THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE GERMANIC LANGUAGES

By Kersti Börjars*, Alan Scott† and David Denison*  
*The University of Manchester and †The University of Nottingham

Abstract

Proto-Germanic had a full case system within which the genitive was used to express possession in its broadest sense. In the modern Germanic languages, there are a number of different ways of expressing possession; the genitive case is still used, as is an element which developed from the genitive case, but there are also more recently developed constructions. In this paper, we compare the expressions of possession available to a number of Germanic languages and consider what the modern systems can tell us about language change and why similar systems develop in very different ways.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Proto-Germanic, possession was expressed by means of the genitive case, which was part of a full case system. In the present-day Germanic languages there is a range of constructions available to express possession, including the genitive case. The individual languages use these constructions to varying degrees and in divergent ways; not every possessive construction is present in every language, and it is rare that a particular construction is used in precisely the same way in two languages. Nonetheless, the family resemblance of the constructions used in the expression of possession in the Germanic languages is clear. In this paper, we trace the development

---

* The work reported here has been carried out as part of the project ‘Germanic possessive -s : an empirical, historical and theoretical study’, funded by the Arts and Humanities Funding Council. We gratefully acknowledge their support. A version of this paper was presented at ICHL 19 held at Nijmegen in August 2009 and the comments made by the audience there have helped improve the paper. We would also like to thank colleagues at Manchester for helpful discussions of different aspects of the data: Adrian Curtis, Martin Durrell, Neil Ferguson, Pauline Harries and Nigel Vincent. Until 30 September, Alan Scott’s affiliation was The University of Manchester.
of expressions of possession in Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, English, Faroese, German, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish and describe how the distinct present day systems developed from the common case system of the ancestor language. The paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the similarities and difference between the modern systems and the historical processes which led to the current distribution. We will only consider noun phrase internal expressions of possession so that we will not for instance discuss predicative possession. The depth and breadth of information available on the different languages varies, particularly as regards historical data, and this will be reflected in this paper.

Dialects of Germanic languages reveal a far greater variation than the standard varieties, but any detailed description of the data is beyond the scope of this paper. One type of possessive construction not dealt with in the present paper is that which has properties of compounds, such as the Obama administration (= Obama’s administration) or a Brown policy (= a policy of Brown’s) in which the possessor (i.e. Obama and Brown in these examples) is unmarked and the construction is ungrammatical without an article.

2 THE GERMANIC POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

2.1 Terminology

There is no established terminology for the different types of constructions we are dealing with in this paper. POSSESSIVE is often used since the core meaning of the construction is to express possession. However, none of the constructions referred to here is reserved for true ownership; they can be extended to other relations, for instance ‘creator of’, ‘ruler of’ or ‘has as a part’ and are also often used more broadly, for instance in partitives and measure phrases. GENITIVE CASE is also often used, partly because early forms of the Germanic languages had a full case system and one of the current exponents of the relation is a development from that earlier genitive case.

We shall generally refer to the construction type as the POSSESSIVE, in the full awareness that its exponents in the different languages are often used to describe
relations other than core possession. We shall recognize four major types of
expression of possession in the Germanic languages. The distinctions are based
largely on the morpho-syntactic properties of the present day versions, but the
historical origin tends to correspond closely to its modern properties. The one
exception is the Faroese possessive marker sa, to which we will return in section
8.2.2.3.

2.2   Genitive case (GEN)

We shall use the term GEN (ITIVE CASE) for possessive expressions in which the
possessor is marked by a bound element and which forms part of a system within
which it contrasts productively with other cases, such as nominative, accusative and
dative. Though the canonical use of GEN is for possession (in its broadest sense), in a
fully productive system, it tends also to be required on objects of certain verbs,
preposition and adjectives. For Dutch, though there is no productive case system, we
will still refer to a modestly productively used construction as GEN since it is a
remnant of the case system and can be distinguished from the POSS-S construction (see
section 2.3).

In this construction type, modifiers and determiners generally show
agreement, so that possession is marked more than once. The actual morpheme
expressing case will often vary with gender and number. The order between the
possessor and the possessum may vary. Typical examples are found in (1) ((1b) is
from Lockwood, 1955:104).

(1) a. das Haus des Mannes
   ‘the man’s book’

   \textit{DEF.NT.SG} \textit{house.DEF.GEN.SG} \textit{man.GEN.SG}

b. móttakarans undirskriftn
   ‘the recipient’s signature’

   \textit{recipient.DEF.GEN} \textit{signature}

   Faroese

German
2.3  Possessive s (POSS-s)

The term POSS-s will be used for constructions in which possession is marked once only by a bound invariant marker — in all the languages considered here this is s. Examples are provided in (2).

(2)  a.  the man’s book

        b.  manens bok
            \textit{man.DEF.POSS book}
            ‘the man’s book’

This construction is well-studied, particularly as it relates to English, and it has been associated with a number of terms in the literature (‘s-genitive’ (e.g. Rosenbach, 2002, Rosenbach, 2003), ‘s-construction’ (Weerman and de Wit, 1999), ‘s-form’ (Rosenbach and Vezzosi, 1999), ‘Saxon genitive’ (much traditional work, but also e.g. de Vries, 2006), ‘English genitive’ (Bermúdez-Otero & Payne to appear \textit{passim}) and ‘prenominal genitive’ (Allen, 1997)). The invariant marker developed from one of the markers of \textsc{gen} in earlier forms of the language and is cognate with genitive markers in other branches of Indo-European, for instance Latin -\textit{is}.

In the POSS-s construction, the possessor precedes the possessum. The POSS-s marker is usually described as a right edge marker or clitic. For the vast majority of POSS-s uses, the head noun is the final element of the possessor noun phrase, so that the POSS-s marker is on the word that is both the head noun and the rightmost element (Scott et al., 2007). When the head noun is not the rightmost element, the marker may appear on a non-head element, as in (3). This is most commonly referred to as the ‘group genitive’ (a term coined by Jespersen, 1894), and more recently the ‘phrasal genitive’ (Rosenbach, 2002:312) for English. We will refer to such constructions as POSTMOD POSS-S.

(3)  a.  the leader of the council’s shirt

        b.  företaget pappa jobbar på’s hemsida\textsuperscript{1}
            \textit{company.DEF dad works on.POSS home page}
            ‘the company my dad works for’s home page’

\textsuperscript{1} \url{www.tiger.se/book/guestbook25.html} [accessed 18.09.09]
It is the distribution illustrated in (3), generally assumed to be more prevalent in the spoken language (see for instance Carstairs, 1987, Rosenbach, 2005), which has led to the standard assumption that POSS-S is a relatively unproblematic clitic in these languages, but the construction is actually quite unusual, even in spoken corpora (Scott et al., 2007). When the head noun is not the rightmost element, an alternative construction may be used, but there are also alternative distributions of POSS-S. One alternative present in several of the languages considered is illustrated in (4). Here the postmodification of the possessor phrase is extraposed and occurs after the possessum. The POSS-S can then occur on the head noun of the possessor.

(4) a. the gentleman’s name with the tape recorder (BNC: FM7 0008)

b. Holger Vestergaards telefonnummer fra Ny Alliance

Danish

\[ \text{the phone number of Holger Vestergaard from Ny Alliance} \]

Such constructions have been referred to as the ‘split construction’ (Rosenbach, 2002) or ‘combined genitive’ (Allen, 2003); we will use the term SPLIT POSS(ESSIVE).\(^2\)

The distinction we make between GEN and POSS-S is partly dependent on whether or not the language can be said to have a case system. Establishing when a case system or an individual case is lost is no straightforward matter. In most of the languages, such as the Mainland Scandinavian languages, there was a general decline in the case system, with genitive no longer being part of a system of contrasting cases. Other languages, like Faroese, have preserved a case system but have all but lost the genitive.\(^4\) Focusing on the genitive, there are essentially two changes that create the POSS-S construction;

(i) the number of different exponents of the case reduces — in the end to one, -s, which spreads from the original masculine and neuter paradigm across all noun classes;

(ii) the marking no longer involves agreement, so that there is once only marking in a possessor noun phrase.

\(^2\) De sorte spejdere, Danmarks Radio P3, 6.2.08

\(^3\) Allen (e.g. 2008: 92-3) uses the term ‘split genitive’ to refer to a different kind of construction.

\(^4\) As mentioned in section 8.2.2.1, the role of GEN in Faroese is controversial, but it would appear that in naturally occurring data it is quite rare.
Both changes are taken as evidence of a decline of the genitive case and the development of POSS-S. More generally, the genitive also stops occurring on noun phrases where it was required by a verb or a preposition. In the languages we are considering, this tends to be an early change. It would not be sensible to take any one of these as the one piece of evidence that the language no longer has a genitive case. When we refer to the end of the genitive, this is then by necessity a vague description, not until the s occurs once only in a complex phrase headed by a feminine noun do we have a clear instance of POSS-S. We will use GEN for constructions that form part of a case system or that can be shown to have developed historically from the genitive and that can be distinguished from a POSS-S form, even when its use is very restricted and the language can no longer be said to have a case system, as in Dutch. We refer to a form as POSS-S when there is just one form and when there is no agreement. As always, there is a period of change when data is conflicting or ambiguous.\(^5\)

2.4 Coreferential pronoun (COREF PRON)

In this construction, the possessor is followed by a coreferential possessive pronoun. Both elements precede the possessum. Where the language has a case system, the possessor usually occurs in an unmarked form or in the dative case (or, in earlier periods of German and some present-day Swiss dialects, in the genitive case). Examples are provided in (5).

\begin{table}[h]
\begin{tabular}{lll}
\hline
(5) & a. & de man z’n boek & Dutch \\
& & \textit{DEF} man \textit{PRON.3SG.M} book & \\
& & ‘the man’s book’ & \\
& b. & dem Mann sein Buch & German \\
& & \textit{DEF.MASC.SG.DAT} man \textit{PRON.3SG.M} book & \\
& & ‘the man’s book’ & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The pronoun may show agreement with the possessor, compare the examples in (6) with (5).

\(^5\) In a number of influential works on PDE, POSS-S is described as the genitive case (e.g. Quirk et al 1985, Biber et al 1999, Huddleston & Pullum 2002). We are not wishing to argue with their analyses (argued for in some detail by Payne & Huddleston 2002); our interest is in distinguishing two stages of the development of the construction.
A superficially similar construction found in earlier periods of English, giving examples such as *bishop Cox his funeral*, has a different origin and is therefore not included here as a type of coref pron; instead the term used by Allen (2008), separated genitive, is used. The arguments for this will be provided in section 7.1.

2.5 *Preposition* (*PREP*)

All the Germanic languages can also express possession by means of a preposition. In some languages, one preposition is in general use with possession, as in English (7a). Other languages, like Swedish use a number of different prepositions (7b)–(7d). We will return to the distribution of these prepositions in section 8.3.3.

(7) a. the vote of the people

b. underlag till polisutredningen (Språkbanken: GP01)

   *the basis of the police investigation*

c. namn och telefonnummer på tre ansvariga tjänstemän (GSLC: V7703011)

   *name and telephone number of three responsible civil servants*

d. chefen för amerikanska centralbanken (Språkbanken: GP01)

   *the boss of the Central Bank of America*

   It has to be said that even in languages which can be said to have a single preposition to express possession, there are usually some locational prepositions which can be used as alternatives to specific possessive constructions. Examples from English are provided in (8).
a. the entrance to the hotel (BNC: KDE 3340)
   cf the hotel’s entrance

b. the new roof on the Centre Court (BNC: CKL 349)
   cf the Centre Court’s new roof

c. the northbound exit from Victoria [station] (BNC: AMR 28)
   cf Victoria station’s northbound exit

3    PROTO-GERMANIC

Proto-Germanic (PGmc), the common ancestor of all the languages discussed, is assumed to have had six cases, namely nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, vocative and instrumental, although the last two, which were subsumed into the nominative and dative cases respectively, were rare already in the oldest attested stages of Germanic (Robinson, 1992:31, Ringe, 2006:233–4). The genitive case is assumed to have expressed possession and also to have been governed by some verbs and prepositions (Prokosch, 1939:230, Ringe, 2006:234). Already at this early stage, the genitive was used not only for core possession, but also indicated more generally ‘various types and degrees of connectivity between the two nouns [i.e. possessor and possessum]’ (Prokosch, 1939:230). Lehmann (1972:244, 263, 1994:34) and Ramat (1998a:411) assume that PGmc had the unmarked order possessor<possessum as in the example from runic inscriptions in (9). However, this seems to be at least partly on the assumption that the language had OV order and that it would have been consistently head final. The possessor<possessum order could be found in other early varieties of Germanic, as in (10a) and (11a), but the order was clearly flexible, since examples of possessum<possessor order are also easy to find, as in (10b) and (11b). Indeed, though Lehmann (1994:34) describes Gothic as having possessor<possessum order, in the Gothic Bible texts the number of noun phrases with possessum<possessor order, like (10b), far outweigh those with the allegedly unmarked possessor<possessum order, as in (10a). Given the scarcity of evidence from Runic inscriptions and the apparently conflicting data from Gothic and Old

---

6 Ramat (1998b) refers to it as Common Germanic rather than PGmc.
Saxon, we would be reluctant to posit one order as having been the obviously unmarked for PGmc.  

(9) a. a(n)sugislas muha
    \( \text{Ansugisla.GEN follower} \)
    ‘Ansugisla’s follower’
    (c. 500 AD, Kragehul inscription)
b. h nabudas hlaiwa
    \( \text{Hnabud.GEN grave} \)
    ‘Hnabuds grav’
    (c. 500 AD, Bø memorial stone)

(10) a. inuh attins izwaris wian
    \( \text{without father.GEN your will} \)
    ‘without your father’s will’
    (Gothic, Wulfila Bible Matthew 10.29, c. 6\textsuperscript{th} c)
b. runos þiudinassaus gudis
    \( \text{mysteries kingd.\text{GEN} God.GEN} \)
    ‘the mysteries of God’s kingdom’
    (Gothic, Wulfila Bible Luke 8.10, c. 6\textsuperscript{th} c)

(11) a. uualdandes uuilleon
    \( \text{ruler.GEN will} \)
    ‘the Ruler’s will’
    (Old Saxon, Heliand c 830, from Lehmann 1972: 263)
b. Tho gihorde that fridubarn godes uuillean thes uuibes
    \( \text{then perceived that child God.GEN belief the.GEN woman.GEN} \)
    ‘then that child of God perceived the belief of the woman’
    (Old Saxon, Heliand c 830, from Lehmann 1972: 263)

The marker of POSS-s in modern Germanic languages can be traced back to one of the genitive singular endings of PGmc. Indeed, already in Proto-Indo-European the genitive singular ending is believed to have been -s — with the allomorphs -es and -os — for at least for certain nouns (Prokosch, 1939:233, Lehmann, 1993: 145).

A change that is assumed to have come about between Proto-Indo-European and PGmc is that the latter had prepositions whereas their existence in PIE is unclear.

\( ^7 \) It should be pointed out that the Greek origin for an example such as (10b) had the possessum<possessor order as in (i), which may have influenced the Gothic translation. However, more evidence would need to be adduced to posit the opposite order as unmarked for Gothic.

(i) \( \text{τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ} \)
    \( \text{the.PLU.ACC mysteries.ACC the.GEN kingdom.GEN the.GEN God.GEN} \)

\( ^8 \) The pronominal possessor izwaris does follow its possessum in this example.
(Ringe, 2006:64–5, 295). We are not, however, aware of any evidence that shows whether or not prepositions were used to express core possession.

4. **German**

4.1 **Historical development**

In Old High German (OHG, 750–1050), GEN was the main expression of possession and the possessor usually preceded the possessum as in (12a). This order was dominant throughout Middle High German (MHG, 1050-1350), but by the time of Early New High German (ENHG, 1350–1650), though it was still a possible order, as illustrated by (12b), the possessum more commonly preceded the possessor, as in (12c) (see for instance Lockwood, 1968:17).

(12) a. in wales wambu (Tatian c 830, Lockwood, 1968:21)

\[ \text{in \ whale.Gen belly} \]

‘in the whale’s belly’

b. in des Walfisches Bauch (Luther Bible 1545, Lockwood, 1968:17)

\[ \text{in \ the.Gen whale.Gen belly} \]

‘in the whale’s belly’

c. der ging von dem Stuhl Gottes und des Lammes

\[ \text{he went from the chair God.Gen and the.Gen lamb.Gen} \]

‘he went from the chair of God and of the lamb’

(Luther Bible 1545, Lockwood, 1968:17)

The genitive case was being affected by simplification by the end of OHG; the reduction of vowels in inflectional suffixes led to several distinct genitive suffixes falling out of use (Behaghel, 1923:479, Lockwood, 1968:18–9). By the time of MHG, further simplifications had taken place and elements which had previously showed agreement no longer carry genitive inflection (Schieb, 1970:370). During the NHG period even the suffix -s, so characteristic of the genitive (as shown by its later

---

9 The time span associated with historical periods of the languages are necessarily imprecise and subject to some disagreement. We will use the dates most commonly found in the literature, but emphasise the importance of recognising their vagueness.
reinterpretation as POSS-S), was lost from some nouns, only to be restored later: compare ENHG des Leben ‘the.GEN life-Ø’ and des Ritter ‘the.GEN knight-Ø’ with NHG des Lebens and des Ritters, respectively (von Polenz, 1991:164, Roelcke, 1997:131).

During the OHG period, a possessive construction involving a possessor in the dative (or the genitive) and a coreferential pronoun started to develop. It is traditionally argued that constructions which were ambigous between a benefactive/recipient reading and a possessive reading, as in (13a) led to unambiguous dative possessive constructions such as (13b) (examples from Lockwood, 1968: 21, see also Burridge, 1995). The resulting construction in (13b) remains in present day German, it is the one we will refer to here as COREF PRON. We will return to the issue of its origin in section 9.

(13) a. thaʒ ih druhtine sînan sun souge

\[ \text{that I Lord.DAT his.DAT son suckle} \]
‘that I may suckle the Lord’s son’ (possessive interpretation)
‘that I may suckle the Lord’s son for him’ (non-possessive interpretation)

b. mit tiu infûorest tu demo gewaltîgen sîn zorn

\[ \text{thereby provoke you the.DAT mighty.DAT his ire} \]
‘thereby didst thou provoke the ire of the mighty one’

The preposition von, which in Present-day German is used to express possession, existed already in OHG. It is original meaning was ‘away from’, a meaning it retains in Present-Day German. In MHG, von starts to appear in possessive constructions (Behaghel, 1924). At this stage, the cognate preposition was already in use to express possession in Middle Low German (Thomas Klein pc).

4.2 Present-Day German

4.2.1 GEN
The use of the GEN in Present Day German (PDG) is a controversial topic amongst linguists and non-linguists alike. This is illustrated by, for example, the title of the recent publication *Der Dativ ist dem Genitiv sein Tod* (Sick (2004) ‘The dative is the death of the genitive’ using the dative COREF PRON construction). Davies & Langer (2006) provide a historical overview of this debate. Though an alternative expression is frequently preferred, possessive marking by means of GEN is used in written formal registers of the standard language. Where the possessive functions as the subject of a nominalised verb, as in (14a), GEN is stillIn the GEN construction, possessors usually follow the possessum (14b). The possessor-possessum order can be found in (14c), but is not in common use and is generally held to be ungrammatical with feminine possessors. We will return to this point in section 9.

(14) a. die Zerstörung der Stadt
   *the.destr.gen city*  
   ‘the destruction of the city’

b. das Buch des Mannes / der Frau
   *the.book gen.masc MASC gen.fem FEM*  
   ‘the man’s / woman’s book’

c. *des Mannes / der Frau Buch
   *the.masc.gen MASC gen.fem FEM book*  
   ‘the man’s book’

A handful of dialects located in the far south of the German language area still use GEN as the main marker of possession also in spoken and colloquial language.

4.2.2 *Poss*-s

*Poss*-s, involving the invariant marker -s, is the most restricted means of expressing possession in German and is found especially in northern Germany (Sitta, 1998:243, Durrell, 2002:39). The possessor can generally only consist of a name or an unmodified kinship term.
The POSS-s construction can be distinguished from GEN in that the -s occurs also on feminine nouns, the possessor precedes the possessum and unlike the GEN ending from which it developed, POSS-s is always non-syllabic, the difference is illustrated in (16) (Zifonun, 2008:8).

(16) a. Horsts / *Horstes Vorschlag
    Horst.GEN Horst.GEN suggestion
    ‘Horst’s suggestion’

   b. der Bau des Horsts / Horstes
    the building the.GEN nest.POSS nest.GEN
    ‘the building of the nest’

German POSS-s cannot appear on the right edge of postmodification of the possessor, as (17) shows. However, this may not be a structural constraint on the distribution of the POSS-s marker as such, but rather be due to the restriction on what type of possessor can occur.¹⁰

(17) *Torben mit dem roten Autos Buch
    Torben with the red car.POSS book
    ‘Torben with the red car’s book’

There is evidence of the POSS-s construction spreading beyond the environments described in the literature. We will return to these constructions and what they may tell us about the development of POSS-s in Germanic in section 9.

¹⁰ Zifonun (2001:4) claims that examples such as *Heike aus Kiel’s Buch ‘Heike from Kiel.POSS book’, in which the postmodification denotes geographical origin, are acceptable to some speakers. However, none of the native speakers consulted during the writing of this paper considered the example acceptable.
4.2.3 COREF PRON

COREF PRON, which as we saw in section 4.1 was generally acceptable in earlier periods of German, is ‘not […] considered part of the written standard’ (Davies and Langer, 2006:157); it does, however, appear in a wide range of German dialects. Possessors, which usually appear in the dative case, must be animate.11 The variant of COREF PRON with a genitive possessor remains in some dialects (Davies and Langer, 2006:159).

(18) a. (der) Heike ihr Buch
    (the.DAT) Heike her book
    ‘Heike’s book’

    b. meinem Vater sein Buch
        my.DAT father his book
        ‘my father’s book’

    c. *dem Tisch seine Beine
        the.DAT table its legs
        ‘the table’s legs’

4.2.4 PREP

Possession may be expressed using a construction with the preposition von ‘of’. PREP is the most flexible of all the means of expressing possession in German. It faces no restrictions on the type of possessor it may take; nor is it restricted to any particular register.

(19) a. das Buch von meinem Vater
    the book of my.DAT father
    ‘the book of my father’

11 Pennsylvania German does use this construction for possessors that are not animate as in (i)
(Burridge, 1989:68, Burridge, 1995:15)

(i) de Disch sei Bee
    the table its legs
    ‘the table’s legs’
b. die Grenzen von der Stadt
   \textit{the boundaries of the} \textit{DAT} \textit{town}
   \hspace{1cm} \textit{the boundaries of the town}'

5 Dutch

5.1 Historical development\(^{12}\)

Old Dutch (c. 600–1200, ODu) had a four case system but one which was already in
decline. The genitive denoted possession in its broader sense, but also occurred in
positions where it was governed by verbs or adjectives. The possessor could precede
or follow the possessum, it is not clear what conditioned the order (Quak and van der
Horst, 2002:55–6). In Middle Dutch (MDu, c.1100–1500), possessor<possessum
order (20a) became more frequent than possessum<possessor (20b), but both were
still used (van Kerckvoorde, 1993:80). SPLIT POSS constructions (see section 2.3) also
occurred (20c) (Vezzosi, 2000:122).

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(20)] a. in des zeewes gronde
   \hspace{1cm} \textit{in the GEN sea GEN bottom}
   \hspace{1cm} \textit{at the bottom of the sea}
   \hspace{1cm} (Floris ende Blancefloer c 1170, van Kerckvoorde 1993:80)

b. Coninc der coningen ende heer der heeren
   \hspace{1cm} \textit{king the PLU GEN kings and lord the PLU GEN lords}
   \hspace{1cm} \textit{king of kings and lord of lords’} (from Suster Bertken, 1426/7-1514)\(^{13}\)

c. des keysers dochter van Griekenland (MDu, Vezzosi 2000: 122)
   \hspace{1cm} \textit{the GEN emperor GEN daughter of Greece}
   \hspace{1cm} \textit{the emperor of Greece’s daughter’}
\end{enumerate}

By the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the Dutch case system can be said to have disappeared.
During the period of general case decline, \textit{GEN} had begun its transition towards

\(^{12}\) For various start and end dates of the periods of the Dutch language, see van der Wal & van Bree
(1992: 93, 100).

\(^{13}\) From \textit{Mi quam een schoon geluyt in mijn[en]} oren, http://www.kb.nl/dichters/bertken/bertken-
lied02.html
becoming POSS-s: the masculine/neuter singular suffix -s became strongly associated with the genitive and, from the 16th century onwards, this ending was also used with feminine nouns (21a). At this stage, the possession started to be marked once only as in (21b), but into the 19th century such examples occurred side by side with agreeing examples such as (21c) (all examples from Komen, 1997:406–7).

(21) a. de vader des bruid\¨s
   \textit{the father GEN bride GEN}
   ‘the father of the bride’

   b. zijn moeders woorden
   \textit{his mother POSS words}
   ‘his mother’s words’

   c. mijns dochters recht
   \textit{my GEN daughter GEN right}
   ‘my daughter’s right’

By the 19th century, GEN had an archaic character and, by the end of that century, there was no genitive in the spoken language (de Vooys, 1970:174, van der Wal and van Bree, 1992, Komen, 1997:468).

The use of PREP as an expression of possession had existed since the ODu period. During the MDu period, the \textit{COREF PRON} construction started to appear. The possessor would generally occur in the dative as in (22), but could also take the genitive or the nominative/accusative case (Vezzosi, 2000:123).

(22) Grote Kaerle \gen{\textit{sijn}} zoon \cite{Stoett, 1977:50}
   \textit{great Charles DAT his son}
   ‘the son of Charles the Great’

5.2 \textit{Present-day Dutch}

5.2.1 \textit{Poss-s}

POSS-s, with the invariant marker -s, appears in written and spoken language. The range of possible possessors is restricted to proper names (23a), kinship terms,
including those modified by a possessive pronoun (23b) and names of professions (23c). Booij (2002:35) states the generalisation as a restriction on the possessor being ‘inherently referential’.

   Jaap.POSS book
   ‘Jaap’s book’

   b. her brother’s best friend
   haar broers beste vriend
   ‘her brother’s best friend’

   c. the professor’s view
   the professor.POSS view
   ‘the professor’s view.’

POSS-S cannot be used when the possessor phrase contains postmodification as illustrated by (24). As in the case of German (cf 4.4.2), it is not clear whether this is a constraint on the placement of POSS-S or is due to more general restrictions on the possessor which do not refer specifically to postmodification.

(24) *Annelies uit Tilburg’s book.
     Annelies from Tilburg.POSS book
     ‘Annelies from Tilburg’s book.’

5.2.2 COREF PRON

COREF PRON, which is associated with colloquial language, is restricted to animate (usually personal) possessors, where a certain familiarity is assumed. The pronoun

---

14 It should be pointed out that some of these examples are rare, so that for constructions like (23c), professors often occurs in compound like constructions professors-muts ‘professorial cap’, professors-titel ‘a professorial title’ or professors-benoeming ‘professorial appointment. The construction also becomes more rare if there is modification, then a PREP construction would tend to be used instead, cf de huidige professors muts ‘the current professor.Poss cap’ vs de muts van de huidige professor ‘the cap of the current professor’.

15 www.bollywood.nl/2007/06/05/mahima-chaudhary-is-in-blijde-verwachting/
agrees with the (natural) gender and number of the possessor (25a) to (25c). The possessor may be postmodified as in (25c).

(25) a. mijn zus d’r vriend
    *my sister her friend*
    ‘my sister’s friend’

b. de man z’n hoofd
    *the man his head*
    ‘the man’s head’

c. Ik vind Peter en Sofie hun show te gek.\(^\text{16}\)
    *I find Peter and Sofie their show too crazy*
    ‘I think Peter and Sofie’s show is really great.’

d. Annelies uit Tilburg haar/d’r boek
    *Annelies from Tilburg her book*
    ‘Annelies from Tilburg’s book.’

5.2.3  *PREP*

*PREP* is found in all registers and with any type of possessor. The preposition *van* is in general use to express all aspects of possession.

(26) a. een boek van Siska
    *a book of Siska*
    ‘a book of Siska’s’

b. de wiel van de fiets
    *the wheel of the bicycle*
    ‘the wheel of the bicycle’

5.2.4.  *GEN*

Dutch no longer has a case system but GEN remains as a means of marking possession, albeit in a much restricted form. Besides lexicalised fixed expressions, there exist partially fixed constructions, where either the possessum precedes the possessor and the genitive determiner des or der is used (27a) or the possessor comes first and the abbreviated genitive determiner ’s is used (27b).\(^\text{17}\)

\begin{align*}
(27) \quad \text{a. } & \text{ zwarte scherm}^{18} / \text{ geen poule}^{19} / \text{ de industrie}^{20} / \text{ des doods} \\
& \text{black screen} / \text{ no group} / \text{ the industry} / \text{ the.GEN death.GEN} \\
& \text{‘the black screen / not a group / the industry of death’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{b. } & \text{ ’s werelds oudste popfestival}^{21} / \text{ eerste iPhone party}^{22} \\
& \text{the.GEN world.GEN oldest popfestival} / \text{ first iPhone party} \\
& \text{‘the world’s oldest pop festival / the world’s first iPhone party’}
\end{align*}

Contra, for example, Weerman & de Wit (1999:1164) and de Vries (2006:20), we have found evidence that GEN retains some limited productivity in present-day Dutch. New formations are rare but are attested in written and spoken language, as in (28a) and (28b), respectively. The order is then always possessum<possessor.

\begin{align*}
(28) \quad \text{a. } & \text{ de onbekende wereld der fietsverhuurders (INL 38 mil corpus)} \\
& \text{the unknown world} / \text{ the.GEN.PLU bicycle leaser.PLU} \\
& \text{‘the unknown world of the bicycle leasers’}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{b. } & \text{ het probleem der overbevolking (CGN fv600879)} \\
& \text{the problem} / \text{ the.GEN overpopulation} \\
& \text{‘the problem of overpopulation’}
\end{align*}

\(^{17}\) Examples such as (27a) can also be found with a feminine or plural possessor, as in in de tand der tijd ‘the tooth the GEN time’ or in de loop der eeuwen ‘in the run the GEN centuries’.  


\(^{21}\) http://www.atp.nl/page.php?id=4643 [accessed 2.6.09]  

\(^{22}\) http://www.onemorething.nl/?p=indexarticles&category=iPhone [accessed 2.6.09]
6. **AFRIKAANS**

6.1 **Historical development**

Present-day Afrikaans has developed from the 17th century Dutch of the original settlers. Views vary as to when Afrikaans should be considered an independent language: Vekeman & Ecke (1992:225) consider Afrikaans an individual language by 1780, while Lockwood (1972:102) places the start date about a century later. In 1925 Afrikaans was recognised as an official language (Ponelis, 1993:54). Of the expressions of possession that were present in the Dutch of the first settlers, **COREF PRON** and **PREP** have remained. In early Afrikaans, the pronoun agreed in number and gender with the possessor, as in (29) (Ponelis, 1993:233–5). These forms remained in use into the 20th century.

(29) a. oom zijn vrouw

*uncle his wife*

‘(my) uncle’s wife’

b. Aletta haar kamer

*Aletta her room*

‘Aletta’s room’

c. de Hartmans hulle vrinde

*the Hartmans their friends*

‘the Hartmans’ friends’

6.2 **Present Day Afrikaans**

6.2.1 **COREF PRON**

**COREF PRON** is the dominant possessive construction in present day Afrikaans, but it has developed differently from its Dutch counterpart. The marker no longer agrees with the possessor, but has an invariant form **se**. As the examples in (30) illustrate, there are no restrictions on the possessor (Donaldson, 1993:98–9, Hantson, 2001:10). The possessor phrase may contain postmodification (31).
(30) a. haar tante se aankoms
   *her aunt’s arrival*

b. die VN se Veiligheidsraad
   *the UN’s security council*

c. die koerant se toekoms-visie
   *the newspaper’s vision of the future*

(31) Vyf van die twaalf mense wat nog in die hospital behandel word,
    *five of the twelve people that are still being treated in hospital is critical* 

   se toestand is kritiek
   *condition is critical*

   (Donaldson, 1993:98)

   The COREF PRON construction can be used not just with core possession, but also in the marking of measurement for instance.

(32) a. ‘n week se geld
    *a week’s money*

b. tien rand se Sasol
    *ten rand’s worth of Sasol (petrol)*

6.2.2 Prep

There is a Prep construction with *van* which is less commonly used than COREF PRON (Donaldson, 1993:99). Where the preposition is used, a COREF PRON construction

---

23 www.freewebs.com/esmith/kindvanliefde.htm
27 pooks.woes.co.za/gedigte/vertoon/3642_Antwoord_op_die_Energie-Krisis.htm
would have been grammatical, but \textit{PREP} may be used in order to have the possessum preced the possessor, or as in (11b) to avoid more than one \textit{se} in any one possessor phrase.

\begin{equation}
(33) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{die Olympiese Spele van die danswêreld}^{28} \\
& \text{\textit{the Olympic Games of the dance world}} \\
& \text{\textquoteleft the Olympic Games of the dance world\textquoteright} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{die naam van die man, wie se ouderdom rondom 30 geskat word}^{29} \\
& \text{\textit{the name of the man who \textit{PRON} age \textit{about 30 estimated became}}} \\
& \text{\textquoteleft the name of the man, whose age was estimated at about 30\textquoteright}
\end{align*}
\end{equation}

7.1 Historical development

Despite a decline in the case system throughout the Old English period (OE, before c 1100), by the end of the period \textit{GEN} remained ‘still almost the exclusive possessive construction’ (Rosenbach et al (2000:184); see also Yngve (1975:47)). As in the other Germanic languages, \textit{GEN} was also governed by verbs and prepositions. The possessor could either precede (34a) or follow (34b) the possessum (Seppänen, 1997:194, Lightfoot, 1999:117). After 900 AD, possessor-possessum order began to dominate (Yngve, 1975:47).

\begin{equation}
(34) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{Ic eom Hroðgares ar ond ombiht} \\
& \text{\textit{I am Hrothgar's messenger and officer}} \\
& \text{\textquoteleft I am Hrothgar’s messenger and officer\textquoteright} \quad \text{(Beowulf, van Gelderen, 2006:57)} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{Lufu godes and manna} \\
& \text{\textit{love of God and of men}} \\
& \text{\textquoteleft love of God and of men\textquoteright} \quad \text{(Ælfric, Lightfoot, 2006:116)}
\end{align*}
\end{equation}

\textsuperscript{28}http://www.dieburger.com/Stories/Entertainment/19.0.118064562.aspx [accessed 22.12.08].
\textsuperscript{29}http://www.dieburger.com/Stories/News/19.0.1178102931.aspx [accessed 14.1.09].
By the Middle English period (ME, c. 1100–1500), the use of _GEN_ had become more restricted than in OE, for instance in that it was no longer governed by verbs and prepositions. With respect to possession, the order became firm, with the possessor preceding the possessum (Seppänen, 1997:194). During this period, the behaviour of the marker _s_ starts to exhibit evidence of a change from the distribution of an agreeing case marker to that of the once-only _POSS-S_ marker. It spreads across the paradigm from singular masculine and neuter nouns to feminine and plural nouns and less frequently displays agreement (Seppänen, 1997:194, Rosenbach and Vezzosi, 1999:38). The _Peterborough Chronicle_ (1122-1154) illustrates the transitional nature of possessive marking during very early ME: alongside typical OE constructions in which all members of the possessor NP are inflected (35a), there exist constructions in which only the possessor noun carries an ending, i.e. in which the _-s_ is a once-only marker of possession (35b) (Shores, 1971:166–7).

(35)  

a. þes cwenes chancellor  
   _the GEN queen GEN chancellor_  
   ‘the queen’s chancellor’

b. þa mannæ throte  
   _the man GEN throat_  
   ‘the man’s throat’

By Early Modern English (EModE, c. 1500–1700) the behaviour of _s_ was that of a _POSS-S_ element, for instance in that with few exceptions, it was marked only once. Rosenbach et al (2000:186) show that it occurred almost exclusively with animate possessors.

The development from _GEN_ to _POSS-S_ can be said to consist of three related changes: the marker _–s_ takes over the paradigm; possession is marked only once in a possessor phrase; and the _–s_ is no longer associated with the head, but with the right edge of the possessor phrase. The last of these changes is the one for which the evidence is most controversial. Possessor phrases containing postmodification are crucial in this debate, in particular, examples of _POSTMOD POSS-S_ (the so-called ‘group genitive’, cf section 2.3) would show that the marker is unambiguously right edge. This construction type, exemplified in (36), emerged during the second half of the ME period; its earliest recorded use is generally agreed to be in Chaucer’s works (see...
Nevalainen (2006:76) describes it as ‘well established’ by EME.

(36) a. this god of loves hypocrite
    \[this \ god \ of \ love.\text{POSS} \ hypocrite\]
    ‘this god of love’s hypocrite’

    (Chaucer, Roscow, 1970:42)

b. þe kyng of Fraunces men
    \[the \ king \ of \ France.\text{POSS} \ men\]
    ‘the king of France’s men’

    (Trevisa, Allen, 1997:121)

The POSTMOD POSS-S construction was restricted to phrases with short postmodification, usually involving a preposition phrase with of, even into EME (see for instance Görlach, 1991:82, Allen, 1997:121). In his corpus study of 17\textsuperscript{th} century English, Altenberg finds no creative or ad hoc group genitive possessors: ‘group genitives like the man I saw yesterday’s wife do not occur in the corpus’ (1982:90).

Similarly, Rosenbach & Vezzosi observe that all their attested group genitives in late 16\textsuperscript{th}–early 17\textsuperscript{th} century Scots feature a possessor with the structure TITLE OF PLACE + -S, leading them to suggest that ‘this type of phrase is analyzed as a proper name, such as king James, and not as a complex NP’ (1999:45).

The construction type we refer to as SPLIT POSS (cf section 2.3), in which postmodification is placed after the possessor, allowing the marker to be attached to the head noun of the possessor NP, was ‘extremely common’ in ME (Mustanoja, 1960:78, Allen, 2002:73, Nielsen, 2005:79).\(^3\) As in the case of POSTMOD POSS-S, the postmodification tended to consist of a prepositional phrase denoting origin, usually – possibly exclusively – with of. An example is provided in (37a). As (37b) shows, this construction type could also be used when possession was marked more than once.

\(^{30}\) Allen (2002: 73) prefers the term ‘combined genitive’ for this construction because it ‘involve[s] a combination of a morphological genitive marker and a prepositional phrase’. She reserves the term ‘split genitive’ for a construction in which the possessor consisted of a name and a title, where the title occurred after the possessor, as in (i) (Allen 2008: 92-5; see also Lightfoot 1999: 117). This construction was present in OE and continued to be used in ME.

(i) \textit{on Herodes dagum cyninges} (Roscow 1970: 40)
\[
\text{in \ Herod.GEN \ days \ king.GEN}
\]
‘in King Herod’s days’
(37) a. the wyues love of Bathe
   \textit{(Chaucer, Jespersen 1894: 293)}
   \textit{the wife POSS love of Bath}
   \textit{‘the wife of Bath’s love’}

   b. þes eorles sunu of Angeow
   \textit{(Peterborough Chronicle, Shores 1971: 168)}
   \textit{the GEN count GEN son of Anjou}
   \textit{‘the son of the count of Anjou’}

The accepted position in the literature is that the POSTMOD POSS — the group genitive — fully superseded the SPLIT POSS, and that the split genitive was last attested in the late 17th century (Lightfoot, 1999:125, Fischer et al., 2000:81, Allen, 2003:14, Nielsen, 2005:255, Fischer and van der Wurff, 2006:119). As we shall see in section 7.2.1, a SPLIT POSS construction is attested also in present day English.

Rosenbach & Vezzosi (1999:43) record examples from EModE in which the postmodification immediately follows the possessor, but the POSS-S marker still appears only on the head noun, as in (38).

(38) a. the kinges of Seuthen embassadeur \textit{(Edward VI, Rosenbach & Vezzosi 1999: 43)}
   \textit{‘the king of Zeuthen’s ambassador’}

   b. the erle’s of Warwick patent \textit{(Edward VI, Rosenbach & Vezzosi 1999: 43)}
   \textit{‘the Earl of Warwick’s patent’}

Examples such as (39), referred to here as the SEPARATED GENITIVE and first attested in the 13th century, have been used to argue that the possessive \textit{s} developed from the pronoun \textit{his} and hence that English had a COREF PRON construction (Janda, 1980, Lightfoot, 1999, Weerman and de Wit, 1999).

(39) a. a preste his house \textit{(John of Trevisa Waldron, 1989:196)}
   \textit{a priest POSS house}
   \textit{‘a priest’s house’}

\footnote{Although \textit{his} has come to be the marker most associated with this construction, at this time the marker was generally \textit{ys} or \textit{is} (Juvonen 2008).}
b. Robert his bedde (John of Trevisa Waldron, 1989:196)  
*Robert POSS bed*  
‘Robert’s bed’

Allen (1997, 2003, 2008:225ff) does, however, argue convincingly that *his* (ys or *is*) in such examples were actually orthographical variants of *s*. Examples such as (40a), in which *his* is used with a feminine possessor, supports this view. There are some examples involving an agreeing pronoun in OE, as in (40b). However, these always involve loan names which would not have fitted easily into the OE inflectional system (see Mitchell, 1985:121). Allen (2008:227–8) states that there is no evidence to suggest that such examples were the starting point of that which we have referred to as the *COREF PRON* construction. Instead, she suggests that such constructions are most likely the result of a topicalisation of the possessor, so that the pronoun is a genuine resumptive pronoun.

(40)  

| a. | Gwenayfer his love | (Lawman, Mustanoja, 1960:161) |
|    | *Gwenayfer POSS love* | ‘Guinevere’s love’ |

|    | *Asia and Europe PRON boundaries* | ‘Asia and Europe their boundaries’ |

A more general use of an agreeing pronoun, as in (41), is a later development (in EModE), which suggests that it arises from a reinterpretation of the orthographical variant *his* rather than a genuine *COREF PRON*.

(41)  

| a. | Lucilla hir company | (Lyly, Barber, 1997:146) |
|    | *Lucilla PRON company* | ‘Lucilla’s company’ |

| b. | the vtopians their creditors | (More, Barber, 1997:146) |
|    | *the Utopians PRON creditors* | ‘the Utopians’ creditors’ |

Further evidence against an explanation of the *SEPARATED GENITIVE* as a *COREF PRON* comes from examples such as (42). If such examples arose from a
fronted possessor being replaced by a pronoun, this type of split example, in which
the postmodification of the possessor follows the possessum, would not be expected.

(42) the kyng ys daughter of Fraunce
    (Allen, 2003:16)
    \textit{the king's daughter of France}

\textquote{‘the king of France’s daughter’}

The \textsc{separated genitive} with \textit{his} generally occurred after a sibilant. In this phonetic
context it is almost homophonous with \textit{poss}-\textit{s}, again supporting the conclusion that it
was an orthographic variant of \textit{s}. Example (43) illustrates nicely.

(43) Job’s patience, Moses his meekness, and Abraham’s faith
    (Richard Franck, \textit{Northern memoirs}, 1658: 31)$^{32}$

\textquote{In EModE, the \textsc{separated genitive} briefly broadened its sphere of use before
disappearing. By the late 17th century, it was ‘obsolescent’ and, by the 18th century,
was ‘pretty much dead’ (Lass, 1999:146), though Jespersen (1894:325) lists some 19th
century literary attestations.}

A \textsc{prep} construction involving \textit{of} had been available as an alternative to \textsc{gen}
from the OE stage. The use of \textsc{prep} started to increase from late OE, coinciding with
the time when the possessor-possessum order had begun to dominate in \textsc{gen}
(Mustanoja, 1960:74, Yngve, 1975:53). \textsc{prep} was the most frequent possessive
construction in EModE, especially frequent with possessors ending in a sibilant (24b)
and was ‘the preferred alternative’ with postmodified possessors (Altenberg, 1982:51, 89).

For completeness sake, it should be pointed out that there was a marginal
possessive construction in OE involving a possessor in the dative case, it could only
be used with inalienable possession, as in (44) (Pasicki, 1998:135–6). There is no
evidence that this construction is the origin of the \textsc{separated genitive}.

(44) a. Ne forbinden ge na ðæm ðyrstendumoxum ðone muð
    \textquote{not tie up you never the.DAT thirsty.DAT oxen.DAT the mouth}
    ‘Do not tie up the thirsty oxen’s mouth’

$^{32}$ OED Online and Lightfoot (1999: 143) give the date of this example as 1568; the year 1658 is that
listed on the scan of the original publication (available at
www.archive.org/details/northernmemoirsc00franiala and in the OED bibliography).
b. Is hem ðæt heafod hinder grene
   is he.DAT the head behind green
   ‘the back of his head is green’

The **PREP** construction with *of* appears in OE and experiences a strong increase in productivity from late OE, to the mid-ME period, by which time it had become the most frequent possessive construction (Mustanoja, 1960:74). As Yngve (1975:53) notes, the rise in the use of **PREP**, in which the possessum precedes the possessor, coincided with the time when the possessor-possessum order began to dominate in **GEN** constructions.

7.2 **Present day English**

7.2.1 **POSS-S**

Having experienced a decline during ME and EModE, **POSS-S** has undergone a resurgence in modern English (Kreyer, 2003:170). Present-day English **POSS-S** has been widely studied, particularly regarding the division of labour between **POSS-S** and **PREP**, see for instance Kreyer (2003), Rosenbach (2003) and Hinrichs and Szmrecsanyi (2007), but also reference grammars such as Quirk et al (1985), Biber et al (1999) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002). A number of semantic, structural and phonological factors play a role in the choice, with animacy of the possessor being the major one (Rosenbach, 2002). The morpho-syntactic status of the English possessive *s* has also received attention in the literature, in particular in relation to the categories affix and clitic. It has generally been assumed to be a right edge clitic, but it displays interaction with the element to which it attaches which is untypical of clitics and hence it has been referred to by some as a phrasal affix (for different arguments see Anderson, 1984, Zwicky, 1987, Lapointe, 1990, Lapointe, 1992, Miller and Halpern, 1993, Anderson, 2005). We will not have much to say here on this aspect of the behaviour of **POSS-S**.
POSTMOD POSS-S, commonly referred to as the ‘group genitive’ after Jespersen (1894), is generally held to be relatively unconstrained in English, though it is assumed to be more common in informal or spoken language (see for instance standard grammars such as Quirk et al., 1985, Biber et al., 1999, Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). However, work on spoken corpora show that the construction is quite rare in present-day English (see Scott et al., 2007). In the spoken component of the BNC, POSTMOD POSS-S occurs almost exclusively with possessors that are more or less fixed expressions or lexicalised structures with gaps into which nouns may be entered (e.g. ‘the people of X’, ‘X as a whole’, etc.), as shown in (45). More creative examples can be found in informal language, as in (46).

(45) a. the people of Leicestershire’s land (BNC: KGM 022)  
   b. the leader of the council’s shirt (BNC: JT7 095)  
   d. China as a whole’s economic development (BNC: JJN 426)

(46) a. the guy next to me’s last night here at the call center^{33}  
   b. the girl who was singing’s name^{34}  
   c. the guy in the green’s job^{35}

Scott et al (2007) show that a SPLIT POSS construction, i.e. examples where the postmodification is postposed to follow the possessum, is roughly as common as creative POSTMOD POSS-S examples in the spoken BNC corpus. Examples can be found in (47), where (47c) and (47d) show that these can involve more extensive postmodification than typically found in POSTMOD POSS-S.

(47) a. the manager’s secretary of the Co-op (BNC: FYH 383)  
   b. the gentleman’s name with the tape recorder (BNC: FM7 0008)  
   c. a person’s mouth that has epilepsy (BNC: F8C 105)  
   d. somebody’s desk who was actually supposed to carry out the work (BNC: H48 740)

^{33} http://lynchedmunkey.blogspot.com/2003/01/so-its-guy-next-to-mes-last-night-here.html [accessed 5.2.09].  
^{34} http://www.restaurantthing.com/ca/on/toronto/restaurant.php?id=3437&tab=general [accessed 5.2.09].  
^{35} http://scienceforfood.blogspot.com/2009/01/snake-charmer.html [accessed 5.2.09].
7.2.2 PREP

PREP is the most frequent possessive construction overall in present-day English (Scott et al., 2007). Though generally associated with inanimate possessors, it is also frequently used with animate possessors, in particular where some factor militates against the use of POSS-s, as in (48c), where the possessor contains postmodification.

(48)  
   a. the age of the person (BNC: KRG 0235)  
   b. the first novel of George Eliot (BNC: KRG 0956)  
   c. the foot of the man at the end of the row (BNC: FSN 0790)

8 SCANDINAVIAN

8.1 Historical development

The modern Scandinavian languages have a common antecedent in Old Norse, so that we will deal with their history in one section. The modern languages will be dealt with as two groups because of their relative similarity, the Insular Scandinavian languages — Icelandic and Faroese — which retained a case system, and the Mainland Scandinavian languages — Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish — which did not.

In Old Norse, possession was indicated by GEN, which was also governed by a number of verbs, adjectives and prepositions (Askedal, 2003a:26). Both possessor-possessum and possessum-possessor order was possible (49). Wessén (1956:103–6) provides some generalisations about order in early Swedish texts, but states that the order was relatively free. According to Faarlund (2002:729), the latter was more common for inanimate possessors and the former for animate possessors, however, we are not aware of any quantative study of this.

(49)  
   a. allra Svia þing  
       all Swede.GEN parliament  
   ‘all Swedes’ parliament’ (Askedal, 2003a:29)
The Insular Scandinavian languages are the only present-day Germanic languages which retain several genitive endings, the allocation of which depends on the gender and class of the possessor noun. The deterioration of the case system in Mainland Scandinavian started in the 14th century and by the end of the 15th century, the case system was essentially lost in all the Mainland Scandinavian languages. In the genitive, (e)s took over and agreement was lost so that the case tended to be marked once only, as in the Old Swedish (50).

(50) min fadhers wiliu

my father.MASC.SG.GEN consent.FEM.SG.OBL

‘my father’s consent’

PREP was in use as a means of expressing possession in the early stages of the Scandinavian languages.

8.2 Present-Day Insular Scandinavian

8.2.1 Icelandic

Icelandic is the only Germanic language where GEN is the most commonly used expression of possession. There are no constraints on what types of possessors can be expressed this way. The possessor usually follows the possessum as in (51a), although the two can be reversed (51b) for emphasis. In the spoken language, a different construction, combining the genitive with a possessive pronoun (agreeing in gender and number with the possessor), is preferred with proper name possessors, as illustrated in (51c).

(51) a. leikfang barnsins (Pétursson 1978: 134)

‘the child’s toy’
b. Haraldar hús (en ekki Jóns)  
   Harald.\textit{GEN} house (\textit{and} not Jón.\textit{GEN})
   ‘Harald’s house (\textit{and} not Jón’s)’

(Thráinsson, 1994:167)

8.2.1.2 \textit{Prep}

Because of the unrestrictedness of the use of \textit{Gen} in Icelandic, \textit{Prep} is used less frequently than in the other Germanic languages. Icelandic \textit{Prep} constructions use mainly the prepositions \textit{á} and \textit{í}, both of which occur most frequently with constructions involving a body part possessum (examples from Thráinsson, 2007:94, see also Stolz et al., 2008:143–4, 221).

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{þakið á húsinu}
   \textit{roof.\textit{DEF} at house.\textit{DEF.DAT}}
   ‘the roof of the house’
\item \textit{tennurna í henna}
   \textit{teeth.\textit{DEF} in she.\textit{DAT}}
   ‘her teeth’
\end{enumerate}

8.2.2 \textit{Faroese}

8.2.2.1 \textit{Gen}

The Faroese \textit{Gen} was already in decline in older periods and is often avoided in the modern language, especially in everyday or spoken language (Lockwood, 1950:97, Barnes and Weyhe, 1994:198). It is sometimes still used in the written language, which Hamre (1961:232) ascribes (at least partly) to deliberate prescriptive attempts to reintroduce the case. Barnes and Weyhe (1994:197–8) note that the \textit{Gen} is used less frequently with nouns whose genitive is not \textit{s}, such as plural and feminine nouns. The possessor may either precede or follow the possessum, as shown by (53a) and (53b),

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{þakið á húsinu}
   \textit{roof.\textit{DEF} at húsinu.\textit{DEF.DAT}}
\item \textit{tennurna í henna}
   \textit{teeth.\textit{DEF} in henna.\textit{DAT}}
\end{enumerate}

\footnote{36 http://baldvinj.blog.is/blog/baldvinj/entry/173532/ [accessed 20.2.09]}
although the former order is most frequent (Hamre, 1961:241). The examples are
taken from Lockwood (1955:104).

(53) a. móttakarans undirskrift
    recipient.DEF.GEN signature
    ‘the recipient’s signature’

        b. undirskrift móttakarans
           signature recipient.DEF.GEN
           ‘the recipient’s signature’

8.2.2.2 Prep

Prep is the most common expression of possession in Faroese. The preposition hjá is
the most versatile in this construction, but other prepositions are also used, for
instance at and til for personal and kinship relationships (Stolz and Gorsemann,

(54) Hesturin hjá gentuni
    horse.NOM.DEF with girl.DAT.DEF
    ‘the girl’s horse’

8.2.2.3 The Sa construction

A relatively recent development in Faroese is a construction in which the possessor is
marked by –sa(r). This construction has a number of interesting properties from a
comparative Germanic perspective. It started to appear in print by the mid-20th
century and its origin is a matter of debate (Lockwood, 1950:96, Staksberg, 1996,
that it may have developed from the reflexive pronoun sær or the possessive pronoun
han(sara) so that it is similar in origin to COREF PRON. It does indeed share a number
of properties with COREF PRON constructions in other Germanic languages, for
instance in that it is limited to possessors consisting of proper nouns or kinship terms
and in that the possessor noun phrase obligatorily appears in its oblique form, as
illustrated in (55a). The sa has the properties of a bound element and is written as
such, but it can take scope over a co-ordinated noun phrase as in (55b) and can occur
on possessors involving postmodification (55c). Note that in all cases, the head(s) of the possessor will occur in an OBL case even if sa is not attached directly to it (Harries, 2008).

\[(55)\]

\[a.\] Mammusar litli skattur
\[
\text{mummy.OBL.SA little treasure}
\]
\[\text{‘mummy’s little treasure’}\]

\[b.\] Beintu og Annusa bók
\[
\text{Beinta.OBL and Anna.OBL.SA book}
\]
\[\text{‘Beinta and Anna’s book’}\]

\[c.\] Annu á posthúsinumsa bilur
\[
\text{Annu.OBL at postoffice.DAT.SA car}\]
\[\text{‘Anna at the post office’s car’}\]

The –sa construction can also occur following verbs and prepositions which historically govern GEN, as in (56). This suggests that it is taking over the role of GEN beyond the expression of possession (Harries, 2008).

\[(56)\]

\[a.\] mammusa vegna
\[
\text{mother.SA because of}
\]
\[\text{‘because of mother’}\]

\[b.\] til abbasa
\[
\text{to grandfather.SA}
\]
\[\text{‘to grandfather’}\]

### 8.2.2.4 ACCUSATIVE CASE

In constructions denoting possession in personal relationships, possession may be marked by the accusative case on the possessor, as in (57). In earlier stages of the language, this construction was used beyond personal relationships, but has been in decline since the mid-20th century (Barnes and Weyhe, 1994:208).

\[37\] There is some uncertainty amongst native speakers as to the acceptability of constructions of the types illustrated in (55c), but many accept it.

\[38\] The dative case of posthúsinum is due to the preposition which governs it and is not connected to the occurrence of sa.
dóttir ein amerikanskan Hermann (FTS hös:02-12:MJ:12 merkir)

daughter.NOM a.M.ACC American soldier.ACC

og eina japanska konu

and a F.ACC Japanese woman.F.ACC

‘daughter of an American soldier and a Japanese woman’

8.3 Present-Day Mainland Scandinavian

8.3.1 Poss-s

Poss-s, which developed from the Old Norse masculine and neuter genitive singular ending, is used in all Mainland Scandinavian languages. In all three languages, there are few restrictions on what possessors can be used with POSS-s, as illustrated by (58) to (60). The c. examples show that in all three languages, POSS-s can take scope over co-ordinated possessors, though both conjuncts can also be marked separately. As will be clear in the coming sections, Norwegian has a broader range of expressions of possession than the other MSc languages, so that it may be assumed that POSS-s is used less frequently in Norwegian than in Swedish and Danish, but we are not aware of any detailed studies of this (Torp, 1992:161 claims that it is rare in both spoken and written Norwegian, but does not provide the data to support the claim). The examples in (60) are all from Bokmål, where POSS-s is more common than the alternative COREF PRON (see 8.3.2). Similar examples can be found in Nynorsk, but in this variety, COREF PRON dominates and POSS-s is mainly used for proper nouns and nouns referring to humans (Faarlund et al., 1997:258–60).

(58) a. de svenske borgerlige ministres begrundelser for fiaskoen (Korpus DK)

the Swedish right of centre minister.POSS reasons for fiasco.DEF

‘the Swedish right of centre ministers’ reasons for the fiasco’

b. togets computer (KorpusDK)

train.DEF.POSS computer

‘the train’s computer.’

39 Claims have been made both for Danish and Swedish that POSS-s is less common with inanimate possessors (Allan et al. 2000: 29 and Teleman et al. 1999: 32). However, examples such as (58b) and (59b) occur frequently in both written and spoken Danish and Swedish.
c. Adam og Saras brevkasse
   Adam and Sara's postbox
   ‘Adam and Sara’s postbox’

(59) a. medlemmarnas spontana önskningar (GSCLC: A0636011)
   member's spontaneous wishes
   ‘the members’ spontaneous wishes’

b. vägens mittlinje (GSCLC: A8404011)
   road's middle line
   ‘the middle line of the road’

c. flickor och pojkars prat och relationer till läraren (Press 98)
   girls and boys' talking and relations to the teacher
   ‘girls’ and boys’ talking and relations to the teacher’

(60) a. Sentrum-venstre-koalisjonens seier (Oslo: AV/Af96/01)
   centre-left-coalition's victory
   ‘the centre-left coalition’s victory’

b. de forskjelligenarkotikums effect (Oslo: AV/Ad96/01)
   the various narcotics' effect
   ‘the effect of the various drugs’

c. barn og unges psykiske helse (Oslo: AV/Af94/01)
   children and young people's psychological health
   ‘this affects the mental health of children and young people’

As for English, examples where the head noun is not the rightmost element of the noun phrase are of special interest since these form evidence that POSS is truly a right edge element in these languages. In all languages, examples in which the POSS-S occurs on a non-head element, i.e. POSTMOD POSS-S (see section 2.3), can be found, as illustrated by (61)-(63).

(61) a. dronningen af Sabas mørke hår på benene (KorpusDK)
   queen of Saba's dark hair on legs
   ‘the queen of Saba’s dark hair on her legs’

---

40 http://www.dr.dk/p3/formiddagen/artikler/20080917130945.htm [accessed 1.5.09]
41 Formally, narkotikum is the singular of narkotika, but it is used here as a plural form.
b. Gry på redaktionens mor
   *Gry on production team's mother*
   'Gry from the production team’s mother’

c. hende-der-jeg-aldrig-kan-huske-navnet-på’s-mor
   *her-who-I-never-can-remember-name's mother*
   'her whose name I can never remember’s mother’

(62) a. den vanlige mannen på gatans liv (GSLC: V0644021)
   *the common man's life*
   'the life of the common man’

b. företaget som jag jobbar på’s hemsida
   *company I work on’s homepage*
   'the company I work for’s homepage’

c. för de som mår dåligtts skull
   *for they feel badly's sake*
   'for the sake of those who aren’t feeling well’

(63) a. ungdommen av idags store ansvar (Knudsen, 1967:60)
   *youth of today's big responsibility*
   'the youth of today’s big responsibility’

b. Universitetet i Oslos museer
   *Norwegian university in Oslo's museums*
   'the University of Oslo’s museums’

c. mannen på verkstedets bil (Faarlund et al., 1997:256)
   *man in the workshop’s car’
   'the man in the workshop’s car’

Though grammatical, POSTMOD POSS-S are restricted in usage, they are particularly
common with relatively set phrases, such as the a. examples. The punctuation in (61c)
and (62b) indicate that there is some uncertainty around these constructions; POSS-S
does not normally involve any punctuation in MSc. Corpus data for Swedish suggest

---

42 *De sorte spejdere*, Danmarks Radio P3, 23.4.08
44 http://velar.wordpress.com/2007/12/14/luciatag/ [accessed 8.1.09]
45 http://blogg.passagen.se/liljones/date/20070111 [accessed 8.1.09]
46 http://www.uio.no/museum/ [accessed 12.1.09]
that POSTMOD POSS-S constructions are rare: only one example appears in the GSLC (reproduced above as (62a)). Torp (1992:161) also comments that such constructions are rare in written and spoken Norwegian.

Clearer evidence that POSTMOD POSS-S constructions are avoided comes from the existence of SPLIT POSS (see section 2.3), where the postmodification has been postposed to follow the possessum, hence allowing the s to appear on the head noun.

(64) a. Holger Vestergaards telefonnummer fra Ny Alliance
   ‘The telephone number of Holger Vestergaard from New Alliance’

   b. dom anställdas synpunkt som
   ‘the point of view of those employees who are going to work with the animals’

The uncertainty around POSTMOD POSS-S is also evidenced by the use of doubly marked possessors, as in (65).

(65) a. kongens af Danmarks rige (Knudsen, 1967:59)
   ‘the king of Denmark’s empire’

b. kungens av Sveriges slott
   ‘the king of Sweden’s castle’

In very formal written Swedish, there is also a construction in which the POSS-S appears on the head, immediately followed by the possessum, giving examples such as (66). The construction is rare in naturally occurring language, but it is referred to by Teleman et al (1999:3, 79) and examples from corpora are provided by Börjars (2003:149).

---

47 The GSLC contains 2264 POSS-S constructions.
48 De sorte spejdere, Danmarks Radio P3, 6.2.08
49 There is an interesting discussion of this construction at http://groups.google.com/group/swenet.svenska/browse_thread/thread/49f6545073106904/83bb527ba96ec236?#. Some contributors to the discussion also accept Kungens av Sverige slott ‘king.DEF.POSS of Sweden castle’, whereas some reject Kungen av Sveriges slott ‘king.DEF of Sweden.POSS castle’.
8.3.2 **COREF PRON**

In Norwegian, **COREF PRON** is an alternative to **POSS-S**. It is traditionally associated more with **Nynorsk** than with **Bokmål**, but is increasing in use also in **Bokmål** (Faarlund et al., 1997:258–60). Askedal (2003b:141) describes it as the most productive possessive construction in Norwegian. The construction is not used in the other standard **MSc** languages. Unlike the other Germanic languages which have a **COREF PRON** construction, standard Norwegian uses a reflexive pronoun, which agrees in gender and number with the possessum.\(^{50}\) The construction is often referred to as **garpegenitiv** in Norwegian, **garpe** being a derogatory term for a Hanseatic merchant. This term reflects the common assumption that the construction entered Norwegian via contact with Middle Low German-speaking merchants during the Hanseatic period; (see for example Askedal, 1994:248, Faarlund et al., 1997:259, Askedal, 2003b:141). One argument put forward in support of the borrowing hypothesis is the claim that the reflexive is an unexpected form in this position and that **sin** is used because of its similarity to the non-reflexive MLG **sīn** (Knudsen, 1967:65). However, it has been argued that the use of a reflexive in this environment need not be the result of foreign influence. The argument goes back at least to Östergren (1902), but has been defended more recently by Lødrup (1989:52–4) and Perridon (1996:384–6). The **COREF PRON** need not then be a borrowing from MLG, but could be an independent development in Norwegian.\(^{51}\) We are not in a position to judge the historical evidence and it will not be essential to our conclusions.\(^{52}\)

The constructions is more common with animate possessors, but examples such as (67c) can also be found.

---

\(^{50}\) Some Norwegian and Danish dialects use a **COREF PRON** construction with a non-reflexive pronoun, but the construction can only be used with possessors which are personal names or kinship terms (Knudsen, 1967:62, Haugen, 1976:296, Torp, 1992:151, Askedal, 2003b:141).

\(^{51}\) Knudsen (1967: 64) does concede that German **CO-REF PRON** may have aided the progress of the Norwegian construction; he also notes an indirect influence from literary German, via written Danish.

\(^{52}\) Fiva (1985:42) argues that possessive **s** in Norwegian has arisen as a variant of **sin**, but this seems implausible (see discussion of similar arguments with respect to English in section 7.1).
8.3.3 PREP

All MSc languages have a PREP construction, but none of them has a dedicated preposition. Instead a range of prepositions are used, depending on the nature of the possessive relationship. Swedish examples of different prepositions being used with phrases that translate into English with of were given in (7b)–(7d), though none of these involve core possession. In fact, in standard Swedish, there is no PREP alternative when core possession is involved, nor can it be used when the possessor functions as the subject of an action nominal, see (68).54

(68) a. min systers dator | *datorn till/åt/av min sister
dator.my sister.POSS computer.computer.DEF to/at/of sister.my
‘my sister’s computer’

b. pojkarnas fnissande | *fnissandet till/åt/av pojkarna
giggling.boys.POSS giggling.DEF to/at/of boys.DEF
‘the boys’ giggling’

Norwegian, on the other hand, though it can use a range of prepositions for different types of relations as in (69), it can also use a PREP construction with core possession, as in (70). The preposition til is in general use, but some varieties use åt.

53 http://www.hit.no/nxcnor/content/view/brief/21816 [accessed 28.10.09]
54 Many Swedish dialects will use a prepositional construction with till or åt for core possession, for an excellent overview, see Dahl (2007:179–83). Somewhat paradoxically, with the head noun ägare ‘owner’, which would seem to capture core possession, a PREP construction can be used: hundens ägare / ägaren till/av hunden.
There is then a difference between the Scandinavian languages in that Norwegian has developed a grammaticalised preposition for possession, but it cannot be used as widely as English *of*, German *von* or Dutch *van*. Swedish, on the other hand, does not have a grammaticalised possessive preposition. It has PREP constructions only when individual prepositions have developed meanings which overlap with those expressed by the possessive preposition in other Germanic languages.

9 CONCLUSIONS

In Proto-Germanic (PGmc), *gen* was the main expression of possession and this was still true for the individual ancestors of the languages we have considered here. In these languages, *gen* formed part of a cases system involving at least three other cases. German and Icelandic have essentially preserved this case system, as has Faroese to a lesser extent. English, Dutch and the Mainland Scandinavian languages can be said to have lost their case systems.

With the difficulties associated with defining when *gen* is lost in mind (see section 2.2), we can say that in all languages we have considered, the demise of *gen* has coincided in time roughly with the development of some alternative expression of possession. For instance, in English, the use of the genitive is clearly in decline by the 14th century, the use of *of* to express possession starts in the 12th to be strengthened in
the 13th, and a form which we can refer to as POSS-S starts to appear in the 13th century (Fries, 1940). It may be tempting to link the two developments causally and analyse it as the demise of the case system, or of GEN specifically, having led to the rise of alternative expressions. Alternatively, a “push” rather than “pull” chain can be assumed, where the rise of the new expressions of possessive forced GEN out. The latter option may appear less plausible given the general demise of the case system. However, as the data presented so far have shown, the situation is too complex for a simple causal relationship to be established. Though the early stages of the individual languages were quite similar with respect to GEN, its use and its role within a case system, there is a lot of variation between the languages as to which forms can be used to express possession in the modern varieties. If we say that it was the decline of the case system in Dutch which caused the COREF PRON to develop, then we need to explain why German also developed COREF PRON even though there had not been a similar reduction in the case system. In this section we will look more closely at the connections between the different constructions and their development.

The data presented so far is summarised in Table 1. A blank cell indicates fully productive use of a form, dark shaded its absence and the shade in between some limited degrees of use. We have entered Faroese sa under COREF PRON here because of the historical origin we assume it to have (cf Harries, 2008), but as we saw in section 8.2.2.3, it shares properties with other construction types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Case system</th>
<th>GEN</th>
<th>POSS-S</th>
<th>PREP</th>
<th>COREF PRON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>von</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>á / í</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faroese</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hjá sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>multiple REFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish/Danish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>multiple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Distribution of expression of possession in some modern Germanic languages
Table 1 illustrates clearly that the present-day systems are very varied; no one system involves the same forms as another. This is true even though the systems were more or less identical a little over one thousand years ago. At the same time, there is a striking family resemblance as far as the alternatives are concerned, PREP is used in all the languages and POSS-S and COREF PRON in at least three of the languages.

The issue of whether Proto-Indo-European had a category that we would describe as ‘preposition’ is still a matter of debate, but it is generally agreed that such a category had developed in PGmc (see for example Ringe, 2006:64–5, 295). Whether there was a PREP construction that could express possession is less clear. We have seen that the extent to which individual Germanic languages have a preposition which has grammaticalised as a possessive marker varies, if it does have one, there is variation as to which preposition is used. This variation may be taken as evidence that PREP constructions to express possession developed once the individual languages had separated. The thoroughly grammaticalised prepositions of English, Dutch and German — of, van and von — all have the same original meaning; ‘away from’. In the Romance languages, the preposition used in the PREP construction derives from the Latin de (French de, Italian di, Spanish de, etc), which had the similar meaning ‘down, away from’. Indeed, the issue of whether the development of of to mark possession in English was the result of influence from French, where the preposition de had replaced the Latin genitive as an expression of possession, is still a matter of debate (Altenberg, 1982:14, Fischer, 1992:226, Nielsen, 2005:79). It is true that the use of of with core possession only developed in Middle English, but this could have been an internal development. Other related non-locational meanings were associated with of in Old English and as we have seen in Swedish, the grammaticalisation of PREP may develop last for core possession (cf section 8.3.3). In the Scandinavian languages, the original source of the preposition used for possession is ‘movement towards’, til, or ‘in the vicinity of’, åt/at/åt.

The other two alternatives POSS-S and COREF PRON appear to be more recent developments than PREP. These constructions did not exist in PGmc and hence are not directly due to a shared historical background; POSS-S and COREF PRON developed independently in the languages we have considered. It might possibly be argued that

55 We are grateful to Nigel Vincent for pointing this out to us.
each construction arose only once and that it spread through contact to the other languages. However, apart from the possible spread of COREF PRON from OLG to Norwegian as discussed in 8.3.2, there is no evidence that it was contact which led to these development of the constructions.

Three of the languages can be said to have maintained a case system as discussed above. Of these, Icelandic has fully productive use of GEN to express possession. German has kept a four case system, but the role of GEN in expressing possession is somewhat restricted and a POSS-S construction also exists, along with a number of other ways of expressing possession. In Faroese, the use of GEN is very limited, with PREP being the main expression of possession and a relatively recent alternative, the sa construction, appearing to be spreading through the system.

Ignoring Afrikaans for the moment, since it is a development from 17th century Dutch, all languages except Icelandic and Faroese have developed a POSS-S construction from GEN. However, in German and Dutch, the POSS-S construction did not develop to become a standard way of expressing possession. In these two languages, COREF PRON appears instead to be the main alternative to PREP (though in German only in spoken language), whereas those languages which either use GEN or POSS-S productively do not use COREF PRON to any great extent. The exception is Norwegian, which uses POSS-S as well as COREF PRON as productive alternatives to PREP.

When we contrast productive use with limited use here, there are different ways in which a form is limited. For instance, in German, GEN is quite unrestricted when it comes to the possessive relationship it can express or the type of possessor it permits, but it is generally limited to written and formal registers. COREF PRON, on the other hand, is considered to be confined to informal and spoken German. In Dutch, on the other hand, though we have found GEN to be used slightly more productively than standard descriptions assume, it is mainly limited to certain construction types. There are also certain structural restrictions, where a construction which is unexpected given semantic factors is dispreferred for instance because there would otherwise be repetition, as in (71a), where (33b) — repeated here as (71b) — is preferred. We also saw in (48c) that structural factors, such as postmodification of the possessor, can make speakers choose a PREP construction where POSS-S would be expected because
of animacy in English. Similarly, in Norwegian, \textsc{coref pron} is preferred when the possessor is sibilant final, as in (71c) (compare this with the English example in (43)).

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(71)] b. \textit{die man se naam wie se ouderdom rondom 30 geskat word} \textit{the man PRON name REL PRON age about 30 estimated become}
\item[a.] \textit{die naam van die man, wie se ouderdom rondom 30 geskat word}\textsuperscript{56} \begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{the name of the man REL PRON age about 30 estimated become} \begin{itemize}
    \item ‘the name of the man, whose age was estimated at about 30’
  \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
\item[c.] \textit{i sine kommentarer til lærer Gunnars kommentarer} \textit{in POSS.REFL comments to teacher Gunnar.POSS comments}
\end{enumerate}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{til elev Frøydis sin tekst skriver hun …} \textit{to pupil Frøydis POSS.REFL text writes she} \begin{itemize}
    \item ‘in her comments on the teacher Gunnar’s comments on the pupil Frøydis’ text she writes …’ (naturally occurring example cited in Faarlund et al., 1997:258)
  \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

Here, we will focus on semantic restrictions on the different expressions of possession, a somewhat simplified representation of which is provided in Table 2. A shaded field indicates that the construction is not used. Stylistic or geographical restrictions are not indicated here.

\textsuperscript{56} \url{http://www.dieburger.com/Stories/News/19.0.1178102931.aspx} [accessed 14.1.09].
Table 2: Semantic restrictions on different types of constructions expressing possession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>GEN</th>
<th>POSS-S</th>
<th>COREF PRON</th>
<th>PREP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>names, unmodified kinship terms, titles</td>
<td>highly animate noun phrases</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>mainly certain construction types</td>
<td>names, kinship terms, titles</td>
<td>highly animate noun phrases</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>restricted</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>restricted</td>
<td>animate noun phrases, spreading into inanimates</td>
<td>restricted</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faroese</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>restricted</td>
<td>names, kinship terms</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>not core possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish/Danish</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
<td>restricted</td>
<td>unrestricted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the languages which still use GEN, it is largely unrestricted semantically, as it was in PGmc. It may appear surprising then that in German and Dutch there are restrictions on the use of POSS-S, even though this construction developed from GEN. The fact that these restrictions can be described in terms of high animacy concepts is also striking given that the constraints on COREF PRON are also specified in terms of animacy. In Early Modern English, POSS-S was restricted to animate nouns (Rosenbach et al., 2000), and in Present Day English though the use of POSS-S has spread to inanimate possessors, animacy is still the major determining factor in the choice between ‘s and of (e.g. Rosenbach, 2002). The development of POSS-S and COREF PRON in Dutch and German occurred independently in the two languages, so that it is not obvious why the constraints between them should be so similar in nature. It may be argued that core possession is associated with more animate referents, so that if POSS-S and COREF PRON initially represented core possession, it is natural that

---

57 German, unlike Dutch, uses POSS-S productively only with one word kinship terms: Vaters Auto ‘father’s car’ versus ??*mein Vaters Auto ‘my father’s car’. We will return to this point.
they should be more closely associated with animate possessors. With respect to POSS-S, this is not the case, since already in the early stages of the individual languages, GEN was used for non-core possession, such as expressions of time and partitives. Furthermore, though the two restrictions on POSS-S and COREF PRON in German and Dutch places them high on the animacy hierarchy, they are different in nature.

‘Names, (unmodified) kinship terms and titles’ are expressed by morpho-syntactically simple units, whereas ‘highly animate noun phrases’ does not define the element with respect to degree of complexity. We will argue therefore that the restrictions on POSS-S and COREF PRON, respectively, in German and Dutch have different motivations.

POSS-S came about through two parallel developments: the spread of one form, –s, from one class of noun to other classes — from certain masculine and neuter nouns to feminine ones — and through a change from agreement to once-only marking. An ambiguous environment will often give rise to change or be a vehicle for the spread of a new form. With respect to agreement versus once-only marking, one-word noun phrases would be ambiguous. Names, kinship terms and titles are all examples of such phrases, and it is not strange then that POSS-S spreads through such constructions first. In Present Day German, POSS-S is only in general use with kinship terms if they are unmodified. However, a change can be seen in Present Day German, where the GEN –s of masculine nouns is starting to be used on feminine possessors which consist of a proper noun. Note that the order possessum < possessor indicates that this is GEN and not POSS-S.

(72) a. mit Blick auf die China-Politik Merkel’s and ihre Einladung

with view on the China-policy Merkel.GEN and her invitation

des Dalai Lama ins Kanzleramt im letzten Jahr

the GEN Dalai Lama in the Chancellery in last year

‘with reference to Merkel’s China policy and her invitation of the Dalai Lama to the Chancellery in the last year’

b. Besonders in diesen etwas ruhigeren Titeln

especially in these somewhat more peaceful titles

58 http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/international/China;art123,2516050 [accessed 28.10.09]
überzeugte der liebliche Gesang Judiths.59

Convinced the lovey singing Judith.\textit{gen}

Judith’s lovely singing was convincing especially in these somewhat more peaceful songs.’

If initially POSS-S was mainly used with highly animate referents expressed by one word, then the widening to animate referents more generally is a natural one. In the Mainland Scandinavian languages, there has been a further loosening of the semantic restriction beyond animacy. We can then see the three types of languages as having reached different stages of generalisation of POSS-S: German/Dutch: structurally simple animates – English: animates with some spread into inanimate – Mainland Scandinavian: unrestricted. There is evidence that in very colloquial German, the use of the POSS-S construction is spreading beyond the environments described in the literature. In “chat room German”, we can find constructions such as those in (73), in which a two-word possessor precedes the possessum and is marked only once by –\textit{s}. Both properties identify them as different from \textit{gen} constructions. As these examples show, they can also be used with feminine nouns. The standard German \textit{gen} form of the possessors would be \textit{meines Bruders} and \textit{meiner Schwester}, respectively, and both would naturally be placed after the possessum.60 This development could then be seen as the early stages of a change that English and MSc had already undergone.

(73) a. mein bruders rechner ist so verstellt
   \textit{my brother.Poss computer is so altered}
   ‘my brother’s computer has been changed so much.’

   b. Meine schwesters Freund hat bald geburtstag
   \textit{my sister.Poss friend has soon birthday}
   ‘It is soon my sister’s friend’s birthday.’

   The \textit{coref pronom} construction in German and Dutch is limited to animate referents, whether they be expressed by a name, a title or a fully modified noun phrase. One account for the development of the \textit{coref pronom} possessive argues that it has developed through reanalysis from sentential dative constructions such as those in

\footnotesize{59 \url{http://www.amboss-mag.de/konzerte/konzber/03/wirsindhelden.html} [accessed 24.11.09]}

\footnotesize{60 It is interesting that a masculine \textit{gen} possessor can marginally occur before the possessum (\textit{meines Bruders rechner}), whereas a feminine one cannot (\textit{*meiner Schwester Freund}). It may be that it is the presence of –\textit{s}, which is ambiguous between \textit{gen} and POSS-S that makes the difference.}
(74) (see particularly Burridge (1995) for details of the development, but also van Bree (1996:163) and Draye (1996:166)).

(74)$^\text{(49)}$ Dat suert hem sun hoeft. (Burridge 1995: 3)  
that $\text{cleans he.DAT}$ his head 
‘That cleans his brain.’

Burridge (1995) refers to this as ‘the dative of involvement’ and the animacy restriction is then due to the fact that only humans and highly animate creatures could show involvement of this kind. This would explain why the dative possessive is restricted to animate possessors. This account assumes that the use of this type of sentential datives predates the use of COREF PRON and this is not clear. Hendriks (2002, To appear) shows that animacy was not an absolute constraint on these constructions, but there are early examples of inanimate possessors. For Dutch, there is evidence of there being a constructive specific dative case in the possessive construction, but rather the case required by the syntactic function of the phrase is used. Furthermore, she also provides examples of COREF PRON which predate the data used by Burridge by quite a long way.

The use of the dative to mark possession is not uncommon typologically; Heine & Kuteva (2002:103–4) give numerous examples. The connection between the semantic role recipient/benefactive and that of possessor makes a development from a marker of the former relationship to the latter quite plausible. Heine (1997:59–61) refers to this as the Goal Schema and points out that even though it is quite a rare source of attributive possession typologically, it is common in the Germanic languages.$^\text{61}$ We saw in section 7.1 that a dative possessive construction without a pronoun was used in Old English. Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2003b:683–4) gives examples from a northern Swedish dialect in which dative is used for the possessor without the presence of a pronoun, as in (75a). Norwegian and Swedish can use the preposition used for recipient/benefactive also for possessive constructions, as in (75b) (Faarlund, Lie & Vannebo (1997:443), also mentioned by Heine (1997:147)).$^\text{62}$

$^\text{61}$ Heine uses ‘attributive’ to contrast with predicative, which is the main focus of his study, rather than to just refer to prenominal possessors.

$^\text{62}$ We have simplified the glossing used by Koptjevskaja-Tamm to fit in with the level of detail provided in this paper.
This means that the development of dative marking for the possessor in COREF PRON
need not rely on the specific construction exemplified in (74), it is due to the semantic
relation between recipient and owner. The connection to highly animate referents
remains, since Recipient/Benefactive is a role filled mainly by humans.

If COREF PRON is assumed not to have developed by reanalysis of the sentential
dative argument in constructions such as (74), how could the presence of the pronoun
be accounted for? One hypothesis would be that it is a resumptive pronoun, there to
replace a possessor that has been fronted for emphasis. This would be similar in
nature to clausal constructions such as the one exemplified in (76a). In fact, there is
evidence that something similar may be available to speakers of languages which do
not have a productive COREF PRON construction. Examples from English and Swedish
are provided in (76b-c).

(76)  a. My dad, he was a good cook.

b. Jane Mansfield, her bust was forty three inches (BNC KCU 9352)

c. killen som jobbar med min mamma, hans hund
   boy REL works with my mum his dog
   ‘the guy who works with my mother, his dog’

If this were the way in which COREF PRON has developed, it could play a role in
accounting for the restriction to animate referents, since focused or topicalised
phrases tend to be animate. Hendriks (2002) shows that already in the early stages of
Dutch, there were examples of COREF PRON being used with inanimate possessors.
Since this analysis would only predict the preference for animacy to be a strong
tendency, it may be considered more plausible than the direct connection with the
We are then not in position to understand fully the historical development of COREF PRON, but it has been motivated by factors quite different from those which impacted on the development of POSS-S. The differences in restrictions on the possessors between POSS-S and COREF PRON can be derived from their distinct historical paths: in the case of POSS-S it has come about partly from structural factors, whereas the restriction on COREF PRON is purely semantic. As can be expected, the restrictions derived from the historical origin of the construction have loosened over time in some languages, so that there are no semantic restrictions on the possessor in POSS-S constructions in Swedish, and the use of COREF PRON in Afrikaans has spread to all kinds of possessors.

A striking property of all the languages represented in Table 2 is that there are at least two ways of expressing possession in each language, one of them being PREP. For all languages, PREP is more or less unrestricted but tends to be used more frequently for those possessors ruled out by the expression with restricted use. The only exception is Swedish and Danish, where PREP cannot be used for core possession. One way in which the different expressions of possession vary is in the order between possessor and possessum. In PGmc, possession was expressed exclusively by GEN, and the order between the possessor and the possessum is assumed to have been relatively free. As discussed in section 3, the evidence in favour of possessor<possessum order being unmarked in PGMC is not unambiguous. The order between possessor and possessum in the modern varieties and their individual predecessors is represented in Table 3.63

---

63 The information available about the order in the early stages of the language is rarely based on quantitative studies of different orders and their correlation to marked environments.
Table 3 shows that the more recently developed constructions display firmer word order than the original genitive, and that when GEN occurs within a reasonably productive case system, it displays freer word order. This is consistent with a general reduction in freedom of word order which the languages have undergone. Table 3 also shows that in all languages but Icelandic, the different constructions vary with respect to the order between possessor and possessum. PREP has possessum < possessor order, and there is at least one other construction type which permits possessor < possessum. In Icelandic, the possessor<possessum is a marked possibility with GEN, indicating emphasis on the possessor (e.g. Sigurðsson, 2006).

---

Table 3: The order between possessOR and possessUM across languages and construction types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>GEN</th>
<th>POSS-S</th>
<th>COREF PRON</th>
<th>PREP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Early stage of language</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>both orders</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>as for Dutch</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
<td></td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>both, with OR&lt;UM becoming dominant</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR, unmarked, UM &lt; OR marked</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faroese</td>
<td>both orders&lt;sup&gt;64&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>both orders&lt;sup&gt;64&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>OR &lt; UM</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
<td>UM &lt; OR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<sup>64</sup> Around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, while still a GEN construction, the order becomes less flexibly OR<UM.
When there is some degree of freedom in word order, information structural considerations are known to influence the outcome. This is particularly clear with the first position in verb second languages such as the Germanic ones, but it has been shown that information structural notions can also be used to account for other variation at the clausal level (see for instance Cook, 2001 on German, Börjars et al., 2003 on Swedish). Large-scale studies of the choice between POSS-S (OR<UM) and PREP (UM<OR) in English (Rosenbach, 2002, Hinrichs and Szmrecsanyi, 2007) show that the topicality of the possessor influences the choice, so that POSS-S tends to be used more frequently when the possessor is topical, in line with tendencies to have given information before new. Teleman, Hellberg & Andersson (1999:34–5) also state that prominence influences the choice between POSS-S and PREP in Swedish: the possessor is prominent in POSS-S but not in PREP. We would speculate that this has been a tendency also in the earlier forms of the languages. It has been argued that both in Old English and in Old Norse, the UM<OR order was more common with inanimate possessors (Mustanoja, 1960–7 and, Faarlund, 2002:729, respectively). This may then be linked to the fact that inanimate referents are less likely to be topical.

Another factor which correlates with order is definiteness. When the possessor is prenominal, it tends to exclude the presence of a determiner associated with the possessum in Germanic. Indeed, in many analyses, the possessor, or the actual GEN or POSS-S marker, is assumed to occupy the same unique position as a determiner (for a general discussion, see Lyons (1999:130–4), for a specific analysis of POSS-S and COREF PRON, see Weerman & de Wit (1999:1171)). A prenominal possessor also normally gives rise to a definite interpretation (for counter-examples, with an indefinite interpretation, see Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2003a). Contrasting examples of POSS-S vs PREP in English can be found in (77), of POSS-S versus GEN in German in (78) and of COREF PRON versus PREP in Dutch in (79).

(77) a. that author’s books

b. a book / the book of the author you came to see\(^65\)

\(^65\) Compare the use a book of Oscar’s referred to as the ‘post-gentive’ (Quirk et al 1985:1283–4) or the ‘oblique genitive’ (Payne & Huddleston 468–9, 478).
Since in all the languages, \textit{prep} permits both the definite and indefinite interpretation, this cannot, however, be the motivation for the existence of the prenominal genitives. Those languages which have developed a productive use of \textit{poss-s} — that is English and the Mainland Scandinavian languages — all have some restrictions on the use of \textit{poss-s} when the possessor involves postmodification.\footnote{Languages like Dutch and German, with a less productive use of the construction do not generally allow it to occur with postmodification either, but this need not be a structural constraint as mentioned in sections 4.2.2 and 5.2.1.} Instead, some alternative construction is used, such a \textit{prep} or \textit{split-gen}. Still, the \textit{poss-s} element in all these languages is standardly described as a right edge element, a clitic or a phrasal affix. It seems to us that the data indicate that speakers are reluctant to attach \textit{poss-s} to the right edge if this does not also coincide with the head. Historically, \textit{poss-s} developed from one of the exponents of \textit{gen}, which was an affix attaching to the head noun. We then assume that though the distribution of \textit{s} has undoubtedly changed over time, some remnant of head placement appears to remain. Payne (2009) describes this as a “ghost feature” on the head. Historically, it can be thought of in terms of ‘persistence’ in grammaticalisation as discussed by Hopper (1991) (for further data of the distribution in English and how to analyse it, see Scott et al (2007)).

In this paper, we hope to have shown how a detailed comparison of some feature in closely related languages can throw light of the diachronic development of the systems of individual languages. Though we have not been able to explain exactly what properties of the individual languages led to their current system of expression of possession, we have showed that simple causal connections cannot be made since languages with very similar properties develop different systems.
Appendix - Primary references

Examples from older periods of the languages investigated are generally taken from
the literature. Contemporary examples are drawn partly from the web, in which case
the source is indicated in a footnote at the relevant point in the paper, occasionally
from the literature, and partly from the corpora listed below. The orthography of the
corpora is preserved throughout the investigation.

- BNC (British National Corpus): ca. 100 million tokens of modern English
  (90% written, 10% transcribed speech)
- CGN (Corpus Gesproken Nederlands): ca. 9 million tokens of transcribed
  spoken contemporary Dutch (Netherlands and Belgium)
- FTS (Färöisk TextSamling)
- GSLC (Gothenburg Spoken Language Corpus): ca. 1.4 million tokens of
  transcribed spoken contemporary Swedish
- INL 38 mil corpus (INL 38 Miljoen Woorden Krantencorpus 1996): ca. 38
  million tokens of written Dutch (including journalistic and legal texts) from
  the early 19th - late 20th century
- KorpusDK: ca. 56 million tokens of written contemporary Danish
- Oslo (Oslo-korpuset av taggede norske tekster): ca. 18.3 million tokens of
  written Bokmål and ca. 3.8 million tokens of written Nynorsk (20th century)


Cook, Philippa. 2001. Coherence in German, Department of Linguistics, University of Manchester: PhD thesis.


Haugen, Einar. 1976. *The Scandinavian languages—an introduction to their history.*
London: Faber and Faber.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


London: Swan Sonnenschein.


Lapointe, Steven G. 1992. Life on the edge: argument in favor of an Autolexical account of edge inflections. In *Papers from the 28th Regional Meeting of the


