

The expression of predicative possession in Avestan

While the linguistic expression of the predicative possession has been widely investigated in the languages belonging to the major Indo-European branches such as Ancient Greek (Benvenuto&Pompeo 2012, Kulneff-Eriksson 1999), Latin (Baldi&Nuti 2010, Bolkestein 1983, 2001), Old Indian (Bauer 2000, Danesi&Barðdal 2018), in the case of the Ancient Indo-Iranian group these kinds of constructions have been observed by some scholars in previous studies, but have not been discussed in great depth. Regarding such earlier research, it is worth mentioning Benveniste’s well-known 1960 study where, on the basis of examples from many Indo-European languages including Old Persian and Avestan, the predicative constructions with dative and with genitive are classified respectively as «*prédicat de possession*», expressing “possession”, and as «*prédicat d’appartenance*», expressing “belonging”. Èdel’man’s 1975 paper and Bauer 2010 also deserve mention, since they contain a brief overview over the expressions of possession in the Iranian languages.

The aim of this paper is to provide a detailed account of the functional distribution of predicative possessive constructions in the Avestan language,

The investigation of the expressions of possession will be based on the situation documented in the Old Avestan texts. According to Kellens and Pirart (1988), the texts which are definitely Old Avestan are: the five *Gāθās* (Y. 28-35, 43-51, 53), the *Yasna Haptañhāiti* (Y. 35.2-41.5), two fragments, that is to say, the *Ahuna Vairiia* (Y. 27.13) and the *Airiiman Išiia* (Y. 54.1); Y. 27.7 and Y. 56.1. The analysis will be focused on the two possessive constructions “verb to be plus dative” as in (1) and “verb to be plus genitive” as in (2), in order to identify the differences in their syntactic and pragmatic functions and in order to examine them from a semantic perspective.

(1) Av. Y. 62.1 *ušta buiiāṭ ahmāi naire*
 “Salvation be to this man”

(2) Av. Y. 43.7 *ciš ahī kahiiā ahī*
 “Who are you? Whose are you?”

In order to highlight the syntactic features of the two constructions we will take into account syntactic functions and the semantic roles of the Avestan genitive and dative, the relevant statistical tendencies regarding word order, focusing on the pragmatic role of the constituents.

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