

## Parallels in the development from locative and existential predications to possessive structures in Arabic and Hebrew

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This work takes as its starting point claims made in the typological and grammaticalisation literature then blends these with statements and analyses that stem from theoretical syntactic perspectives, with the aim at a reconstruction of Arabic and colloquial Hebrew possessive structures, meant to provide an analysis of the varied steps in the trajectory. Highlighting what led to the grammaticalisation of what synchronically appears to be a transitive have-like possessive structures in languages that do not possess a quintessential lexical ‘have’ predicate of the type that characterises Romance and Germanic possessive structures, the study will provide an answer to the question how be possessive predications mould into have ones, having themselves already stemmed from other clausal structures. Possessives in Arabic have developed out of a (predicative) locative structure Comrie (1991); Heine (1997), while according to Berman (1978), the Hebrew possessive structure is a development out of existentials. A synchronic analytical difference which characterises the two possessive structures is the following: The theoretical Arabic literature appears to have caught up with claims in Stassen (2009) that Arabic clausal possessives display a have-Drift that has led to their transitive have-like nature. Hallman (2020) has argued that Arabic possessives can be classified as be and have types, further mentioning that the latter is a development of the former, in line with a number of claims in the literature, e.g. Benveniste (1966). In the Hebrew syntactic literature, in contrast, possessives such as (1) are analysed distinctly, even if the varied strands in the literature agree on their diachronic origin as existentials.

- (1) yeš le-dani harbe sfarim  
EXIST to-Dani many books  
Dani has many books.

The claim put forward here is that the above Hebrew structure can best be characterised as a transitive have structure as Shlonsky (1987) analyses it. However, that is not all. The full picture is such that structures such as (2) are also available. In the analysis to be presented here, these structures are treated as be predicates on a par with Arabic counterparts. These are hypothesised to have functioned as precursors of the have structures in (1), even if the availability of such structures is not given much exposure in the literature.

- (2) le-dani sfarim harbe  
to-Dani books many  
Dani has many books.

Key to the development in the structures across the two systems is the earlier development of a P that bleaches into a CASE marker, in which *la* in Hebrew develops as a DATIVE marker (Borer and Grodzinsky, 1986), while collectively, the locative Ps *ʕand* ‘at’, *maʕ* ‘with’ and *la* ‘to’ grammaticalise as dependent markers that identify their erstwhile complement as the possessor NP. In both instances, a possessor grammaticalises as the SUBJ of a BE possessive predication. The main difference is that in Hebrew it is a NP, while in Arabic, it is a PP, parallel to ‘to’ + NP structures in English. This stage in the development constitutes a be predication; one that in the case of Arabic is merely a semantic development out of an inverted locative predicative structure. In both languages, it is a zero element that predicates of these structures. It may have been for this reason that by time we then observe the development of a pseudo-verbal HAVE predication moulding itself, as the BE possessive structures in both systems shift and develop into a HAVE structure. While Arabic reaches this stage via a dependent-to-head marking shift, Hebrew makes use of the existential structure, with the change involving a remapping between the grammatical functions/relations and the different thematic arguments involved.

## References

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