

The possessum-agreement construction

or

‘Does Albanian have a genitive case?’

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I discuss the possessive construction in two languages said to have a ‘genitive case’, Albanian and Hindi. In both languages the possessed noun (possessum) in the construction agrees with the possessor in exactly the manner that an attributive adjective agrees with its head noun. Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001, 2003) points out that, in fact, these constructions are identical to the ‘a-of-relationship’ found in many Bantu languages. However, despite Koptjevskaja-Tamm’s observations, descriptions of Albanian and of Indo-Aryan persist in treating these constructions as a type of ‘genitive case’. In this paper I therefore show in detail exactly why these constructions cannot sensibly be thought of as instantiations of a genitive case. Instead, they are examples of what I refer to as the ‘possessum-agreement’ construction, in which the possessor noun or noun phrase is marked with a formative which agrees with the possessor in the manner of an adjective, but the possessum itself is not categorially an adjective and the possessum phrase itself retains the internal syntax of a noun phrase. The possessum-agreement construction also highlights the unfairly neglected, but very close relationship between possessive constructions and attributive modification.

1. Introduction

Traditional grammars of Albanian and most of the theoretical discussions of Albanian morphosyntax that depend on those descriptions assume that the Albanian nominal system distinguishes a genitive case. Yet the morphosyntax of this genitive is extremely odd compared to that of other Indo-European languages and compared to the other, less controversial, case forms of Albanian. A genitive-marked noun is preceded by a clitic/prefix ‘article’ which agrees in number, gender, definiteness and case with the possessed noun. The genitive-marked noun itself is in an oblique-case form which on its

own expresses the dative case (and ablative in most contexts). The clitic/prefix article on the genitive noun, moreover, is identical in form and function to the agreement clitic/prefix on the declinable class of adjectives. In other words a genitive-marked noun shows exactly the kind of agreement with the head noun of the NP that an attributive adjective shows. This agreement pattern is the mirror image of the more familiar possessor agreement construction, in which it is the possessed noun (possessum, Pd) which agrees with the possessor (Px). Where we have a construction in which the possessor (Px) agrees with the possessum (Pd) I shall use the usual terminology, ‘possessor agreement construction’. Where we have a construction in which it is the possessor which agrees with the possessum I shall speak of the ‘possessum-agreement construction’. The two types are shown schematically in (1):

- (1) a. possessor agreement
- | | | |
|----------|-----------|--------------------|
| NP_i | agr_i-N | |
| Px | Pd | |
| the girl | her-books | ‘the girl’s books’ |
- b. possessum agreement
- | | | |
|------------------|-------|--------------------|
| $NP-agr_i$ | N_i | |
| Px | Pd | |
| the girl-AGR(PL) | books | ‘the girl’s books’ |

Traditional grammars of Indo-Aryan languages outside the eastern region, such as Hindi, Punjabi, Marathi and others distinguish a series of cases marked by particles. These particles are clitics (phrasal affixes) appended to the right edge of the noun phrase. In Hindi, these case particles are ascribed functions of accusative (in imperfective tenses), ergative (in perfective tenses), dative, instrumental and various locatives. Quite separate from this phrasal marking, in many of these languages certain subclasses of nouns have two forms, ‘direct’ and ‘oblique’. Where a noun distinguishes an oblique form from a direct form, the case particles invariably select the oblique form. In addition, these languages have a genitive case particle. However, this particle agrees with the possessed noun in number and gender, and also inflects for the direct/oblique status of

the possessed noun. In Hindi the actual morphology of this inflecting ‘genitive case particle’ is identical to the morphology of a declinable adjective.

Apart from the fact that the word order of the Albanian construction is the mirror image of the Indo-Aryan constructions (as represented by Hindi), the two languages demonstrably have the same possessum-agreement construction. However, it is typologically unusual for genitive case to exhibit possessum agreement. Although cases do exist of genuine genitive case markers agreeing with possessed nouns (this is reported for certain Daghestan languages, Boguslavskaja 1995, Kibrik 1995; and Central Cushitic, Hetzron 1995) it is more common for a language to have a general purpose marker which turns any type of nominal phrase (not just genitive case marked phrases) into a attributive modifier. A well-known instance is the *-ki* suffix of Turkish (Lewis 1967: 69).

The correct analysis of these constructions has been offered by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001, 2003). She points out that the construction is identical in form to the ‘a-of-relationship’ possessor construction found in Swahili and many other Bantu languages. However, it appears that linguists discussing both Albanian and Indo-Aryan languages have been reluctant to accept the conclusion that their languages lack a genitive case. For Albanian the repercussions of rejecting the genitive are not particularly far-reaching: the language clearly has a case system, albeit it one which is being eroded, and so the grammar of the language still needs to appeal to a [Case] attribute. For languages such as Hindi-Urdu, however, matters are a little different. If the Hindi-Urdu so-called ‘genitive’ case marker is not a case marker then we must ask serious questions about the status of other so-called ‘case markers’.

The Albanian and Hindi constructions, when compared to the Bantu construction, raise interesting questions about the nature of grammatical categories such as ‘case’ and ‘agreement’ and the relationship between possessive constructions generally and attributive modification constructions. For this reason it is worthwhile considering the construction in detail. In section 2 I present the Albanian nominal system. I demonstrate that the ‘genitive’ marker is really a highly morphologized clitic (or even weakly adjoined affix) which allows a nominal phrase to be used as an attributive modifier. In section 3 I survey the Hindi nominal case system, showing that there is a (vestigial)

system of cases but that the postpositive clitic markers often referred to as ‘cases’ are not case markers. In particular the Hindi *kaa* postposition is not a genitive case marker. In section 4 I examine in minute detail the thesis that the Albanian and Hindi markers require us to set up a grammatical feature [Case] with the value [Case: genitive] and show that this is unnecessary and, indeed, would be highly misleading. In section five I outline the Swahili possessum-agreement construction, which has exactly the same morphosyntax as the Albanian and Hindi constructions, even though Bantu languages are not case languages. The paper concludes with some speculative pointers for future work on the nature of agreement morphosyntax in possessive constructions.

2. The Albanian case system

Albanian nouns inflect for number and definiteness, and fall into gender-based inflectional classes. Traditional grammars distinguish five cases – nominative, accusative, dative, ablative and genitive (Bokshi 1980) and this analysis is generally carried over into descriptions written in other languages (e.g. Buchholz and Fiedler 1987; Camaj 1969, 1984; Ejntrej 1982; Mann 1932; Newmark, Hubbard and Prifti 1982; Zymberi 1991). However, the grammatical synopsis in Newmark’s (1998) dictionary fails to list the genitive as a separate case and Newmark’s (1957) structuralist grammar argues on the basis of distribution that there are only three cases – nominative, accusative and marginal (Newmark (1957: 56) speaks of the “‘genitive’ functions’ of the marginal case in construction with the ‘proclitics of concord’, thereby distancing himself from an analysis which appeals to a genitive case). Whether it makes sense to distinguish dative and ablative is an interesting question, but it is irrelevant to the question of whether Albanian has a genitive case and what criteria we can deploy to answer such a question. We are therefore left with three uncontroversial cases – nom, acc, obl(ique).

The examples in Table 1 are taken from Zymberi (1991: 51f, 101) (omitting the marginal neuter class).

Table 1 Albanian basic noun declension

djalë ‘boy’				
	Masc sg Indefinite	Definite	Masc pl Indefinite	Definite
Nom	një djalë	djali	ca djem	djemtë
Acc	një djalë	djalin	ca djem	djemtë
Obl	një djali	djalit	ca djemve	djemve
vajzë ‘girl’				
	Fem sg Indefinite	Definite	Fem pl Indefinite	Definite
Nom	një vajzë	vajzja	ca vajza	vajzat
Acc	një vajzë	vajzën	ca vajza	vajzat
Obl	një vajze	vajzës	ca vajzave	vajzave

The preposed indefinite articles *një* (singular) and *ca* (plural) are in effect loosely bound prefixes.

Albanian adjectives fall into two broad groups: a group of declinable adjectives which are also accompanied by an inflecting preposed ‘article’, and a group of indeclinable adjectives lacking the article. In Table 2 we see the declinable adjective *mirë* ‘good’.

Table 2 Albanian attributive modifiers: article-taking adjectives

	Indefinite	Definite
Masc sg	‘a good boy’	‘the good boy’
Nom	një djalë i mirë	djali i mirë
Acc	një djalë të mirë	djalin e mirë
Obl	një djali të mirë	djalit të mirë
Masc pl	‘good boys’	‘the good boys’
Nom	ca djem të mirë	djemtë e mirë
Acc	ca djem të mirë	djemtë e mirë
Obl	ca djemve të mirë	djemve të mirë
Fem sg	‘a good girl’	‘the good girl’
Nom	një vajzë e mirë	vajzja e mirë
Acc	një vajzë të mirë	vajzën e mirë
Obl	një vajze të mirë	vajzës së mirë
Fem pl	‘good girls’	‘the good girls’
Nom	ca vajza të mira	vajzat e mira
Acc	ca vajza të mira	vajzat e mira
Obl	ca vajzave të mira	vajzave të mira

From this table it can be seen that the adjective itself has fairly minimal inflection, changing only in the feminine plural form, while the article agrees with the head noun in number, gender, case and definiteness.

The traditional ‘genitive case’ is formed by taking the preposed article illustrated for adjectives in Table 2 and placing it before the oblique form of the noun (singular or plural, definite or indefinite). The article then agrees in number, gender, definiteness and case with the possessed noun (not the possessor noun to which it is preposed). This is shown in Table 3, where *fshatit* is the oblique definite singular form of the word *fshat* ‘village’.

Table 3 The Albanian ‘genitive case’

	Indefinite	Definite
Masc sg	‘a boy of the village’	‘the boy of the village’
Nom	një djalë i fshatit	djali i fshatit
Acc	një djalë të fshatit	djalin e fshatit
Obl	një djali të fshatit	djalit të fshatit
Masc pl	‘boys of the village’	‘the boys of the village’
Nom	ca djem të fshatit	djemtë e fshatit
Acc	ca djem të fshatit	djemtë e fshatit
Obl	ca djemve të fshatit	djemve të fshatit
Fem sg	‘a girl of the village’	‘the girl of the village’
Nom	një vajzë e fshatit	vajzja e
Acc	një vajzë të fshatit	vajzën e
Obl	një vajze të fshatit	vajzës së
Fem pl	‘girls of the village’	‘the girls of the village’
Nom	ca vajza të fshatit	vajzat e fshatit
Acc	ca vajza të fshatit	vajzat e fshatit
Obl	ca vajzave të fshatit	vajzave të fshatit

Exactly the same pattern would be found if we substituted *fshatit* with any other noun, singular or plural, masculine or feminine, definite or indefinite. I give a sampling of the relevant data in (2) (adapted from Zymberi 1991: 53f):

- | | | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|-----|------------------------|----------------------|
| (2) a. | një djalë | i | një | fshati |
| | INDEF boy.NOM.SG.INDEF | ART | INDEF | village.OBL.SG.INDEF |
| | ‘a boy of a village’ | | | |
| b. | një vajze | të | një | qyteti |
| | INDEF girl.OBL.SG.INDEF | ART | INDEF | town.OBL.SG.INDEF |
| | ‘(to) a girl of a town’ | | | |
| c. | studentët | i | shkollës | |
| | student(MASC).NOM.SG.DEF(MASC) | ART | school(FEM).OBL.SG.DEF | |
| | ‘the (male) student of the school’ | | | |

- d. studentes së kolegjit
 girl.OBL.SG.DEF ART college.OBL.SG.DEF
 ‘(to) the (female) student of the college’
- e. ca djem të ca fshatrave
 INDEF.PL boy.NOM.PL.INDEF ART INDEF.PL village.OBL.PL.INDEF
- f. vajzave të qyteteve
 girl.OBL.PL.DEF ART city.OBL.PL.DEF
 ‘(to) the girls of the towns’

As is clear from these examples the ‘genitive article’ marker instantiates the possessum-agreement construction shown in (1b). Moreover, the actual morphology of the ‘genitive article’ is identical to that of a declinable attributive adjective.

The question arises as to which constituent the article is associated with (if any), the attribute/possessor or the modified/possessed. The answer is unequivocal: the article is part of the adjective/possessor NP constituent (Morgan 1984): [djalë [i mirë]] ‘the good boy’, [djalë [i fshatit]] ‘the boy of the village’. Crucial evidence comes from the facts of coordination. In (3) we see that each conjunct of a coordinated adjective has to repeat the article (Zymberi 1991: 104):

- (3) djalë i mirë dhe *(i) sjellshëm
 boy ART good and ART polite
 ‘a good and polite boy’

Plank (2002: 165) provides further evidence of for the constituent structure, given here in (4):

- (4) a. Akademia e Shkenca-ve të Shqipëri-së
 academy.DEF ART sciences-OBL ART.PL Albania-OBL
 ‘the Academy of Albanian Sciences’

- b. Akademia e Shkenca-ve e Shqipëri-së
 academy.DEF ART sciences-OBL ART.SG Albania-OBL
 ‘Albanian Academy of Sciences’

From these examples we can see that the article takes a different form depending on whether it is construed with ‘sciences’ or with ‘Albania’. In (4a) the article *të* agrees with the plural noun *Shkenca* and the constituent structure is [Akademia [e Shkencave [të Shqipërisë]]]. In (4b) the second occurrence of the article *e* agrees with the head *akademia*, which is singular, so that the constituent structure is [[[Akademia [e Shkencave]] [e Shqipërisë]]. Clearly, in (4a) we have an instance in which a modifying genitive is itself modified, forming a minimal pair with (4b). The point is that in (4b) the genitive article which agrees with the head noun *akademia* is not adjacent to that noun but appears as a prefix to the noun *Shqipërisë*.

Example (4) also illustrates the important point that the genitive-marked NP behaves like a noun phrase in the syntax and not like an adjective phrase. On both of the construals of (4) a genitive-marked noun is modified as a noun, namely by means of the possessive construction, and not as an adjective. Further examples can be found in Buchholz and Fiedler (1987: 418).

Clearly, the Albanian ‘genitive case’ is an unusual type of case, both from the point of view of the rest of the Albanian nominal inflectional system and typologically. The problem is in the morphosyntactic construction, not in its uses. Although the genitive is not used as the complement of a head (including a simplex preposition), it nevertheless has most of the other uses common with inflectionally realized genitives. Buchholz and Fiedler (1987: 219f) identify twenty-five uses for the adnominal genitive, including subject-like functions (‘the answer of the pupil’, ‘the author of the article’), object-like functions (‘the defence of the fatherland’), picture-noun constructions, partitive-type constructions (‘a salad of tomatoes’, ‘the number of listeners’) and so on. The genitive construction can also be used appositively, as in an example whose translation runs ‘the principles of friendly relations: of equal rights, of sovereignty, of non-interference in internal affairs and of mutually advantageous exchange’. In addition the genitive NP can

be used predicatively in expressions such as (5, 6) from the nouns *mendim* ‘thought, opinion’ and *udhë* ‘path, road’:

(5) Unë jam i mendimit se ti ke të drejtë
 I am the.opinion.GEN that you are right
 ‘I am of the opinion that you are right’

(6) Më duket e udhës të mos përgjigjemi
 me seems ART right.GEN that we don’t answer
 ‘It seems to me to be appropriate that we don’t answer’

The noun *udhë* occurs as the genitive object of verbs such *sheh* ‘see’, *gje* ‘find’, *quaj* ‘call, consider’, as in (7):

(7) E gjen të udhës
 he finds ART right.GEN
 ‘He finds it advisable’

Finally, a genitive-marked NP can be the complement of the copular verbs *është* ‘be’ and *bëhet* ‘become’:

(8) Ky libër është i Agimit
 this book is ART Agim.GEN
 ‘This book is Agimit’s’

This behaviour makes it reasonable to regard the construction as a species of genitive case. However, all of these functions are also found with other types of morphosyntactic construction. Indeed, most of them are found with prepositions meaning ‘of’ in case-less Indo-European languages such as English.

Before exploring these issues I turn to an alleged genitive case construction found in a variety of Indo-Aryan languages.

3. The Hindi case system

3.1 Layer I and Layer II markers

The non-Eastern Indo-Aryan languages such as Hindi-Urdu, Punjabi, Marathi, Nepali, Romani and others make use of particles to express case relationships, commonly labelled ‘absolutive’, ‘ergative’, ‘nominative’, ‘accusative’, ‘dative’ and ‘genitive’. In this section I base myself on Hindi, relying particularly on the detailed description of the case system found in Mohanan (1994b, ch 4). Mohanan (1994b: 66), following a long descriptive tradition, distinguishes the following cases:¹

(9)	nominative	(zero-marked)
	ergative	ne
	accusative	ko
	dative	ko
	instrumental	se
	genitive	kaa
	locative1	mē
	locative2	par

In (10) we see a typical transitive (ergative) construction in the perfective aspect (Mohanan 1994b: 70):

(10)	raam-ne	ravii-ko	piiTaa
	Raam-ERG	Ravi-ACC	beat
	‘Ram beat Ravi’		

The case markers are called clitics by Mohanan. They are not properly regarded as (canonical) affixes. They can only appear once in a given NP and they are restricted to

¹ In the transcriptions, capital T, D, N, R represent retroflex consonants, vowel doubling represents length and a tilde represents a nasalized vowel.

final (rightmost) position on the NP. Moreover, a single case clitic can readily take scope over a coordinated NP.

These case markers belong to what Zograf (1976) and, following him, Masica (1991) refer to as Layer II markers. However, Hindi nouns also show a form of inflection marked either by genuinely affixal formatives or by stem allomorphy, belonging to Zograf's Layer I. The Layer I affixes are true affixes in the sense that they show none of the clitic-like properties found with the case clitics and postpositions and indeed sometimes the forms are suppletive. There are three forms of interest to us.

First, nouns can be inflected for number (singular/plural). For instance, masculine nouns in *-aa* (other than those borrowed from Sanskrit and other languages) take the plural ending *-e*: *laRkaa* 'boy', *laRke*; *kamraa* 'room', *kamre*. Masculines in nasalized *-ãã* take *-ẽ*. Feminine nouns take the plural suffix *-ẽ*, except for those in *-i/ii*, which take the ending *-yãã*: *bahin* 'sister', *bahinẽ*; *maataa* 'mother', *maataaẽ*; *tithi* 'number', *tithiyãã*; *beTii* 'daughter', *beTiyãã*.

The second inflectional category is difficult to name. Historically it derives from the Sanskrit case system but there is now an entrenched tradition which uses the term 'case' for the Layer II clitics. For the present, let us distinguish a direct from an oblique form of the noun (following Mohanan (1994b: 61), who speaks of 'stem forms'). The oblique singular form of a native masculine noun in *-aa* is identical to the direct plural form. The oblique singular form of other masculine nouns and of feminine nouns is identical to the direct singular form. The plural oblique form ends in *-õ*.

The third Layer I case form is the vocative. In *-aa* masculines the (optional) ending is *-e*, while in the plural for all inflecting nouns it is *-o*. Recent discussion has tended to ignore the vocative on the grounds that it has no syntactic function, though this begs the question of how the vocative case is to be integrated into morphological descriptions and what relationship the morphological vocative bears to the other morphological cases.

Examples of all six inflected stem forms are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Hindi ‘case stem’ forms

		‘boy’	‘girl’	‘sister’
Sg	Direct	laRkaa	laRkii	bahin
	Oblique	laRke	laRkii	bahinē
	Vocative	laRkee	laRkii	bahin
Pl	Direct	laRke	laRkiyāā	bahin
	Oblique	laRkō	laRkiyō	bahinō
	Vocative	laRko	laRkiyo	bahino

Even from this brief description it is evident that there is some unclarity in the case system. On the one hand, the case clitics *ne*, *ko*, *kaa* and so on have the usual functions of case markers, namely marking the grammatical functions of noun dependents. On the other hand, the case clitics themselves are not really affixes and tend to show properties of postpositions. In particular, the case clitics invariably select the oblique form of the head noun of the noun phrase. Moreover, in most Indo-Aryan languages the oblique form cannot be used on its own but is only found when governed by a case clitic or postposition (Masica 1991: 239). In order to avoid any possible terminological confusion I shall refer to the Layer I case inflections as ‘m-cases’ (for ‘morphological cases’). To avoid commitment to any particular morphosyntactic analysis of the NP-case clitic formatives, I shall refer to them as ‘case particles’. Thus, a word form such as *laRkō* ‘boys (oblique)’ is an m-case oblique form (in the plural). The construction *laRkō ko* ‘boys (acc/dat)’ is formed from the oblique m-case form of the lexeme LARKAA in construction with the case particle *ko* realizing what is generally referred to as accusative/dative case.

One important respect in which the oblique form has the morphosyntax of a case is found in adjective agreement. In Table 5 we see the declension of ACCHAA ‘good’ and the demonstrative YAH ‘this’ (McGregor 1995: 7f):

Table 5 Hindi adjective inflection

		Masc	Fem	Dem
		‘good’		‘this’
Sg	Dir	acchaa	acchii	yah
	Obl	acche	acchii	is
Pl	Dir	acche	acchii	ye
	Obl	acche	acchii	in

Notice that the demonstrative has suppletive inflected forms.

Adjectives agree not only in number/gender but also with respect to the direct/oblique m-case distinction. This is illustrated in Table 6 (Dymshits 1986: 78, 79):

Table 6 Examples of Hindi adjective agreement

Direct m-case forms:				
Masc	Sg	acchaa laRkaa	‘good boy’	
	Pl	acche laRke	‘good boys’	
Fem	Sg	acchii laRkii	‘good girls’	
	Pl	acchii laRkiyãã	‘good girls’	
Oblique and vocative m-case forms before acc/dat case particle <i>ko</i> :				
Masc	Sg	pyaare beTe ko	‘favourite son’	
		are pyaare beTe!	‘O favourite son!’	
	Pl	pyaare beTõ ko	‘favourite sons’	
		are pyaare beTo!	‘O favourite sons!’	
Fem	Sg	pyaarii beTii ko	‘favourite daughter’	
		are pyaarii beTii!	‘O favourite daughter!’	
	Pl	pyaarii beTiyõN ko	‘favourite daughters’	
		are pyaarii beTiyo	‘O favourite daughters!’	

Notice that the vocative plural form of masculines is treated like the oblique form with respect to agreement, not like the direct form.

No adjective or other modifier in Hindi agrees with respect to any Layer II property, in particular, the case particles do not trigger any kind of agreement.

As an interim summary we may say the following:

- Hindi nouns may inflect for number and m-case (direct, oblique, vocative).
- Hindi adjectives may inflect for number and m-case (direct, oblique, vocative), agreeing with the modified noun.
- Hindi NPs may be marked by case particles realizing (what have come to be called) ergative, accusative/dative, genitive cases and so on.
- The case particles serve solely to realize grammatical functions such as subject-of, object-of, possessor-of as well as various adverbial meanings. They do not participate in agreement relations.

3.2 *The ‘genitive’*

The genitive case particle was given above as *kaa*. However, its morphosyntax is considerably more complex than that of the other case particles, as seen from the examples in (11) (McGregor 1995: 9; see also Payne 1995):

- (11) a. us strii kaa beTaa
 that woman KAA.M.SG son
 ‘that woman’s son’
- b. us strii ke beTe
 that woman KAA.M.PL son.PL
 ‘that woman’s sons’
- c. us strii ke beTe kaa makaan
 that woman KAA.M.OBL.SG son.OBL.SG KAA.M.SG house(M)
 ‘that woman’s son’s house’

- d. us aadmii kii bahnō kaa makaan
 that man KAA.F.PL sister.F.OBL.PL KAA.M.SG house(M)
 ‘that man’s sisters’ house’
- e. yah makaan us strii kaa hai
 this house that woman KAA.M.SG is
 ‘this house is that woman’s’

The case particle *KAA* agrees with the possessum in gender, number and m-case (even when the possessum is elided, as in (11e)). The pattern of agreement and its morphological realization is identical to that inflecting of adjectives. Clearly, Hindi instantiates the possessum-agreement construction. The only real difference between the Hindi and the Albanian constructions is that they are the mirror image of each other in their word order. In the next section we investigate to what extent the possessive formatives can be regarded as genitive case markers.

4. Does Albanian or Hindi have a genitive case?

In this section we investigate whether the Albanian and Hindi formatives can truly be called genitive cases, or, more precisely, whether the formal grammars of these languages ever need to appeal to an attribute-value pair [Case: Genitive].

Blake (1994: 1) speaks of case as ‘a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads’. In the canonical possessive construction expressed by genitive case, the possessed noun functions as the head and the possessor noun functions as the dependent. In a language ‘with genitive case’ this dependency requires us to set up the [Case: Genitive] attribute. In order to investigate the notion of genitive case without admitting a whole host of typologically distinct constructions, it is desirable to distinguish canonical case markers such as the various forms of genitive in Latin, from markers which we would not wish to label as case markers, such as the English preposition *of*. We can therefore restrict the notion of case marking to individual words, that is, nouns as opposed to noun phrases. Beard (1995) proposes more rigorous criteria for casehood. He argues that it is only necessary to set up an attribute [Case] in languages in which one and the same case takes several different forms, a situation

which regularly arises in a language such as Latin which has inflectional classes. He claims that even an apparently paradigm example of a case language such as Turkish doesn't have a case system. There's no need to generalize across forms with a [Case] feature in Turkish, as all nouns have the same suffixes. We can generalize this by factoring in the effects of allomorphy due to cumulation of case with other features such as number, definiteness or possessor agreement. If, say, nouns have distinct affixes for one and the same case in singular and plural then again a [Case] feature is needed. Moreover, even with purely agglutinating languages, if the syntax imposes case agreement on modifiers then a [Case] feature will be needed in the syntax to generalize over the set of cases triggering that agreement. Spencer and Otaguro (2005: 121f) have expanded on this logic and propose what they call 'Beard's Criterion': a [Case] attribute is only warranted in the formal grammar of a language if it is needed to generalize over allomorphy due to inflectional classes or cumulation with other features, or in order to generalize over syntactic constructions, principally case agreement on modifiers. The question now reduces to that of whether the Albanian and Hindi 'genitives' satisfy Beard's Criterion. We investigate the relevant morphological and syntactic properties in turn.

The first morphosyntactic property is therefore a purely morphological one: a genitive case is an inflectional affix placed canonically on a possessor noun indicating that noun's grammatical relation to the possessed head noun.

If we adopt this (rather strict) morphological (affixal) criterion then it is clear that the Hindi 'genitive case' particle is not a case at all. All the case particles, including *KAA*, are clitics taking the whole of the NP in their scope, including coordinated NPs. This general standpoint on Indo-Aryan case particles is defended at some length in Spencer (2005). However, since this is still a controversial matter let us set aside those objections and continue to explore the idea that Hindi has a genitive case marker.²

The Albanian marker, somewhat ironically, is often referred to as a 'clitic', though it tends to show the properties of an affix, as we have seen. But this means that it might

² I shall continue to refer to the markers in both languages as 'genitive markers', even though I shall conclude that they are not cases at all.

still make sense to regard the Albanian formative as an inflected form of the noun and hence, perhaps, a kind of case marker. To resolve this issue we need to look into the morphosyntax of the constructions in more detail.

We begin with the Albanian genitive, where we will see significant differences in morphosyntax of the genitive compared with the other (true) cases. The most transparent observation is that the Albanian genitive has completely different morphology from the other cases. First, it is a prefix (or perhaps a tightly-bound proclitic) and not a suffix. Second, it fails to cumulate the properties of definiteness, number and inflectional class like the other cases. At the same time the syntax of the genitive is completely different from that of the other cases. Attributive modifiers, including the genitive construction, agree with the head noun in definiteness, number, gender and case. However, these modifiers have no dedicated form indicating ‘genitive case’. Rather, the modifier agrees in case with the oblique case-marked noun selected by the genitive ‘article’. In terms of agreement the genitive is therefore invisible. Thus, the genitive construction fails to pattern like a case either in the morphology or in the syntax.

We have seen that the Hindi construction differs significantly from a canonical case form. Indeed, it has sometimes been claimed that the genitive-marked NPs are really a species of adjective, with the KAA formative being some kind of derivational morpheme. The relevant arguments are succinctly summarized in Payne (1995: 293f), in which he addresses this question explicitly by comparing the Indic languages (such as Hindi) with the Dardic language Kashmiri. He cites six reasons for not treating the Hindi KAA construction as a kind of adjectival derivation. The crucial point is that in their internal syntax the KAA-marked phrases retain nearly all the properties of NPs. The only adjectival property that they show is their external syntax: attributive modifier agreement with their head noun. Payne argues that the NP-internal syntax rules out an analysis under which KAA serves to convert the noun into an adjective, a conclusion we can concur with. From this, however, he concludes that the KAA marker is a genuine genitive case marker. However, the logic of the argument is flawed, in that the KAA marker can still be in construction with an NP without being a case.

The status of the case particles, and of the inflecting genitive particle in particular, has been the subject of some debate. If the KAA formative is treated on a par with the

other case particles, and if the case particles are case markers, then we can treat KAA as an inflecting genitive case marker, as Payne argues. The problem is that there is very little reason for treating the case particles as cases and very good reasons for not treating them as cases. As mentioned earlier these particles are clitics taking wide scope over coordinated NPs. It is ungrammatical to repeat a case particle within a coordinate structure (in this respect the Hindi case particles behave less like cases than the Albanian genitive article does). Moreover, there is no case agreement of any kind involving the case particles. There is only one sense in which the case particles behave like case markers proper:³ they are often used to mark core grammatical functions of subject and direct object, as indicated in (9) above. Broadly speaking (see Butt and King 2004 for a more nuanced description, including the important role of agentivity), the ergative marker *ne* marks a transitive subject, though only in perfective aspect constructions. The *ko* marker is used canonically for indirect objects, but in addition can be used to mark a direct object depending on a complex set of factors including animacy and specificity/definiteness (see Mohanan 1993, 1994a, b for detailed discussion of these factors). The genitive can mark subjects of certain types of nominalized or infinitival (non-finite) subordinate clause. The other case particles mark locative or other ‘semantic’ functions.

Compare the Hindi case particles with the three inflected m-case forms of nouns illustrated above in Table 4. Inflecting nouns have singular and plural forms and three m-case forms. These forms cumulate number and inflectional class features with m-case. With respect to agreement it is these m-case forms that behave like true cases. Many modifiers are indeclinable, but an inflecting attributive modifier (including a genitive

³ Certain pronouns have special suppletive forms in free variation with the *ko*-marked forms. However, in Spencer (2005) I show that it would be a mistake to use this handful of forms as evidence for a full-blooded case system, in the same way that it would be inappropriate to argue that French prepositions are inflected for the definiteness, number and gender of their complements on the basis of portmanteau forms such as *du* ‘of the.masc.sg’. The same pronouns in Hindi have portmanteau forms arising from fusion of the pronoun with the focus marker *hii*. This means that if the ‘case’-portmanteaus force us to set up a case system for Hindi, by the same logic, the *hii*-portmanteaus would force us to claim that all nominals inflect for ‘focus’.

noun) agrees in number, gender and case (direct/oblique) with its head noun. Only a noun in the direct-case stem form can trigger agreement on the predicate (which means that zero-marked intransitive subjects and zero-marked direct objects can trigger agreement, but not *ne*-marked transitive subjects or *ko*-marked direct objects). The case particles invariably select the oblique-case stem form of the noun. The oblique-case stem form is almost always found in conjunction with such a particle, but occasionally the bare oblique form is found, in which case it bears a locative meaning.

Moreover, there are further morphosyntactic reasons for withholding the label ‘case’ from the postpositional case particles. Sharma (2003) discusses the interaction between the case particles and emphasis or focus particles such as *hii*. For some speakers the focus particle can intervene between noun and the case particle (the ‘%’ sign in (12b) indicates variation in speakers’ judgement of acceptability; particles are separated from their hosts with the sign ‘=’):

- (12) a. in tiin laRkō=ko=hii chot lagi
 these three boys=DAT=FOC hurt got
 ‘(Only) these three boys got hurt’
- b. (%in tiin laRkō=hii=ko chot lagi
 ‘(Only) these three boys got hurt’
- (13) a. mai vahāã saikal=se=hii pahūch saktii hūũ
 I there bicycle=LOC=FOC reach able am
 ‘I can get there only with a bike’
- b. mai vahāã saikal=hii=se pahūch saktii hūũ
 I there bicycle=FOC=LOC reach able am
 ‘I can get there with only a bike’

In (12) we see that the focus particle *hii* can optionally intervene between the case postposition *ko* and the noun phrase, while in (13) we see that difference in linear positioning between *hii* and the postposition *se* can give rise to scope effects. Sharma explicitly likens this behaviour to a similar, though more extensive interaction found in

Japanese. Such behaviour in Japanese is part of a more widespread patterning which severely undermines the treatment of the case particles of Japanese as case markers. Otaguro (2006) provides extensive argumentation to demonstrate that the case particles of Japanese and Hindi fail to behave like genuine cases in nearly all respects.

All these facts (and others detailed in Spencer 2005) show that it is the m-case forms and not the case particles that are the real case forms in Hindi. Although it is a convenient shorthand to refer to a *ne*-marked NP as ‘ergative’, this is strictly speaking an abuse of terminology, on a par with calling an English *of*-phrase a ‘genitive’. In sum, the Hindi forms marked with the inflecting particle *KAA* are not really cases because none of the case particles are case markers.⁴

We have arrived at the conclusion that the Albanian and Hindi ‘genitives’ are neither adjectival derivational formatives nor true genitive case markers. Rather, they are markers which are attached to nouns (Albanian) or NPs (Hindi) and which give that NP (or the phrase headed by the marked noun) the external agreement morphosyntax of an adjective: the possessum-agreement construction. We now look at a ‘pure’ instantiation of that construction.

⁴ An example of the descriptive difficulties we get into when we try to treat the case particles as genuine cases is revealed in Masica’s (1991) survey of the Indo-Aryan languages. Masica (1991: 239) points out that some descriptions regard the oblique form as an ‘Oblique Base’ rather than a case ‘since it has no casal function’, that it, is cannot be used on its own to signal argument structure relationships). He then adds in a footnote that ‘[t]he historically-minded conversely sometimes prefer to treat it as the *only* “case”, very general in function, with specifying postpositions added (1991: 474, fn. 17, emphasis original)’. The jibe at the ‘historically-minded’ is aimed at those who stress the fact that the oblique forms generally reflect earlier inflectional cases in Sanskrit. However, Masica soon afterwards finds himself in a quandary when dealing with the morphosyntax of adjectives (p. 250), for he is obliged to describe that as agreement with Layer I case (sic).

5. The Bantu possessum-agreement construction

The typical possessive construction in Bantu languages is an unadorned version of the possessum-agreement construction, as illustrated from Swahili in (14), from Ashton (1944: 55f, 324) (though other languages of the group pattern in essentially the same way – see Welmers 1973, especially chapter ten for general discussion):

- (14) a. k-iti ch-a Hamisi
 CL7-chair CL7-POSS Hamisi
 ‘Hamisi’s chair’
- b. k-iti ch-a nani
 CL7-chair CL7-POSS who
 ‘whose chair’
- c. v-iti vy-a nani
 CL8-chair CL8-POSS who
 ‘whose chairs’
- d. k-iti ch-a-ngu
 CL7-chair CL7-POSS-1SG
 ‘my chair’
- e. v-iti vy-a-ngu
 CL8-chair CL8-POSS-1SG
 ‘my chairs’

As can be seen, the possessive construction is mediated by an inflecting particle *-a*. This construction goes by a variety of names in Bantu linguistics, including associative *-a*, connecting *-a* and the a-binder, and, in Ashton’s grammar of Swahili, ‘-A of Relationship’. The connecting element takes concord prefixes in agreement with the possessum. The concord markers are given their traditional labels here: Classes 7/8 are respectively the singular and plural classes for (broadly speaking) smallish artefacts.

Before a vowel the /i/ of *ki/vi* undergoes gliding and the glide then triggers palatalization of /k/ to /č/, represented as ‘ch’ in the orthography.

Like the Albanian and Hindi ‘genitive’, the -A of Relationship has exactly the same agreement morphosyntax as attributive modification. Compare the possessive construction examples in (14) with the attributive modification examples in (15):

- (15) a. k-iti ch-ema ki-moja
 CL7-chair CL7-good CL7-one
 ‘one good chair’
- b. v-iti vy-ema vi-tatu
 CL8-chair CL8-good CL8-three
 ‘three good chairs’

Schematically we can represent the Bantu possessive/attributive constructions as in (16):

- (16) Possessed_i AGR_i-a Possessor
 Head_i AGR_i-Attribute
 CL7-chair CL7-a Hamisi ‘Hamisi’s chair’
 CL7-chair CL7-good ‘good chair’

The -A of Relationship has a great variety of uses in addition to simple possessive constructions (Ashton 1944: 145). In particular, it can cooccur with verbs in the infinitive (17a) and adverbs (18b):

- (17) a. chakula ch-a ku-tosha
 food AGR-A INF-suffice
 ‘sufficient food’

- b. w-a kupigwa wakapigwa w-a kukimbia wakakimbia
 AGR-A beat.PASS.INF were.beaten AGR-A get.away.INF got away
 ‘Those who were to be beaten were beaten and those who were to get
 away, got away’
- (18) a. chakula ch-a jana
 food AGR-A yesterday
 ‘yesterday’s food’
- b. vyombo vy-a ji-koni
 things AGR-A LOC-kitchen
 ‘kitchen utensils (lit. things of in-the-kitchen)’

It seems to be taken for granted by most commentators (for instance, Vitale 1981: 108) that the constituent structure of the -A of Relationship is Pd [AGR-a Px] (though I have not seen a formal demonstration of this). This is very clear where the possessor is a pronominal, as in (14d, e), in that the *-a* formative and the possessive pronominal stem fuse to form a single word. The AGR-A formative is always immediately to the left of (the head of) the possessor phrase. On the other hand, the possessed/modified noun can be elided altogether, as in (17b) and it can be separated from the possessor/modifier phrase by other modifiers, as in (19):

- (19) ratli mbili z-a sukari
 pound two AGR-A sugar
 ‘two pounds of sugar’

In other Bantu languages the constituency may be more obvious than in Swahili. In Xhosa, for instance, the class agreement prefix coalesces with a following vowel within a word (see du Plessis and Visser 1992: 328f):

- (20) ízi-njá z-a-índoda ⇒ zéndoda
 CL8-dog CL8-A-man ‘the man’s dog’

This type of morphophonemic alternation does not occur between word boundaries, so that we can be confident that the constituent structure is as shown in (20).

The -A of Relationship construction is shown schematically in (21):

(21) Swahili ‘-A of Relationship’

Possession

daughter_i [AGR_i-A man]

Pd_i [AGR_i-A Px]

‘the daughter of the man’

Swahili attributive modification

daughter_i AGR_i-beautiful

N_i AGR_i-ADJ

‘the beautiful daughter’

This can be regarded as the canonical form of the possessum-agreement construction.

Bantu languages lack case. They exhibit the possessum-agreement construction in its ‘pure’ form so to speak. The Albanian and Hindi ‘genitive’ constructions share all their important properties with the Bantu -A of Relationship possessum-agreement construction, including constituent structure. Therefore, either Albanian and Hindi lack a true genitive or Bantu languages have an (extremely aberrant, not to say unique) genitive case.

6. Conclusions

Although the Albanian case system has figured rather sparsely in theoretical debate, systems such as that of Hindi have been widely discussed in the literature on case. This paper has shown that nearly all of that debate is misguided, since neither language has a genitive case. However, I do not wish to end on a negative note. Languages such as Albanian, Hindi and Swahili illustrate that there is a close relationship between the functions of possession and attributive modification. In the possessum-agreement construction what is actually happening is that a morphosyntactic construction that

canonically is used for attributive modification has been seconded to express possession, a relationship that is typically expressed in morphology by case or by possessor agreement. At the same time many languages use genitive case marking or possessor agreement for expressing attributive modification. For instance, it is common for languages to express modification of a noun by a noun by using the genitive form of the attributively used noun, as in English *children's party* or *men's room*. Similarly, many languages use possessor agreement as a way of expressing N N modification, giving constructions with the form 'bed its-room' for 'bedroom' (see the examples of Turkish *izafet* in Spencer 1991, for instance). Another strategy for modifying a noun by a noun is to transpose the modifying noun into a relative adjective without adding a semantic predicate. This is what happens with an expression such as *prepositional phrase* (and why this means the same as *preposition phrase*). Finally, many languages express possession by turning the possessor noun/pronoun into an adjective. Indo-European languages do this routinely with pronominal possessors, but many languages also do it with lexical nouns so that the meaning 'the president's palace/the palace of the president' is expressed using a possessive adjectival form of the noun, as in *the presidential palace*. (See Corbett 1995, for why this isn't a genitive in Slavic).

These issues have been discussed in no little detail in a number of papers by Koptjevskaja-Tamm in recent years (e.g. Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1995, 2001, 2002, 2003a, b, 2004.), including the relationship between possessor constructions and attributive modification. Her ground-breaking work has so far received insufficient attention from grammarians and typologists, in part, perhaps, because the notion of 'attributive modification' has received rather little serious attention. In work currently in progress (Nikolaeva and Spencer 2007) we take up some of the themes raised by Koptjevskaja-Tamm, though with slightly different assumptions.

A further question that is the focus of work in progress is the relationship generally between agreement morphosyntax and other types of encoding device for possessive constructions. It is commonly recognized that languages can mark possessive relations either on the dependent or the head. In dependent-marking we have the traditional genitive case construction. The usual form of head marking in possessive constructions is found when the possessed noun (possessum) agrees in (pro)nominal features with the

possessor, hence ‘possessor agreement’. In the Albanian-Hindi-Swahili construction we have agreement morphosyntax but here it is the possessor phrase that bears agreement morphology, not the possessum, and the possessum, not the possessor, triggers that agreement. For this reason I have referred to such constructions as ‘possessum agreement’ constructions. The existence of the possessum-agreement construction demonstrates that agreement can be deployed in ways other than just the familiar head-marking construction. In fact, when we look at the various encoding strategies found for possessive constructions it appears that agreement is in principle of all other modes of marking, whether head marking, dependent marking or neither (as in the case of the *ezafe* of Iranian languages). This idea will be the subject of a subsequent paper.

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