Raising, cf. (2) & (4a):
(2) a. Polučih ti.POSS pismoto. = a’. Polučih pismoto ti.POSS.
    Received.1SG your.POSS letter.DEF received.1SG letter.DEF your.POSS
    ‘I received your letter.’
    b. Zabravila săm mu.POSS adresa. = b’Zabravila săm adresa mu.POSS
    forgotten be his.POSS address.DEF forgotten be address.DEF his.POSS
    ‘I have forgotten his address.’
    read.1SG your.POSS new.DEF book read.1SG new.DEF your.POSS book
    ‘I read your new book.’

External Possessor, cf. (3) & (4b):
(3) a. Nameriha mu kolata. ≠ a’. Nameriha kolata mu.
    found.3PL he.DAT/POSS car.DEF found.3PL car.DEF his.POSS
    ‘They found the (his) car for him.’ ≠ ‘They found his car.’
    b. Šte ti nareža dâravata. ≠ b’. Šte nareža dâravata ti.
    will you.DAT/POSS cut wood.DEF Will cut wood.DEF your.POSS
    ‘I will cut the (=your) wood for/instead of you.’ ≠ ‘I will cut your wood.’

1 In the present work, we mainly employ the term Old Bulgarian (abbreviated as OB). The term Old Church Slavonic (OCS), also used in the literature, reflects the status of the language as being used by Slavic orthodox community (cf. Duridanov et al. 1993).
c. Otkradnaxa *mi* portmoneto ≠ Otkradnaxa portmoneto *mi.* stole.3PL *me.DAT/POSS* purse.DEF stole.3PL purse.DEF *my.POSS*

They stole *my* purse on *me.* ≠ They stole *my* purse.

(4) a. V POSS CL [NP N+ Def POSS CL] Possessor Raising (PR)


a) “affected” benefactive/malefactive predicates;

b) relational nouns of ‘inalienable possession’ (body parts, kinship terms, items of possession, etc., cf. Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1993, a.o.);

c) “possessor” dative clitics

Main argument of the talk: EP was present in OB/OCS in the special function of the dative referred to as *doubly bound dative* by Minčeva (1964) = Dative of interest (Dativus commodi et incommodi) + an implied possessive relation.

With the rise of the category of definiteness (Mladenova 2007: 348-357), and as a result of a functional reanalysis of the clause (Dimitrova-Vulchanova, Vulchanov 2006, 2008a, 2008b), and the tendency of pronouns/clitics to appear in 2P, the clausal dative pronoun came to occupy an additional position inside the NP (esp. with inalienable nouns referring to body parts) leading to the emerging of postnominal possessive clitics.

1.3. Data collected from: TOROT corpus (texts annotated also into the PROIEL database, cf. Haug, Eckhoff 2011a, 2011b); TITUS database; Historical Corpus of Bulgarian Language (HCBL) for further sketching of the process in later stages.

2. The *doubly bound dative* in Old Bulgarian: examples and preliminary observations

(5) a. da pokryjǫt sę *emou* děla *ego* (Euch.Sin., 194, 68b, Minčeva 1964: 25) to cover REFL him.DAT deeds.NOM his.GEN

'To cover for him his deeds'

b. i ovtvrěste sę *ima* oči (Mt. 9:30, Cod. Mar.) and opened REFL them.DAT eyes.NOM

καὶ ἀνεῴχθησαν ὁι οὐφαλμοί.

'And their sight was restored.'

(6) a. pomaza *emou* oči brěměmь. (Jo. 9:6 Cod. Mar., Zogr., Assem.)

annointed him.DAT eyes mud.INST

αἰ ἐπέχρισεν αὐτοῦ.GEN τὸν πηλὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς.eyes

(Scriv.1894: καὶ ἐπέχρισε τὸν πηλὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ τυφλοῦ.GEN)

'(He) annointed his eyes with mud'

b. ourěza *emou* ouho desnoe. (Jo. 18:10 Cod. Mar., Zogr., Assem., Sab.)

cut off him.DAT ear.ACC right.ACC

καὶ πέκοψεν αὐτοῦ.GEN τὸ ὠταρίον.eye τὸ δεξιόν.right

'(He) cut off his right ear.'

Two theoretical options for the pronominal dative argument: a) θ-role accumulation; <Benefactive/Malefactiv> and <Possession>; b) the possessive interpretation is not
grammaticalised but is inferred or implied (Tomić 2009; Topolińska & Bužarovska 2011), cf. Chomsky’s (1981: 35) θ-criterion:

(7) Each argument bears one and only one θ-role, and each θ-role is assigned to one and only one argument.

Cf. also Lehman (2004: 11): “in most languages, the ‘possessive dative’ is not really a function of the dative, since the possessive relation itself is not expressed. Instead, it is inferred, [...] on semantic grounds, since [eye, ear, etc. are] relational concept[s] so there must be a possessor in the situation.”

→ “True” possessor datives in OB: predicative possessors and NP-internal datives:

(8) i ne bě imă čęda (Lk. 1:7, Cod. Zogr., Assem.)
and not be their.DAT child
kai oûk ĝv αὐτοῖς.DAT tēkno
'And they had no child'

(9) a. Ioañ’est̃ imę emou. (Lk. 1:63 Cod. Mar, Zogr., Assem)
John is name.NOM his.DAT
'Ioánης ἐστίν ὄνομα. name αὐτοῦ.GEN.'
(Scriv. 1894: 'Ιωάννης ἐστί τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.GEN)
'John is his name'

b. vľprašah̆o že jeğo droužina jemou (Cod.Supr., 18, 109b, 25)
asked DISC he.ACC/GEN group his.DAT
Ŏi ďe synelďon̆tĕs αὐτ̆ŏ.DAT ĕl̆p̆ŏn πρ̆ŏs αὐτ̆ŏν.ACC
'his fellows asked him'

2.1. Properties of the OB doubly bound dative construction
- A dative pronoun referring to a human individual acting as an indirectly affected argument:
  1st and 2nd SG mi and ti -- 23 occurrences, mostly in Cod. Supr; ‘weak’ anaphoric pronouns emou ‘(to/of) him.SG.M’, ei ‘(to/of) her.SG.F’, imy ‘(to/of) them.PL’, ima ‘(to/of) them.DU’ -- 86 occurrences.
- Predicates of the benefactive/malefactive type
  - Cod. Mar. 26 occurrences of NP-external dative pronominals which 21 with affected predicates;
  - Cod. Supr. 67 occurrences of NP-external dative pronominals of which 39 with affected predicates.

(10) a. mečení otyšëčešį mi glavо (Cod. Supr., 22, 127b, 2)
sword.INST cut off me.DAT head.ACC
čiřeši με ACC ύποβαλλείν
'(you) beheaded my with a sword'

b. i škroušį jemou vše lice. (Cod. Supr., 5, 37b, 15)
and broke him.DAT whole.ACC face.ACC
kai synet̆rišv̆ αὐτοῦ.GEN τ̆ήν.ART ὄ̆ψ̆ιν
'And broke his whole face'

2 From this point of view, the term ‘external possessor’ is a misnomer. We will however continue to use it for consistency with the terminological practice.
• **Affected** arguments are typically inanimate Themes or at most animate Patients (cf. the animacy hierarchy, e.g., Nichols 1999: 160-162):
  
  - body parts > kinship terms > extended kinship > abstract properties
  - Cod. Mar.: the *doubly bound dative* is used predominantly with body parts (83% of all occurrences)
  - Cod. Supr.: frequent ‘extended’ inalienables (Guéron 2005: 594), i.e., personal belongings; as well as abstract nouns. Increase in the functional load of the construction.

*Table 1. Affected predicates and semantic NP types*

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body part (body, eyes, flesh, face, mind, head...)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended inalienables (shirt, bread, horse ...)</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Kinship (brother, daughter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extended kinship (disciple, master, friend)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract terms (thought, word, life, discourse ...)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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Arguments in favor of EP status of the *doubly bound dative*:

• rare occurrences of non-pronominal dative NPs: 6 in Cod. Mar. (6.4%).
• rare occurrences of pronominal genitives in prenominal position: 8 in Cod. Mar. (out of overall 445 pronominal genitives, 1.5%); 26 in Cod. Supr. (out of overall 417 pronominal genitives, ca. 6%).

(11) и вьзълѣ на главѣ ego възлѣжѣста (Mt. 26:7, Cod. Mar., Zogr.) and poured on head.ACC his.GEN reclining (on the table) кай κατεξειν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ.GEN ἰασκειμένου. 'And poured on his head reclining on the table'

(12) a. опь же вѣду ihь pomišleniѥ. reѥ imь (Mt. 9:4, Cod.Mar.) he DISC knowing their.GEN thoughts said them 'He, knowing their thoughts, told them'

b. I виђѣвъ isъ pomišleniѥ ihь reѥ (Mt. 9:4, Cod. Assem.) and knowing Jesus thoughts their.GEN said καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις αὐτῶν.GEN εἶπεν (or εἰδὼς instead of ἰδὼν) 'And Jesus knowing their thoughts said.'

• the dative pronoun can bind an affected NP across a PP, (13a) from Cod. Sab. Cf. Cinque & Krapova (2009) for arguments in favour of this test.

(13) a. нѣсмо дѣстина da mi [PR podь [NP krонѣ] вѣнѣдѣш (Mt. 8:8, Cod. Sab.) am-not worthy to me/DAT under roof enter οὐκ εἰμι ἰκανὸς ἵνα μου.GEN [υπο τὴν στέγην] εισέλθῃς
'I do not deserve to have you come under my roof'
b. *verigy jemou naloživše [PP na [NP vyjøj]] (Cod.Supr. 1, 19, 112a, 23)
chains him.DAT putting on neck.ACC
δεθῆναι αὐτῶν.ACC ἀλλόσει σιδηρῆ
'Putting chains around his neck'

NB! Binding is also available across PPs in contemporary Bg:
(14) a. Ne sam dostoen da ti vľjaza [PP v kaštata].
not am worthy to you.DAT/POSS enter.1SG in house.DEF
Cf. a’ Ne sam dostoen da vľjaza [v kaštata ti]
not am worthy to enter.1SG in house.DEF you.POSS
'I do not deserve to enter your house'
b. *Ne sam mu čul [PP za uspexa]
not am him.POSS heard for success.DEF
Cf. b’ Ne sam čul za uspexa mu
Not am heard for success him.POSS
'I have not heard about his success'

2.2. Extrapolated genitive in New Testament Greek
OB doubly bound dative usually translates as an extrapolated genitive in NT Greek:
(15) a. τότε διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν.ACC
then unbound them.GEN the.MASC.ACC mind. ACC
(Lk. 24:45)
tῆγδα οτργγζε ἢμτ ουμν (Lk. 24:45, Cod. Mar., Zogr., Assem.)
then unbind them.DAT mind.ACC
'then he opened their mind'
b. θεραπευσον μου.GEN τὴν θυγατέρα
heal.IMP me.GEN the.FEM.ACC daughter.ACC
icěli mi dištere- (Cod.Supr., 26, 154b, 4-5)
heal.IMP me.DAT daughter.ACC
'Heal my daughter'

- Extrapolated genitives in NT Greek are derived through the mechanism of possessor raising of the genitive clitic Gianollo (2010: 109);
- Genitive-dative syncretism in NT Greek is explained with reanalysis of the raised gen. clitic to a clausal position where it could be interpreted as structurally equivalent to a sentential dative (Horrocks 2007: 628f; Gianollo 2010:112, cf. also Havers (1911), König, Haspelmath (1998: 584-86) for connection with dativus sympatheticus of Classical Greek.

3. Factors for the genitive-dative syncretism in OB
- In 44 instances (Cod. Supr.), the construction appears as a single translation choice irrespectively of the Greek original (extrapolated or NP-internal genitive).
- In a number of cases, the doubly bound dative translates a completely different source structure (cf. e.g. (10a) above).
- Significantly low rate of perfect matches in translating the Greek extrapolated genitive: 1,5% in Cod. Mar. and 6% in Cod. Supr (Minčeva 1964)

The rise of the postnominal possessive pattern in OB: 111 occurrences in Cod. Supr (as opposed to the 16 found in Cod.Mar., 3 of which ambiguous). Cf. (16) with (17):
(16) a. priemy emou съвдѣтелство (Jo. 3:33, Cod. Assemani) receiving him.DAT testimony
(He) who has received his testimony has set his seal (to this that God is true)

b. i tako že ne bě ravnъ съвдѣтелство имъ. (Mk. 14:59, Cod.Mar.) and thus DISC not was same testimony them.DAT
b. kaи съдьтъ иси йъ мъартвія аўтъвъ.GEN. 'Yet even then their testimony did not agree.'

(17) a. i tako že ne bě ravnъ съвдѣтелство имъ. (Mk. 14:59, Cod.Mar.) and thus DISC not was same testimony them.DAT
b. kaи съдьтъ иси йъ мъартвія аўтъвъ.GEN. 'Yet even then their testimony did not agree.'

(18) a. a ne prѣстопити slovese jemou- (Cod.Supr., 9, 64b, 23) but not overstep word him.DAT
b. vojevoda щe пovelъ тeло jemou нe върѣшти въ rѣкъ. (Cod.Supr., 2, 12a, 17-18) chieftain DISC ordered body him.DAT throw into river
Ο ḍὲ ἡμεῖς ἐκέλευσε τὸ σῶμα αὕτω.GEN ῥιφῆναι εἰς τὸν ποταμόν. 'The chieftain order his body to be thrown into the river'

3.1. Emerging clitics in OB
- Personal pronouns mi and ti are clitics in OB (Večerka 1989: 42).

(19) a. otdadętъ ti сe grѣsi (Mt. 9:2, Cod. Sab.) forgive you.DAT REFLE sins.NOM
αφίενται σου.GEN αἱ ἁμαρτίαι (Scriv. 1894: αφέωνται σοι.DAT αἱ ἁμαρτίας σου.GEN) 'Your sins will be forgiven./ Sins will be forgiven to you.'

b. prinesěte mi je сeмо (Mt. 14:18, Cod. Mar., Zogr.) bring me.DAT them.ACC here
Φέρετέ μοι.DAT ὧδε αὐτοῦ.GEN 'Bring them to me here.'

(20) a. kako ti sе otvrěste oči. (Jo. 9:10, Cod. Mar) how you.DAT REFLE open eyes
πῶς [οὖν] ἠνεῴχθησαν σου.GEN οἱ ὀφθαλμοί 'How were your eyes opened?'

b. hoštišǐ li [ср i rebro mi ispytati ] (Cod.Supr., 44, 252a, 24) cut off him.DAT ear.ACC right.ACC
καὶ ἀπέκοψεν τὸ ὀτάριον τὸ δεξιόν. 'He cut his right ear'

- Dative anaphoric pronouns are emerging 2P clitics in OB:

(21) a. emouže njasmь dostoešь sapogon jenesti (Mt 3:11, Cod. Assem.) to him/whose.DAT am-not worthy shoes carry
ož.of.whom.DAT οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανός τά ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι· ' … whose sandals I am not worthy to carry'

b. ourěza emou ouho desnoe. (Jo. 18:10 Cod. Zogr., Assem., Sab.) cut off him.DAT ear.ACC right.ACC
καὶ ἀπέκοψεν αὐτοῦ.GEN τὸ ὀτάριον τὸ δεξιόν. 'He cut his right ear'
Their eyes were opened'


(23) a. mečemъ otъsъčeši mi glavо (Cod. Supr., 22, 127b, 2)
    sword.INST cut off me.DAT head
    ‘You will cut off my head with a sword’

(24) a. ne by oumъryъ mi bratъ (Cod. Supr. 26, 153b, 19-20)
    not be.COND died me.DAT brother.NOM
    ο̅κъ ἀν̈ ἀπεθάνανε μνο GEN ὁ ἀδελφός,brother

b. ne by mi oumъryъ bratъ. (Cod. Supr. 26, 154a, 22)
    not be.COND me.DAT died brother.NOM
    ο̅κъ ἀν̈ ἀπεθάνανε μνο GEN ὁ ἀδελφός
    ‘My brother would not have died’

3.3. The rise of definiteness

- Postnominal possessives occur in 2P within the NP if the head N is a body part, an ‘extended’ inalienable (konu emou 'his horse'), kinship, ‘extended’ kinship (e.g. droužina 'team, group'), or an abstract N (slovese emou 'his words', ime emou 'his name').
- In the slot of the article-on-the-rise (Dimitrova-Vulchanova & Vulchanov 2011), as well as after long-form adjectives.

(25) a. sverëpyi ть bęšь (Cod. Supr. 14, 87b, 24-25)
    ferocious.ADJ this/the.DET fury.NOM
    ὁ ἀνήμερος δαίμων 'this/the ferocious fury'

b. ть мраčьnyim emou oumomъ. (Cod. Supr. 4, 33b, 3)
    with darkended.INST his.DAT mind.INST
    αντον GEN ἐσκοτισμένου.darkened.GEN λογισμοῦ.mind.GEN
    'with hus dark mind'

c. и в prvoе tи vprašanie ... (Cod. Supr. 15, 89a, 26-27)
    and in first your.DAT questioning ...
    και ἐκ τῶν πρωτότητων σου.GEN ἐπερωτήσεων [ἐγνος̈]
    'And we told you many times, in your first questioning, that [we are Christians]'

d. povelë čestънoђ jего glavor otъsъštнi (Cod. Supr. 4, 31a, 25-26)
    order righteous his.GEN head cut off
    ... тн ти two aυτον.GEN κεφαλήν.head.ACC
    '(…) ordered to cut off his righteous head'

4. Evidence for further development: evidence from the Legend of Troy (LT)

- 1 & 2 p. clitics mi, ti continue to appear as possessors of relational Ns:

(26) Všhрани mi otrоkl сего
    Keep me.DAT child this
    'Keep this child of mine'
- Dative *emou* ‘to him.DAT’ specializes for IO functions; *mou* ‘him.DAT’ dominates with *doubly bound* interpretation with head Ns like *name*, kinship term, quality, etc. and benefactive, emotional and cognitive predicates:

(27) i rekošǫ *emou* proroci ego *Recipient*
and told *him.DAT* prophets.NOM his.GEN
‘and his prophets told him’

(28) a. da *mou* bődetь imę Ил ionь gradь. *Predicative Possessor*
to *him/his.DAT* be name.NOM Иlion.NOM town.NOM
‘(Let) its name be Ilion town’

b. I ouhyti *mou* s(y)na
‘And kidnapped his son.’

- Re-analysis of the genitive/genitive-accusative form of the anaphoric pronoun ego ‘him.ACC’ as a DO pronominal:

(28) a. i ne može *ego* pogoubítъ, and not can *him.GEN* kill
‘And (they) can't kill him’

b. i iska *ego* въ мпозёвъ мěštёвъ, i otocёvъ, i gradёвъ,
and search for *him* in many places, and small rivers, and towns,
and not can *him.ACC-GEN* find
‘And searched for him in many places and rivers, and towns and can't find him’

c. My esvě stvorila Troг gradь, my hoštevě i oumyslitи
we be create Troy city we want also think
kako go i rasypati
how it also destroy
‘We have created the city of Troy, we shall consider how to destroy it’

- Rise of possessive adjectives of the *egovъ* ‘his’ type (ego ‘he.GEN’ + poss. suffix -овъ):

(29) a. i žena *egovа* Androfia g(opso)žda, i *sestry* ego Kašranda i Polikšena
‘and wife *his* Androfia Mrs. and sisters *his* Cassandra and Polyxena’

b. na *egovъ* Širočëi pleštëi,
on *his* broad shoulders

- Possession mainly expressed by possessive pronouns and adjectives and genitive (and dative) NPs with a noun head (not a pronoun).

5. Damascenus Troianensis (DT), 17th c.): a system close to that of contemporary Bulgarian: *go* ‘him’ as a DO, *negovъ* ‘his’ as possessive adjective. and *mu* ‘to him’ as IO & POSS.

(30) a. i popita *go* ta *mu* kaže
and ask *him.ACC-GEN* and *him.DAT* say
‘And ask him to tell him (...)’

b. A roditelje *negovъ* (...) baštа *mu* i mayka *mu* (...)
And parents *his* father *his.DAT* and mother *his.DAT*
‘And his parents (i.e.) his father and his mother (...)’

c. dogđe *mu* se naide stopaninъть.
Until *his.DAT* REFL found owner.DEF
'Until his owner was found'

d. i prilepila mu se rizata
and stuck him/his.DAT REFL shirt.DEF

'And his shirt stuck (on him)'

5. Conclusions

- The **doubly bound dative** played the role of a “bridging context” facilitating the reanalysis of the clausal dative pronoun as a noun-dependent possessive clitic/marker.
- The signs of the genitive-dative syncretism reveal a complex process evolving in a number of directions: prosodic changes regarding 2P cliticization & formation of a clitic cluster; linear ordering of the informationally salient elements; rise of definiteness.
- The genitive-dative syncretism was contemporaneous to other major morphosyntactic changes operative in Old Bulgarian: a) the retreat of the genitive in negative sentences ad its replacement by the nominative; b) the reanalysis of the accusative-genitive distinction as a kind of definiteness marker; c) the regrouping of the declension system and its gradual replacement by prepositional constructions.

Selected references


Havers 1911: W. Havers. Untersuchungen zur Kasussyntax der indoeuropäischen Sprachen, Strassburg 1911.


