

On the historical origin and typological context of the Ainu possessive form

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The Ainu language features a so-called “possessive” or “affiliative” form with the suffix -V-hV. This form presents well-known challenges to both synchronic and diachronic research. Apart from functional aspects, previous research has, in particular, been focussed on the rules governing the choice of the suffix vowel, and it has been suggested that the issue is connected with some kind of combination restrictions (vowel harmony), or also an obscured class system (nominal classes). The present paper proposes a different solution, based on the application of the method of internal reconstruction. Parallels are quoted from other languages in the Eurasian realm.