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## Varieties of external possession in Chimwiini<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a discussion of external possessor constructions in Chimwiini, an endangered Bantu language of Somalia. As in European and Semitic languages, external possessors in Chimwiini occupy structural positions unlicensed by the semantics of the verb. However, unlike European and Semitic languages, Chimwiini lacks datives altogether and external possessors appear as either accusative or nominative arguments in canonical structural argument positions.

Chimwiini has two ways to express possession that are unrestricted regarding the selecting verb or the possessed. One is a series of personal enclitics or words expressing personal possession (1a). The other is the associative, used in Bantu to express a variety of relationships, including possession (1b).

- (1) (a) *Omari / Ø-vunz-ile maana / kuluu=y-e*  
Omar 3SG-break-PST 1child 9leg=9AGR-3SG.POSS  
'Omar broke the child's leg.'
- (b) *Omari / Ø-vunz-ile kuulu / y-a maana*  
Omar 3SG-break-PST 9leg 9AGR-ASC 1child  
'Omar broke the child's leg.'

Note that the verb cannot show object agreement with the possessor in either construction, though object agreement with animate objects is typical in Chimwiini. With certain verbs, three other constructions are possible in which the possessor is external to the possessive phrase. We have termed two of these *possessor raising* constructions following the literature, and the third the *possessum raising* constructions. All raise interesting questions for structure, movement, and binding.

### 2. POSSESSOR AND POSSESSUM RAISING IN CHIMWIINI

The first construction is the *possessor raising to object* construction. As argued by Keach and Rochemont (1994) for Swahili, the possessor in this construction is a grammatical object of the verb, evidenced by the fact that the possessor controls

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<sup>1</sup> This work is supported by NEH through the *Documenting Endangered Languages* program, DEL PD-50009-09. List of abbreviations: 3SG = 3 person singular, AGR = agreement, PST = past ASC = associative, OBJ = object marker, PASS = passive, STAT = stative, APP = applicative, Ø = null morpheme. Numbers on nouns and agr indicate noun class. Slashes indicate phonological phrase boundaries.

verbal object agreement (2a) and may passivize (2b). The possessum follows the possessor. Possessive enclitics and the associative marker are absent.

- (2) (a) *Omari / Ø-m-vunz-ile*                      *maana / kuulu*  
 Omar      3SG-3SG.OBJ-break-PST      1child      9leg  
 ‘Omar broke the child’s leg.’
- (b) *Maana / Ø-vunz-ila*                      *kuulu / (na Omari)*  
 1child      3SG-break-PST.PASS      9leg      by Omar  
 ‘The child’s leg was broken (by Omar).’

Possessor raising to object is limited to transitive verbs. Interestingly, the possessor is a grammatical object of the verb, and there is no evidence that the possessum is oblique. It therefore appears that possessor raising requires a monotransitive verb to have the structure of a ditransitive. For Bantu languages, this is odd. Aside from *give*, inherently ditransitive verbs are rare. Monotransitive verbs do not become ditransitive without a derivational change, requiring a derivational suffix (an applicative or causative suffix, phonological exponents of changes in the verb’s argument structure) to introduce a second grammatical object, such as the applicative in (3). Comparing this to the construction in (2a), we see the secondary object position in the latter comes ‘for free’ without the need to indicate argument structure change in the verb.

- (3) *Ali / Ø-m-pelek-el-ele*                      *maana / xati*  
 Ali      3SG-3SG.OBJ-send-APP-PST      1child      9letter  
 ‘Ali sent the child a letter.’

The second construction, *possessor raising to subject*, is available with unaccusative and stative intransitive verbs. In this construction, the possessor is the subject, controlling subject agreement on the verb, while the possessum is post-verbal. The verb may be a derived stative (using the stative suffix), or an inherent unaccusative.

- (4) (a) *Maana / Ø-vund-ish-ile*                      *kuulu*  
 1child      3SG-break-STAT-PST      9leg  
 ‘The child’s leg has broken.’
- (b) *Maana / Ø-fur-ile*                      *miimba*  
 1child      3SG-swell-PST      9stomach  
 ‘The child’s stomach swelled.’

Note that in this construction, the post-verbal possessum may not trigger object agreement on the verb, even if it is dislocated or absent:

- (5) *\*Maana / Ø-i-fur-ile*                      *(miimba)*  
 1child      3SG-9AGR.OBJ-swell-PST      9stomach  
 ‘The child’s stomach swelled.’

The third construction, *possessum raising*, also occurs with unaccusatives/statives. In (6) the possessum controls subject agreement and the possessor, object agreement.

- (6) *Kuulu / i-m-vund-ish-ile / maana*  
 9leg 9AGR-3SG.OBJ-break-STAT-PST 1child  
 ‘The child’s leg is broken.’

All three of these constructions are only available with verbs that can be construed to have some effect (directly or indirectly) on the possessor. This is a general property of external possessors in many languages (see below). Thus, the contrast below:

- (7) (a) *Ouari / Ø-m-vunz-ile maana / kuulu*  
 Omar 3SG-3SG.OBJ-break-PST 1child 9leg  
 ‘Omar broke the child’s leg.’
- (b) *\*Ouari / Ø-m-meene maana / kuulu*  
 Omar 3SG-3SG.OBJ-see-PST 1child 9leg  
 ‘Omar saw the child’s leg.’

Finally, these constructions are also limited by the possessum in that the latter must be inalienably possessed. They are possible, with a few exceptions, only with certain part-whole relations and particularly with body parts.

- (8) (a) *\*Ouari / Ø-m-vunz-ile maana / xalamu*  
 Omar 3SG-3SG.OBJ-break-PST 1child 9pen  
 ‘Omar broke the child’s pen.’
- (b) *\*Maana / Ø-vund-ish-ile xalamu/*  
 1child 3SG-break-STAT-PST 9pen  
 ‘The child’s pen has broken.’

This section has laid out the basic properties of the three possessor/possessum raising constructions in Chimwiini. In the next section, we turn to so-called ‘possessive datives’ in other languages which display similar properties.

### 3. EXTERNAL POSSESSORS CROSS-LINGUISTICALLY

Research on external dative possessors is wide ranging and the construction is attested in a number of languages. Generally, a dative experiencer is interpreted as the possessor of an NP that is not marked for possession, as in Hebrew below:

- (9) *Rina kilkela le-Gil et ha-ša'on*  
 Rina spoiled to-Gil ACC the-watch  
 ‘Rina spoiled Gil’s watch.’  
 (Landau 1997:1)

Analyses of these constructions have varied with the central difference pivoting around whether the construction is taken to involve raising of the possessor out of the possessive DP into the verbal domain, or whether it involves a base-generated dative possessor binding a (null) possessor variable within the possessive. Furthermore, differences have been noted regarding whether or not the construction is limited to inalienable possession or requires the affectedness of the possessor. Recently, Cinque and Krapova (2009; henceforth C&K) have taken this variation seriously, arguing that at least two dative possessor constructions with different properties exist in the literature. One construction, they argue, has the properties of a movement construction while the other has the properties of a binding structure. It is this latter construction that is relevant for Chimwiini. C&K list its four characteristic properties:

- (10) a. The possessum has no overt possessive marking  
 b. The possessor appears as a dative-marked argument or clitic  
 c. The possessor is affected by the verb in some way, usually experiencing harm or benefit as a result of the action.  
 d. The relation between the possessor and possessum is inalienable.

The other construction, they argue, has only properties (10a, b) and not (10c, d). As we have seen, the Chimwiini constructions examined here adhere to the characteristics in (10a, c, d). It lacks (10b) since Chimwiini does not have case-marked datives. Rather, the external possessors are unmarked. Indeed if we are to adopt case terms to describe Chimwiini, then we must conclude that the external possessors and possessum are accusative and nominative as they control object/subject agreement on the verb in precisely the same way a subject or object would.

The possibility of dative objects in other languages and its absence in Chimwiini may also explain another difference between these languages. All of these languages express possessor raising to object constructions. Like Chimwiini, some dative possessor languages, such as Hebrew, can also express the possessum raising structure in which the possessum serves as the subject of an unaccusative and the possessor is post-verbal. This is equivalent to the Chimwiini construction except that in the Chimwiini the dative possessor would be expressed as (accusative) object agreement on the verb:

- (11) *ha-kelev ne'elam le-Rina*  
 The-dog disappeared to-Rina  
 'Rina's dog disappeared.'  
 (Landau 1997:3)

However, possessor raising to subject constructions of the kind exhibited by Chimwiini isn't attested in many dative possessor languages. This may be due to the case that when external possessors are dative, possessor raising to subject isn't possible if a language disallows dative subjects. In Chimwiini, though, possessors are not dative, but reside in core argument positions. Thus, possessors can appear in subject position.

## 4. ANALYSIS

4.1 *Movement or Binding?*

There is a debate in the dative possessor literature regarding whether dative possessor constructions should receive a movement/raising analysis or a binding/control analysis. As mentioned above, C&K argue for both analyses, differentiating two different constructions. Here we follow C&K in accepting that two constructions exist cross-linguistically, differing in whether they are delimited by inalienable possession and the experiencer semantics of the verb. The latter fact we take to be of particular importance. As we have seen, the possessor in a possessor raising construction is not only in a thematic relationship with the possessum (serving as its possessor), but is also in a thematic relationship with the verb (as an experiencer). We take a single argument having more than one thematic role as a diagnostic of control.

If we were to take C&K's arguments wholesale, this would put the constructions in Chimwiini in line with the constructions in Bulgarian that Cinque and Krapova take to be binding structures. The binding analysis, however, is based on language-particular arguments which do not hold for Chimwiini (arguments which, unfortunately, we haven't the space to evaluate here). Given this, and the fact that it has been extensively shown that movement and control are not incompatible (Hornstein 1999, 2001), we tentatively adopt a movement approach to external possessors, arguing possessors may move from the specifier position of a possessive DP to a grammatical argument position of the verb where it can be assigned a second thematic role and case. We detail this analysis below for all three constructions.

4.2 *Possessor Raising: A Movement Analysis*

Two of the structures, possessor raising to object and subject, are fairly straightforward under a movement analysis. In the former, the possessor raises out of the possessive DP specifier to a second object position in the VP domain where it can get its experiencer role and accusative case, controlling object agreement on the verb. This analysis is given in (12). The analysis is similar to that of Landau (1997) for Hebrew, except in Chimwiini the possessor receives accusative instead of dative case.

(12) Transitive Clause:

$$[_{VP} \nu [_{VP} \text{DP}_{\text{POSSR}} \nu [_{VP} \nu [_{DP} t \text{D NP}_{\text{POSSM}} ]]]]]$$

↑

Note that from the raised position, the possessor is in a position from which it can be passivized. All things being equal, we also predict that the moved possessor, occupying an A-position, should be an intervener for passivization of the possessum since moving the latter to subject position would involve a minimality violation. The prediction is borne out: the possessum may not passivize over the external possessor.

Note the key to movement of the possessor in (12) above is the availability of the second accusative object position in the transitive verb phrase. Under the standard analysis of unaccusatives, however, the surface subject of an unaccusative verb is

really an internal argument. Therefore, with unaccusative verbs there is no extra accusative case position for the possessor to move to. Rather, it raises directly to subject position where it receives nominative case and controls subject agreement:

- (13) Unaccusative Clause:  
 [TP DP<sub>POSSR</sub> T [VP V [DP t D NP<sub>POSSM</sub>]]]  
 ↑

Note that it is not clear how the possessive DP containing the possessum can get case in this construction. Recall the chief difference between external possessors in Bantu and languages like French, Hebrew, and Bulgarian is that the latter require external possessors to be dative, presumably an inherent case, while Bantu doesn't have that option. A few conclusions are possible. One is that abstract case is simply irrelevant for Bantu languages. Another is that the possessive DP and the raised possessor DP somehow share the single available structural case. A third option is to claim that the possessive DP has inherent case in (13), admitting that this conclusion is ad hoc and lacks any substantiating evidence. At this point, we can think of no good arguments to choose between these options and must leave this for future work.

For the possessum raising construction, things are more complicated. Recall this construction is also limited to unaccusative/stative verbs. We might then expect it to have a basic structure similar to that of possessor raising to subject in (13). But if that is the case, it is not clear where the possessor is residing structurally since no VP-internal position is available for it to raise to. Moreover, if such a position were available for the possessor, movement of the possessive DP over it would involve a minimality violation of exactly the kind that rules out passivization of the possessum over the possessor in (12) above. A solution to these problems is suggested by further examination of facts, however. Below we argue that in the possessum raising constructions, the overt possessor is not the external possessor DP, but a null *pro*.

#### 4.3 Possessum Raising: the Possessor is always *pro*

The first piece of evidence that the possessor in these constructions is *pro* is that the object marker is strictly required. Generally, object agreement is preferred with animate objects. In natural speech, though, the marker is often omitted. Thus, sentences like (14a) are considered degraded, but not ungrammatical, even in the possessor raising construction (14b). On the other hand, agreement with post-verbal inanimate objects is strongly dispreferred (14c):

- (14) (a) ?*Omari* /  $\emptyset$ -*bish-ile*                      *maana*  
           Omar        3SG-hit-PST                              1child  
           ‘Omari hit the child.’
- (b) *Omari* /  $\emptyset$ -*vunz-ile*                      *maana* / *kuulu*  
           Omar        3SG-break-PST                              1child        9leg  
           ‘Omar broke the child’s leg.’

- (c) \**Omari* /  $\emptyset$ -*i-vunz-ile*                      *maana* / *kuulu=y-e*  
 Omar      3SG-9AGR.OBJ-break-PST    1child      9leg-9AGR-3SG.POSS  
 ‘Omari broke the child’s leg.’

In the possessum raising construction, however, lack of agreement with the animate possessor makes the construction completely unintelligible:

- (15) \**Kuulu* / *i-vund-ish-iile*                      *maana*  
 9leg              9AGR-break-STAT-PST      1child  
 ‘The child’s leg is broken.’

Furthermore, the possessum raising construction is impossible with inanimate possessors (16c), despite the fact that inanimate possessors are marginally allowed in both possessor raising constructions (16a, b):

- (16) (a) *Fatima* /  $\emptyset$ -*vunz-ile*              *chiti* / *kuulu*      Possr. raising to object  
 Fatima      3SG-break-PST    7chair 9leg  
 ‘Fatima broke the chair’s leg.’
- (b) ?*Chiti* / *chi-vund-ish-ile*              *kuulu*      Possr. raising to subject  
 7chair      7AGR-break-STAT-PST    9leg  
 ‘The chair’s leg is broken.’
- (c) \**Kuulu* / *i-vund-ish-ile*                      *chiti*      Possessum raising  
 9leg              9AGR-break-STAT-PST      7chair  
 ‘The chair’s leg is broken.’

These facts are explained if the possessor in the possessum raising construction is *pro* and not the post-verbal possessor. In Bantu, *pro* is licensed by the presence of agreement, hence the strong requirement on the presence of the object marker in these constructions. Since object agreement with inanimates is strongly dispreferred, licensing a *pro* possessor via object agreement in (16c) is also not allowed.

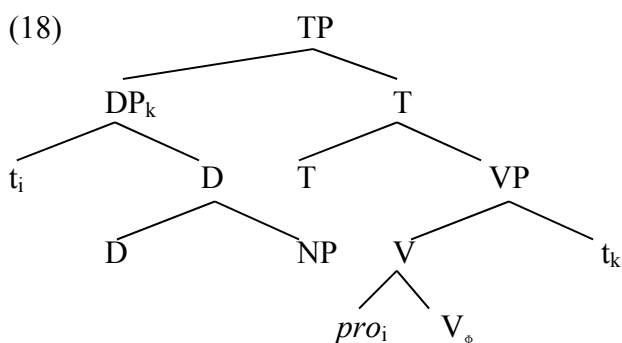
Another piece of evidence involves prosodic phrasing. As Kisseberth has extensively argued (Kisseberth and Abasheikh 1974; in press), prosodic phrases in Chimwiini are important in describing a number of phenomena, including vowel shortening and accent placement. Crucially, the prosodic phrases must line up along the right edge with maximal syntactic phrases. One effect of this generalization is that a verb generally forms a prosodic phrase with whatever constituent immediately follows it in the verb phrase. This is true of objects, prepositional phrases, post-verbal subjects, and other constituents. It is also true of a possessor that has undergone possessor raising to object, or a possessum when the possessor has raised to subject (see (16a, b) immediately above). In the possessum raising construction, however, the post-verbal possessor construction is typically *not* in the same prosodic phrase as the verb (though some variation exists). This suggests that it is outside the verb phrase, likely a right-adjoined adjunct. Again, we take this as evidence that the post-verbal possessor in this construction is not the post-verbal possessor, but a null *pro* licensed by object agreement.



- (17) *Miimba / i-m-fur-iile / maana*  
 9stomach 9AGR-3SG.OBJ-swell-PST 1child  
 ‘The child’s stomach swelled.’

6. POSSESSUM RAISING: PROBLEMS FOR MOVEMENT

Accepting the conclusion that the possessor in this construction must be *pro*, we argue that *pro* is licensed by object agreement on the verb and therefore incorporates into the verb for licensing. Once this occurs, *pro* ceases to be a barrier for movement of the possessive DP. The latter may then move directly to subject position.



The structure in (18) is suggested by the data we have examined. However, the analysis is not without problems. In particular, the structure in (18) would seem to violate a basic tenet of movement, namely that an antecedent c-commands its trace. Given that A-movement does not reconstruct, the raised possessive DP in (18) contains a trace of the *pro* possessor that is not c-commanded by *pro*, which has incorporated into the verb. If the analysis in (18) is correct, this would suggest that the incorporation of *pro* into the verb not only causes it to cease to be an intervener for A-movement, but also exempts it from the requirement to c-command its trace (or lower copy, if one prefers the copy theory of movement).

Alternatively, one might take the analysis in (18) to be evidence against a movement analysis and instead argue for an account of possessum raising in terms of binding and big *PRO*. This would not solve the problem, however, as it is typically assumed that that the controllee (*PRO*) must be c-commanded by its controller. Nevertheless, this difficulty is not unknown, and there are cases of (obligatory) control in which the controller does not c-command its controllee, in particular where dative experiencers are involved. In English, for instance, *PRO* may be the subject of a gerundive nominal phrase in subject position, controlled by an experiencer. It is hard to imagine the experiencer c-commanding into the subject:

- (19) [*PRO*<sub>i</sub> Running that marathon] exhausted her<sub>i</sub> completely.

Indeed there are certain parallels here with the possessum raising construction: the post-verbal possessor is an experiencer that must be affected (malefactively or benefactively) by the action described, much like in (6). One difference, though, is

that the gerundive NP in (19) may receive arbitrary control interpretations in the absence of an experiencee whereas the possessed NPs in Chimwiini require a controller.

Another problem with this second approach involves the binder, *pro*. In particular, the binding approach would seem to require that *pro* be base-generated as an experiencer object of the verb licensed by object agreement. The question would then arise why this possibility is not available in the passive construction. That is, what would prevent *pro* from being base-generated as an experiencer incorporated into the verb, thus freely allowing passivization of the remnant possessive DP? Without postulating movement in the passive from the possessor position, through the secondary grammatical object position, ruling out A-movement of the possessive DP seems difficult without additional assumptions.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we've discussed two possessor raising constructions in Chimwiini as well as the more unusual possessum raising construction. Most differences between the former two constructions and the more familiar dative experiencers, we've argued, fall out from Chimwiini's lack of dative case. This difference also makes the possessum raising construction possible in Chimwiini, though we have noted certain questions this latter construction raises for the nature of *pro* as well as whether possessor raising is best thought of in terms of movement or binding.

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