DIMENSIONS OF POSSESSION

Edited by
IRENE BARON
MICHAEL HERSLUND
FINN SØRENSEN

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Chapter 15

The difference a category makes in the expression of possession and inalienability

Marianne Mithun

A basic distinction drawn in discussions of the grammar of possession is that between attributive and predicative constructions. Attributive constructions typically presuppose possession and involve modifiers in nouns or noun phrases: *my dog*. Predicative constructions typically assert possession and involve verb phrases or clauses: *The dog belongs to me* or *I have a dog*. Yet certain languages appear to express attributive possession in verbs. Such structures can be seen, for example, in languages of the Siouan family centered on the Northern Plains in North America, the Chinookan family spoken along the Columbia River on the Northwest Coast, and the Iroquoian family centered in the Northeast:

(1) Lakhota (Siouan): Stan Redbird, speaker
   pʰeʰi wɛčašla
   pʰeʰi wa-ki-ka-šla
   hair 1sg.ag-poss-cause.with.instrument-be.bald
   hair I cut his
   ‘I cut his hair’

(2) Kathlamet (Chinook): George Cultee, speaker, to Boas 1901:10.14
   kuəlqʷ: amiuxúlxama
   kuəlqʷ a-m-i-x-u-l̓xam-a
   thus fut-2erg-masc.abs-poss-speak-fut masc-2poss-nephew
   thus you will speak to yours your nephew
   ‘How can you tell *your own* nephew such a thing?’
A closer look at their structures shows that they are not quite what they seem. It has long been recognized that many languages exhibit a distinction in their nominal possessive constructions, one used for such expressions as 'my head' or 'my father', the other for 'my hat' or 'my firewood'. The first type is generally known as 'inalienable', 'inseparable', or 'indivisible' possession, and the second as 'alienable', 'separable', or 'divisible' possession. The entities classified grammatically as inalienable vary from language to language, but they typically include body parts and/or kinsmen, spatial relations (the top of an object), and often other intimately associated objects, such as one's home, certain personal tools, footprints, or thoughts. (Extensive discussion is in Chappell and McGregor 1996.)

As early as 1926 Charles Bally noted that a similar distinction is signaled in Indo-European languages by other grammatical patterns, such as the clausal dative of involvement construction in French (4a), in place of a possessive determiner in the noun phrase (4b):

(4) French inalienability in the clause: Bally 1926
a. On lui tranche la tête
   one him.DAT slice the head
   'They're cutting his head off' (clausal construction)
b. On déchire [ses habits].
   one rips [his.GEN.PL clothes]
   'They're ripping [his clothes]' (nominal construction)

Bally linked the notion of inseparability to the sphère personnelle which 'can include objects and beings associated with a person in an habitual, intimate or organic way' (1996 [1926]:33).

Taking Bally's observations as a point of departure, Chappell and McGregor (1996a) show that the expression of inalienability is not limited cross-linguistically to word or phrase-level constructions (the noun or noun phrase), but may also be carried by clause-level constructions, such as Bally's dative of involvement in (4a), body-part locatives (The dog bit Cliff on the ankle), and noun incorporation as in (3). In all of these constructions the possessor (lui, Cliff, -hi- 'l'/him') appears as a core argument of the clause.
These constructions have sometimes been described as the products of ‘possessor ascension’, ‘possessor raising’, or ‘possessor promotion’, based on an assumption that the possessor nominal has been removed from its basic position as a modifier within the noun phrase. As Blake (1993) and others have pointed out, however, the appropriateness of such analyses is called into question by the fact that the clausal constructions differ in meaning from their putative sources. Not only are they limited to inalienable possession; one can say The dog bit Cliff on the ankle but not *The dog bit Cliff on the hat. They also represent the victim as more intimately affected than their nominal counterparts: The dog bit Cliff’s ankle.

Several other features have been associated with the clausal constructions as well. Bally pointed to the relevance of the part–whole relation in the dative of involvement:

Each constitutive element of the [personal] domain is regarded, not as a simple property, but as an integral part of the person... The idea of indivisibility or of being part of a whole follows directly from the above: each phenomenon, action, state or quality which affects any part whatsoever of the personal domain, automatically affects the whole person. The part of the body directly affected is only the medium for a condition which spreads to the whole system. (Bally (1996 [1926]:33), translated by Christine Béal and Hilary Chappell.)

The importance of the part–whole relation in inalienability is further pursued by Herslund (1997). Bally also observed that possessors in such constructions are typically animate. One might say, for example, On lui a coupé la jambe (one her.dat cut the leg) ‘They cut her leg off’ about a person but not about a table. Describing Romanian, Manoliu-Manea (1996) shows that clausal constructions typically involve topicalization as well.

In the Siouan, Chinookan, and Iroquoian languages, core arguments of the clause are represented within the verb by pronominal prefixes. Thus verbs can and often do constitute complete, grammatical sentences in themselves, specifying both predicate and arguments within a single word. The affixes translated as markers of possession in examples (1)–(3) are part of the verbal morphology, but they are elements of clause-level constructions. The clausal status of the constructions suggests that they might be of the type discussed by Bally and by Chappell and McGregor as markers of inalienable possession. Here we will examine their structures and uses more closely to determine whether their primary function is indeed to signal attributive possession, then investigate the interrelationships they reflect among features that have been
associated with such constructions, particularly inalienability, intimacy of involvement, partitivity, animacy, and topicality.

1. Nominal versus clausal constructions

In addition to the clausal constructions seen in (1)-(3), Lakhota, Kathlamet, and Mohawk also contain nominal possessive constructions, as in (5)-(7):

(5) Lakhota possession on nouns: Stan Redbird, speaker
\[
\text{nit}^\text{h} \text{hayapi k} \text{ blujaza}
\]
\[
\text{nit}^\text{h} \text{a-hayapi k} \text{ wa-yu-za} \text{za}
\]
your-clothing the.PAST 1sg.ag-by.pulling-wash
'I washed your clothes'

(6) Kathlamet possession on nouns: Boas 1901:115.9
\[
\text{Icktuhipck}
\]
\[
\text{i-ck-tu-kui-pck}
\]
\[
\text{kanaui tahi}
\]
\[
\text{kanaui tahi}
\]
\[
\text{IMM-MASC.PL.ERG-PL.ABS-carry-water.to.shore all those}
\]
t'stamqu
\[
\text{t-sta-mqu}
\]
\[
\text{PL-DU.POSS-wood}
\]
'They carried up all their wood'

(7) Mohawk possession on nouns: Warisose Kaierithon, speaker
\[
\text{iakonniata} \text{tha ne raonahsire'shon'a}
\]
\[
\text{iak-onni-a't-ha ne raon-ahsire'-shon'a}
\]
\[
\text{FEM.AG-make-INSTR-IMPRF the MASC.PL.POSS-blanket-DIST}
\]
'She makes their blankets with it'

The fact that the nominal and clausal constructions coexist so robustly in each language suggests that they are functionally distinct. The examples seen so far indicate that clausal constructions might indeed be used for inalienable possession (hair, nephew, house), while nominal constructions are used for alienable possession (clothing, wood, blankets). This pattern is typical in natural speech. It is not exceptionless, however. In all three languages, both inalienable and alienable possession can be conveyed by either nominal or clausal constructions. The circumstances under which speakers choose each are revealing.
The use of Lakhota nominal constructions for apparently inalienable possession can be seen in (8), and the use of clausal constructions for apparent alienable possession in (9):

(8) Lakhota nominal constructions with inalienables: D 1932:12.4, Stan Redbird, speaker

a. hé mičʰ UKši yúžkta čʰ'I
   hé mičʰ UKši yúžkta čʰ'I
   that 1SG.POSS-daughter catch-IRR desire
   that one my daughter he will marry her he wishes
   'He wishes to marry my daughter'

b. mič'UKši kj kʰúžac'h
   mič'UKši kj kʰúžac'h
   3POSS-son the.past ill=since
   'since my son was sick . . .'

(9) Lakhota clausal constructions with alienables: Stan Redbird, speaker, D 1932:13.3

a. hayápi waglúžaža
   ha-yá-pi wa-ki-yu-žaža
   skin-cover-nomr 1AG.POSS-pulling-wash
   clothing I washed mine
   'I washed my clothes'

b. iš wasé glubléblel hináží
   iš wasé ki-yu-bléblel hi-náží
   ŽEMP red.earth poss-pulling-break.RDP arrive-stand
   she warpaint untying hers she came and stood
   '... she advanced with her bag of face paints open . . .'

Kathlamet shows similar exceptions, as in (10) and (11):

(10) Kathlamet nominal constructions: Boas 1901:9.7, 159.3–4

a. Aqa ikhiquat l̓káxan
   aqa i-k-l-u-quat l̓ka-čan
   then IMM-FEM.ERG-NEUT.ABS-X-bathe NEUT-FEM.POSS-child
   then she washed it her child
   'Then she washed her child'
b. ichúqumst
i-c-l-u-qumst
IMM-MASC.ERG-NEUT.ABS-away-drink NEUT-INDEF.POSS-blood
he drank it
‘He drank their blood’


a. iskiixilakua
i-s-ki-x-l-akua
IMM-3DU.ERG-MASC.ABS-poss-move-around MASC-3DU.POSS-canoe
they two turned theirs around
‘They turned their canoe around’

b. anakixxtkama
a-n-i-x-u-xtk-am-a
FUT-1ERG-3MASC.ABS-POSS-from-steal-PURP-FUT
I will rob mine

Similar exceptions appear in Mohawk, as in (12) and (13):

(12) Mohawk nominal constructions: W. Kaierithon, T. Jacobs, speakers

a. Iotkà:te’ ronwatikaratòn:nis
iotka’te’ ronwati-karatonni-s
often FEM.AGT/3PL.PAT-storytell-IMPRF
often she would tell them stories

ne ronwatiien’okôn’a
ne ronwati-i-en’-okon’a
the FEM.AGT/3PL.PAT-child-DIST
the her children
‘She would often tell her children stories’
The distinction underlying the choice between the nominal and clausal constructions is not inalienability after all. It is affectedness. The clausal construction is used when the individual translated as a possessor is considered the most significantly affected participant in an event or state. A choice of the construction in (8a) 'He wishes to marry my daughter' would have indicated that the speaker considered himself more significantly affected by the marriage than his daughter. In (10a) 'Then she washed her child' it would have indicated that the speaker considered herself more significantly affected by the washing than her child. In (11a) 'She would often tell her children stories' it would have indicated that the speaker considered the storyteller more affected by the storytelling than the children.

By contrast, a clausal construction was chosen in the Kathlamet 'They turned their canoe around' in (11a). By turning the canoe the two boys turned themselves around as well, heading toward shore. The effect of the change in direction on the boys was portrayed as more significant than its effect on the canoe. The choice of the clausal construction in the Mohawk 'No one ever heard her words again' in (13b) reflects the deeper point of that utterance: the
woman was never heard from again, that is, she disappeared. The effect on her was portrayed as more significant than the effect on her words.

Often the rationale behind the choice of construction is not obvious without an understanding of the context. One might think, for example, that drinking someone’s blood would have a more significant effect on the victim than on his blood, and prompt the choice of the clausal construction. Yet a nominal construction was used in the Kathlamet ‘He drank their blood’ in (10b). The line comes from a tale about a man who loved blood. If he could not find enough, he would kill his wives and drink theirs. After he had bought one wife, her brothers worked diligently to supply him with blood, in order to protect their sister. They gave him five sea lions, and he drank their blood (as in (10b)). The sea lions were already dead at this point and played no other role in the story. The effect of the action on them was thus not portrayed as significant. They simply characterized the kind of blood consumed.

One might think that if my workman is robbed, he is more seriously affected than I. Yet a clausal construction was chosen in the Kathlamet (11b) ‘I am going to rob my workman’. It comes from a tale about Owl and Panther, who lived together. A young woman was sent by her father to marry Panther, but she encountered Owl first. Owl, pretending to be Panther, made her his wife and took her home. The house was full of meat and grease, but the grease on Owl’s side was ugly and green, taken from intestines, while that on Panther’s side was lovely and white. Owl went to Panther’s end of the house to find some nice grease for his new wife, saying he would just get some from his workman. He used the clausal construction to indicate that by taking fat from the workman’s area he was really taking it from himself.

Speakers have choices in their portrayal of affectedness. In (14a) and (15a) the speaker focused on the property and the horse with nominal possession. In (14b) and (15b), the focus was put on me (the speaker), with clausal constructions:

(14) Lakhota choices: Boas and Deloria 1941

a. mitʰáwoyuha manŋ’
   mitʰa-wa-yuha manŋ’
   1sg.poss-things-possess steal
   my property he stole it
   ‘He stole something belonging to me (among other stolen property)’
b. wóyuha mamákinu'
wa-yuha ma-ma-ki-nu
things-possess steal-1sg-poss-steal
property he stole from me
'He stole property from me'

(15) Lakhota choices: Boas and Deloria 1941:88
a. mitʰášu.ke kį napʰē'
mitʰa-šu.ke kį na-pʰe
1sg.poss-dog the.past by.foot-flee
my horse the it fled
'My horse has run away'
b. šúkakʰa 'imákiyapi'
šu.ca-wakʰa i-ma-ki-yaya=pi
dog-great to-1pat-poss-have.gone=pl
horse mine have gone
'My horses have run away' (I am horseless.)

Similar choices can be seen in Kathlamet. Both sentences in (16) involve a mat, but nominal possession was used in (16a), while a clausal construction was used in (16b):

(16) Kathlamet choices: Boas 1901:11.16, 12.1
a. ikiistula B&uop
i-k-l-u-stxula
IMM-FEM.ERG-NEUT.ABS-app-carry.on.back NEUT-FEM.POSS-mat
she was carrying it on her back her mat
'She was carrying her mat'
b. inlaxskam
i-n-l-a-x-sk-am
IMM-1ERG-NEUT.ABS-FEM.DAT-POSS-take-CMPL NEUT-FEM.POSS-mat
I took hers her mat
'I took her mat away'

People in a village were starving. One youth could see Hunger, a supernatural being, coming into the settlement in the evenings carrying a mat on her back. She would peer into the window of a house, and soon people living in the house would die. The mat was actually a powerful medicine bundle. The youth plotted to destroy Hunger by seizing her bundle. In (16a) the effect of carrying did not go beyond the mat. When the youth took the mat in (16b),
he ultimately destroyed her, an effect expressed with a clausal construction.

Similar choices can be seen in (17). A young man was told that he had been kidnapped as a child, and that the woman he lived with was not his mother. He was instructed in (17a) that the way to destroy her was to cut her throat first. The nominal construction was used here to focus on the throat, specifying just where he should cut. Once he had cut it, something round would jump out of it which he was told to break in order to kill his kidnapper. The clausal construction in (17b) comes from another tale. Two sisters regularly went berry-picking together. One day while they were out, the wicked elder sister Robin ate a louse she had found on the good younger sister Salmonberry. She exclaimed at its sweetness and suggested that her younger sister would probably taste sweet too. When Salmonberry returned home she warned her sons that if she were to disappear, they should flee, so that Robin would not eat them, too. One day Robin returned home alone. The clausal construction was used in (17b) to announce the demise of Salmonberry, focusing on the effect of the event not on the neck but on Salmonberry herself:

(17) Kathlamet choices: Boas 1901:11.4, 119.9–10

a. [. . .] lqup amiuxua
   lqup a-m-i-x-u-a
   cut FUT-2ERG-MASC.ABS-IRR-do-FUT MASC-FEM.POSS-neck
   cut you will (cut) it her neck
   ‘[If you want to kill her], cut her throat’

b. Qušt, lqup ikiuxux
   Qušt, lqup i-k-i-á-x-ux
   behold cut IMM-FEM.ERG-MASC.ABS-FEM.DAT-POSS-apparently-do
   behold cut she cut hers
   ‘Behold, she had cut

   icátuk         wuxí akámtxi
   i-ka-tuk       wuxí a-ka-mtxí
   MASC-FEM.POSS-neck that FEM-FEM.POSS-younger.sister
   her, neck      that her younger sister
   the throat of her younger sister’

2. Diachronic sources

The functions of the clausal constructions are easily understood once their
structural sources are considered. The constructions in the three languages show fundamental similarities.

2.1 Lakhota

Verbs in Lakhota, as in all Siouan languages, contain pronominal prefixes for first, second, and inclusive persons, but none for third. The prefixes reflect a semantic agent/patient distinction, though the choice is now lexicalized with each stem (Mithun 1991). Participants instigating events and states are categorized as grammatical agents (below left), while those affected but not in control are categorized as grammatical patients (below right):

(18) Lakhota pronominal prefixes: Stan Redbird, speaker

\[
\begin{align*}
wa-hi? & \quad \text{‘I came’} & ma-hǐxpaya & \quad \text{‘I fell’} \\
yə-hi? & \quad \text{‘you came’} & ni-hǐxpaya & \quad \text{‘you fell’} \\
y-hi? & \quad \text{‘you and I came’} & u-hǐxpaya & \quad \text{‘you and I fell’} \\
hi? & \quad \text{‘(he/she/it) came’} & hǐxpaya & \quad \text{‘(he/she/it) fell’} \\
wə-ktékte & \quad \text{‘I’ll kill (him/her/it)’} & ma-ktékte & \quad \text{‘(he/she/it) will kill me’} \\
yə-ktékte & \quad \text{‘you’ll kill (him/her/it)’} & ni-ktékte & \quad \text{‘(he/she/it) will kill you’} \\
ma-yə-ktékte & \quad \text{‘you’ll kill me’}
\end{align*}
\]

If the effect is indirect, a dative prefix \textit{ki}- marks the indirectness:

(19) Lakhota indirectness or dative: Stan Redbird, speaker

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{oýa-ya-ka} & \quad \text{omáyakiyaka} \\
\text{o-ya-ka} & \quad \text{o-ma-ya-ki-ya-ka} \\
\text{about-2AGT-talk about-1PAT-2AGT-DAT-talk}
\end{align*}
\]

‘You talked about it, told a story’ ‘You talked about it to me, told me’

A possessive relationship is often inferable from the specification of indirect effect. If the death of a horse affected someone indirectly, a likely explanation is that the horse was his:

(20) Lakhota dative interpreted as possessive: Boas and Deloria 1941:128

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{šúka-wa} & \quad \text{wá ki-te} \\
\text{šúkakwá} & \quad \text{wá ki-te} \\
\text{dog-great a DAT-die} \\
\text{horse a it died on him}
\end{align*}
\]

‘A horse died on him’ → ‘His horse died’
2.2 Kathlamet

In Kathlamet, as in other Chinookan languages, pronominal prefixes on verbs distinguish first, second, and third persons, as well as inclusive and exclusive first persons, and masculine, feminine, and neuter third persons. Ergative, absolutive, and dative cases are distinguished, with the pronouns appearing in that order within the verbal morphology:

\[(21)\text{ Kathlamet core arguments: ergative-absolutive-dative: Boas 1901:139.16}\
\begin{align*}
\text{actnlúta} \\
\text{a-c-t-n-l-u-t-a} \\
\text{FUT-MASC.ERG-3PL.ABS-1SG.DAT-to-x-give-FUT}
\end{align*}
\begin{align*}
\text{He shall give them to me'}
\end{align*}

Coreference among core arguments is indicated by a reflexive prefix -x-:

\[(22)\text{ Kathlamet reflexive: Boas 1901:14.5}\
\begin{align*}
\text{Aqa ikixquat} \\
\text{aqa ik-i-x-quat} \\
\text{then IMM-3MASC.ABS-REFL-WASH}
\end{align*}
\begin{align*}
\text{Then he washed himself}
\end{align*}

As in most languages, the dative argument represents an individual indirectly affected by the situation. If an agent carries out an action that affects himself or herself indirectly, the dative is coreferential with the agent. The coreference is marked by the reflexive prefix:

\[(23)\text{ Kathlamet reflexive effect: Boas 1901:104.16, cited in Hymes 1955:236}\
\begin{align*}
\text{anlxáya} \\
\text{a-n-l-x-á-ya} \\
\text{FUT-1ERG-NEUT.ABS-REFL-haul.asshore-FUT}
\end{align*}
\begin{align*}
\text{I will haul her ashore for myself'}
\end{align*}

The verb in (23) was uttered by the character Mink, who set a dish in the water near the shore in hopes of attracting a woman. He announced, 'If somebody should come to take that dish, I will haul her ashore; I will lie down with her all day.' Mink apparently saw himself as the most significant beneficiary of his act, a fact indicated by the reflexive dative.

This reflexive prefix has sometimes been interpreted as a marker of possession within the verb. One may indeed be indirectly affected by action on one's possessions. But the specification of indirect affectedness and possession
are distinct in Kathlamet: affectedness is specified in the verb, and possession is specified in the noun. The verbal marking of affectedness and the nominal marking of possession often cooccur within sentences, because action on a possession often indirectly affects the possessor, but either can occur without the other. We saw affectedness without possession in (23) 'I will haul her ashore for myself', and possession without affectedness in (10a) 'Then she washed her child.' Affectedness with and without possession can be compared in the sentences in (24) below. The arrows in (24a) belonged to the boy, but the sinew in (24b) had been borrowed. (The noun for 'sinew' is feminine in gender, but the noun contains no possessive prefix):

(24) Kathlamet affectedness with and without possession: Boas 1901:12.1, 190:2

a. Aqa itáqtquam
   aqa i-t-xa-t-qu-am
   then MASC.ERG-3PL.ABS-REFL-take-completely-CMPL
   then he finished them on himself
   tiáqamacx
   t-ia-qamacx
   3PL-MASC.POSS-arrow
   his arrows
   'He used up all his arrows'

b. ikaxlıxum
   i-k-a-x-łxu-m
   IMM-FEM.ERG-FEM.ABS-REFL-finish-CMPL that FEM-sinew
   she had finished it on herself that sinew
   'She had used up all the sinew'

The Kathlamet reflexive construction has been extended in an interesting way. If the person indirectly affected is other than the agent, this affected person is identified by a dative pronominal prefix. The reflexive suffix -x- can still appear to link the absolutive argument (the object directly affected) with the dative argument (the person indirectly affected). This time the relationship is not perfect coreference, a fact already marked by the distinct absolutive and dative pronouns. They share the effect: the dative is affected indirectly through the absolutive, a situation that can arise, for example, when possessors are affected by actions on their possessions. This is the structure seen in (2) and (16b).
2.3 Mohawk

The pronominal prefixes on verbs in Iroquoian languages, as in Siouan languages, show an agent/patient pattern:

(25) Mohawk pronominal prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical agents</th>
<th>Grammatical patients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>k-tákhé' 'I run'</td>
<td>wak-i:ta's 'I sleep'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s-tákhé' 'you run'</td>
<td>sén-ta's 'you sleep'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ra-tákhé' 'he runs'</td>
<td>ró:-ta's 'he sleeps'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ie-tákhé' 'she runs'</td>
<td>iakó:-ta's 'she sleeps'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sg.ag/fix</td>
<td>2sg.ag/fem.pat-fix-dat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indirect effect is indicated by a dative applicative suffix on the verb. In constructions containing the applicative, the grammatical patient, specified within the pronominal prefix complex, is marked as indirectly affected. It usually refers to a semantic goal or beneficiary:

(26) Mohawk benefactive: Rokwaho Dan Thompson, speaker

she'kwa-tákhé' 'Get it ready, fix it up!' she'kwa-tákhé' 'Fix it for her!' 

Mohawk also shows extensive noun incorporation, whereby a noun stem usually invoking a semantic patient is compounded with a verb root to yield a new compound verb stem. These stems, like others, may occur with dative applicatives, as in (27). Such structures have sometimes been identified as possessive constructions (Baker 1999):

(27) Mohawk clausal construction: Rokwaho Dan Thompson, speaker

she'kwa-tákhé' 'Fix the car for her!'

The notion of possession is actually not part of the grammatical structure. If an event or state involving an object indirectly affects someone, one likely explanation is that the person is the owner. If you are fixing a car for her, a possible inference is that the car belongs to her. Dative arguments are thus often interpreted as possessors of objects evoked by incorporated nouns. But possession is not specified by the structure.
The sentence in (28) below has the same structure as that in (27) above, but the beneficiary ‘him’ is not interpreted as the possessor of the incorporated door. Inferences of possession are based on context and real-world knowledge, not this grammatical structure. The possessor of the door in (28) was actually the woman opening it rather than the boy outside, just as we might expect from our general experience with visit protocol:

(28) Mohawk incorporation without possession: Niioronhia’a Montour, speaker
Wahonwanhotónkwahse
wa-honwa-nh-oton-kw-hs’
FACTUAL-FEM.AG/MASC.PAT-DOOR-CLOSE-REV-DAT-PRF
‘She opened the door for him’

3. Intimacy of affectedness: directness of effect

A feature that has been associated with inalienability is ‘intimacy of effect’. As pointed out by Blake (1990:102) and by Chappell and McGregor in the introduction to their inalienability volume (1996a:7), the clausal construction The dog bit Cliff on the ankle represents the bite as more intimately affecting Cliff than does the nominal in The dog bit Cliff’s ankle. Inalienability and intimacy of affectedness are indeed closely related, but grammatical structures in Lakhota, Kathlamet, and Mohawk show that they are ultimately distinct.

Two of the languages distinguish inalienability overtly in their nominal possessive constructions. Both Lakhota and Mohawk contain two paradigms of possessive prefixes for nouns. In Lakhota, inalienable possession is indicated on nouns by the same pronominal prefixes as those marking patients on verbs: ma- or mi- ‘my’, ni- ‘your’, yki- ‘our’. (There is no third person prefix.) Alienable possession is shown by the marker tʰa- preceded by the same pronominal prefixes: mitʰ̠a- ‘my’, mitʰ̠a- ‘your’, tʰa- ‘his/her/its’, ykitʰ̠a- ‘our’. One thus says ma-si ‘my foot’ and ma-ite ‘my face’, but mitʰ̠a-šuка ‘my horse’ and mitʰ̠a-hayapi ‘my clothing’. In Mohawk, inalienable possession is indicated on nouns by nearly the same pronominal prefixes as those marking agents on verbs, while alienable possession is indicated on nouns by nearly the same prefixes as those marking patients on verbs. One thus says k-ahsi’tа:ke ‘my foot’ and k-konhsа:ke ‘my face’ but ak-итshe:nen ‘my domestic animal’ and akw-atia:תawi ‘my coat/shirt/dress’.

In addition to their clausal constructions marking indirect affectedness, Lakhota, Kathlamet, and Mohawk all contain a second type of clausal con-
struction that is often interpreted as attributive possession. In this type, the participant identified as a possessor is cast as a core argument of the clause, as in the clausal constructions described above, but there is no marker of indirectness. In Lakhota the participant is expressed as a grammatical patient, but the verb does not contain the indirect prefix *ki-*:

(29) Lakhota: Stan Redbird, speaker, Boas and Deloria 1941: 129

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{p'á} & \text{mayáza} \\
    \text{p'á} & \text{ma-yazá} \\
    \text{head} & \text{1SG.PAT-ache} \\
    \text{head} & \text{I am in pain} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{sí} & \text{makáhu'} \\
    \text{sí} & \text{ma-kahu} \\
    \text{foot} & \text{1SG.PAT-cut} \\
    \text{foot} & \text{(he) slashed me} \\
\end{array}
\]

'I have a headache' 'He foot slashed me'

='My head aches' = 'He slashed my foot'

In Kathlamet the participant identified as the possessor appears in the absolutive rather than dative case, and there is no reflexive prefix:

(30) Kathlamet: Boas 1901: 234.5

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{qa-lk-i-quilxmx} \\
    \text{qa-ilq-i-quilx-m-x} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{NON.IMM-NEUT.ERG-MASC.ABS-strike-CONT-REP} \\
\end{array}
\]

she struck it repeatedly

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{i-aqstaqpa} \\
    \text{i-ia-aqstaq-pa} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{MASC-MASC.POSS-head-LOC} \\
\end{array}
\]

on its head

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{yáxi imúlak} \\
    \text{yáxi i-mulak} \\
    \text{that MASC-elk} \\
\end{array}
\]

'She struck the elk on the head' = 'She struck the elk's head'

In Mohawk the participant identified as the possessor (as in Baker 1997) is cast as the grammatical patient of the clause, but there is no dative suffix to mark indirectness:

(31) Mohawk direct effect: Kaia'titahkhe' Jacobs, speaker

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{wahikonhsóhare'} \\
    \text{wa-hi-konhs-ohare-'} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
    \text{FACTUAL-1SG.AG/MASC.PAT.SG-face-wash-PRF} \\
\end{array}
\]

'I washed his face'
Such constructions are used primarily with body parts, just the entities that are normally considered inalienably possessed. The sentence in (31) with incorporated noun -konhs- ‘face’ is fine, but nearly the same sentence, with incorporated noun -nonhs- ‘house’, is not acceptable: *wahinonhsóhare’. A dative applicative suffix is necessary, as in (3) above.

Though there is a strong correlation between the use of these constructions and inalienability, their primary function is to specify directness of effect. If someone cuts my foot, he cuts me directly. When the woman struck the elk’s head, she struck the elk directly. Direct affectedness and inalienability usually go hand in hand: action on an inalienable possession, such as a foot, head, or face, usually affects the possessor more directly than action on an alienable possession such as a house or car. But where the two do not coincide, the choice of clausal structure reflects the directness of effect rather than inalienability.

In Lakhota, hair is categorized as an inalienable possession by the noun morphology: ma-p\^éhj ‘my hair’ (not *mi-t\^á-p\^éhj). But if I cut someone’s hair (as in example (1) repeated below as (32)), my action is expressed as affecting him indirectly, with a verb containing the indirect prefix ki-, despite the grammatical inalienability of the noun:

(32) Lakhota indirect affectedness with inalienable possession: Stan Redbird, speaker
p\^éhj w\^éčaššla
p\^éhj wa-ki-ka-ššla
hair 1sg.ag.indirect-cause.with.instrument-be.bald
‘I cut his hair’

In Mohawk, one’s car is classified by the nominal morphology as alienable: ak\^è:sere ‘my vehicle’. But in (33) no dative appears. The loan was made directly to the son:

(33) Mohawk direct affectedness with alienable possession: K. Lazore, speaker
aonsaho’seréhtani’
aon-sa-ho’-seréht-ani’
OPT-REP-MASC.AG/MASC.PAT-car-lend-PRF
‘He (the father) would lend him (the son) the car again’

Further evidence of the fact that the direct clausal construction does not depend on inalienability can be seen in the appearance of the same noun in both kinds of constructions. The Mohawk noun ahkwénnia‘harness’ is
categorized by the noun morphology as alienable. In (34a) it appears in a nominal with an alienable possessive pronominal prefix. In (34b) it appears incorporated in a direct-effect clausal construction. The difference in structure does not reflect a difference in alienability, but rather a difference in affectedness. Strapping the horses’ harness on the fence has little effect on the horses, but removing their harness, that is, unharnessing them, affects them directly:

(34) Mohawk: Tekaronhiokon Jacobs, speaker

a. Aten’enhr-â’ke wahrotárhoke’
   aten’enhr-a’-ke wa-hr-otarhok-e’
   fence-NS-LOC FACTUAL-MASC.AGT-strap-PRF the
   on the fence he strapped it the
   aonahkwéennie’
   aon-ahkwennia’
   ZOIC.PL.ALIEN.Poss-harness
   their harness
   ‘He strapped their harness on the fence’

b. Wahshakohkwenniahra:ko’
   wa-hshako-ahkwennia-hra-ko’
   FACTUAL-MASC.AGT/MASC.PL.PAT-harness-set-REV-PRF the
   he harness-removed them the
   akohsá:tens
   ako-hsaten-s
   the INDEF.PAT-carry-IMPRF
   horses
   ‘He removed the horses’ harness’

The direct-effect construction, like the indirect-effect construction, does not actually specify possession. The sentence ‘she water-gave them’ in (35) has the same structure as ‘I face-washed him’ in (31), but there is no implication that the water belonged to the guests. The idea that the face belonged to the boy in (31) but that the water did not belong to the guests in (35) is a matter of inference from general knowledge of the world:
Inalienability and direct affectedness thus often cooccur for logical reasons, since events affecting inalienable possessions usually affect the owner more directly than those affecting alienable possessions, but the correlation is circumstantial. It is important to note that the selection and interpretation of the direct-effect and indirect-effect clausal constructions depends not only on the way a speaker wishes to present a situation, but also on the lexical inventory of the language. The dative markers, reflexive, and noun incorporation are all word-formation devices, used to create lexical items. Speakers tend most often to select existing lexical items as they speak, though they may of course create neologisms on occasion. Individual lexical items often develop certain associations with circumstances surrounding their usual uses, a fact which colors their interpretation.

4. Partitivity

The notion of partitivity, or the part–whole relation, appears to play a role in the direct-affect clausal construction. If a man cuts my foot, as in the Lakhota example in (29), he affects me directly because he is cutting a part of me: when he cuts my foot he cuts me. If a woman hits an elk on the head as in the Kathlamet example in (30), she affects the elk directly because the head is part of the elk: when she strikes the head she strikes the elk. Other examples in Section 3 show, however, that while the feature of partitivity can be related to direct affectedness as a contributing factor, it is not the primary feature signalled by the construction. When the father lent the son a car in the Mohawk example in (33), he did not lend the son a part of himself. When the farmer unharnessed his horses in (34), he did not remove a part of them. When the woman gave her guests water in (35), she did not give them a part of themselves. The direct-effect clausal constructions were used nevertheless, because the son, horses, and guests were portrayed as directly affected.
5. Animacy

As noted by Bally in 1926 and others since, the participants interpreted as possessors in the clausal constructions are typically animate. It will be recalled that French speakers easily say On lui a coupé la jambe (‘They cut off her leg’) about a person but not about a table (even though the table is grammatically feminine in French). The same close association can be seen in both kinds of clausal constructions examined here. Those interpreted as possessors, actually those portrayed as indirectly or directly affected, are usually animate.

But the animacy is not specified by the construction. It is a consequence of the fact that the effect of events and states on animates, that is, sentient beings, is often portrayed as noteworthy, but their effect on inanimate objects seldom is. An example from Kathlamet shows that inanimates are not categorically excluded from the construction. To say ‘The water began to boil’, the speaker cast the water in the dative case, as the entity most significantly affected by the event. The overlap in identity between the (dative) water and its own (absolutive) froth was indicated by the reflexive prefix -x(a)-:

(36) Kathlamet inanimate: Boas 1901:239.5 cited in Hymes 1955:237

\[ \text{ił-almilm} \quad \text{ni}xatlúxuax \]
\[ \text{i-la-imilm} \quad \text{n-i-xa-t-l-ù-xu-ax} \]
\[ \text{MASC-PL.POSS-foam NON.IMM-MASC.ABS-RFL-PL.DAT-to-on-do-IMPRF} \]
\[ \text{its foam} \quad \text{it (its own foam) was on it (the water)} \]

\[ \text{łáxí l-cúqua} \]
\[ \text{łáxí l-cuqua} \]
\[ \text{that MASC-water} \]
\[ \text{that water} \]
\[ ‘\text{The water became foamy’ = ‘The water began to boil’} \]

At the same time, animacy is not sufficient to prompt the choice of the clausal construction. The possessor of the footprints in (37) was animate, but the construction was not used. The person was not affected by the discovery of his tracks:

(37) Kathlamet animacy without affectedness: Boas 1901:162:13

\[ \text{lkuañl}x \quad \text{insktúskam} \]
\[ \text{l-kuañl}x \quad \text{i-n-sk-t-u-sk-am} \]
\[ \text{NEUT-PERSON IMM-1ERG.PL-3PL.ABS-X-find-CMPL} \]
\[ \text{some person we found them} \]
We found the footprints of a person.

6. Topicality

The frequent association between the use of clausal constructions and the topicality of possessors in Romanian was noted by Manoliu-Manea (1996). A similar correlation can be seen in Lakhota, Kathlamet, and Mohawk. The reason behind the correlation is easy to understand in light of the function and form of the constructions.

The primary function of the clausal constructions in all of the languages is to portray significant affectedness. Speakers show more interest in the affectedness of human or personified participants who are central to a discussion than of peripheral characters or inanimate objects. Significantly-affected participants are cast as grammatical core arguments, a status generally reserved for topical arguments. Though the features of animacy and humanness are typical of topical participants, they are not sufficient to render the participants topicworthy. In the sentence in (38), those affected by blood-drinking were human beings, but the clausal construction was not used:

(38) Kathlamet lack of topicality: Boas 1901:13.6
Tilxam  āqauwulqt
 t-ilxam  1-qa-uwulqt
PL-person NEUT-INDEF.POSS-blood
people their blood
a-n-c-k-l-u-qumst-a
FUT-1-PL-ERG-NEUT.ABS-away-drink-PRF-FUT
we shall drink it
'We shall drink the blood of people'

The people were not expressed as core arguments because they were not topicworthy in this context. The speakers were fleas, going out to seek sustenance. The people served only to characterize the kind of blood they were after.
7. Extension of grammatical patterns

The characteristics of the clausal constructions seen so far are easily understood in terms of the functions of their source structures. They specify the significant affectedness of participants by casting them as core arguments: as absolutes, patients, or datives. The feature of possession is a secondary inference from contexts in which they are used.

But the origins of grammatical constructions do not necessarily constrain their functions forever. Developments in the Siouan languages show how functions may evolve.

It will be recalled that Lakhota, like other Siouan languages, contains a dative prefix *ki-* that marks indirectness of effect. At a certain point in the development of the family, a benefactive prefix *kiči-* was formed from reduplication of the dative prefix with palatalization of the second *k* to *č* induced by the preceding *i* (Robert Rankin p.c. 1998). The form of the resulting prefix shows extensive phonological alternation across contexts. It specifies that an action was done on behalf of another individual, in his or her place:

(39) Lakhota dative and benefactive markers: Stan Redbird, speaker

\[ \text{lowa 'sing'} \]
\[ \text{ma-ki-lowa 'sing to me'} \]
\[ \text{m-ici-lowa 'sing for me, on my behalf, in my place'} \]

(Benefactive)

(40) Lakhota benefactive clause: Stan Redbird, speaker

\[ \text{iti wečiyužaža} \]
\[ \text{iti wa-kiči-yu-žaža} \]
\[ \text{face IAG-BENEFACTIVE-by, pulling-wash} \]
\[ \text{face I washed for (him)} \]
\[ \text{'I washed his face for him'} \]

As in Mohawk, a possessive relationship is often inferred between the object and beneficiary of an action. If I washed a face and the washing benefitted some person, a likely inference is that the face belonged to that person. The dative and the benefactive constructions have now developed distinct, conventionalized meanings, as described by Boas and Deloria:

the form *ki-* [dative] implies action referring to an object belonging to a person different from the subject but without sanction or permission of the owner, for instance, "I take his own without his permission", in other words, an action that reflects in some way upon his interest but performed on the initiative of the subject. The form *kiči-* [benefactive] expresses an action done with permission of
The owner of an object, an action done on his initiative or in his place. (Boas and Deloria 1941:86)

The development of another verbal prefix in the Siouan languages shows that original inferences may be reinterpreted as core meaning. A second prefix has developed from reduplication of the dative ki-, a reflexive possessive prefix kik- ‘one’s own’ that marks actions directed at one’s own possessions. It has followed a separate course of development from the benefactive, showing no palatalization and distinct morphophonemic behavior:

(41) Reflexive possessives: Martha St. John, Stan Redbird, speakers
   a. napsükaza wakpáhu
      napsukaza wa-kik-pa-hu
      finger 1AG-own-by.drawing-cut
      finger  I cut own
      ‘I cut my finger (with a knife’) (Santee dialect)
   b. hayápi
      waqáža
      skin-cover-NOMR 1AG-own-by.pulling-wash
      clothing  I washed own
      ‘I washed my clothes’

As can be seen by comparing (41a) and (41b), the construction does not distinguish alienability.

This construction now specifies possession directly rather than simply implying it, as is confirmed by certain items that are grammatically unpossessible in Lakhota. They consist primarily of objects that cannot be considered personal property, such as rocks, trees, and food. Nouns for them never appear with possessive prefixes. They also never appear with verbs containing the reflexive possessive prefix. Instead, the basic reflexive construction is used, which otherwise marks coreference between the agent and patient or dative. The reflexive appears in its primary function in (42a) and with an unpossessible object in (42b):

(42) Lakhota reflexive -iči-: Stan Redbird, speaker, Boas and Deloria 1941: 103,90
   a. mičktekte
      m-iči-kte=kte
      1SG.PAT-REFL.kill=IRR
      ‘I’m going to kill myself’
b. wa-mičižūšu
by.sawing-1sg.pat-refl-butcher
'I slaughtered buffalo for myself' for 'I slaughtered my buffalo'

8. Conclusion

Verbal affixes in three genetically and geographically distinct languages of North America, Lakhota, Kathlamet, and Mohawk, have sometimes been identified as possessive markers, in part because they are often translated as such. The location of the markers in verbs is surprising, since attributive possession is normally marked in nouns or noun phrases.

Though they appear in verbs, the affixes are actually markers of clause-level constructions. In all three of the languages, the core arguments of clauses are represented by pronominal prefixes in verbs, so that every verb can constitute a full grammatical sentence in its own right. The Lakhota, Kathlamet, and Mohawk constructions are akin to clausal structures in other languages that have been said to specify inalienability.

A closer examination of the uses of the constructions shows that their primary function is actually not to specify possession or even inalienability, but the significant affectedness of a participant. Possession, inalienability, and features associated with inalienability such as partitivity and animacy, may be inferred from contexts in which the constructions are used, but they are not specified directly by the constructions themselves.

The functions and distributions of the clausal constructions reflect their structural origins. In each, a participant is cast as a core argument, either a grammatical patient/absolutive or a dative/beneficiary. Status as a patient or absolutive indicates that the individual is directly affected by the event or state, while status as a dative or beneficiary indicates that the effect is indirect. Affectedness can suggest the possibility of possession, since possessors are often affected by situations involving their possessions. Direct affectedness can suggest inalienable possession, and indirect affectedness alienable possession, since situations involving inalienable possessions usually affect their possessors more directly than those involving alienable possessions. Partitivity and animacy may be suggested as well. Situations involving a part of a participant usually affect that participant directly. The effect of situations on sentient
The difference a category makes

beings is typically portrayed by speakers as more significant than that on inanimate objects. In the end, the forms reflect their functions.

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Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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