# Predicative possession in the languages of the Ethiopian area

## Abstract

In Ethiopian languages, *have*-possession and existential constructions of possession are the predominant predicative possession types represented by the two dominant languages namely Oromo and Amharic, respectively. Previous research has shown that the *have*-possession is a Cushitic feature (cf. Thomason 1983:216) whereas the existential construction of possession has no clear historical records for its origin in Semitic (Rubin 2005:57). However, the Amharic-type of existential constructions of possession is common in the whole Ethiosemitic. The goal of this paper is two-fold: (1) showing further predominance of the existential constructions of possession over the *have*-possession, and (2) giving an overview of the notional characteristics of predicative possession in the languages of the Ethiopian area. It depends on the data from informants, online corpora, native-speaker intuition being bilingual in Oromo and Amharic, and published grammars. While the *have*-possession is employed by a few Cushitic and Omotic languages, the existential constructions of possession have been widespread in the area.

On the other hand, the Ethiopian languages show more commonality with the notions coded by the predicative possession constructions. Not only the possessive notions that include the prototypical ownership and the non-prototypical kinship, part-whole, physical, abstract, etc. relations, but also the non-possessive domains such as attribution, experience, and location are expressed by the predicative possession. The paper shows that the Ethiosemitic influence tends to be accounted for predominance of the existential constructions of possession based on the synchronic analysis because such construction is observable in all Ethiosemitic that might have spread to others through Amharic, the lingua franca of the country. The distribution of these predicative possession constructions implies that the predicate structures and the associated notional domains probably add important information to the Ethiopian Language Area.

**Key words**: *have-possession, Ethiopian Language Area, notions, predicative possession, existential constructions*

## Reference

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