Possession without possessives: The view from Äiwoo

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▶ Imagine a language without possessives.
  ▶ No 'my/mine', 'your(s)', 'their(s)', etc.
▶ How do you express possession then?
  ▶ Now imagine that this language lacks possessives, but it still has a verb "to have".
  ▶ Now you can say "I have a dog" – that's good.
  ▶ But how would you say "my dog is black" if you can't have "my"?
  ▶ '[the dog$_i$ [that I have _$_i$]] is black'

- ▶ At a first glance, Äiwoo is clearly not this language
  - ▶ It has **a wealth of possessives:**
  - ▶ Six different ways of saying 'my' depending on what object you're talking about, obligatorily possessed nouns, etc.
- ▶ But what if all of these are really 'have' verbs?

- ▶ Äiwoo: Oceanic (< Austronesian), ~8 400 speakers. Solomon Islands, Temotu Province, Reef Islands

- ▶ Fieldwork data collected by Åshild Næss[1], plus a translation of the Gospel of Mark

(University of Oslo)

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[1]['ɔːṣ̣hɪl 'nɛs]; morpheme boundary between the ⟨s⟩ and the ⟨h⟩.

- ▶ Inalienable vs. Alienable nouns:
    - ▶ Kinship/body parts vs. the rest
- ▶ **Inalienable: possessor**'s person/number features are marked on the noun itself
- ▶ There's no non-possessed form; only '**his/her** father', no just 'father'

(1) a. *tumo-**mu***
father-**2SG**
'**Your** father'

      b. *tumo-**ngopu***
father-**1PL**
'**Our.EXCL** father'

      c. *tumwä*
father.**3SG**
'**His/her** father'

(2) a. *nyibe-**mu***
eye-**2SG**
'**Your** eye(s)'

      b. *nyibä-**i***
eye-**3PL**
'**Their** eye(s)'

      c. *nyibä*
eye.**3SG**
'**His/her** eye(s)'

▶ Alienable: possessor's person/number features are marked on a possessive marker (six classes)

(3) a. *nenu*   *numo-**mu***
         coconut POSS:DRINK-2SG
         '**Your** coconut (to drink)'

     b. *nenu*   *na-**mu***
         coconut POSS:FOOD-2SG
         '**Your** coconut (to eat)'

     c. *nenu*   *no-**mu***
         coconut POSS:GEN-2SG
         '**Your** coconut
         (e.g. decoration in the
         house)'

     d. *nenu*   *numo-**de***
         coconut POSS:DRINK-12PL
         '**Our.INCL** coconut (to drink)'

- ▶ What if these possessives...
  - ▶ ... are all really verbs ('have')?
  - ▶ ... so, "my dogs" really is "the dogs$_i$ [that I have $\_{i}$]"?
- ▶ Why though?
  - ▶ My idea accounts for facts that would otherwise go unexplained
- ▶ How this is going to work:
  - ▶ I tell you something about Äiwoo, and then show you that the possessives work the same way

- ▶ Äiwoo has so-called "symmetrical voice"
  - ▶ Common in Western Austronesian (Tagalog, Cebuano, Indonesian, Javanese, Malagasy, …)
- ▶ We're used to the active vs. passive distinction, which is fundamentally asymmetric:
  - ▶ Passive is morphosyntactically derived from active;
  - ▶ Passive involves one less argument than the active (*Bill saw Mary* vs. *Mary was seen*)
- ▶ Austronesian voice systems: multiple voices in a symmetrical relationship
  - ▶ None is clearly derived from the other(s);
  - ▶ They are all equally transitive
  - ▶ You pick one or the other based on some notion of saliency/prominence

▶ Äiwoo: multiple voices in a symmetrical relationship

(4) a. **Actor Voice: S** V=CL **O**
    sime   *ki-**li**-⌐läke⌐=kaa*   *näte*
    person   IPFV-**3PL**-chop.**AV**=FUT   firewood
    'The people will chop (the) firewood'

    b. **Undergoer Voice: O** V **S**=CL
    näte   *ki-⌐läki⌐-**i***   *sime=kaa*
    firewood   IPFV-chop.**UV**-**3PL**   person=FUT
    'The people will chop (the) firewood'

(5) a. ***me**-ki-⌐vängä⌐*   *sii*
    1PL-IPFV-eat.**AV**   fish
    'We eat fish'

    b. *sii*   *ki-⌐ngä⌐-**ngopu***
    fish   IPFV-eat.**UV**-**1PL**
    'We eat fish'

▶ Today we care about **Undergoer Voice**

    ▶ Pretty much the default transitive construction, 10x more common in natural speech than AV

▶ Word order: **O** V **S**=CL, or rather:

    ▶ **O**$_{DP}$ V **S**=CL

    ▶ V **S**=CL **O**$_{PRON}$

(6)   ***nupo*** *lâ*   *i-pa-kä-∅*   ***gipiä****=jo=wâ*
     net   DIST   PFV-fetch-DIR3-3SG   br.in.law.3SG=TAM=DIST
     'His brother in law took the net'

(7)   *i-togulo-**no**=ngaa*   ***ijii***
     PFV-hit-**1SG**=FUT   **3PL**
     'I will hit them'

► **Relative clauses:**

  ► There's no overt marking, but you extract to the left:

(8) *i-lotolâ-kä-∅=nâ*   [_DP_ **dena**_i_
     PFV-prepare.AV-DIR3-3SG=DIST   **food**
       [_CP_ _i *ki-pi-kä-∅*   **tumwä=jo]]**
                  IPFV-bring.UV-DIR3-3SG **father.3SG**=TAM
     'She prepared [_DP_ **some food** [_CP_ that **her father** had brought _]]'

► Problem: distinguish [O V S=CL] from [O [_ V S=CL]]?

  ► You extract something else:

(9) **sime**_i_ [_CP_ *ki-singäive-**gu**-∅*   _i=ngâ]*
     person   IPFV-lie.about.UV-**3SG-1SG**   =DIST
     '**The man** [who _ told lies about **me**]'

▶ I claim that possessives are all formed with UV verbs
  ▶ [(the) **dog** [that **I** have.uv **_**]]
▶ UV subjects are post-verbal, so
  ▶ If we have an overt possessor DP (***Mary**'s dog*), and this really is the subject of a UV relative clause, it should be right-adjacent to the possessive marker

(10) *wo-polâu*   ***nogo***   ***Tukuba=ke***
      go-sail   POSS:UTEN.3SG   Tukuba=PROX
      'The sea journey of (Mr.) Tukuba'

(11) *box*   ***no***   ***sime***   ***mi-nubo=kâ***
      box   POSS:GEN.3SG   person   one-die=DIST
      'The coffin of the dead person'

(12) *isä*   ***Meri***
      mother.3SG   Mary
      'Mary's mother'

▶ What I'm concretely proposing:

  ▶ Possessive markers really are just 'have' verbs in UV
    (have as food, have as drink, etc.)

  ▶ You create a relative clause by extracting the object

(13)   ***wo-polâu_i*** [_{RC} __i ***nogo***   ***Tukuba=ke]***
       go-sail   POSS:UTEN.3SG   Tukuba=PROX
       'The sea journey of (Mr.) Tukuba'
       → 'The sea journey [that Tukuba has _]'

- ▶ Ok but why
    - ▶ It accounts for a bunch of things that would otherwise be mysterious
- ▶ Äiwoo loves to have complex verb stems, where you stack modifiers or several stems inside the verb complex
- ▶ One of these modifiers is 'again':
    - ▶ *ute* for intransitives and AV
    - ▶ *usi* for UV

(14) *li-lotâlâ-ute*   *numomoji*   *nogo-i*
3PL-prepare.AV-**again.AV**   canoe   POSS:UTEN-3PL
'They prepared their canoe again'

(15) *ku-lotoläi-usi=jo*
IPFV-prepare.UV-**again.UV**=TAM
'She prepared (it) again'

▶ Prediction: possessives are UV verbs: they should take *usi*

(16) *lâ minugolunänâ lâ*   *na-usi*   *[nää*
the tenth one   DIST   POSS:FOOD.3SG-**again.UV**   spirit
   nogo]=nâ
   POSS:UTEN.3SG=DIST
'The tenth one is [his spirit]'s again'

▶ If the first stem is UV, all others must take a suffix *-i/-nyii*:

(17) a. *i-[kää]-no*
      PFV-know.UV-1SG
      'I know (this)'

   b. *mo (i-)[päko]*
      but PFV-good
      'But it's okay'

(18) *bäli engeke i-[[kää]-päko-i]-no*
      side this PFV-know.UV-good-UV-1SG
      'I know this topic well'

(19) *i-[[[kää]-päko-i]-mana-i]-no*
      PFV-know.UV-good-UV-very-UV-1SG
      'I know [this] very well'

(20) *lâto=wâ ki-[[la]-une-i]-wâ   God=kaa ngâgu-mi*
      then=DIST IPFV-give.UV-true-UV-DIR2 God=FUT to-2PL
      'Then God will truly give [that] to you' (Mark 11:24)

(21) *lâ sime-eângâ ba i-[[kää]-mole-nyii]-no=gu*
      DIST person-DIST NEG PFV-know.UV-exactly-UV-1SG=NEG
      'I don't know this person exactly' (Mark 14:70)

▶ **Prediction:** if our possessives are UV verbs, if we modify them we should see this same suffix

(22) *ile   sime-enge   [Gino   une-i]   God*
     this   person-prox   son.3sg   true-uv   God
     'This man is the true Son of God' (Mark 15:39)

(23) *go   ile   ine   [ibete   päko-i]   Pita*
     prep   this   he   friend.3sg   good-uv   Peter
     'Because he (here) is a good friend of Peter'

(24) *mo   molâ   [nugu-mole-nyii-ji]   ile=to*
     but   tradition   poss:uten.1sg-exactly-uv-12sg   this=tam
     'But this is exactly our tradition'

▶ Normally you only get **subject** agreement on verbs:

(25) *i-togulo-no ijii*
      PFV-hit-1SG 3PL
      'I hit them'

▶ But sometimes you get **object** agreement too. Iff:

    ▶ **S** = 1st person, **O** = 2nd person:

(26) a. *i-togulo-nee-mi*
          PFV-hit-1SG-2PL
          'I hit you (pl)'

      b. *i-togulo-ngee-mu*
              PFV-hit-1PL-2SG
              'We hit you (sg)'

    ▶ **S** = 3SG, **O** = not 3SG:

(27) a. *i-togulo-gu-mu*
          PFV-hit-3SG-2SG
          'S/he hit you'

      b. *i-togulo-gu-i*
              PFV-hit-3SG-3PL
              'S/he hit them'

- ▶ Our idea: possessives are really UV verbs
  - ▶ We should expect to see something like 'object agreement', but what is the object?
  - ▶ "Possessor has possessum"
  - ▶ "I have dogs" + RC-extraction:
  - ▶ dogs$_i$ [that I have __$_i$]
  - ▶ We do get object agreement if S = 3SG, O = non-3SG

▶ Object agreement if **S** = 3SG, **O** = non-3SG:

(28) a. *i-togulo-**gu**-i*
          PFV-hit-**3SG**-**3PL**
          'S/he hit them'

b. *i-togulo-**mu**   ijii*
    PFV-hit-**2SG**   **3PL**
    'You hit them'

(29) a. *kuli   no-**gu**-i*
          dog   POSS:GEN-**3SG**-**3PL**
          'His/her dogs'
          dog(s) [such that **s/he** has
          them]

b. *kuli   no-**mu**   ijii*
    dog   POSS:GEN-**2SG**   **3PL**
    'Your dogs'
    dog(s) [such that **you** have
    them]

(30) a. *gino-**gu**-i*
          son-**3SG**-**3PL**
          'His/her sons'

b. *gino-**mu**   ijii*
    son-**2SG**   **3PL**
    'Your sons'

▶ What about two 3SG arguments? The same, but null:

(31) a. *i-togulo-∅*   *∅*
   PFV-hit-**3SG**   **3SG**
   'S/he hit it'

b. *kuli*   *no-∅*   *∅*
   dog   POSS:GEN-**3SG**   **3SG**
   'His/her dog'

▶ What happens with 1st/2nd person possessums?
  Remember: we get object agreement iff:

  ▶ **S** = 1st person, **O** = 2nd person

► In verb world:

(32) a. S = 2SG, O = 3SG:
          i-togulo-mu (∅)
          PFV-hit-2SG 3SG
          'You hit it'

      b. S = 3SG, O = 2SG:
          i-togulo-gu-mu
          PFV-hit-3SG-2SG
          'S/he hit you'

► In possessive world:

(33) a. S = 2SG, O = 3SG:
          [You have dog] → dog [such that you have it] →
          kuli no-mu   ∅
          dog POSS:GEN-2SG 3SG
          'Your dog'

      b. S = 3SG, O = 2SG:
          [S/he has you] → you [whom s/he has (you)] →
          lâ   iumu=wâ Gino une-i-gu-mu   God
          DIST 2SG=DIST son   true-UV-3SG-2SG God
          'You are the true Son of God' (Mark 3:11)
          Literally: you are the one whom God has (you) as a son

▶ **Prediction:** we would expect 'I'm your son' and 'you're my son' to be something like this:

(34) Baseline from verbs:

a. S = 1SG, O = 2SG:
   *i-togulo-**nee**-**mu***
   PFV-hit-**1SG**-**2SG**
   'I hit you'

b. S = 2SG, O = 1SG:
   *i-togulo-**mu** **iu***
   PFV-hit-**2SG** **1SG**
   'You hit me'

(35) Constructed, predicted to be right:

a. S = 1SG, O = 2SG:
   *(iumu) ginou-**nee**-**mu***
   2SG   son-**1SG**-**2SG**
   'You're my son' (the one
   [whom **I** have (**you**) as son])

b. S = 2SG, O = 1SG:
   *(iu) ginou-**mu** **iu***
   1SG   son-**2SG** **1SG**
   'I'm your son' (the one
   [whom **you** have (**me**) as son])

▶ Preliminary evidence that we might be right:

(36) *mo   iu   ile,   gino-**mi-le** **iu***
     but 1SG PROX, son-**2PL-DU** **1SG**
     'But me here, I'm your son/the son of you two'

(37) *iie   ki-lää-wâ   nuwoi ku-nu-mu   go   känä*
     who IPFV-give.AV-DIR2 water IPFV-drink-2SG because say.3SG
     *nou-**nee**-**mu***
     POSS:GEN-**1SG**-**2SG**
     Mark 9:41, Official NIV translation, Jesus speaking: "anyone who gives
     you a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah [will certainly
     not lose their reward]"
     Possible more literal translation: "anyone who gives you water to
     drink because s/he says that **you** are **mine**"

▶ **My claim**: all the possessive markers are really different UV verbs meaning something like 'have' (have as food, have as drink, etc.)

▶ To create a possessive structure, you start from a UV transitive clause and you extract the theme: 'the dogs [that you have them]'

(38) **Alienables**:

a. *kuli*   *no-**mu***   *ijii*
    dog   POSS:GEN-**2SG**   **3PL**
    'Your dogs'

b.   DP
     / \
  dogs   RC (UV)
          / \
      2SG   \
          "have" ~~dogs~~
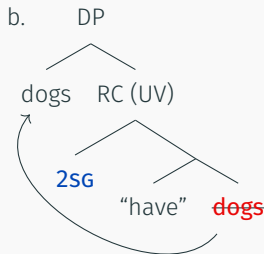
▶ **Inalienables:** same stuff, but harder to picture
▶ Basic idea: verbs that mean 'have-as-son', 'have-as-mother', etc.
▶ Why not just 'have', and 'son' is the object?
  ▶ [I have son] → son [that I have _]
  ▶ Problem: the thing we're extracting can be 1st/2nd person, so it can't be the noun 'son' itself
  ▶ Remember 'you [whom God has (you) as son]'
  ▶ So the 'son' part has to be a modifier of the verb of some sort

▶ Verbs like 'have-as-son', 'have-as-mother' etc. are known to exist in some Algonquian languages (Passamaquoddy, Wampanoag); also used transitively

(39) **Intransitive:**

*kusseh k8-wompequau pish **k8-namoni***
behold 2-be.pregnant will 2-have.son
'[And the angel of the Lord said unto her] Behold, thou art with child and shalt **bear a son**' (Genesis 16:11)

(40) **Transitive:**

*[noh [**wanaumonai-t** mattammogw-oh]], ne wu-nneuantam8onk*
that **have.son-3** fool-OBJ that 3-sorrow
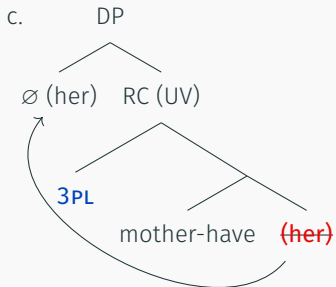'He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow' (Proverbs 17:21)

▶ So how do you say 'their mother' in Äiwoo?
  ▶ Literally 'she$_i$ [whom **they** mother-have $_i$]'

(41) a. *isä-i*
          mother-3PL
          'Their mother'

      b. *(∅$_i$) [isä-i   _$_i$]*
          she   mother(have)-3PL (her)

      c.   DP

          ∅ (her)   RC (UV)

                3PL

                  mother-have   ~~(her)~~

▶ **Prediction:** if we can extract a null pronoun, maybe we could extract something overt too?
  ▶ 'My son the fisherman' → 'the fisherman [whom I son-have _]'

▶ Not tested with speakers, but here's some examples:

(42) *[pesaliki   gisi]   i-pu-mä*
     bigman   brother.1sg   pfv-go-dir1
     'My brother is nearly here' (*pesaliki* is an honorific term for
     rich/notable/powerful men in Äiwoo culture)
     → Literally 'the bigman [whom I brother-have _]'

(43) *eâpo=to,   [pesaliki   gisi]*
     enter=tam   bigman   brother.1sg
     'Come in, my friend'

(44) *dee [sipe   [pesaliki   gisi]]*
     this daughter.3sg bigman   brother.1sg
     'This is [[my friend]'s daughter]'

▶ **Problem:** I haven't yet shown you how you actually say 'have' in Äiwoo
  ▶ Can you use these putative 'have verbs' to actually mean 'to have'?
  ▶ Nah, or, well, nah
  ▶ You can use them by themselves, and you get 'X is mine':

(45) *boat   nugu*
      boat   POSS:UTEN.1SG
      '(The) boat is mine'

  ▶ To say 'I have X', you need something more complicated

(46) *[boat   nugu]   i-to*
      boat   POSS:UTEN.1SG   PFV-be
      'I have a boat' (lit. 'a boat of mine exists')

▶ What's the difference between 'X is mine' and 'I have X'?

▶ In English, often a matter of definiteness of the possessum:

(47) *I have **a/*the** laptop*

(48) ****A/the** laptop is mine*

(49) *I have the car/the keys*
       (fine, but only for "temporary possession")

▶ Maybe this is what we see in Äiwoo?

▶ Maybe this is what we see in Äiwoo?

    ▶ Maybe these verbs can take both definite and indefinite objects, differently from 'have' in English:

(50) a. *boat*   *nogo-i*   b. *boat*   *nogo-i*
          boat.DEF 'have'-3PL   boat.INDEF 'have'-3PL

    ▶ BUT, if the object is **indefinite**, you obligatorily **have to extract it** (if it's definite you can leave it there):

(51) a. *boat*   *nogo-i*   b. *boat$_i$*   *[_$_i$ nogo-i]*
          boat.DEF 'have'-3PL   boat.INDEF   'have'-3PL

    ▶ But now (51b) is not a sentence, it's **just a DP** ('a boat that they have'), so **we need a verb** to sentenceify it:

(52) *[boat$_i$*   *[_$_i$ nogo-i]]*   *i-to*
     boat.INDEF   'have'-3PL   PFV-be
     'A boat of theirs exists', i.e. 'they have a boat'

- ▶ What have we seen:
  - ▶ A language "without possessives", that uses verbs instead
- ▶ Yet another parallel between CPs and DPs?

(53) a.

b.