The Development of Possessive Expressions in the Germanic Languages.

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This paper

- Germanic Possessive *-s* project (Manchester):
  - Expression of possession in present-day English and Swedish
  - Is possessive *-s* a clitic, as suggested in much of the literature (e.g. Anderson 2005, Zwicky & Pullum 1983)?
  - Historical development of possessive expressions in the Germanic languages

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  - Historical development of possessive expressions in the Germanic languages
- The aim of this paper:
  - Follow and compare the development of possessive expressions in the Germanic languages
    - Identify common trends and patterns
  - Focus on neglected/disputed aspects

This paper

- Existing research specifically on the development of possessive expressions:
  - English: Allen (2008) – genitives in Old and Middle English, comparison with other Germanic languages; Altenberg (1982); Rosenbach (2002); Rosenbach et al. (2000)
  - Dutch: Weerman & de Wit (1999)
  - Swedish: Börjars (2003); Norde (1997)
  - German: Zifonun (2001, 2005)
  - general: Delsing (1998); also parts of Allen (2008)

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- No existing work follows the historical development of the Germanic possessive expressions or contrasts the situations in the present-day languages.

Structure of talk

1. Areal distribution of possessive expressions
2. Chronology of possessive expressions
3. Development of possessive expressions
   - Genitive case ⇒ possessive *-s*
     - Diachronic development throughout Germanic languages
     - Focus on German and Dutch
   - Typology of possessive *-s*
     - Focus on a recent development in German
4. Conclusions

Possessive expressions

- Present-day languages:
  I. Genitive Case
  German: *das Buch des Mannes* 'the book the.GEN man.GEN'

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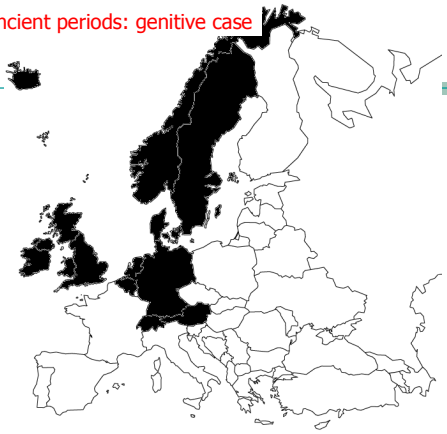
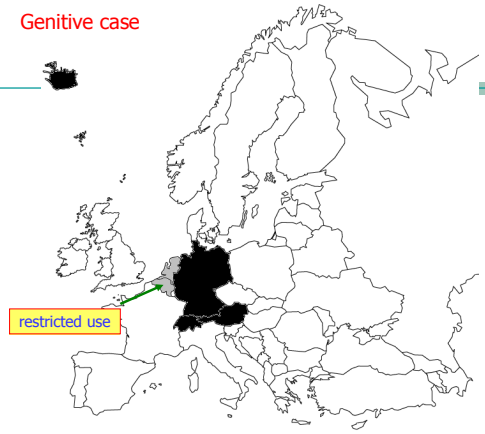
Areal distribution

- Variation across space and time
- Originally: genitive case found in all Germanic languages
- Present-day: possessive expressions unevenly spread throughout Germanic languages

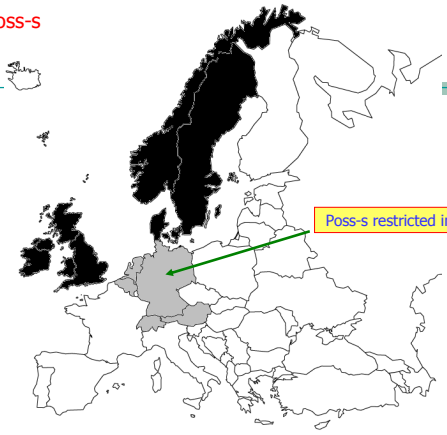
Ancient periods: genitive case



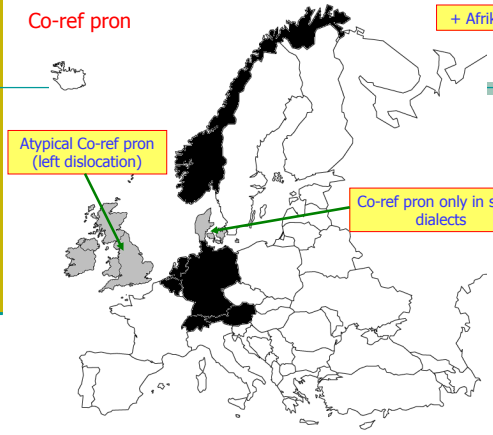
Genitive case



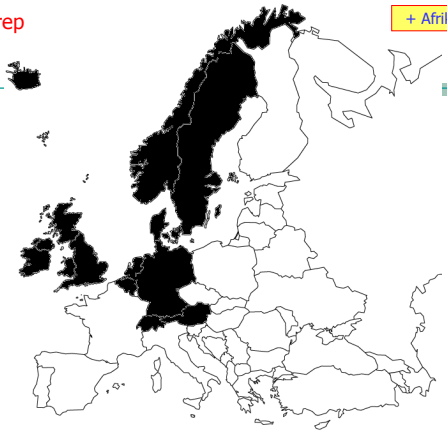
Poss-s



Co-ref pron



Prep

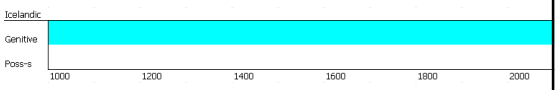


Chronology

- Similar developments at different times:
  - All the languages start off with genitive case marking of possession
  - Development of prepositional possession marking
  - Genitive falls out of use in some languages
  - Development of Poss-s
    - Often connected to decline of genitive/case system (e.g. English, Mainland Scandinavian), but not always (e.g. German)
  - Development of Co-ref pron: from body part expressions with dative? (e.g. Burridge 2003)

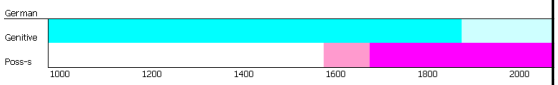
Chronology

Genitive and Poss-s
Icelandic:



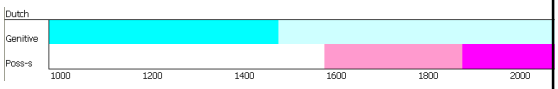
Chronology

Genitive and Poss-s
German:



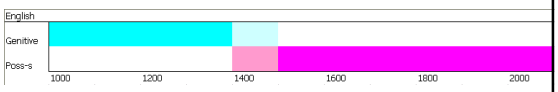
Chronology

Genitive and Poss-s
Dutch:



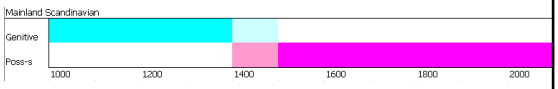
Chronology

Genitive and Poss-s
English:



Chronology

Genitive and Poss-s
Mainland Scand. (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish):



Analysis of Poss-s

- Two contrasting views on history of Poss-s (in English):
  - Allen (e.g. 2008 and earlier work): Poss-s < genitive case
  - Janda (1980): Poss-s < Co-ref pron (i.e. "his-genitive")
- Cross-linguistically (in the Germanic languages), there seems to be a link between the development of genitive case and the development of Poss-s.
- Our assumption (following Allen):
  Poss-s developed from genitive case
  - This position seems to cover the related developments throughout the Germanic languages.

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Development of possessive expressions

1. Genitive case ⇒ Poss-s
   i. Diachronically and cross-linguistically
   ii. Present-day German
   iii. Present-day Dutch
2. Typology of Poss-s
   i. Comparison of Germanic languages
   ii. Recent development in German

Genitive ⇒ Poss-s:

Genitive case

- Defining 'case system' is tricky
- Some characteristics of a productive case system (especially relevant to marking of possession):
  - Case marking on N and D (maybe also on an A)
  - Genitive governed by some verbs, prepositions and adjectives (i.e. not only used for possession)
    - Uncertainty about which case to use here may suggest a breakdown of the case system (e.g. Di Meola 2004 re. present-day German)
  - More than one genitive marker (e.g. Icelandic)

Genitive ⇒ Poss-s:

Poss-s

- How can we identify Poss-s as distinct from genitive case?
  - Only one exponent: *-s*
  - *-s* appears on feminine (and plural) possessors (not just masc. and neut. singular)
  - Once-only marking on possessor noun (i.e. no marking on determiners or adjective in possessor NP)
    - Marking on right-edge of possessor NP – not necessarily on head (in English and Mainland Scandinavian; not yet in German and Dutch [?])
  - Not governed by verbs, adjectives or prepositions (but cf. Faroese once-only possessive marker)

Genitive ⇒ Poss-s:

Genitive in Germanic

- All Germanic languages start off with a case system comprising 4 productive cases
  - nominative, accusative, dative, genitive
  - + relics of old cases (e.g. instrumental)

Genitive ⇒ Poss-s:

Loss of Genitive

- Number of forms of genitive marker is reduced to just one before once-only marking develops.
  - Is this a prerequisite for the development of Poss-s?
- No languages have a once-only possessive construction with more than one marker.
- Icelandic retains an inventory of genitive markers and has no once-only possessive construction.
  - N.B. German has two productive genitive markers, namely *-s* (masc./neut. sing.) and *-Ø* (fem. sing./all genders plu.), plus some restricted/unproductive markers, and DOES have Poss-s.
  - However, German *-s* IS the only productive physically realised genitive ending.

Genitive ⇒ Poss-s:

Loss of Genitive

- Deterioration of case system (every Germanic language except Icelandic)
  - Number of cases reduced (e.g. German dialects)
  - Number of markers of each case reduced: genitive *-s* in most Germanic languages
  - Genitive stops being governed by verbs, prepositions and adjectives

Genitive ⇒ Poss-s:

Constituent order

- Order of possessor and possessum in genitive case:
  - Originally the two could appear in either order
  - Order generally firms up as possessum – possessor
    - Icelandic: either order grammatical but possessor – possessum is stylistically marked
    - German: new possessor – possessum genitive constructions are unusual/marked (Zifonun 2005)

      ??des Sohnes Hund v. *der Hund des Sohnes*
      the.GEN son.GEN dog the dog the.GEN son.GEN
  - Poss-s always has possessor – possessum order

Genitive ⇒ Poss-s:

General developments

- Typological/historical pattern:
  - Case system dies out; Poss-s develops from genitive case
  - E.g. English, Mainland Scandinavian
  - Icelandic retains case system and has no Poss-s
- Anomalies:
  - Dutch has lost its case system; retains (limited) genitive case AND Poss-s
  - German retains its case system (including genitive): genitive and Poss-s coexist
  - Faroese genitive case unproductive; once-only possession marking is not a development of the genitive

Genitive in German

- Masc./neut. marker *-s* used with feminine possessors
- This is still genitive case (note order of possessor and possessum)

Schröder kritisiert China-Politik Merkels
'Schröder criticises China-policy Merkel.GEN'

…dienen die Instrumente als roter Teppich für den Gesang Judiths
'…serve the instruments as red carpet for the singing Judith.GEN'

- Evidence of a genitive in decline (compare descriptions of older English, Dutch and Mainland Scandinavian)?
- Cf. 16th/17th century Dutch:
  de vader des bruids 'the father the.GEN bride.GEN'
  (Komen 1997: 406)

Genitive in Dutch

- Freely formed present-day genitives:

het einde der liberale dominantie
the end the.GEN.FEM liberal domination
'the end of liberal domination'

de onbekende wereld der fietsverhuurders
the unknown world the.GEN.PLU bicycle leasers
'the unknown world of (the) bicycle leasers'

des schrijvers voetsporen
the.GEN writer.GEN footsteps
'the writer's footsteps' (from INL 38 mil. words corpus)

Genitive in Dutch

- Freely formed present-day genitives:
- Also in spoken language
  (examples from Corpus Gesproken Nederlands)

het probleem der overbevolking (CGN: fv600879)
the problem the.GEN overpopulation
'the problem of overpopulation'

de invloed der atmosfeer (CGN: fv400595)
the influence the.GEN atmosphere
'the influence of the atmosphere

Genitive in Dutch

- Speaker uncertainty?
- Mismatch between determiner number and possessor number

de mildheid des jaren (CGN: fn008413)
the mildness the.MASC/NEUT.SG.GEN years
'the mildness of the years'

Typology of Poss-s

- Seen diachronically: final stage of development of genitive
  (e.g. in English and Mainland Scandinavian, but not German)
- Possessor-based restrictions vary between languages…

Typology of Poss-s

	Proper names	Common nouns	Adjectival poss.	Pronoun poss.	Right-edge	Split gen.
Dutch						
English						
Faroese						
German						
Mainland Scand.						

Typology of Poss-s

	Proper names	Common nouns	Adjectival poss.	Pronoun poss.	Right-edge	Split gen.
Dutch	✓	Brams boek 'Bram's book'				
English	✓	John's book				
Faroese	✓	Siggusa(r) bók 'Sigga's book'				
German	✓	Judiths Buch 'Judith's book'				
Mainland Scand.	✓	Josefines bok 'Josefine's book'				

Typology of Poss-s

	Proper names	Common nouns	Adjectival poss.	Pronoun poss.	Right-edge	Split gen.
Dutch	✓	(✓) Mijn vriends boek 'my friend's book'				
English	✓	✓ My friend's book				
Faroese	✓	x				
German	✓	(✓) Vaters Buch 'father's book'				
Mainland Scand.	✓	✓ Min väns bok 'my friend's book'				

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English	✓	✓ My friend's book				
Far						
German	✓	(✓) Vaters Buch 'father's book'				
Mainland Scand.	✓	✓ Min väns bok 'my friend's book'				

Mein Freunds Eltern haben auch keine Drogen oder sonst was genommen.
'My boyfriend's parents didn't take drugs or anything else either'

From an internet chat forum: http://www.med1.de/Forum/Sucht/112158/ [accessed 20.5.09]

Typology of Poss-s

	Proper names	Common nouns	Adjectival poss.	Pronoun poss.	Right-edge	Split gen.
Dutch	✓	(✓)	x			
English	✓	✓	(✓)			
Faroese	✓	x	x			
German	✓	(✓)	x			
Mainland Scand.	✓	✓	✓			

Close study debunks myth of the rich's tax burdens
http://david-crystal.blogspot.com/2009/04/on-richs.html

De dödas uppståndelse (GSLC: V0187011)
'the resurrection of the dead'

Typology of Poss-s

	Proper names	Common nouns	Adjectival poss.	Pronoun poss.	Right-edge	Split gen.
Dutch	Iemands boek 'someone's book'			✓		
English	✓	Someone's book		✓		
Faroese	✓	x	x	x		
German	Jemands Buch 'someone's book'			✓		
Mainland Scand.	Någons bok 'someone's book'			✓		

Typology of Poss-s

	Proper names	Common nouns	Adjectival poss.	Pronoun poss.	Right-edge	Split gen.
Dutch	✓	(✓)	x	✓	x	
English	The leader of the council's shirt (BNC: JT7 095)			✓	✓	
Faroese					x	
German					(✓)	
Mainland Scand.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Walther von der Vogelweides Sprache
'WvdV's language'
?Anna aus Mannheims Buch
'Anna from Mannheim's book'
(Zifonun 2001)

Den vanlige mannen på gatans liv (GSLC: V0644021)
'the common man on the street's life'

Typology of Poss-s

	Proper names	Common nouns	Adjectival poss.	Pronoun poss.	Right-edge	Split gen.
Dutch	✓	(✓)	x	✓	x	x
English	✓	✓	(✓)	✓	✓	✓
Faroese	✓	x	x	x	x	x
German	✓	(✓)	x	✓	(✓)	x
Mainland Scand.	✓					✓

The gentleman's name with the tape recorder
(BNC: FM7 0008)

Dom anställdas synpunkt som ska jobba med djuren (GSLC: A0636011)
Kammarrättens i Göteborg beslut

Recent development in German Poss-s

mein bruders rechner ist so verstellt
My brother.s computer is so altered
'my brother's computer has been altered so much'
http://community.games4mac.de/index.php?showtopic=3652&mode=threaded&pid=49203
Von da an wusste ich, dass mein Lehrers Team hinter uns ist :-)
from there on knew I, that my teacher.s team behind us is
'I knew from there on that my teacher's team was behind us'
http://freenet-homepage.de/kessy16/triathlon.html

- Corresponds to development observed in older Swedish and English
- Marking only on head of possessor NP
- Order: possessor – possessum
- *-s* marker used with masculine possessors and with feminine possessors...

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from there on knew I, that my teacher.s team behind us is
'I knew from there on that my teacher's team was behind us'
http://freenet-homepage.de/kessy16/triathlon.html
Meine schwesters Freund hat bald geburtstag
my sister.s friend has soon birthday
'It's my sister's boyfriend's birthday soon'
http://www.gutefrage.net/frage/wo-kann-ich-neon-schwarzlicht-bilder-finden
Er lud oft seine und meine Mutters Geschwister ein
he invited often his and my mother.s siblings
'He often invited his and my mother's siblings'
http://einestages.spiegel.de/static/authoralbumbackground/981/als_st_pauli_wirklich_rot_war.html

Conclusions

- From a shared starting point, the Germanic languages have developed their inventory of possessive expressions in different ways and at different rates.
  - Nonetheless, many common trends can be observed.
- Cross-linguistically, support for view that Poss-s develops from genitive (and not from Co-ref pron); use varies cross-linguistically
- German Poss-s developing in same way as English and Mainland Scandinavian languages
- Dutch genitive survives despite lack of case system

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Thank you.

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http://www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/research/projects/germanic-possessive-s/

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