Possessive Construction in Mursi

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with possessive construction in Mursi, a Nilo-Saharan language spoken by a small group of people located in southwestern, Ethiopia. Mursi has a fairly rich syntactic system for the expression of possession or ownership. A plausible reason for acquiring such a rich expression of syntactic construction of possession is that it has both a head and dependent marking system. As a head-dependent marking language, both the head and the dependent are marked by appropriate dependency relation marking morphological elements. The head can be marked with two different morphologies, modification markers (restrictive/non-restrictive) and pertensive. When it is converted to possessive construction, the head is always the possessed noun (D) and the dependent/modifier is the possessor (R). The various syntactic constructions and possibilities of indicating possession/ownership should follow the syntactic frame of 'NP-internal possessive construction'. What makes possessive construction in Mursi interesting is that the R can be an 'intermediate possessor' or an 'intermediate modifier', and can be explained through the notion of *Construct Form* (CF). Therefore, this paper aims to explore the morphology, syntax, and semantics of the NP-internal possessive constructions.

Keywords: Nilo-Saharan languages, Surmic language, Mursi, Head-dependent marking, Construct form, Noun modification construction, intermediate possessors/modifiers

1. Introduction

The Mursi (*Mùn* plural; *Mùnì* singular) are a small group of people approximately about 7,500 in South Omo Zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), in Southwestern Ethiopia (Population Census Commission 2007). They live in four villages, namely: *Makki*, *Moyzo*, *Bongozo*, and *Romos* (Hayluha). Their territory lies between two rivers, the Omo (*Warr*) to the west and the Mago to the east (Firew 2021). Their language, Mursi (*munɛn*), belongs to the Surmic language? a group within the Eastern Sudanic branch of the Nilo-Saharan language family.

The Mursi are dependent on occupations for a living: pastoralism and small-scale farming. Since their main livelihood is cattle herding, they are known by the central government and by the highland people as pastoralists. In fact, to some extent, they depend on the flood retreat cultivation method, they also produce sorghum along the banks of the Omo River. They prefer this farming method because they practice the hoe-cultivation system. Cattle are not only the main source of food (milk and blood) but are also the only asset that they use to exchange with their highland neighbors for grains, especially during times of crop failure (cf. Firew 2021: 20ff). Turton (1973: 19) described the Mursi's relationship with cattle as follows: 'For a Mursi, to have no cattle, and to be forced therefore to live ''like a monkey'' in the Omo forest and bush, to eat fish ''like a wading bird'' and never to leave the banks of the Omo"

Among other closely neighboring linguistic groups, the Mursi share a high degree of linguistic and cultural similarities with the 'Suri' (*Chai*)[11]. In addition, they regularly interact with different groups whose speech are from three major African language families—Nilo-Saharan (Chai, Tirma, Baale, Me'en, Nyangatom, and Kwegu), Omotic (Aari, Kara, Banna, Bashada, and Hamar), and Cushitic (Dassanech).

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[1] Dimmendaal (1998: 5) wrote, ''Suri'' and ''Surma[11]'' are primarily ethnonyms covering three Surmic speech communities speaking partly different languages namely Chai, Tirma, and Baale. Suri is an ethnonym which refers a people rather than a language''.

2. Typological Profile of Mursi

Typologically, Mursi is similar to a certain degree to the Surmic group languages, particularly to the Southeast-Surmic languages such as Chai and Tirmaga. Mursi grammar is, in many respects, similar to that of Chai. Thus, probably half of what is said by the Mursi can be understood by speakers of Chai (cf. Firew 2021; Last and Lucassen 1998).

Concerning phonology, Mursi has a total of twenty-nine phonemes: twenty-two consonants and seven vowels. When comparing Mursi with the Southeast-Surmic languages, it lacks the following three consonant phonemes: the voiceless bilabial stop /p/, the palatal implosive /ʄ/, and the velar implosive /ɠ/. On the other hand, like the other languages of the Southeast-Surmic, Mursi has retained a seven-vowel system. The maximal syllable template is CVC. A great majority of Mursi verb roots have monosyllabic CVC shapes. It has also two register tones: High and Low. Both are contrastive and play significant roles both at the lexical and grammatical levels.

Morphologically, Mursi is an agglutinating language with some degree of fusion; it is highly synthetic (up to seven morphemes per word) (Firew 2021). It is a predominantly suffixing language. Verbs have up to fourteen slots for verbal grammatical categories. Only a maximum of three pre-root slots can be available for both inflectional and derivational markers to be added to the verbal roots at a time, as illustrated in (1) (Firew 2021:7).

(1)   *ŋà=kó-jóg-ón-óŋ-Ø=ó-ɔ̀*

     NEG.IMPERV=1SU-tell-MT-2PL.OBJ-1PL.INC.SU.IMPERV=NEG-VFS

     'We (inc.) will not tell (it) to you (pl.).'

The inflectional and derivational affixes associated with the verb include bound pronominals S/A and O arguments, aspect, mood, motion, and most valency and voice changing devices. All these are cross-referenced on the verb. Compared with the size of the verbal inflectional/derivational grammatical categories, nominals tend to have smaller categories. The inflectional grammatical categories associated with nominals are number, case, deictic, and definiteness. However, Mursi nominals can have up to ten affixal slots if both its inflectional and derivational categories are counted together. In addition, Mursi has a complex number marking system. Thus nouns are divided into four sets based on how they

mark numbers: *replacive, marked plural, singulative*, and *suppletive*. Some nouns utilize a tripartite number marking system. Nominal morphological categories usually display the following affix orderings.

(2) *[hùll-á   ór-έ-à   [ŋà=múɲín-í=tùnù=ŋà]ₙₚ]RC/SUBORD:CL*

    when-RSTR   see.IMPERV-3PL.SU.IMPERV-RSTR   DEM=star-SG=FAR=DEF

    'When/while they saw that star…'

In terms of syntax, Mursi is a nominative-accusative language and has a canonical constituent order AVO (for a transitive clause) and/or SV (for an intransitive clause). Core arguments in this constituent order are functionally-unmarked. In addition to this, depending on clause types and pragmatic context, there may be two other orders: AOV (in negated clauses), and OVA/VS (in transitive/intransitive clauses). In the latter order, both post-verbal subjects (S and A) are marked for nominative cases. Mursi marks both the head noun and the dependent form. There are morphological markers for the head noun and for the dependent (modifier) called the 'restrictive and non-restrictive modification' form.

The data for this paper were collected from native speakers of Mursi, in two fieldwork trips to the Mursi villages between 2016 and 2019—which was also part of the data I gathered for my doctoral study at James Cook University (2016-2020). The data collected include mainly an extensive corpus of texts of different genres and from different speakers.

3. Possessive Constructions

The term 'possession' refers to various types of relationships (between possessor ~R and possessed ~D) and almost all languages have syntactic constructions where relationships associated with R-D can be shown—typically by an NP-internal grammatical construction of possession (Dixon 2010), or commonly known as 'NP-internal possessive construction'. Possessive constructions in general can convey one of the following semantics relationships: ownership, whole-part, kinship, attribute, statement of orientation/location, association, and nominalization (p.263). Cross-linguistic pieces of evidence show that there are variations among languages concerning the semantics that their NP-internal possessive constructions convey and the morphological markers they utilize to indicate the R and D. Thus, comma

here this paper's aim is not to use the reasoning connectors together (i.e thus and therefore) to discuss the Mursi possessive constructions in light of the semantics they cover and the various morphological forms used to indicate R and D within NPs.

The internal syntax of Mursi NPs displays syntactic and morphological patterns/possibilities, particularly in the NP-internal possessive construction. As a result, the language utilizes a fairly rich syntactic system for the expression of possession or ownership (Firew 202: 209). Given the head-dependent marking system of the language, there are thus suffixes that can occur either on the head, on the dependent, or both. These suffixes are, number, case, possessor (R), and pertensive. There are also two dependency relation marker suffixes called 'construct forms, modification forms, relators': *-a* 'restrictive' and *-i* [*-ti,-ni*] 'non-restrictive' (cf Firew 2021; Mutze 2014).

Generally, the internal syntax of Mursi NPs shows that there are two types of constructions: *head-dependent/modifier* (D-R) and *dependent/modifier-head* (R-D). In the former order, almost all head nouns and dependents/modifiers receive different formal different markings. Whereas in the latter order, neither the head nor the dependent is morphologically-marked. There are, however, two exceptions to the former order and both are triggered by specific types of dependents/modifiers, i.e. number words and quantifiers. The first is that in the *head-dependent/modifier* order where dependents/modifiers are cardinal number words higher than one, both the head and its dependents do not trigger any dependency relation marking (as in (3)).

(3)   *[zùwò   háánán]*_{NP}

      people   five

      'five people'

The second one is that only the head nouns of the NP can be marked by the non-restrictive dependency relation suffix *-ti* when modified by the cardinal number *ɗɔnèj* 'one' (as in (4a))or a quantifier (as in (4b)).

(4)   a.   *[érmì-tí   ɗɔnèj]*_{NP}   *áíw-ó*

         child-NRSTR   one   come.PERV.SG-MT.3SG.SU.PERV

         'One child came.'

b. *[kèn-í   mèrì]*_{NP}

    tree.PL-NRSTR   many

    'Many trees'

As it is tried to make clear in the examples illustrated above, a point worth noting is that the presence or the absence of morphological marking on head nouns and the dependent types that trigger their heads to occur with a specific form of dependency marker is determined, in large part, by the internal syntax of NPs of the language. It is also likely to depend, in part, on the semantic (w) associated with dependents/modifiers. For example, in the NP-internal possessive constructions where the D and the R occur in the order *head-dependent*, only the restrictive suffix *-a* can be marked either on both D and R or just on the D.

Accordingly, five NP-internal possessive construction types have been identified in Mursi: one structure where R and D are simply juxtaposed within an NP (see §2.1), and four other distinct structures where D is followed by R (see §2.2-2.5). The ordering of elements within the five possessive construction types and the different markings associated with each type is illustrated in i-v below.

i.   Juxtaposed (possessor-possessum) (§2.1)

        [NOUN$_{Possessor}$ NOUN$_{Possessed}$]

ii.   Possessum-possessor (§2.2)

A.   [HEAD.N-MOD/RELATOR$_{Possessed}$ POSSESSOR-GEN$_{Possessor}$]

B.   [HEAD.N-MOD/RELATOR$_{Possessed}$ PROPER.NAME-GEN$_{Possessor}$]

iii.   Possessum-possessor (where the possessor is a possessive pronoun) (§2.3)

        [[HEAD.N-MOD/RELATOR$_{Possessed}$ POSS. PRO$_{Possessor}$]

iv.   Pertensive (§2.4)

A1.   [HEAD.N$_{Possessed}$-PERT$_{Possessor}$] (synthetic structure)

A2.   [HEAD.N$_{Possessed}$-PERT$_{Possessor}$ (POSS. PRO$_{Possessor}$)] (analytic structure)

v.   Noun Modification Constructions (§2.5)

        [HEAD.N-RSTR/RELATOR$_{Possessed}$ POSSESSOR-RSTR/RELATOR$_{possessor}$]

As far as I can tell regarding the semantic nature of possessed nouns (D's), almost all Mursi simple nouns can be possessed as long as they take the restrictive modification marker *-a*. there are, however, exceptions to a handful of kinship nouns and a body-part noun *rɛ* 'body' that can be possessed inalienably or obligatorily. Inalienably possessed nouns can be easily distinguished from alienably possessed ones by their ability to take a pertensive morphology (see §2.4). About the semantics associated with the nature of the possessors (R's), the nominal categories identified are —simple nouns (A), proper names (B), possessive pronouns (C), and modified modifiers (D).

Regardless of their semantic nature, all Rs take a genitive case that has allomorphic variants. Accordingly comma here the genitive suffix *-ɲ* is marked on a possessor noun that ends in a vowel. The allomorphs *-ùɲ* and *-òɲ* are used following nasal/liquid-final nouns. The allomorph *-ùŋ* is used often following vowel-final plural nouns, but it has unpredictable distribution in the majority of cases. Another form of the same case maker suffix is *-j [-i, -Ø]*. It is used following vowel-final proper names. Its allomorphs, *-ì*, is suffixed to consonant-final proper names/proper nouns and *-Ø* to nouns ending in the palatal nasal /ɲ/.

2.1 Juxtaposed system

In this NP-internal possessive construction type where the two elements of the NP are expected to occur in a different order rather than the typical *dependent-head* order of the language, R and D are simply apposed within the NP. Apposed elements have the order *dependent-head* (R-D) and there is no morphological marking on both elements. The semantics expressed that are by the juxtaposed system are restricted to ownership, whole-part, and association relationships. The ownership relationship can be used to refer to the young animals only in (5a-b).

(5)   a.   *[bì$_R$ hòjnè$_D$]*

              cow   kid

           'offspring of (the) cow' (Lit. 'Calf of

    b.   *[tɔŋɔ̀$_R$ hòjnè$_D$]*

           (the) cow')

           goat   kid

'kid of the goat'

The noun *hòjnè* ~ 'the young' is only used for offspring of animals. Such ownership type is also known as full ownership. The possessive constructions in (5a-b) may look like simple noun formations but they are not at all. A justification for this is that there are terms of reference for each one of them, i.e., *mɔ̀r* 'calf' for (5a) and *mɛ̀ɛ̀n* '(goat) kid' for (5b).

The other semantic relationship associated with the juxtaposed system is whole-part. It includes body parts of humans and animals, plants, and objects.

(6) *[érmìᵣ   dʒààrèᴅ]ₙₚ   lɔ̀-Ø   ŋɔ̀dɔ̀rì*
      child.SG   leg.SG   has-3SG.SU.IMPERV   sore
      'The child's leg has a sore.'

(7) *[ɓúŋájᵣ   kààrìᴅ]*
      bull.SG   eye.SG
      'Eye of a bull'

(8) *[kìòᵣ   ɲàbìᴅ]*
      tree.SG   ear.SG
      'The tree's branch' (Lit. 'The tree's ear')

Although both R and D cannot receive morphological markings in this NP construction system, D may not always agree with R in number. The semantic content of nouns when functioning as D appears that more important than their syntactic order or the morphological markers they receive. Interestingly, I can present one instance of the juxtaposed construction which could substantiate my statement concerning the number agreement between R and D. The example in (9) below is a juxtaposed construction and the type of possessive relationship it refers to is an association.

(9) *[híríᵣ   sáràᴅ]*

      man.SG   name.PL

      'The man's name'

Note that the noun *sárá* 'name' is an inherently plural noun in Mursi and has no singular form. In contrast, in (10) below, the D agrees with the R in number but the meaning hasn't been affected and still has a singular interpretation.

(10) *[sárá-áᴅ   g=àɲùᵣ]ₙₚ*

      name-RSTR   PL.PSD=1SG.PSR

      'My name'

Generally, nouns such as 'name' and those we saw above, as D, are believed to be related to R (cf. Dixon 2010:278ff).

2.2 Possessum-possessor

i. *Possessive construction with type-A and type-B possessors*

This is one of the four types of NP-internal possessive constructions in *head-dependent* order or D-*a* R-GEN dependency relation. Accordingly, *type-A* possessive constructions have simple nouns as R whereas *type-B* possessive constructions have proper names as R. Except for the semantic content of the Rs, both *type-A* and *type-B* are almost identical in their morphology and syntax. The morphological markers which are used on D and R are identical. The construct form suffix -*a* is used for a marker on D and the genitive case suffix is used for a marker on R.

(10)   *type-A* possessors

    a.   *[érmì-a   hírí-ɲ]*

        child-RSTR   man-GEN

        'Child (son) of man'

    b.   *[úr-á   bì-ɲ]*

        milk-RSTR   cow-GEN

        'Milk of the cow'

    c.   *[zíwá-á   mùn-ùɲ]*

        medicine-RSTR   mursi.PL-GEN

        'Medicine of the Mursi'

    d.   *[mà   kútúl-òɲ]*

        water+RSTR   mountain-OBL.GEN

        'Mountain water (water of a mountain)'

    e.   *[bùnà-á   kútúl-ì]*

        coffee-RSTR   mountain-GEN

        'Mountain coffee'

    f.   *[zùw-á   mìs-òŋ]*

           people-RTSR   grassland-OBL.GEN

           'People of the grassland'

    g.   *[lɔ̀g-á   áú-ɲá-ùŋ]*

           word/issue-RSTR   eldest.child-PL-GEN

           'Thing/issue of the eldest children'

In the examples illustrated above, there are three types of possessive relationships—examples in (10a-c) express ownership, the example in (10d-e) express source and location, and (10f) express 'association'. On the other hand, in example (10g), the genitive case marker *-uŋ* always occurs following plural possessors.

In *type-B* possessive constructions, the Rs are proper names. Thuscomma here the genitive suffix is added to Rs. See the examples illustrated in (11a-c) below.

(11)   *type-B* possessors

    a.   *[čɔ̀r-á   báríhúɲ]*

           hair-RSTR   Barihuny.GEN

           'Hair of Barihuny'

    b.   *[érmì-á   ŋàkútúl-ì]*

           child-RSTR   Ngakútúl-GEN

           'Ngakutu's child'

    c.   *[bì-ò-á   tókó-ì]*

           cow-PL-RSTR   toko-GEN

           'Toko's cows'

The possessive relationship expressed by *type-B* constructions may include whole-part and ownership.

2.3 Possessive construction with *type-C* (possessive pronouns)

A possessive construction with *type-C* involves possessive pronouns. The internal syntax of a *type-C* construction identical order of elements to those in §2.2, §2.4, and §2.4, i.e., *head-dependent* order or D-*a* R. Mursi possessive pronouns naturally specify three grammatical information—a person of the R, number of the R and number of the D. At the level of the underlying form of Mursi possessive pronouns, we may think that specification of the person of the R is fused with specification number of the R. In fact, the Southeast-Surmic group languages including Mursi have lost their -*g* marking plural of the R (Unseth 1997: 58). Mursi has maintained an *n* specifying a singular number of the D, as well as the R. Singular and plural number of both, are shown by a proclitic: *n=* singular and *g=* plural—see (12).

(12)   Number of D=person+number of R[12]

nànù	~[n=à+nù]	'My/mine, singular possessed'
gàɲù	~[g=à+ɲù]	'My/mine, plural possessed'
nùnù	~[n=ù+nù]	'Your, singular possessed'
gùɲù	~[g=ù+ɲù]	'Your, plural possessed'
nὲnὲ	~[n=ὲ+nὲ]	'His/her, singular possessed'
gὲɲὲ	~[g=ὲ+ɲὲ]	'His/her, plural possessed'
nàj	~[n=àj]	'Our (inc.) singular possessed'
nàw	~[n=àw]	'Our (exc.) singular possessed'
gàw	~[g=àw]	'Our (exc.) plural possessed'
gàj	~[g=àj]	'Our (inc.) plural possessed'
gùj	~[g=ùj]	'Yours, plural possessed'
gὲj	~[g=ὲj]	'Theirs, plural possessed'

In addition, all forms marking person of the R were preserved and they have segmental realizations, i.e., *a* for 1ˢᵗ person, *u* for 2ⁿᵈ person, and *ɛ* for 3ʳᵈ person.

(13) a. *[zíwá-á   n=ànù]*
          medicine-RSTR   SG.PSD=1SG.PSR

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² Note that the listed possessive pronouns in (10) do not show all of its members.

'My medicine'

b.   *[čɔ̀r-à   g= àɲù]*

    hair-RTSR   PL.PSD=1SG.PSR

    'My hair'

The fact that Mursi nouns a distinction between 'plural' and 'pluralia tantúm'. The former system refers to 'more than one' while the latter refers to 'inherently plural nouns'. Nouns that belong to the latter category are often associated with mass nouns/liquids (*mɔ̀ɗà* 'saliva', *ɲáwà* 'blood', *mà* 'water') and 'name'. Interestingly, Mursi possessive pronouns may also help us to distinguish whether or not the noun in the D function is plural or pluralia tantúm because pluralia tantúm does not take any morphological number marking (Firew 2021:233). In addition, when they function as D, the possessive pronoun which is placed after it must contain the *g=* marking plural of the D. See the example in (14).

(14)   a.   *[sárá-a   g=àɲù]*

    name-RSTR   PL.PSD=1SG.PSR

    'My name'

b.   **[sárá-a   n=ànù]*

    name-RSTR   SG.PSD=1SG.PSR   (ungrammatical)

In Mursi, almost every noun can be possessed as long as possessive pronouns occur in the R function. For examples:

(15)   a.   *[éséɗ-á-á   n=ànù]*

    think-NOMZ-RSTR   SG.PSD=1SG.PSR

    'My idea'

b.   *[dáʃ̌ǐ-á   n=ànù]*

    work.NOMZ-RSTR   SG.PSD=1SG.PSR

    'My work (job)'

As it is shown in (15a-b), nominalized/deverbal nouns can be possessed optionally.

2.4.Pertensive

Pertensive marking on D is a straightforward way of showing an inalienable possession within an NP-internal possession construction. A few close kinships referring to nouns and the body-part noun *rɛ* 'body' can be possessed inalienably. In other words, a pertensive marker is added to these nouns in the NP in the D function.

Table 1 Pertensive markers

	Pertensive	Number of D + person
1	=nà (sg.)	=n-à ~ PERT.SG-1.PSR
	=gà (pl.)	=g-à ~ PERT.PL-1.PSR
2	=nù (sg.)	=n-ù ~ PERT.SG-2.PSR
	=gù (pl.)	=g-ù ~ PERT.PL-2.PSR
3	=nɛ̀ (sg.)	=n-ɛ̀ ~ PERT.SG-3.PSR
	=gɛ̀ (pl.)	=g-ɛ̀ ~ PERT.PL-3.PSR

The pertensive markers in table 1 can directly or indirectly indicate three basic information (i) that the noun to which it is attached is in D function, (ii) that the noun to which it is attached in D function is possessed inalienably, and (ii) they specify the number of the R. Table 2 below contains a list of Mursi kinship nouns that take pertensive markers.

Table 2 Pertensive taking kinship terms

Singular	Plural	Meaning
dàdà	*dàdàčó*	'father'
màmà	*màmàčó*	'mother'
ʃúúnɛ́	*ʃúúgɛ́*	'father'
ʤɔ̀ɔ̀nɛ́	*ʤɔ̀ɔ̀gɛ́*	'mother
gòdóná	*gòdóngá*	'brother
ŋɔ̀nà	*ŋɔ̀nìgɛ̀n*	'sister'
kògónà	--	'grandfather'
óóná	--	'uncle'

Interestingly, concerning kinship nouns, Mursi employs synthetic (direct) and analytic (indirect) possession types. The listed kinship relationship by blood (consanguineal) can be possessed inalienably or directly, i.e. they occur in synthetic constructions. All the rest nouns referring to kinship relationships of blood and marriage (affinal) can be possessed alienably (indirectly), thus they occur in analytic constructions. As Aikhenvald (2019: 11-12) noted,

such analytic structure originates from the fact that components have to be individuated and made specific rather than genetic. That is, when there is less proximity between components (D R), then they are labeled to be part of the analytic structure. The examples illustrated below (16a-c) have synthetic structures whereas the example in (16d) has an analytic structure. The first two kinship nouns (*dàdà* and *màmà*) can only be possessed by first persons.

(16) a. *[dàdà]*

        father.PERT.SG.1.PSR

        'My father'

    b. *[dàdá-ɲó]*

        father.PERT.1.PSR-PL

        'Our father'

  c. *[dàdá-čó]*

        father.PERT.1.PSR-PL

        'Our fathers'

  d. *[dàdá-čó-á*   *g=àw]*NP
      father.PERT.1.PSR-PL-RSTR   PL.PSD=1PL.EXC.PSR
      'Our (exc.) fathers'

It is important to note that inalienably possessed kinship nouns may also occur in analytic construction or indirect possession. This means that inalienably possessed kinship nouns can be used in a direct and an indirect possessive construction (cf. Aikhenvald 2019: 12). Likewise, both *dàdà* 'father' and *màmà* 'mother' have different forms for 2nd and 3rd person R's (pertensive forms), as illustrated in (17) and (18) respectively.

(17) Second person R

    [ʃúúnù]   *[ʃúúgù]*

    father.PERT.SG.2.PSR   father.PERT.PL.2.PSR

    'Your father'   'Your fathers'

(18)   Third person R

[ʃúúnέ]   *[ʃúúgέ]*

father.PERT.SG.3.PSR   father.PERT.PL.3.PSR

'His/her father'   'His/her fathers'

Except the two kinship nouns, the other inalienable possessed kinship nouns do not alter their original forms. See the following examples.

(19)   a.   *[gòdóná]*

            brother.PERT.SG.1.PSR

            'My brother'   b.   *[gòdón=gá]*

                                                  brother=PERT.PL.1.PSR

                                                  'My brothers'

2.4 Noun Modification Constructions

The noun modification construction (NMC) is normally the same as simple NP construction. Yet it stands apart from the previous four possessive construction types because it may involve a series of intermediate possessors/modifiers. The template below illustrates the NMC in Mursi.

> [HEAD.N-RSTR/REL$_{Possessum}$ MODIFIER-RSTR/REL$_{possessor}$X] MODIFIER-RSTR/REL$_{possessor}$Y]]…MODIFIER-GEN$_{possessor}$Z]]]

In Mursi NMC, the head noun can be modified by another noun. Also, one or more than one nouns can modify the head at a time. In such a case, the first or the second noun modifiers may be considered intermediate modifiers. In NP-internal possessive constructions, the head noun functions as D whereas the modifying nouns check it. intermediate possessors (R's). Therefore, the D and the intermediate R's are marked by restrictive *-a* while the erstwhile possessor will be marked by the genitive case marker, as in (20-21).

(20)   *á*   *[gúná-à*   *[zùw-à*   *mìs-òn]$_{NP}$]$_{NP}$*
       COP.3.IMPERV   field.PL-RSTR   people-RSTR   grassland-OBL.GEN
       'These are the fields of the grassland people' (Mütze 2014)

(21) *[[zùw-á   ɲàgàs-á]ₙₚ   ɔ́r-ùɲ]ₙₚ   mèzì-d-ó*
      people-RSTR   old.STV-RSTR   village-GEN   discuss-PERV.PL-3PL.IRR
      'The village's elders held a council.'

In both cases, for example, one could say *gúɲáà mìsòɲ* 'fields of the grassland' without the intermediate possessor *zùwà* 'people of' (as in (20)) and *zùwá ɔ̀rùɲ* 'people of the village' without the intermediate possessor or the attributive *ɲàgàsá* 'old (of)'. In addition to nouns in genitive marker, simple nouns in oblique (22)) or possessive pronouns (23), or an adjective (23) can be in R function.

(22) *[bá-á   [tán-á   [ŋɔ́č-á   sús-ɔ́]ₙₚ]ₙₚ]ₙₚ*
      place-RSTR   side-RSTR   nape.of.neck-RSTR   sun-OBL

      ká-gáj-í   ʃɛ́ɛ́   háŋ
      1SU-know.IMPERV-1SG.SU.IMPERV   well   Very
      'I know the eastern part pretty well.'
      (Lit. 'I know the place on the other side of sunrise very well.')

(23) *lúsì   bág-Ø   [bá-á   [mùm-á*
      boy.SG   show.off-3SG.SU.IMPERV   place-RSTR   face-RSTR

      [ŋɔ̀nì-á   n=ɛ̀nɛ̀]ₙₚ]ₙₚ]ₙₚ
      sister-RSTR   SG.PSD=3SG.PSR
      'The boy was showing off in front of his sister.'

(24) *á   [lɔ̀g-á   [bì-á   gɔ̀lɔ̀ɲ-á]ₙₚ]ₙₚ]*
      COP.3.IMPERV   issue/matter-RSTR   cow-RSTR   red.STV-RSTR
      'This (it) is the matter of the red cow.'

In NMC, rarely, the possessor may also occur on the left side. However, it does not take a genitive marker, as in (25).

(25) *nɔ̀ŋ   á   [[hír-á   gùrgùr-tín-a]ₙₚ   dǎdǎl-á]ₙₚ*
      3SG   COP.3.IMPERV   man-RSTR   skill-N.S-RSTR   hard.STV-RSTR

      háŋ
      INTENS
      'S/he is a man of great abilities.'
      (Lit. 'S/he is a man of very strong skills/knowledge.')

Whenever the final element at the right edge of an NP is a simple noun, a genitive marker is added to this simple noun as in (26).

(26) *nɔ̀ŋ   á   [[hír-á   lɔ́m-à*
       3SG   COP.3.IMPERV   man-RSTR   have-NOMZ
       gùrgùr-tín-á]NP   álí-ɲ]NP
       skilled.STV-NOMZ-RSTR   voice/talk-gen
       'S/he is an able speaker.' (Lit. 'S/he is a man having knowledge of speaking.)'

Ownership, association, orientation/location, and attributes of a person are some of the semantic relationships which are covered by Mursi NMCs.

4. Summary

As was mentioned earlier, this paper is about the NP-internal possessive constructions of Mursi. The morphological markers and semantic relationships associated with the NP-internal possessive constructions of the language have been dealt with in detail. Accordingly, five NP-internal possessive construction types have been identified in Mursi, of which, one structure where R and D are simply juxtaposed within an NP, and four other distinct structures where D is followed by R. Since Mursi is a head-dependent marking language, both the head and the dependent are marked by appropriate dependency relation marking morphological elements. Mursi possessive constructions, in general, can carry the following relationships/semantics: ownership, whole-part, kinship, attribute, statement of orientation/location, association, and nominalization. Also, the most interesting morphosyntactic aspect of Mursi possessive constructions is that the Rs themselves can be 'intermediate possessors' or 'intermediate modifiers. This morphosyntactic phenomenon is also explained through the notion of Construct Form. Table 3 below is a summary of the possessive construction types and highlights the morphological, syntactic, and semantic nature of the possessive relationships of the NP-internal-driven possessive constructions.

Table 3 The morphological, syntactic and semantic nature of the D & R in NP-internal possessive

constructions

NP-internal possessive construction types	The nature of D	The nature of R	Marking on D	Marking on R	Semantics	Alienably/ inalienably possessed
Juxtaposed (R-D)	animates, body parts, objects, name	human, animates, plants, objects	none	None	ownership whole-part association	both ??
Possessum-possessor (D-R) A TYPE B TYPE	human, animates, any simple noun	human, animates, kinship, any simple noun	*-a*	genitive *-ɲ* [-ùɳ]/[-uɳ], Ø genitive+oblique *-oɲ*	kinship, ownership association orientation/location source or material	alienably possessed
	human, animates, body part, any simple noun	proper names	*-a*	genitive *-i* [-j], Ø	ownership	alienably possessed
Possessum-possessor (D-R)	any noun	possessive pronouns	*-a*	None	kinship, ownership whole-part, attribute association	alienably possessed
Pertensive (D=PERT.R) A TYPE	close kinship nouns, *rɛ* 'body (of human)'	pertensive markers referring human possessors	pertensive enclitics	none or rarely a plural marker -*čo* following the pertensive	kinship ownership	inalienably possessed
B TYPE	close kinship nouns (8), *rɛ* 'body (of human)'	possessive pronouns (optional)	pertensive enclitics	none or rarely a plural marker -*čo* following the pertensive	kinship ownership	inalienably possessed
Noun Modification Constructions (D- (R₁) (R₂) R)	human, animates, body part, kinship, simple nouns	human, animates, ,any simple noun, possessive pronoun	*-a* (on D and on intermediate Rs)	on the last R: genitive *-ɲ* [-ùɳ]/[-uɳ], Ø genitive+oblique *-oɲ*, oblique -*ɔ*	ownership association orientation/location attribute	alienably possessed
(R- (D₁) (D₂) D)	human, simple nouns	human, animates,	*-a* (on all Ds)	*-a*	ownership association orientation/location attribute	

Abbreviations and conventions

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
A	subject of transitive verb
ADJ	adjective
BEN	benefactive
C	consonant
COP	copula
D/PSD	possessed
DEF	definite
DEM	demonstrative
EXC	exclusive
GEN	genitive
EMPH	emphatic
IMPERV	imperfective
INC	inclusive
IRR	irrealis
NP	noun phrase
N.S	nouns of state
NEG	negative
NOMZ	nominalizer

NRSTR	non-restrictive modification marker
Ø	zero
OBJ	object
OBL	oblique
PERT	pertensive
PERV	perfective
pl,PL	plural
R/PSR	possessor
RC	relative clause
RSTR	restrictive modification marker
S	subject of intransitive verb
sg,SG	singular
RSTR	restrictive
STV	stative
SU	subject
SUBORD	subordinate
V	vowel
VFS	verb-final suffix
//	phonemic
=	clitics
[ ]	phonetic
< >	grapheme/orthography

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