

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

THE GENITIVE CONSTRUCTION OF POSSESSION
IN AMHARIC

BY

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

THE GENITIVE CONSTRUCTION OF POSSESSION IN AMHARIC

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other Collage or University for academic credit.

(Signed) I/- G~
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the morphosyntactic markers of the genitive construction in Amharic. In Amharic, genitive markers are bound morphemes which are either prefixed or suffixed to the noun they modify. The genitive markers show some morphological and inflectional characteristics different from languages such as English and Greek. Amharic's uniqueness makes it difficult to directly apply the methods proposed for these languages to the analysis of noun phrases that form the Amharic genitive. In this paper I present the construction of genitives in Amharic by taking examples of noun phrases that are frequently used in written and oral communication.

TO:

My mother Yeshimebet Kassa who passed away
while I was working on this linguistic project
And

My wife Senait Shiferaw
and my daughter Bethlehem Girma

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	accusative
OEF	definite
OEM	demonstrative
F	feminine
M	masculine
N	noun
NEG	negative
NP	noun phrase
PART	participle
PASS	passive
PAST	past tense
PL	plural
PN	pronoun
poss	possession
PP	prepositional phrase
SG	singular

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Each language has its own phonology (sound system), morphology (the structure of words), syntax (the combination of words into sentences), and semantics (the way in which sounds and meanings are related). So it is very important to give an introduction of Amharic from a linguistic point of view.

Background

Language

h" ' lC~
emetine
amharic

Amharic is a language of Ethiopia belonging to the South Ethiopic group of South Semitic languages, which, in turn, belong to the Semitic subfamily of the Afro-Asiatic-family of languages (Grimes, 2000)

Amharic, also called Abyssinian, *Amaripa* or *Kucamba*, is spoken by more than 18 million people as a first language and is used as a lingua franca throughout much of central highland Ethiopia. Amharic is also the language of more than 3 million Ethiopians who have immigrated to other lands. It is the second most commonly spoken Semitic language in the world, after Arabic

Its status as national language is principally due to the long dominance of the Ethiopian monarchy by Amhara (the inhabitants of the northern highlands of Ethiopia). The name of the language was thus derived from Amhara. Amharic is related to Geez, which is still the classical and ecclesiastical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Though manuscripts in Amharic are known from the 14th century, the language has only recently been used as a general medium for literature, journalism, and education. Amharic employs a modification of the Ethiopic script (Lambdin, 1978). Amharic has been considerably influenced in its grammar and vocabulary by the nearby Cushitic tongues. (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, 2006, s.v. "Amhara")

Amharic is written in a script called *fidel* or *abugida*, a consonant-based syllabary, more properly an *alphasyllabary*. It was adapted from Geez. Originally, the script contained only symbols for consonants with no indication of vowels which were added in the 3rd century A.D (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, 2006, s.v. "Ethiopian Semitic Languages")

Amharic is used in government, public media, and national commerce, education to eighth grade in many areas and a wide variety of literature (fiction, poetry, plays, and magazines). It is also widely used in the evangelical churches of Ethiopia.

Sound and Orthography

Consonant and vowel phonemes

There is no agreed-on way of transliterating Amharic into Roman characters.

The Amharic examples in the sections below use one system that is common, though not universal, among linguists specializing in Ethiopian Semitic languages. The Amharic ejectives correspond to the Proto-Semitic "emphatic

consonants", usually transcribed with a dot below the letter, (Britannica concise Encyclopedia, 2006, s.v. "proto-Semitic, "). The consonant and vowel charts give these symbols in parentheses where they differ from the standard IPA symbols. 33 phonemes (altogether with over-differentiation), contained in this orthography are listed below. The script has 33 basic characters, each of which has seven forms depending on which vowel is added to the consonant. It is written horizontally from left to right. Amharic has 7 vowels.

A distinguishing feature of consonants in Amharic is the presence of ejective sounds *lp'*, *1t'1*, *lk'*, *lc'*, and *ls'*.

The syllable patterns are **eV**, **eVe**, **V**, and **eVee**

Amharic orthography

Vowels

Phonemes	Graphemes
e	<i>11.</i>
u	<i>h-</i>
o	<i>h</i>
	<i>h..</i>
i	X
o	
a	h

Vowel Chart

	Front		Central		Back	
	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
Close	i		ɪ			u
Close -Mid	e		ə			
Open- Mid						o
Open			ɒ			

Consonants

Phonemes Graphemes

/h/	h
/b/	(b)
/s/	f
/h/	u
/h/	ll
/m/	oD
/n/	~
/r/	G
/f/	s.
/g/	1
/d/	Y-
/j/	"r.
/z/	H
/ʒ/	1f

<i>IV</i>	”
<i>It'l</i>	rn
<i>Is'l</i>	R
<i>lpl</i>	T
<i>lp'l</i>	AD
<i>lw'l</i>	CD
<i>ISl</i>	if

Amharic consonant phoneme chart

Manners of Articulation		Place of articulation							
		Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Post alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal	
	Plosives	Voiceless	p		t		c	k	ʔ
		Voiced	b		d		ɟ	g	
Central Fricatives	Flat	Voiceless		f					h
		Voiced		v					
	Grooved	Voiceless			s	ʃ			
		Voiced			z	ʒ			
Nasals		Voiced	m		n		ɲ		
Trills		Voiced			r				
Lateral Approximants		Voiced			l				
Central Approximants			w				j		
Ejectives			pʰ		r sʰ		cʰ ɟʰ	kʰ	

P and v are borrowed

Word Order

The typical word order of Amharic is Subject-Object-Verb (SOV); prepositions, genitives, articles, and relatives precede noun heads. Question words appear either at the start of the sentence or at the end of the sentence. Case affixes and verb suffixes show person, number, and gender of subject.

Purpose of the Paper

Since Amharic is a language of wider communication and a national language of Ethiopia, it has many functions. All Bible translator training is conducted in Amharic, because the majority of the Bible translators cannot understand

English. The Amharic Bible is used as a reference by most of the Bible translators. Thus translators must be able to use the Amharic Bible properly.

To exploit the Amharic Bible for the purpose of translation requires the translators to know the morphosyntax of Amharic. Translators must know how a genitive construction in Amharic is marked to give the proper interpretation in their vernacular translation.

For example in Mark 1:4

.1.	βάπτισμα	!!E"tUVO [0,(;
	<i>baptisma</i>	<i>metanoias</i>
	baptism.ACC.NEU.S G	repentance. =oss .SG

'Baptism of repentance'

In Amharic this genitive construction is marked as;

(2)	<i>ye-niseha</i>	<i>t'imk'et</i>
	=oss-repentance	baptism
	'Baptism of repentance'	

As it is seen in the above example ye-is a genitive marker.

Presentation of the Problem

How are genitive constructions marked in Amharic? Is there a particular particle or a bound morpheme that marks the genitive construction in Amharic? By applying our linguistic understanding, is it easy to identify one form of construction from those that look like genitive markers?

"Languages typically express many semantic relationships with some formal constructions used to express ownership. We call such formal construction possessive constructions, even though the semantic relation is not always one of possession." (Payne, 1997, 104).

For example, the noun phrase "his doctor "doesn't refer to a doctor that he "possesses" in the same way that his car refers to the car he possesses.

Genitive case can be described as saying something about another noun within the same context. The description, however, can be done from different perspectives. (Payne, 1997)

The genitive of possession in this paper is the means by which the ownership relation is marked.

Many languages have their own morphological processes by which stems can be formally altered to adjust its meaning to fit its syntactic and communicational context. Amharic usually employs bound morphemes.

Data Collection Method

The data for this linguistic project was collected from different sources, daily conversation, Amharic Bible, Amharic student texts, Amharic newspapers and

my own understanding of the language as a native speaker in both oral and written materials.

CHAPTER 2

YE- AS A GENITIVE MARKER

Ye- has many different functions when suffixed and prefixed to noun and verbs. For example, it may work as a nominalizer. This paper focuses on the genitive function of ye-. Ye- is mainly used in the construction of a genitive case in Amharic. It is prefixed to a noun or a pronoun which is the possessor.

Nominal Possession

According to Trask possession is defined as 'a general name for any relation between two noun phrases by which the second in some sense 'belongs to' the first.' Possession is expressed in two main ways: by a possessive construction, in which the two noun phrases are involved and by a predication of possession. In this paper we will see possession expressed by a possessive construction (Trask, 1993, 212).

Material Possession

In this paper, items that can be sold, bought or transferred, such as a house, a cow, a car, a farm, etc are said to be material possessions

Ye- prefixed on a Noun

ye- + NP1 + NP2-+Possessor + Possessum
(3) *ye-yohannis bet ta-dese*

=oss-John house PAss-be.renew

'John's house' was renewed.

(4)

ye-daniel mes'ehaf tikur new

=css-Danle! book black is

'Daniel's book is black.'

As we can see in examples (3) and (4) *ye-* is prefixed on the possessors, John and Daniel, to show that the house and book are owned by them, respectively.

The plural marker for all nouns is *-oc* or *-woc*. There is no change in forms when the possessum is plural.

(5)

ye-yohannis bet-oc

=oss-John house-PL

'John's houses'

(6)

ye-yohannis wuSa-woc

=oss-John dog-PL

'John's dogs'

(7)

**yohannis bet tadese*

John house be.r-Asr.renew

Example (7) doesn't make sense to any Amharic speaker because it is grammatically wrong.

When the same or different materials are possessed between different persons or entities, *ye-* is prefixed to each of them. Look at examples; (8), (9) and (10) each coordinative possessor is prefixed by *ye-*.

(8)

ye-yohannis ye-dniel-na ye-sara mekina

=oss-John =oss-Daniel-and =oss-Sara car

John's, Daniel's and Sara's car.'

- (9) *ye-yohannis mekina* *ye-daniel* *feres-na* *ye-sara*
ahiya
 =oss-John car poss-Daniel horse-and =oss-sara
 donkey

John's car, Daniel's horse and Sara's donkey.'

- (10) *ye-mengist-na* *ye-dirijit* *mekina-woc*
 Poss-government-and =oss-orqanization car-PL

'Government's and organization's cars.'

Ye-prefixed to a pronoun marking ownership

The pronoun which functions as a noun phrase is prefixed by *ye-* to denote possession. Although the pronoun inflects with person and number, *ye-* remains the same.

ye-+PN1 + NP2+possessor + possessum
 Table: 1 personal pronoun

Personal Pronoun	Gender and Number		
	Singular		Plural
	Feminine	Masculine	
1	<i>ine</i> I	<i>ine</i> I	<i>ipa</i> we
2	<i>anci</i> you	<i>ante</i> you	<i>Inante</i> you
3	<i>iswa</i> she	<i>isu</i> he/it	<i>inesu</i> they

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mes'ehaf
t'ik'ur new

POSS-3SG.M book black is

'His book is black.'

t'ikur new

POSS-3SG.F book black is

'Her book is black.'

mes'ehaf t'ikur
new

black is

(17) *ye-iswa**mes'ehaf*(18) *ye-inesu* book

POSS-3PL

Their book is black.'

All of Amharic personal pronouns have vowels in initial position. When *ye-is* prefixed to a pronoun, either the contracted or the non-contracted form can be used. The contracted form omits a vowel based on a phonological rule

(morphophonemic rule):

 $[ye-] + [+back] \rightarrow [ya-]$ $[ye-] + [-back] \rightarrow [ye-]$

For example:

(19) *ye- + ante* ~ *yante*

POSS- + 2SG.M-+ yours

(20) *ye- + ine* -+ *yene*

POSS- + 1sG -+ mine

Since the two alternatives, the contracted and non-contracted forms, are

acceptable, I have used the non-contracted form in this paper.

Other Types of Possession

This section discusses other types of possession including kinship, body part relations, and abstract possession.

Ye- Used to Encode Kinship Relations

This construction focuses on family relationship. According to cultural conventions of the Amharic-speaking people, husband-wife and parent-children relations can be categorized with genitive of possession. Although kinship relations have different interpretations from possessing materials, I have used =oss to indicate kinship relations.

In Amharic *ye*-is prefixed to the noun or pronoun it marks to show marriage or any other kinship relation (father, sister, brother, etc) with another noun in a noun phrase.

(21) <i>ye-yohannis /ij</i>	<i>wede</i>	<i>nairobi</i>	<i>hed-e</i>
=oss-John son	to	Nairobi	went-3SG.M
'John's son went to Nairobi.'			

This construction refers to legal son (such as adopted child) or born physically from the father, in this case *Yohannis*.

(22) <i>ye-yohannis mist ke-addis</i>	<i>ababa</i>	<i>met'-ae</i>
=oss-John wife pp-Addis	Ababa	came-3SG.M
'John's wife came from Addis Ababa.'		

According to (22) the wife belongs only to *Yohannis*. The husband may have another wife or wives but there is no case where a wife has more than one husband.

(23) <i>Yohannis</i>	<i>won</i>	<i>new</i>
John	<i>dim</i>	i
<i>ye-ipa</i>	brother	s
=OSS-t PL		

'John is our brother.'

As we can see in examples (22), (23) and (24) the possessor must be followed by the possessum.

(24) *yohannis* *ye-ine* *agot new*

John =oss-tsc uncle is

'John is my uncle.'

Abstract Possession

Abstract concepts such as knowledge, spirit, sickness, god, love, soul, etc can be possessed.

(25) *ye-ine* *iwk'et*

=oss-t SG knowledge

'My knowledge'

(26) *ye-israel* *amlak*

'poss-Israel's God'

'Israel's God'

Possession of Body Parts

Amharic uses *ye-* as a possessive marker for both non-human and human body parts.

Non-human

(27) *ye-t'erep'eza-w* *igir* *ac'ir new*

=oss-tabre-oes leg short is

'The table's leg is short.'

In example (27) the leg is a part of the table.

(28) *ye-duba* *fire*

=oss-pumpkin fruit
'Pumpkin's fruit' (Text Folk Tale (Amharic))

Human

(29) *ye-aster s'egur rejim new*

=oss-aster hair-3sG.F long is

'Aster's hair is long.'

(30) *ye-ne hod tamoal*

=oss-tso stomach is sick

'My stomach is sick

ye- With a Noun Phrase Embedded Under Another Noun Phrase

When a recursively embedded noun phrase occurs in a sentence ye-is prefixed only once on the first noun in the possessor-possessum order.

(31) *ye-daniel wen dim mist mekina adis new*

=oss-oaniet brother wife car new is

'Daniel's brother's wife's car is new.'

(32) *ye-yohannis mist abat ihit mekina keyi new*

=oss-john wife father sister car red is

'John's wife's father's sister's car is red.'

As we have seen in examples (31) and (32) above there is only one possible possessive marker on the first noun which is the main reference for the other nouns in the sentence. In example (31) the possessor of the possessed noun (car) is the noun immediately in front of the possessed item, 'wife' which precedes the 'car' (the possessum). The purpose of such sentences is to make clear to whom the possessed item belongs in a situation where the possessor is not known.

Ye-prefixes Used for other Functions

Since *ye-* has many functions, all *ye-* prefixes do not mark possession. It is important to check the type of the phrases and the order of the nouns related to the *ye-* prefix. I have used the gloss, POSS, TO indicate the genitive relationship such as location (33) and (34). Consider the following examples.

Ye- As a Locative Marker

ye- can be prefixed on the noun to locate the place.

(33) *ye-autobus mak'omia*

=oss-bus stop

'Bus station'

(34) *ye-sira bota*

=oss-work place

'The place of work.'

Ye- As Temporal Marking

Ye- can be prefixed to a noun to indicate time (day, season or hour).

(35) *ye-lidet ken*

=oss-blrth day

'Day of birth/birth day'

(36) *ye-azmera wek'it*

=oss-harvest season

'Season of harvest'

(37) *ye-mehita* *se2at*

pass-sleeping hour

'Time of sleeping'

Ye-In Causative Construction

ye- can be prefixed to a noun to confirm the cause of the event.

(38) *ye-gorf* *adega*

pass-flood calamity

'flood's calamity'

Ye- As Cause/Agent? Producer of the Action

(39) *ye-kebero* *dims'*

pass-drum sound

'Drum's sound'

In this example the drum is the source of the sound.

CHAPTER 3

PRONOMINAL POSSESSIVES

Pronominal suffixes mark possession by suffixing the suitable possessive personal pronoun morpheme on the noun possessed. The pronominal suffix inflects with the person addressed. In Amharic the case forms are morphologically realized in the pronominal system which has separate paradigms for nominative, accusative and genitive cases.

Gender is distinguished in Amharic in second and third person.

NP2 + pronominal suffix-s-possessum

Table 2: Possessive Pronoun suffixes

Personal Pronoun	Gender and Number		
	Singular		Plural
	feminine	Masculine	
1	-e my	-e my	- <i>acin</i> our
2	- <i>is</i> your	- <i>ih</i> your	- <i>acihu</i> your
3	- <i>wa</i> her - <i>wan</i>	- <i>u</i> his/its -un	- <i>acew</i> their - <i>acewun</i>

Pronominal Suffixes

Possessive Markers in First Person Singular and Plural

(40) *mes'ehaf-e* *tek'doal*
 book-1 SO.POSS was.torn
 'My book was torn'

(41) *mes'ehaf-acin* *tek'doal*
 book-1 PL.POSS was.torn
 'Our book was torn.'

Possessive Markers in Second Person, Gender and Number

(42) *lam- is* *met'-ac*
 came-F
 COW-
 2SG.F.POSS
 'Your cow came.'

(43) *lam-ih* *met'-ac*
 came-F
 COW-2SG.M
 'Your cow came.'

(44) *lam-acihu* *met'-ac*
 came-F
 COW-2PL
 'Your cow came.'

Possessive Markers in Third Person, Gender and Number

If the possessed noun ends in a consonant, the third person masculine singular possessive marker suffix is *-u*. When the possessed noun ends in a

vowel, the suffix will be -w. In the case of accusative, the pronominal

possessive marker is *-wan* or *-un* depending on the consonant or vowel to which it is suffixed

(45) *mekina-wa met'-a*

car-
3SG.F came-
 M

'Her car came.'

(46) *lam-wan [ei'e-c*

cow-3sG. F .ACC sold-3sG.F

'She sold her cow.'

(47) *bet-u si-me/es*

house-3sG.M pp-back

'Back to his home,' (Text 1:1)

(48) *bet-un Set'-e*

house-3sG.M.ACC sold-3sG.M

'He sold his house'

(49) *mekina-w tadese*

car-3SG.M was.renewed

'His car was renewed.'

(50) *bet-acew tadese*

house-3PL was. renewed

Their house was renewed.'

Homophony between the Pronominal and Definite Article Markers

Third person pronominal suffixes are homophonous with definite article markers.

As we can see in Table 3, the Amharic definite article seems to be complicated as there is no stem representing it. However, suffixes of various kinds attach themselves to nouns depending on whether the noun to which it is suffixed ends in a consonant or a vowel, is singular or plural, and is masculine or feminine.

Table 3: Amharic definite articles

Third person in Gender and number	Nominative		accusative
	consonants	vowels	
Male singular	-u	-w	-un, -n
Female singular	-wa	-wa	-un
Male plural	-u	-u	-un
Female plural	-u	-u	-un

For example if the noun to which it is suffixed is masculine singular and ends in a consonant, the marker of the definiteness is *-u*.

If the masculine singular ends in a vowel, the definite suffix is *-w*. In examples

(51), (52) and (53) we can observe the homophony between pronominal suffixes and definite articles.

(51)	<i>mekina-w</i>	<i>met'-a</i>	/	<i>mekina-w</i>	<i>met'-a</i>
	car-DEF	came-M	/	car-3SG.M.POSS	came-M
	'The car came'		/	'His car came'	
(52)	<i>feres-u</i>	<i>me't-a</i>	/	<i>feres-u</i>	<i>met'-a</i>
	horse-DEF	came-M	/	horse-3sG. M. =oss,	came-M
	'The horse came.'		/	'His horse came'	

(53) <i>lam-wa</i>	/	<i>lam-wa</i>	<i>met-ac</i>
COW-OEF.F	/	cow-3SG. F.	came-F
'The cow'	/	=OSS	
		'Her cow came'	

The interpretation of the phrases depends on the context. Without the context they have two possible interpretations. For example (54) has only one possible interpretation whereas (55) has two different possible interpretations.

(54) <i>ye-igziabiher-n</i>	<i>bet</i>	<i>atabelashu</i>
=oss-Ood-oer	house	don't.spoil
'Do not spoil the house of God.'		

(55) <i>yohannis</i>	<i>mekina-un</i>	<i>geza</i>
John	car-soss.Sse.u	bought
'John bought his car.'		

Sentence (55) has another interpretation when *-un* marks definite article. That is 'John bought the car.'

As we have seen in example (55), it is important to give attention when a pronoun or definite article is suffixed to a possessum.

(56) <i>yohannis</i>	<i>mekinaw-un</i>	<i>geza</i>
John	car-3SG.M	bought
'John bought his car.'		

We have seen how the possessum is suffixed by pronominal suffixes to mark the possessive construction.

The following chapter deals with alternative construction and the grammatical purpose of each form.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONSTRUCTIONAL ALTERNATION

According to Trask, (1993, 58), Amharic has two different constructions for the same grammatical purpose. Example (57) shows the two alternative constructions.

(1)	<i>bet-e</i>	/	<i>ye-ine</i>	<i>bet</i>
	house-tso.soss	/	Poss-1SG	bet
	'My house'	/	'My house'	

As we can see in example (57), one of the alternatives is to suffix a possessive marker on the possessum (a pronominal suffix, in this case) ; the other option is to prefix *ye-* on the possessor. The grammatical purpose remains the same. However, they do not have an identical function. From my emic understanding of the language (as a native speaker), it seems to me that the two forms have their own purpose beyond the default meaning.

Possession Markers on the Possessor and Possessum

Possession markers can indicate the purpose intended by a communicator. In a sentence, focus can be marked by possessive markers. Before dealing with the purpose of the possessor and the possessum markers, let us see focus from a linguistic point of view.

Focus is defined as 'the kind of emphasis, that the speaker marks out a part of a message block as that which he wishes to be interpreted as informative' (Halliday1967, 204).

In Amharic focus is often marked with bound morphemes and word order change. There are three types of focus, based on their structure, which can be used in different communicative situations. They are: predicate-focus structure, argument focus structure and sentence focus structure. (Lambrecht, 1994)

Of these focus structures in Amharic, argument and sentence focus structures are mainly used in written communication.

Consider the three ways used to mark possession with noun phrases from the Amharic Bible and newspapers.

Ye- + np1 + np2 ~Possessor + Possessum

Possession is marked by the juxtaposition of two noun phrases, the first being the possessor and the second being the possessum. When ye- is prefixed on the first noun neither the possessor nor the possessum is emphasized. In the examples below the purpose of such noun phrases is simply to relate a possessor and a possessum, without necessarily focusing on either of them.

(58) *ye-igziabiher* *mengist*
 =oss-Goo kingdom
 'God's kingdom' (In.3:5)

In example (58) we are informed that the kingdom belongs to God, which is different from secular government of this world.

(59) *ye-siga* *minot*

=oss-flesh lust

'Flesh's lust' (the lust of the flesh)

(Galatians 5: 17;"For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.")(NRSV)

As we can understand from the context 'flesh' is in contrast with the 'spirit'.

Ye- is prefixed for the purpose of indicating the desire of the flesh as opposed to the desire of the spirit. In this sentence 'lust' or 'desire' belongs to flesh.

Neither the possessor nor the possessum is focused.

(60) *ye-abat-oc* *bihil*

=oss-father-rt, idiom

'Fathers' idiom' (taken from an Amharic newspaper)

The purpose of sentence (60) is to mention one of the idiomatic statements of the forefathers. In Amharic most of the idiomatic expressions belong to the forefathers.

(61) *ye-set-oc* *mahiber*

=oss-woman-rt. association

'Women's association' (taken from Amharic news paper)

In example (61) the women's association is distinguished from other associations, such as youth, farmers', teachers' or workers' association.

Pronominal Suffix on a Noun to Mark Possessum

NP2 + pronominal suffix-s-possessum

When we look at the possessum suffix in example (62) the purpose of this genitive construction is to indicate the emphasis. 'Flesh' is focused. It is understood by the participants that Jesus is talking about his body, He is not

introducing a new possessor. Unless the grammatical purpose is changed, sentence (62) will not be substituted by the pronominal possessor marker, *ye-ine siga*.

(62) *sigay-e* *iwunetene mebil new*

flesh-1 SG. real food is

=oss

'My flesh is real food.'

(John 6:55; "For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink ... ") (NIV)

(63) *mahiber-acew* *tet'enakere*

association-3PL. =oss was.strengthened

Their association was strengthened' (taken from an Amharic newspaper)

In example (63) the focus is on the 'association' which was strengthened. The possessum is marked purposely whereas there was an option to say women's association.

Example (64) (Bible in Amharic Revised, 2005) shows the *ye*-prefix on a pronoun whereas example (65) (Bible in Amharic, 1962) shows a noun possessum marked by pronominal suffix.

(64) *ye-isun* *misiklrinet*

POSS-3SG.M testimony

'His testimony'

(65) *misikirinet-un*

testimony-3sG. M

.ACC

'His testimony'

Both of these phrases are stated twice in (John; 3:32-33; " ... but no-one accepts his testimony." (Verse 33) "The man who has accepted it (his testimony) has certified that God is truthful" (NIV).

These two versions focus differently. The new Amharic translation focuses on the possessor, in this case 'his' testimony, according to this context, John.

The older translation focuses on the possessum, in this case, the testimony.

To my understanding the emphasis should be on the testimony 'said by John about Jesus or the basic Christian foundation'. I stick to the older translation.

In this verse the older translation is more accurate than the new one. I would like to say that translators need to understand the pragmatics of the forms as they translate the text.

In a similar way, if we look at Genesis 37:31-33, we can observe that the two versions of the Amharic Bible have different interpretations.

(66) <i>ye-yosefin</i>	<i>fibs</i>	<i>be-dem</i>	<i>nekeru</i>
=oss-Joseph	robe r=-blood		they.dipped

'They dipped Joseph's robe in blood'

In verse 31, the Amharic translations have the same construction. Neither of the two noun phrases, 'Joseph' or 'robe' is focused. Example (66) simply gives new information without focusing on either the possessor or the possessum. If focus is wanted, pronominal possessive marker should be applied.

(67) <i>llbs-un</i>	<i>be-dem</i>	<i>nekeru</i>
robe-ross.aso.v	=r-blood	dipped

'Thy dipped his robe in blood.'(The older Amharic version in verse 33)

Although they are the same verse the above examples have different interpretations. In (66) no focus is marked whereas in (67) the possessum is focused. This shows that the interpretation is different because of the use of different possessive markers.

Ye- Prefixed on a Possessor Pronoun

ye- + PN1 + NP2-+possessor-possessum

(68) *ye-ante* *age/gay*

POSS-2SG.M servant

'Your servant" (Gen, 39:19)

Ye- is prefixed on the possessor *ante*, to mark that the focus is on the possessor. In this context the wife's complaint is against the master, but not against the 'servant'. The 'wife's' utterance implies that the master is responsible for the matter because he is the one who brought the servant. So 'master', which is encoded with *ante* is focused.

(69) *ye-isu* *mengist*

POSS-3SG.M

kingdom

'His kingdom'

(Luke 11: 18; "If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand?"(NIV))

This construction shows that the focus here is on 'Satan' the possessor of the kingdom. If we observe the text, Satan is mentioned and the focus is indicated by prefixing *ye-* on the pronoun *isu*.

Comparison between the Possession Markers

The two possession markers are: *ye-* prefixed on a pronoun to encode the possessor, and the pronominal suffixes used to encode the possessum.

I have randomly selected nine chapters from the Amharic Bible to analyze how often the two forms occur within the passages to indicate the purpose intended.

Table 4 the number of possessive markers in each of the 9 chapters in the Amharic Bible.

Form of the possessive marker	Frequency									co	o o)
											o o)
											*... co
											o)
										r-	CLC
Passage from the bible	C#0 C o	co C o	...t C o	L0 C o	 C o	CO C o	..C C o	C0 C o	..- C o		
Number of verses	36	59	31	27	26	32	33	55	14		
Possessions marked with <i>ye-</i> on a noun	14	16	2	5	3	9	17	18	11	95	33.57%
Possessions marked on possessor (pronoun)	3	3	2	5	7	0	1	9	0	30	10.6%
Possessions marked on possessum	14	22	18	22	10	7	4	52	9	158	55.83%
Total number of possession markers	31	41	22	32	20	16	22	79	20	283	100%

Each of these nine chapters is written on different subjects so that the frequencies of the possessive markers are varied. The number of verses does not determine the frequencies. When we consider John 8 and Genesis 31, we can say that the frequencies of each possession marker cannot be affected relatively by the number of verses. The decisive key for the distribution of the frequencies is the context in which the passages are written. The highest

percent of possession marked (55.83%) is possessum- focused. Within these nine chapters possessors are marked 10.6%, in which relatively the highest frequency is in John 17. Why does this happen? Because it is the type of utterance that Jesus said, in his prayer focused on his Father and himself. It looks like conversational or dialogue discourse.

For example, in John 17 the subject is Jesus' prayer. 7 possessor and 10 possessums are focused. Consider the following examples.

Possessor focused

(70) *ye-ante*

POSS-2SG.M

'Yours'

This phrase is repeated 5 times; they all focus on God, according to the context.

(71) *ye-ine*

=OSS-tso

'Mine'

This phrase is repeated 2 times, focusing on Jesus himself.

Possessum focused

(72)	<i>tij-h,</i>	<i>kat-h,</i>	<i>sim-h,</i>
	Son-2SG.M.POSS,	word-2sG.M.POSS	name-2SG.M.POSS
	'Your son',	'Your word',	'Your name',
	<i>dest-e</i>	<i>ibr-e</i>	
	joy-1 SG.POSS	g lory-1 SG. POSS	
	'My joy',	'My glory'	

The first 3 noun phases are repeated 2-3 times.

<i>geta-w</i>	<i>k'a/-ac-un</i>	<i>te-het'iet-ec-u</i>
tord-ss0. =oss	woro-xc-zru. =oss pp-sin-Acc-2pL. =oss	

'His lord',	'Your words',	'In your sins'
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As we have seen in this chapter the two constructions have different purposes. The data extracted from the text material evidenced our suggestion that each of the possessor and possessum markers have their own purpose. We should not simply say they have the same grammatical purpose

CHAPTER 5

CONSTRUCT STATE OF GENITIVE MARKING

'In certain languages, notably Semitic languages, an overtly inflected form which is assumed by a noun to indicate that it is possessed or modified by another noun or NP which itself may exhibit no overt inflection'(Trask, 1993, 59)
This construct form is used in official writings such as government

newspapers, in Amharic Bible translations, and in oral communications, as well. However is not productive in all cases like other genitive markers such as ye-prefix or pronominal suffixes. This might be because this construction is adopted from Ge'ez. Lambdin defines the Ge'ez construct state as:

'A modifying relationship between two nouns is indicated by adding -e to the first noun in the sequence Noun-+Noun-. It is the second noun that modifies, limits, or qualifies the first. Noun- is said to be in contrast with Noun-, or in the construct state. Example; *qa/e nebiy* 'the voice of the prophet' (Lambdin, 1978, 23)

The following noun phrases are used frequently in communication.

Construct + Absolute (Possessed Noun + Possessor Noun)

The construct is marked by the bound morpheme -e the construct form is thus: NP+-e

The possessed Noun is suffixed by -e to mark the construct form. '*bete*' is a construct where as '*mengist*' and '*kiristian*' are absolute. It is necessary to understand that this construction is completely different from pronominal construction although suffixed to a possessum. In this construct form -e is never

suffixed to a pronoun. In the following examples compare the ye-alternate with the construct state construction.

As we can see below, the construction of the construct state is also different from the construction of the *ye-* alternative. However they have the same relation between the noun phrases. Consider the following.

(78) <i>bet-e</i>	<i>mengist</i>	/	<i>ye-mengist</i>	<i>bet</i>
	house-ross		Poss-gogernment	house
	'House of government'	/	'Government's house'	

The literal interpretation of *bete mengist* is 'palace' whereas *yemengist bet* is a house that belongs to the government, but does not belong to public or private parties.

(79) <i>bet-e</i>	<i>kiristien</i>	/	<i>ye-kiristien</i>	<i>bet</i>
	Hcuse-ross Christian	/	=oss-christian	house
	'house of Christians	/	'Christian's house'	

bete kiristien is literally mean 'church' but *yekiristian bet* is a house which belongs to a Christian.

When a part belongs to the whole in this construct state (80), it indicates one particular part of the town. But, in the *ye-* construction 'town' division' means that the mentioned place belongs to the town/city council.

(80) <i>kifl-e</i>	<i>ketema</i>	/	<i>ye-ketema</i>	<i>kitil</i>
	division-r-oss town	/	=oss-town	division
	'Division of town'	/	'Town's division'	

When the type or the quality is wanted to be mentioned

(81
)

36

<i>mengist-e</i>	<i>semay</i>	/	<i>ye-semay mengist</i>
kingdom-ross	heaven	/	=oss-heaven kingdom
'Kingdom of heaven'		/	'Heaven's kingdom'

Genitive of Kinship

(82) <i>weld-e</i>	<i>mariam</i>	/	<i>ye-mariam lij</i>
son-ross	mary	/	=oss-Mary son
'Son of Mary'		/	'Mary's son'

weld is borrowed word from Ge'ez. In example (82) the difference between the two constructions is that '*welde mariam*' is mainly used as a proper name for men, but '*ye-mariam lij*' communicates that the son belongs to Mary

Abstract possession

(83) <i>amlak-e</i>	<i>Israel</i>	/	<i>ye-israel</i>	<i>amlak</i>
God-poss	Israel	/	=oss-Israel	God
'God of Israel'		/	'Israel's God'	

The semantic difference between the two in example (83) is emphasis (*amlak-e Israel*) and giving information (*ye-israel amlak*).

(84) <i>ye-lij</i>	<i>abat</i>	/	<i>*abat-e</i>	<i>lij</i>
=oss-son	father	/		
'Son's father'		/		

Even if the relationship between 'father and son' is the same in both the constructions; the construct state does not work. So the construct state is not productive in all cases.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to show the morphosyntactic marker of the genitive construction in Amharic. I have shown how genitive of possession is marked mainly in three different forms:

1. In the possessor-possessum order, the possessor is prefixed with *ye-*.
2. The possessed noun is marked with a pronominal possessive suffix.
3. In a construct state *-e* is suffixed to the possessum.

The first one marks the possessor whereas the second and the third mark the possessum. *Ye-* can either be prefixed to a noun or a pronoun to mark nominal possession. *-e* can never be suffixed to pronouns, but only to nouns.

In Amharic personal pronouns are free morphemes, but pronominal possessive markers are bound morphemes, which are suffixed only to the possessed items. Pronouns inflect with person, number and gender, while *ye-* remains the same.

When a recursively embedded noun phrase occurs in a sentence *ye-is* prefixed only once on NP1 in the NP1+NP2 order. Pronominal suffixes are homophonous with definite article suffixes.

Although not productive in all cases, *-e* is suffixed to a possessum in a construct state, to mark possession in possessor-possessum order.

Pronominal markers have purpose beyond encoding possessions. When the possessed noun is suffixed with appropriate pronominal possessives, the possessum is focused. This is one of the outcomes of this paper.

When the possessor pronoun is prefixed with *ye-*, the possessor of the possessed noun is marked. Therefore a possessor marked NP is not simply a constructional alternative with a possessum marked.

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APPENDIX

Text: Folk Tale (Amharic)

<i>Ye-duba</i>	<i>fire-na</i>	<i>ye-shola</i>	<i>fire</i>	
poss-pumpkin	fruit-and	poss-fig	fruit	
"Fruit of pumpkin and Fruit of fig"				
(1)	<i>ke-iletat</i>	<i>and ken and ba/ager</i>	<i>gebeya</i>	<i>wulo wede</i>
	of-day.rt,	one day one countryman market		staying to
	<i>bet-u</i>			
	house-ross			
	<i>simeles</i>	<i>ye-tsehay</i>	<i>muket</i>	<i>betam</i>
	back	=oss-sun	heat	very
				beat-3sG.M

"Once-upon a time a countryman, having stayed at the market, while returning home, the heat of sun beat him too much"

(2) *adekeme-wum*
weakened-3sG.M
"It weakened him."

(3) *ke-zihm* *yetenes* *wede and kirncaf-u*
yetenserafa
r=-this for to one branch-3sG. =oss shootout
tilik *ye-sho/a* *zaf* *sir* *hed-o* *tekemete*
big =oss- fig tree under gO-PART sat.down

"Because of this he went to the big fig tree with its branch shoot out,
(and) sat under it."

- (4) *ketilom wede lay wede kimcaf-u angat*
 Next to up to branch-t-oss tuning his face.up
bimeleket
 looked.at
shoal-w mafrat-un tegenezebe
 fig-DEF bo re. fru it - realized
ACC

"Next, turning his face up, having looked at the branch, he realized as
the fig bore fruit."

- (5) *keziam ye-shola-wun fire meten k-ezaf-u kumet-na*
 then poss-fig-3sG.M-DEF fruit size pp-tree-poss.3SG.M height-
 and
wufret gar iyawedadere "indet yihenin yemiahil
 thickness "how comes.this
 much
kumet with PROG-
 COmpare *fire yaferal?"*
yalew
 height it.has tree DIM small fruit produces?"
bemalet tegereme.
 Saying amazed

'Then, comparing the fig's fruit size with the tree's height and thickness

he said "how comes a tree having this much height and thickness

produces this small fruit?"

(6) *be-huneta-wum* *iye tege rem* *ashgro* *bimeleket*

by-situation-DEF while.he.was.amazing across looking

ke-shola-w zaf *tinish ilif billo* *yebekele* *duba*

PP- fig-DEF tree small passing planted pumpkin

temelekete

he saw

"Having been amazed by the situation, looking across, at a few distance from the fig tree, he saw a pumpkin plant."

(7) *yam* *duba* *fire* *a fritoa*
I

that pumpkin fruit bore

'That pumpkin bore fruit.'

(8) *ye-duba-wun-na* *ye-shola-wun* *fire*

=oss-pumpkin-Acc-and =oes-nq-xcc fruit

iyawedadere

"igziabiher midiron

PROG.compare

PART *belayi-wa yalutin negeroch*

serve

on it-F.SG present things all

astskaklo

ketemelekete

o

b

behuala

"God

*f
e
t
r
-
o*

after

sertoal"

earth

creat-

hulu

asm

am-

to-na

fit-

.PAR

T-

and

can.not Ground pp-ground trails lame/weak is

"The pumpkin plant even can not stand that is lame trails on the ground."

(13) *firew-u gin gulicha a kilo meret lay*
 fruit-ross but big.stone equate ground o
 n

tegolitoal"

is.sited

"But its fruit, as big as big stone is sat on the ground."

(14) *igziabiher le-tin ish-un duba* *tilik fire le-tilik-u*
shoal
 God pp-small-DEF pumpkin big fruit pp-big-DEF fig
fire Degmo tinish fire setitot neger kemiabelash
fruit then/and small fruit giving thing instead of spoil
tilik-un
 .big-
 DEF

ye-duba lay biseklew tinishu-n fire degmo awurido
 =oss-pumpkin on if.hang small-DEF fruit then
 bring.down

le-duba-w bi-sete-w aserar-u tikikil yi-hon
neber

r=-pumpkin if-give-oEF system-t-oss right FUT-be
was

" God, instead of giving to the small pumpkin big fruit and for the big fig small fruit, that ruins the system of his work, it will be right if the big pumpkin fruit is hang on the fig and the small fruit put down and give it to the pumpkin".

(15) *honom gin tinish-un le-tilik-u tilik-un degmo*

however but smau-osr pp-big-OEF big-OEF then

le- tinshu ka-deregut duba-w fire-w kebdot

r=-small r=-made pumpkin-oar fruit-oar weigh

meret

ground

le-meret yigotetal.

pp-ground trails

"However if the small is given to the big and the big to the small, the pumpkin fruit weighs so that it trials on the ground."

(16) *yihm le-temelkac betam yaskeyimal.*

this =r=observer very is. bad

"This is very bad to the observer"

(17) *igziabiher* *lemin endezih* *yetezeberareke* *sira* *inde-sera*

God why like.this mesed up work how-

worked

Mikniyatu *al-geba-n'im"* *iy-ale* *temeramere*

reason NEG-understand- PROG- examined

1.sG say

"He examined saying that I don't understand the reason why God made such messed up work"

examination-soss because-tired-3.sG.M

(18) *memeramer-u* *sil-adekeme-w* *zaf-un*

tree-

OEF

tetegit-o *indetegnam* *ankelafa*

rested.on-PART as.layover napped

"Because he was tired of the research, as layover at the tree, he napped."

(19) *indetepam andit nefas yetalat* *ye-shola* *fire*

as.he.slept one wind throw =oss-fiq fruit

ke-afincha-u *arfa bi-timetaw-u* *himem-u*

r=-nose-ross rested rr-beat-asc.v pain-oar

tesemtot *dengito* *binin* *ale.*

felt terrify. PART wake.up be

"While he was sleeping, a fruit of fig that fall by wind rested on his nose, beat him, felt him very sick, being terrified he wake up."

(20) *min indemetaw-u kena.bilo bimeleket andit ye-shola*
 What beat-ross raised.up see one =oss-flq
fire deret-u lay wedka aye
 fruit chest-rose on fall saw

"As he raised up to sea what hit him, he saw a fruit of fig fall on his chest."

(21) *afinca-wunim*
 nose-ACC. =oss
temelekete-na
 saw-and
tolo bilo be-ij-u dabisso
 quickly r=-hano-r-oss catch
"ere gud new demichaleh-
"it.is.amazing u
 bleeding-13G
leka!
 so

"As he quickly catch his nose in his hand and observed, he said 'it is amazing, I am so bleeding'.

(22) *bedifret igziabiher tesastoal biy-e mal/et-e*
 boldly God is.mistaken said-tee salo-tso
Sihitet mehon-un ahun gena gebafJ
 mistake be-Ace now yet understood

"Now I have understood my fault that what I said boldly God is mistaken is wrong."

(23) *ine in dalkut ye-duba-w fire shoal-w lay*
bihon

1sG as.said =oss-purnpkln-oes fruit fig-OEF on

been

Nora afincay-e-n bilo yigedl-efJ neber bilo.ale

nose-ross.t SG-OEF

beat killed-1 SG

was

he said

"As I have said, if the fruit of pumpkin had been on the fig, it could have killed me hitting my nose" he said.