

ON THE REANALYSIS OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS IN
HEBREW POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS*

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will be concerned with a syntactic change currently in progress in Colloquial Israeli Hebrew. Certain possessive constructions in Modern Hebrew will be examined; it will be shown that with respect to the structure and analysis of these constructions there are differences between the normative literary style and the colloquial Israeli style of Hebrew. I claim that the possessive constructions under investigation are currently undergoing grammatical reanalysis such that, at the very least, the term that functions as subject in the normative literary style is losing some of its subject properties in the colloquial dialect. I show that this change in the grammatical status of the "nominal subject" is rather systematic; the various stages of the change will be investigated and an attempt will be made to explain the general nature of the reanalysis, the reasons for it, and the direction in which it is heading.

It is appropriate at this point to comment briefly on the two dialects of Modern Hebrew which are relevant for the present investigation--Colloquial Israeli Hebrew (CIH) and Normative Literary Hebrew (NLH). By Colloquial Israeli Hebrew I mean the dialect of Hebrew used in casual conversations in nonformal situations, where the social or educational status of the participants is irrelevant. By Normative Literary Hebrew, on the other hand, I mean the style or styles used in literature, and in the media (newspapers, radio, television, and theatre). This dialect, which is regarded by educators as the norm, is taught in the school system and is called for in formal situations.¹

The differences between the colloquial style and the normative literary style can be regarded not merely as dialect variations, but also because of the nature of these two styles, as an instance of a diachronic change in progress. As Segal (1921, 156) noted, "It is of course the uncontrolled speech of the folk to which we must look for advance information as to the general linguistic movement."

2. The Structure of Possessive Constructions--Background

In NLH possessive constructions are expressed in the following schematic manner:

(1) *be* to someone something
 dative nominative

The noun phrase that denotes the possessed object (which I refer to as the possessed nominal) occurs in the nominative case, the verb *be* agrees with the possessed nominal in gender, number, and person, and the noun phrase that designates the possessor (the possessor nominal) occurs in the dative case. Consider the sentences in (2):

- (2) a. haye lemose šaron šveycari.
was (3m sg) to Moshe watch (m) Swiss (m)
'Moshe had a Swiss watch.'
b. hayta lemose mexonit adama.
was (3f sg) to Moshe car (f) red (f)
'Moshe had a red car.'
c. hayt lemose š-oda štarin ruseyim.
were to Moshe three (m) books (m) Russian (m)
'Moshe had three Russian books.'
d. hayt lemose štey mexor-voš kadašlet.
were to Moshe two (f) cars (f) new (f)
'Moshe had two new cars.'

The fact that the verb in sentences (2a-d) agrees with the possessed nominal indicates that the latter functions as the subject in these possessive constructions. This is the case because, as indicated by the sentences in (3), only subjects control verb agreement in Hebrew:

- (3) e. Sara natne lahem sefer.
Sara (f) gave (f sg) to them (m) a book (m)
'Sara gave them a book.'
d. *Sara natnu lahem sefer.
Sara (f) gave (m sg) to them (m) a book (m)
'*Sara gave them a book.'
c. *Sara natnu lahem sefer.
Sara (f) gave (3 pl) to them (m) a book (m)
'*Sara gave them a book.'

(3b) and (3c) are ill-formed; they exemplify verb agreement with the direct object and the indirect object respectively. (3d), however, where it is the subject which controls verb agreement, is well-formed. Therefore, we can safely conclude that the possessed nominal serves as subject in NP possessive constructions. It is precisely the subjecthood of the possessed nominal, however, which is involved in the grammatical reanalysis of the possessive constructions in CIH. In the following sections, I will show that the possessed nominal is losing some of its subject properties in CIH.

3. Subject Properties and the Promotional Hierarchy

Keenan (1976) claims that the notion 'subject of' is not a single unified concept, but rather that the subjecthood of an NP results from a combination of factors. Hence, a noun phrase is judged to be the subject of a given sentence if it possesses a clear preponderance of the subject properties relative to the other NPs in the sentence.

The subject properties list that Keenan provides in this context includes properties relevant to the surface coding of the subject (e.g. case marking and position relative to the verb); properties involving the exact transformational behavior of the subject (e.g. what transformations it can undergo); and properties which have to do with the semantic and/or pragmatic content of subjecthood (e.g. agency, independent existence). The "unifactor" concept of subjecthood, as developed by Keenan, can be utilized to capture generalizations about varying degrees of subjecthood. (No previous characterization of the notion 'subject of' was capable of expressing such observations in a nonarbitrary fashion.)

Keenan used the redefined notion of 'subject of' to advance the following generalization: "Non-basic subjects [subjects derived by some

transformational process] are never more subject-like than basic subjects. In other words . . . subjects of non-basic sentences frequently do not have quite as "full a complement of the subject properties as do subjects of [basic] sentences" (Keenan 1976, 303). This generalization suggests that transformational operations which create derived subjects may do so to a greater or lesser extent, and it follows from this that certain of the subject properties will be harder for derived subjects to acquire than other subject properties, and, conversely, that some subject properties may be harder than others to lose, when losing subject status. Keenan proposed the following promotion to Subject Hierarchy to represent the relative difficulty with which the various subject properties can be passed on to derived subjects.⁴

(4) The Promotional Hierarchy				
Coding Properties		Behavior Properties	Semantic/Pragmatic Properties	
position > case	> verb	deletion, movement,	agency, independent	
marking	agreement	case changing prop-	existence, selectional	
		erties, control of	restrictions	
		cross reference		
		properties		

This promotional hierarchy claims that it is easier for derived subjects to take on the coding properties of subjects of basic sentences than to assume the behavioral or semantic properties of subjects of basic sentences. Furthermore, within the coding properties, subject position is the easiest to assume; case marking and verb agreement are more difficult properties to take on.

Keenan's promotional hierarchy is intended as a characterization of a synchronic process. However, I found it very useful to use the hierarchy when considering the diachronic issue at hand. The Promotional Hierarchy (PI) allows us to present the diachronic process of loss of subject properties within a sensible framework of gradation of subject properties.

The various stages of the diachronic process, especially the manner in which the coding properties are lost, in fact provide confirmation for the gradation of subject coding properties in the manner displayed in the PI. As will become evident below, in the diachronic process of reanalysis subject position is lost sooner than is subject case marking, and subject case marking, in turn, is given up before control of verb agreement by the subject is relinquished. I will now turn to the reanalysis of the subject status of the possessed nominal. I will open with an examination of the coding properties.

1. Loss of Subject Coding Properties

4.1. Subject Position

The most unmarked word order in Modern Hebrew, in both CIH and NH, is SVO. There are, however, various possible word orders, most, if not all, of which are conditioned by pragmatic factors.⁵ For our present purposes the relevant point with respect to word order is the fact that the possessed nominal, when we have seen to be the subject in the possessive constructions in NH, does not normally occur in sentence-initial position in either NH or CIH possessive constructions, whatever the

conditioning factors for this distribution may be.⁷
Thus, sentences like those in (5), where the possessed nominal occurs sentence initially

- (5) a. Yaon Šveycari haya Lemoše.
watch (n) Swiss (m) was (3m sg) to Moshe
'Moshe had a Swiss watch.'
b. mənənt- adurva haya Lemoše.
car (f) red (f) was (3f sg) to Moshe
'Moshe had a red car.'

would be highly marked both in NH and in CIH: they would be practically impossible, unless the possessed nominal were either interceded as focus (in which case it would bear a heavy stress) or were conditioned by the context (linguistic or situational) to serve as topic. (For an explanation of my use of the terms 'focus' and 'topic' consult Ben-Horin 1976.) Since in Hebrew NPs which function as focus can act those that function as topic always do occur sentence initially, the occurrence of the possessed nominal in sentence-initial position in (5a) and (5b) only as either topic or focus does not invalidate my contention that the possessed nominal does not occur in sentence-initial position in the unmarked case. It will be suggested here that the lack of typical subject position for the possessed nominal in the unmarked case functions significantly in the reanalysis of certain possessive constructions in CIH. Next I will consider case marking.

2.2. Case Marking

For reasons that will become clear in the course of this presentation, the change of case marking on the possessed nominal is more evident in the instances where the possessed nominal is definite than in the cases where it is indefinite. I will, therefore, first present the cases where the possessed nominal is definite; later in this paper I will deal with the instances where the possessed nominal is indefinite.⁸

In NH the possessed nominal occurs in the characteristic subject case--the nominative. (Note that nominative case has to over- morphological manifestation in Hebrew.) Consider the NH sentences in (6):

- (6) a. haya Lemoše hašəon mišəyca kvar
was (3 m sg) to Moshe the watch (m) from Switzerland already
bašara šəvra.
in the year that passed.
b. Moshe had the watch from Switzerland already last year.
c. haya Iann hašəonit hašca od kšəgəru
was (3 f sg) to us the car the this still when we lived
bešəvayv.
in Tel Aviv
'We had this car when we were still living in Tel Aviv.'
d. haya Iəsarə hašəonit hašca od lifney
was (3 pl) to Sara the jewelry (pl) the these still before
šəni hitəvəna.
that she got married
'Sara had this jewelry already before she got married.'
e. haya Lemoše hašəonit hašca od kvar
was (3 pl) to Moshe the tickets to the show (f) the this already
lifney šəvra.
before (a) week

'Moshe had the tickets to this show already a week ago.'
In CIH, however, the possessed nominal is assigned the accusative case marker *et*.⁹ Consider the CIH sentences in 7:

- (7) a. haya Lemoše et hašəon mišəyca kvar
was (3 m sg) to Moshe acc the watch from Switzerland already
bašara šəvra.
in the year that passed
b. haya I rak et hašəonit hašca od kšəgəru
was (3 m sg) to me only acc the car the this when (I) began
lifnəd.
to study
'I had only this car when I began to study.'
c. tənəd haya Iəsarə et hašəonit hašca od kvar
always was to Sara acc the document the appropriate
'Sara always had the appropriate document.'

The behavior of the possessed nominal with respect to pronominalization and relativization will serve as evidence that indeed the possessed nominal functions as accusative NP in CIH. Consider pronominalization first. The following sentences

- (8) hu natan li et hašəonit hašca kəlo.
he gave to me acc the key (m) to the apartment his
'He gave me the key to his apartment.'
(9) haya I oca kimat xodeš.
was (3 m sg) to me him (acc) almost a month
'I had it for almost a month.'
(8') *hu haya li kimat xodeš.
he (nom) was to me almost a month
kimat et hašəonit hašca mišəvra šəli.
'I got acc the watch the this from grandmother my
'I got this watch from my grandmother.'
(9') *haya Iə oca kimat xodeš.
was (3 m sg) to her him (acc) since that she got married
'She had it since she got married.'
(9'') *hu (nom) was (m) to her since that she got married

indicate that the possessed nominal can be referred to only by the accusative pronoun. (Hence the well-knownness of (8') and (9') as continuations of (8) and (9), respectively.) The reference to the possessed nominal by the pronominal pronoun, as in (8'') and (9''), results in ungrammaticality.¹⁰

Similar facts obtain in relativization with pronominal retention. The sentences in (10) indicate that the relativized possessed nominal can be referred to in the relative clause only by the accusative pronoun.

- (10) a. ze hašəonit hašca od kvar
this the book {he haya li oca kšəvixəli lifnəd.
that was to me him when (I) began to study
(he) (that) him acc. was to me }
b. *ze hašəonit hašca od kvar
this the book {he haya li kšəvixəli lifnəd.
that was to me him when (I) began to study
(he) (that) him acc. was to me }

Thus, we can conclude that in CIH the possessed nominal is no longer associated with nominative, subject, and marking with which it was

associated in NPH; rather, it has acquired accusative case marking.

I have so far demonstrated that in both NPH and CIH, the possessed nominal lacks the typical subject position, and that in CIH it has lost the characteristic subject case marking and has acquired the accusative case marking. It should be noticed here that position and case marking are two of the three subject coding properties mentioned in the PH, and that lack or loss of the characteristic subject coding properties involves some type of reanalysis of the NP in question. In what follows I will show that the possessed nominal is now in the process of losing its third subject coding property--control over verb agreement.

4.3. Verb Agreement

Consider the NP possessive constructions in (6) once again. In such sentences we find that the possessed nominal controls verb agreement. In CIH, however, where the possessed nominal occurs with an overt accusative marker, it tends to lose control of verb agreement. Consider the CIH sentences in (11-14).

- (11) a. ?hayta hann ec haxexont hazot od ksegarnu
was (3 f sg) to us acc the car (f) the this (f) still when (we)
betelaviv.
lived in Tel Aviv.
'We had this car when we were living in Tel Aviv.'
b. haya hann ec haxexont hazot od ksegarnu
was (3 m sg) to us acc the car (f) the this (f)
betelaviv.
jedani ec haxtovet Yela ksegagotli oto.
was (3 f sg) to Dani acc the address (f) hers when (I) met him
'Dan had her address when I met him.'
b. haya jedani ec haxtovet Yela . . .
was (3 m sg) to Dani acc the address (f) hers Ever lifney savta.
'Sara had these tickets already a week ago.'
(12) a. ?hayu lesara ec haxmalot hele od lifney yahu
were (3 m sg) to Sara acc the dresses (f pl) these still before that she
hixatara.
got married
b. haya lesara ec haxmalot hele . . .
was (3 m sg) to Sara acc the dresses (f pl) the these

Sentences like (11a), (12a), (13a), and (14a), where the verb agrees with the accusative definite possessed nominal, were judged by most speakers whom I have consulted as somewhat lower in acceptability than the corresponding (b) sentences, where the verb occurs in the third-person singular masculine irrespective of the gender and number of the possessed nominal. Other speakers accepted both versions as equally well-formed and only a few preferred the (a) sentences, where the verb agrees with the possessed nominal.

I would like to note in this context that I take these variations in speakers' judgments to indicate that the loss of control over verb agreement by the possessed nominal is now in progress. The two facts of the grammatical process--pre- and post-loss of control over verb agreement--apparently occur in the colloquial style, giving rise to such variations

among speakers as mentioned above.

The sentences in (15) and (16) further support my contention that there is a tendency for loss of control over verb agreement by the possessed nominal. Consider:

- (15) a. *zot hasimla I: ota
this (f) the dress (f) that was (f) to me her (acc)
 (ze) ota haya I
 (that her (acc) was (f sg) to me)
- ?betelaviv Kitana.
 when (?) was little
 'this is the dress that I had when I was little.'
b. zot hasimla I: ota
this (f) the dress (f) that was (m) to me her (acc) . . .
 (ze) ota haya I
 (that her (acc) was to me)
- (16) a. *ze haxaxilin I: ota
these the jewelry (m pl) that were (m) to me them
 (ze) ota haya I
 (that them (m) were to me)
- ?leeme-lia.
 to America
 'this is the jewelry that I had when I came to America.'
b. ele haxaxilin I: ota
these the jewelry (m pl) that was (3 m sg) to me them
 (ze) ota haya I
 (that them (m) were (3 m sg) to me)

The ill-formedness of sentences such as (15a) and (16a) indicates that when the possessed nominal occurs in the accusative case the verb cannot agree with the possessed nominal. The verb *hax* assumes the third-person masculine singular form, as in (15b) and (16b). This type of neutralization of verb agreement is in accordance with Greenberg's observation (1963, 92) that, in many languages, when the verb is not in agreement with any term in the sentence it assumes the singular form.

So far I have examined the possessive constructions where the possessed nominal was definite. It will become evident shortly that the reanalysis of the possessive constructions is clearer and more advanced in those cases than in the cases where the possessed nominal is indefinite. I will now examine possessive constructions with indefinite possessed nominal.

4.4. Indefinite Possessed Nominals

The sentences of (2) (which are well-formed in both NPH and CIH), as well as the (a) and (b) sentences of (7) and (8) below indicate that, when the possessed nominal is indefinite, it displays the same characteristics with respect to position as the definite possessed nominal--it lacks the typical subject position sentence initially. Concerning case marking, the loss of the nominative case marking by the possessed nominal which is evident in CIH possessive constructions where the possessed nominal is definite cannot be detected in the instances where the possessed nominal is indefinite, for lack of overt morphological distinction between the nominative and the accusative case of indefinite NPs. (See footnote 9 for a comment on the distribution of the change of status of the possessed nominal, in constructions where it is indefinite, may be loss of control

over verb agreement. There are indicators that this indeed happens, even though it seems to be less widespread when the possessed nominal is indefinite than when it is definite.

When confronted with sentences such as those in (17) and (18)

- (17) a. hayta lē mexonit kazot.
 - was (3rd sg) me to a car (f) such
 - 'I had such a car.'
- b. *hayta li mexonit kazot.
 - was (3rd sg) to me a car (f) such
 - 'I had such a car.'
- c. hayta li et hamexonit kazot
 - was (3rd sg) to me acc the car (f) the this (f) when (I) studied
 - behalversita.
 - in the university

- (18) a. hayu la tamid lamon beayot.
 - were (pl) to her always a lot of problems (f)
 - 'She always had a lot of problems.'
- b. *hayta la tamid hamon beayot.
 - was (3rd sg) to her always a lot of problems (f)
 - 'She always had a lot of problems.'
- c. hayta la et hapeayot haale od beyisrael.
 - was (3rd sg) to her acc the problems the these still in Israel
 - 'She had these problems back in Israel.'

most speakers whom I have consulted considered the (b) version, where the verb does not agree with the possessed nominal, as substandard, when compared to both the (a) version, where the verb agrees with the possessed nominal, and to the (c) version, where there is no verb agreement but where the possessed nominal is definite. Some speakers claimed that all three sentences were equally well-formed. No one, however, preferred the (b) version over either of the other two.

These judgments reveal that loss of control over verb agreement by the indefinite possessed nominal is in a less advanced stage than is loss of control over verb agreement by the definite possessed nominal. This suggests that, in instances where there are overt clues that the possessed nominal lacks characteristic case marking, the next stage in the loss of subject coding properties (i.e. loss of control over verb agreement) follows more readily than in cases where there are no overt clues as to the case marking of the NP in question. (Cf. also footnote 16.)

4.5. Some Conclusions about the Coding Properties

Thus far I have shown that (1) the possessed nominal lacks the typical subject position in both NH and GH, (2) in GH it has lost the characteristic subject case marking and has acquired the accusative case marking, and (3) in GH it is currently in the process of losing control over verb agreement. These aspects of the difference between the grammatical status of the possessed nominal in NH and GH suggest that the diachronic process involved in the transition from the normative to the colloquial structure may constitute a mirror image of the synchronic process described by the PH. While the PH claims that when a term gains subject properties it assumes subject position with greater ease than it does when it loses subject position with greater ease than it gains up subject position with greater ease than it can relinquish its case marking or its control over verb agreement.

The various stages of the diachronic process seem to occur in the

order described above. Due to the basically conservative nature of normative dialects, the fact that lack of subject position is attested in the normative as well as in the colloquial style suggests that this is the earliest stage of the diachronic process.

Concerning the other two subject coding properties, if loss of control over verb agreement were to occur prior to any change of case marking on the possessed nominal, as in (19) below--where case marking on the possessed nominal has not changed, but where the verb no longer agrees with the possessed nominal--could be well-formed, at least for some speakers. However, I have found no such speakers.

- (19) a. *hayta li hamexonit kazot
 - was (m) to me the car (f) already before (e) year
 - 'I had this car already a year ago.'
- b. *hayta lemi hamexonit kazot
 - was (m) to him the dresses (f) the these still in Israel
 - 'Ruth had these dresses back in Israel.'

In addition, if this were the case we would probably find more variance in speakers' judgments about change of case than about verb agreement. However, we have seen that exactly the opposite situation obtains.

Unless loss of control over verb agreement and change of case marking happened simultaneously across the board (a condition which cannot be supported by the facts--loss of control over verb agreement has not yet applied across the board whereas change of case marking has), the only plausible direction of the change could have been case change before loss of control over verb agreement.

I will now turn to a discussion of the status of the possessed nominal with respect to subject behavior properties.

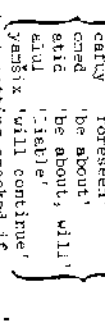
5. Subject Behavior Properties

The transformational operations which may bear on the issue at hand are subject raising and equi NP deletion. Let us first examine subject raising to subject position.

5.1. Subject Raising to Subject Position

The sentences of (20a-b) are related by the syntactic process of subject raising to subject position:

- (20) a. Fehaxur hazo yekarev makot im hu lo yilmed bircinut.
 - The guy for this will get blows if he not will study seriously.
 - 'This guy will get smacked if he doesn't study seriously.'
- b. hehaxur hazo yakol yilbegim lefahel makot im . . .
 - The guy the this can will likely be about to get blows
 - 'The guy will start getting smacked if . . .'



It is clear that only subjects can be raised in this fashion, therefore, this transformational operation can bear on the question of the subjecthood of the possessed nominal.

equivalent sentences in NID to indicate that the possessed nominal can undergo equi NP deletion (thereby manifesting its subjecthood). It turns out, however, that even in NID possessive constructions the possessed nominal cannot be the victim of equi NP deletion. Thus consider:

- (29) a. **Yehedim tevim hištedu liyat li miyom bo'i leIsrael*
 friends good tried to be to me from day my coming to Israel
 'Good friends tried to be mine, since the day I came to Israel.'
 b. **Yehedim halelu hištedu liyat li miyom bo'i*
 the friends the these tried to be to me from day my coming
 leIsrael.
 to Israel

It therefore appears that the impossibility of the possessed nominal's undergoing equi NP deletion in CIH is not due to its loss of any subject property, but rather to its lack of the property that is relevant to the application of equi in the first place. In other words, the possessed nominal seems never to have had the properties that are necessary in order to function as the victim of equi, and thus it could not have lost them. If this is indeed the case, then the inapplicability of equi NP deletion to the possessed nominal does not bear on the question of the subjecthood of the possessed nominal.

5.3. Some Conclusions About Subject Behavior Properties

We have seen that the possessed nominal in CIH has lost at least one of its subject behavior properties. When it is definite, it yields guessable sentences with respect to subject raising to subject position. The difference between the "raisability" of the possessed nominal when it is indefinite and its questionable raisability when it is definite suggests that the process of the possessed nominal's losing subject behavior properties is in accordance with the process of its losing its coding properties. (See Section 5.1 above.)

If we go back to the PH, we will find that the only claim that it makes with respect to behavior properties of subjects are that (1) the behavior properties are harder to assume than the semantic/pragmatic properties of subjects; (2) the behavior properties are easier to assume than the semantic/pragmatic properties of subjects. There is no established order within the behavior properties such that property X would be easier to assume than property Y. With respect to the grammatical reanalysis of the possessed nominal as I have discussed it so far, there seems to be no clear evidence that might bear on the relative order between loss of subject coding properties and loss of subject behavior properties.

It seems appropriate at this stage to discuss the possible reasons for the reanalysis of the possessed nominal in such possessive constructions.

5. The Reanalysis--Possible Reasons

6.1 An Overgeneralization of *et* Insertion

One possible reason for the reanalysis is the status of the possessed nominal might be simply an error on the part of speakers. Since CIH is an SVC language, a postverbal NP is generally not interpreted as the subject. Thus, speakers might come up with an overgeneralization of the

et insertion rule, which states, roughly, that any postverbal NP which is definite and which is not associated with any other preposition has to be preceded by *et*.

There are two major problems with such an explanation. First, the overgeneralization of *et* insertion predicts that the subjects in sentences like (30) will be preceded by *et*, since they occur post-verbally. However, the ill-formedness of (30a) and (30c) indicates that this is not the case.

- (30) a. **nikhsa lekar [et ha'avera] Yel axi.*
 entered to here acc the friend (F) of my brother
 'My brother's friend just came in here.'
 b. **hae elav et ha'avere Yeli meangive etiml*
 came to me acc the friend (F) my from England yesterday
 balayla.
 at night
 'My friend from England came to me last night.'

We may attempt to save the analysis by accounting for the ill-formedness of the sentences in (30) in terms of rule ordering in the following manner: *et* insertion has to precede subject-predicate inversion and, as the point in the derivation or sentences like (30) where *et* insertion has to apply, its structural description is not met. (Note that there is no definite NP postverbally.) If we attempt to save the overgeneralization of *et* analysis in this manner, then we would not be able to account for the occurrence of *et* in the colloquial (or perhaps slangy) expressions in (31), where subject-predicate inversion seems to have also applied, but where *et* has been inserted.

- (31) a. *parca kam [et lasrefa] haxi ešola ba'ir.*
 broke there acc, the fire the most big in the city
 'The biggest fire in the city broke out there.'
 b. *kara kam et oto ha'asen gar bakana Me'ava.*
 happened there acc. him disaster also in the year that passed
 'The same disaster occurred there last year too.'

In addition, an attempt to account for the reanalysis solely in terms of the overgeneralization of *et* insertion will be unable to provide an explanation both for the partial reanalysis of the indefinite possessed nominal (recall that in some instances it has ceased to control verb agreement), and it would also be unable to account for further developments in the change of status of the possessed nominal. It thus seems that an overgeneralization of *et* insertion does not provide a satisfactory explanation for the reanalysis.

6.2. Influence of European Languages

Another suggestion which might provide an explanation for the reanalysis in such possessive constructions has to do with the influence on the syntax of CIH of certain European languages where such possessive constructions have the possessor as subject and the possessed as direct object. Consider the examples in (32).

- (32) I have a book. (English)
 Ya man ksovskay (Polish)
 is habe sva buk (German)
 ix hob a buk (Yiddish)

Such an inference is not at all surprising, in light of the fact that Israel is a country of immigrants; European languages such as Yiddish, German, Polish, and English are spoken by many Israelis. The change in structure of the possessive constructions will, accordingly, involve the reanalysis of the possessed NP as a nonsubject, if not as a direct object, and potentially it could also involve the reanalysis of the possessor nominal as the subject.

We have seen that the possessed nominal in CH is in the process of losing its subject properties. It is impossible, however, to establish whether it has become a direct object in those instances where it is no longer subject, since all the tests which are relevant to direct objecthood would be inapplicable in the possessive constructions in Hebrew. Thus, passive, which is the prime example of a rule that only applies to direct objects in Hebrew, cannot apply in such possessive constructions, and dative movement, which ordinarily creates a direct object out of an indirect object, does not operate in Hebrew at all.²⁸

With regard to the potential reanalysis of the possessor nominal as subject on the model of the European languages (as mentioned in (32)), it should be noticed that this is not a necessary development, since Hebrew, unlike some other languages, allows for sentences without a surface subject. The reanalysis of the possessive constructions could thus, in principle, not even have to go as far as reanalyzing the possessor nominal as the subject. I would like to suggest, however, that there may be some tendency in fact to reanalyze the possessor NP as the subject but that a forced reanalysis in terms of subject coding properties—namely, position, case marking, and control over verb agreement—is highly unlikely.

7. The Reanalysis of Possessor Nominals

- Sentence (33)
 Ceruti havu tamid they mexoniyyot.
 to Ruth were always two cars.
 Ruth always had two cars.

Indicates that the possessor nominal can occur sentence initially, that is to say, in subject position. (This seems to be the case only when the possessor NP is nonpronominal.) Although Hebrew is a relatively free word order language which allows for various topicalizations of nonsubjects to sentence-initial position, there seems to be a difference in the degree of markedness of the word order between sentences like (33), where the possessor occurs sentence-initially, and sentences like (34):

- (34) Jedani natati et ha-sefer.
 to Dani I gave acc. the book
 'I gave the book to Dani.'

where the indirect object has been topicalized. Sentence (33) sounds much less marked than does (34); it needs less of a contrastive or list-like context. Therefore, it may be plausible to assume that sentences like (33), where the possessor nominal occurs sentence-initially, suggest that

the possessor nominal is in the process of acquiring the coding properties of the subject. It has, in this instance, acquired subject position.

In what follows I will suggest that it is highly unlikely that the possessor nominal will acquire the other two coding properties of the subject—case marking and control over verb agreement. This low likelihood of any further reanalysis of the possessor nominal as subject may be due to a potentially intolerable ambiguity which might result once such a reanalysis takes place.²⁹ If the possessor nominal were to lose its dative case marking and to assume the nominative case marking (as in (35c) and (36i))

- (35) a. Moshe has a factory for cigarettes.
 to Moshe (dative) was (3 m sg) a factory for cigarettes
 'Moshe had a cigarette factory.'
 b. Moshe has a factory for cigarettes.
 Moshe (nom) was (3 m sg) a factory for cigarettes
 'Moshe was a cigarette factory.'
 (36) Moshe has a Swiss watch.
 Moshe has (3) store (f) cigarettes
 'Moshe was a cigarette store.'

we would end up with ambiguous sentences which are either ungrammatical or semantically odd in one reading or both, due to the partial identity of *have* and *be* in Hebrew. As subject, the possessor nominal would have to trigger verb agreement; this might remedy the intolerable ambiguity of sentences like (36), but it will not resolve the intolerable ambiguity between the possessive and the nonpossessive readings (e.g. (35b) would be between the possessive 'Moshe had a cigarette factory' and 'Moshe was a cigarette factory'). Therefore, it seems safe to assert that the possessor nominal in the possessive constructions in CH will not be fully reanalyzed as the subject. It may gain more prominence in subject position, but it will not assume the other coding properties of the subject.

If the PH is to have an empirical validity in the possible reanalysis of the possessor nominal, then the prediction would be that, since the possessor nominal has not acquired all the subject coding properties, it should not manifest subject behavior properties. This is in fact what happens.

The possessor nominal does not function as subject with respect to equi NP deletion (see the sentences in (37)) or subject raising (cf. (38)). Consider:

- (37) a. Moshe hecilit liye Lemose Yaon Yevyacari.
 Moshe decided will be to Moshe watch Swiss
 'Moshe decided [Moshe will have a Swiss watch].'
 b. Moshe hecilit liyot Yaon Yevyacari.
 Moshe decided to be watch Swiss
 'Moshe decided to be a Swiss watch.'
- (38) a. Iye Lemose Yaon Yevyacari.
 will be to Moshe watch Swiss
 'Moshe will have a Swiss watch.'

(The sentence is starred in the possessive sense only. Note the intolerable ambiguity, as in (35b).)

(38) b. ^{nosbe} Mosbe	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>easy</td> <td>'is likely'</td> <td>lyvot Saon</td> <td>Sveycart.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>alvul</td> <td>'is liable'</td> <td>to be</td> <td>vavca Swiss</td> </tr> <tr> <td>yatxil</td> <td>'will start'</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>omed</td> <td>'is about'</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mosbe</td> <td>'is about'</td> <td>to be</td> <td>a Swiss watch.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>'is likely'</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	easy	'is likely'	lyvot Saon	Sveycart.	alvul	'is liable'	to be	vavca Swiss	yatxil	'will start'			omed	'is about'			Mosbe	'is about'	to be	a Swiss watch.		'is likely'		
easy	'is likely'	lyvot Saon	Sveycart.																						
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(Here, as above, the sentence is started in the possessive reading.)

It thus seems that the predictions of the PH are borne out. At this point I would like to offer the following observation. What is in fact involved in the reanalysis of the possessive constructions is a change of the grammatical relation between the possessed and the possessor. The two terms seem to maintain an internal balance; when one manifests a given subject property, the other does not, for they cannot both be analyzed as subjects with respect to the same processes at the same time. With respect to each property, thus, we can see that if the possessed nominal manifests this property the possessor nominal will not, and vice versa. This is not to say that with respect to any given property one of the terms must function as subject. Thus, even though the possessed nominal has in many instances relinquished its subject case marking and its control over verb agreement, the possessor nominal has not acquired any of these properties. However, with respect to position, for example, the possessed nominal lacks subject position, and in some cases the possessor nominal is now emerging in subject position.

To summarize, I have shown that possessive constructions in GH are currently undergoing grammatical reanalysis. I have portrayed the various stages of the reanalysis and attempted to explain its general nature.

NOTES

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For some discussion of the various styles in Modern Hebrew, see for example Reem (1956 and 1966).

I have cited these examples in the past tense, since in the present tense in such possessive constructions the suppletive form of *be* is the invariable particle *yaq*. The facts about verb agreement would thus not be clearer were I to use the present tense in these sentences.

On the basis of examples like those in (3), it may be argued that the noun phrase which governs verb agreement is not the subject, but rather is the noun phrase in the nominative case. Thus, case, rather than grammatical relation to the verb, may be taken as the factor governing verb agreement.

However, sentences such as the following, from bascul, litney Sana, kam et ofam bascul gam, happened there also before (a) year ago, too.

- (11) *nohda* ^{lc} ^{kasarya} ^{tabac} ^{hasibit}.
was born (3) to him the week ago, the girl the third
'His third daughter was born this week.'

where the verb agrees with the noun phrase in the accusative case, indicating that the nominative case is not the factor governing verb agreement.

In an earlier version of this paper, presented at the 1974 Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Keenan explicitly restricted the predictive power of the hierarchy to subjects derived by passive-like transformations (transformations in which the NP to be subjectivized occurs within the clause of which it becomes the derived subject). In the revised version of the paper, cited here, there is no such explicit restriction; nevertheless must, if not all, of the examples cited offer passive as an instance of subject creating transformation.

It should be noted that here, and throughout this paper, when I speak of 'loss of subject case marking' I do not wish to imply that the subject is overtly marked for the nominative case at any stage of the derivation; the relevant fact with respect to case marking is that in the process of reanalysis the NP which used to function as subject assumes the accusative case marking. The overt occurrence of the accusative marker on the NP in question is referred to here as loss of subject case marking, since the accusative is not a typical subject case marker in Hebrew, and by assuming the accusative case marker the relevant NP is no longer associated with the nominative case (irrespective of the letter's marking factor).

See, for example, Ben-Horin (1976) and Ziv (1976) for some pragmatic conditions on word order in Modern Hebrew. (Given actually claims that word order is totally pragmatically conditioned diachronically and that GVC is but a grammaticalization of a frequently occurring construction which have to do with the distribution of information in the sentence (e.g. 'functional sentence perspective' and 'communicative dynamism') see Filinas (1957 and 1971). See also Ziv (1976) for a short summary and some critical comments. In this connection see also Hestron (1975), where the 'presentative function' of discourse is discussed. With respect to the particular construction under investigation, see Clark (1973), where factors such as definiteness and animacy are shown to determine word order.)

There are claims (Clark 1970, Berman and Gross 1976) that the possessed nominal must be indefinite. The existence of sentences such as those in (6), (7) and (1) below, however, seems to counter such claims. I can see no reason, in the absence of an overall characterization of the relation of 'possession', for deciding that sentence (1), where the possessed nominal is morphologically definite, is not an instance of a possessive construction, but that sentence (11), where the possessed nominal is morphologically indefinite, is such an instance.

- (1) She has the most beautiful diamond ring that I have ever seen.
(11) She has a beautiful diamond ring.

On the basis of this observation it seems to me that generalizations about the nature of the possessed nominal require a semantic/pragmatic characterization and not a syntactic/morphological one.

The accusative marker *et* precedes definite NPs only. Thus compare:

- (1) a. *našati et hasofer leyonatan.*
 (I) gave acc the book to Jonathan.
 with b. **našati et sefer leyonatan.*
 (I) gave acc (a) book to Jonathan

and
 (ii) a. *raiti et moše haboker.*
 (I) saw acc Moshe the morning (= this morning)

with b. **raiti moše haboker.*
 (I) saw Moshe the morning

Sentence (ii) is ill-formed because *et* precedes an indefinite NP, whereas (iib) is ill-formed due to the absence of *et* preceding the definite accusative mode. It should be mentioned, incidentally, that the distribution of *et* is in fact more complicated than that; in some instances *et* occurs before what appear to be indefinite NPs. Consider:

- (iii) *et mi pašaša bašmašar?*
 acc who (you) met at the party?
 'Whom did you meet at the party?'

In this connection it was noted in Cole (1976a) that the conditioning factor cannot be specificity rather than definiteness. I cannot, however, provide a more insightful characterization of the distribution of *et* at the present time.

The observant reader may have noticed that the example sentences in (7) include only possessed nominals which are masculine singular; this is the case because, as will become evident shortly, the sentences where the possessed nominal is other than masculine singular exemplify further changes in the subcategory of the possessed nominal.

Linguarists and educators have tried time and again to uproot the occurrence of the accusative marker *et* in possessive constructions where the possessed nominal is definite. Thus such statements as that in (1)

- (1) Don't say: *yeš kavar et haškartim.*
 existential particle to me already acc the tickets
 'I have the tickets already.'

use the correct form: *yeš kavar haškartim*, without the superfluous *et*.

are abundant in grammar books. (See, for example, Sivan 1969, Ben-Or 1959, and Bahat and Ron 1972.)

The existence of such explicit instructions serves as evidence that in CIH speakers do utter the possessive constructions with the accusative marker *et* whenever the possessed nominal is definite. For, if speakers had not used such constructions with *et*, statements like that in (1) would be meaningless and superfluous. Educators wish to uproot only those mistakes which people actually make; they do not introduce nonexistent forms and warn against their use in speech.

It should be clarified at this point that I am not taking a stand here against attempts at correcting what are considered to be mistakes in the language of some speech community. I believe that this is a totally different question which is relevant for language standardization and the language instruction. All I am interested in here is a description of the way native speakers actually speak. The description is, thus, totally void of value judgment. What I would like to show here is that the occurrence of the accusative marker *et* in front of the possessed nominal in the possessive constructions in CIH is not a mere accidental, arbitrary, and isolated mistake, but rather that it represents a stage in the

reanalysis of such possessive constructions.

The fact that the pronoun subject referring to the possessed nominal occurs sentence initially in (8^a) and (9^a), unlike its nominal location in the possessive constructions where the possessed nominal is a full, nonpronominal NP, is due to the absence in CIH of subject-verb inversion where the subject is a pronoun.

The question might be asked whether sentences such as (8^a) and (9^a) are not well-formed in NIH. As I have claimed, the possessed nominal functions as the subject in NIH and our expectations would therefore be that such sentences, where the nominative pronoun is used to refer to the subject, should be well-formed. It turns out that such sentences are not used in NIH, but that sentences like

- (1) *hu (nom) haser bešad kimat xodes.*
 he (nom) was in my hand almost a month

are used instead. The use of the locative expression 'in my hand' to refer to my having it suggests an alternative way to expressing the possessive idea, and its existence might explain the nonoccurrence of (8^a) and (9^a) in NIH. Note, incidentally that, once a locative expression is introduced to sentences like (8^a) and (9^a), they become well-formed.

Consider:

- (ii) *hu haya li bašmašar.*
 he was to me in the office
 'I had it in my office.'

However, I would like to claim that such sentences do not express true possession, but that they are in fact instances of locative statements. Thus (ii) is actually a statement about the location of the object in question, not about my possessing it.

The question here, as in the case of pronominalization (cf. note 13), is whether such sentences as (10b) cannot be accepted in NIH. The answer is negative, but the reason is not the nonnominative status of the relevant NP, but rather the violation of the NIH relativization technique; NIH does not relativize a NP in the nominative case utilizing the pronoun reference technique. When the NP is in the nominative it is relativized by deletion of its referent in the relative clause.

Note, incidentally, that the deletion strategy of relativization, although more apt in such constructions, will have no bearing on this issue at hand. Both nominative and accusative NPs can be deleted by this procedure, and thus sentences like

- (1) *ze hasofer šehava li.*
 this the book that was to me
 'This is the book that I had.'

will provide no evidence one way or the other as to the status of the possessed nominal.

One noted in note 14, relative clauses where deletion rather than pronoun retention is employed manifest no overt clue that the possessed nominal occurs in the accusative case. In such sentences we find that the verb may or may not agree with the possessed nominal. Consider:

- (i) *zot hasiḡa šehava li xšehayiti xšama.*
 this (f) the dress (f) that was (f) to me when (f) was little
 šehava li xšehayiti xšama.
 (ii) *zot hasiḡa li xšehayiti xšama.*
 that was (m)

Let me note here, however, that sentences like (ii) were judged by severe-

speakers to be somewhat substandard. This reaction, together with the well-formedness of (i), may indicate that the loss of control over verb agreement by the possessed nominal is just in the initial stages in cases where there is no overt evidence that the possessed nominal occurs in the accusative case. See also the discussion about indefinite possessed nominals which follows in the text.

[Keenan's examples of Welsh, Latin, German, Finnish, Polish, Spanish, and Arcaic passive constructions also show that when the verb does not agree with any NP in the sentence it occurs in third-person singular. (All the examples are cited in his 1971 version; only the first three are also cited in the 1976 version.)

Note that I am not claiming that the order has actually been changed from SV to VS in such possessive constructions. It may well be the case that the possessed nominal has always occurred following the verb. (Note, in this connection, that various grammarians still consider Hebrew to be a VSO language.) For our present purpose it is irrelevant to discover whether such possessive constructions in fact involve a change of the original VS to SV at some point (to accord with the grammaticalized SVO order) and then back to the present VS order displayed by possessive constructions. The important factor is that in Modern Hebrew (both MH and CH) the SV order has been grammaticalized and the VS order in the possessive constructions manifests lack of the characteristic subject position sentence initially.

Note that passivization, which usually serves as a behavioral test for subjecthood, cannot apply to the possessive constructions in Hebrew. 20 would like to entertain the idea that reflexivization may bear on the subjecthood of the possessed nominal. (I am referring here to regular reflexive forms, not to the intensive reflexives which are semantically and syntactically distinct from regular reflexives. In this context see Leskowsky 1972.) The factor conditioning reflexivization in Hebrew seems not to be just left-to-right order; rather it seems that subjecthood is also involved as a relevant factor. The difference in grammaticality between the MH possessive construction in (2) and the CH possessive construction in (11)

- (i) eyn lo adam be'clm.
there is not to him (s) person in the world
*yeš lo acmo bišvd.
there is to him himself only
- (ii) eyn lo šm davar bešm.
there is not to him anything in the world
yeš lo rak et acmc.
there is to him only acc himself

'Be has (got) nothing in this world. He has only (got) himself.'

could be attributed to the difference in the subject status of the possessed nominal. If the restriction on reflexivization in Hebrew were such that subjects could not be reflexivized, then the ill-formedness of (i) and the well-formedness of (ii) would be accounted for. The ill-formedness of (i) would indicate that the possessed nominal functions as subject with respect to reflexivization in MH, and the well-formedness of (ii) would indicate that the possessed nominal does not function as subject with respect to reflexivization in CH.

Note that the underlying assumption here is that the same restrictions on reflexivization hold for both MH and CH. The subject raising to object position, to the extent that it operates in Modern Hebrew, is restricted in such a way as to make it impossible

examine the subject status of the possessed nominal. So far the most likely candidates for a subject raising to object position analysis are sentences such as:

- (i) kašavti et ze lebiš ešer.
 I thought acc this to not possible
 I considered it to be impossible.
- (ii) ?šefar haze hašev leš leš leš. I will soon have this book at home.

The restriction on the rule is that the complement can only have predicative nominal or predicative adjective.

For an extensive discussion of subject raising, see Postal (1971).

Note that whether the definite possessed NP denotes a specific referent, as in (2-a), or a generic referent, as in (2-b), the same situation obtains.

- 23Let me note here that the distinction between sentences (i) and (ii) below is especially enlightening in this connection. Compare
- (i) hašefar haze 'is about' lišor bašifra bešarov.
 the book the this yaxxil 'will start' to be in the library soon
 yafsiq 'will stop'
 'is likely'
- and
- (ii) ?šifšefar haze 'is about' lišor leš leš leš.
 the book the this yaxxil 'will start' to be to me soon
 yafsiq 'will stop'

The subject of the locative sentence in (i) can easily undergo subject raising. The possessed nominal in (ii), however, can hardly, if at all, be raised by this rule. Note too, in this context, that sentence (iii) below, which on the surface appears to be like a possessive construction, is actually a locative sentence, and as such it allows subject raising of the book.

- (iii) hašefar haze 'is about' lišor li bašar bešarov.
 the book the this 'is about to be to me at home soon
 'I will soon have this book at home.'

24Likewise, we have seen that the possessed nominal in CH could be reflexivized (cf. sentence (ii), note 20), a fact which suggested that it does not function as subject with respect to reflexivization. Since reflexivizable NPs must necessarily be definite, the fact that the possessed nominal could be reflexivized indicates that when it is definite the possessed nominal lacks some crucial subject properties.

25I will have more to say about the possible influence of morphology on subject behavior properties when I deal with the properties of the possessor nominal.

In this context I would like to mention an interesting observation which was brought to my attention by Lloyd Anderson. The difference in behavior between the definite and the indefinite possessed nominals that has been discussed here seems to constitute an exception to their behavior elsewhere. Thus, it is an established fact that more often than not subjects tend to be definite. However, the evidence from CH indicates that definite NPs lose their subject status sooner than indefinite NPs do. Thus Hebrew-specific phenomena, such as the restrictions on the distribution of the accusative marker et, may account for the exceptional characteristics that definite and indefinite NPs reveal in Hebrew.

The characterization of the properties that are relevant for the application of equi NP deletion evades me, at least for the time being. Note that notions like 'control over the activity' or 'volitionality',

which suggest themselves as potential candidates for determining what a given subject would be able to undergo equi NP deletion, would not account for the distribution of equi. Even though lack of control over the activity, or lack of volitionality, could explain the ill-formedness of

- (2) *basefer haze lo rava liyot il.
the book the this not wanted to be to me
'this book did not want to be mine.'

it would make the wrong prediction with respect to

- (11) basefer haze lo rava liyot basefer li.
the book the this not wanted to be belong to me
'this book did not want to belong to me.'

The expectation that a sentence like (11), which is semantically similar to (2), would be ill-formed on the same grounds that (1) is ill-formed is not borne out. (11) is a *basefer* sentence. Thus it seems that the property relevant for the application of equi NP deletion is not simply 'volition' or 'control over the activity'.

Let me mention in this context that two other studies of subject properties (Kerem 1976 and Seidman 1976) have reported that equi could not apply to certain otherwise subject-like NPs. These observations about *basefer* (Kerem) and *basefer* (Seidman) also suggest that equi NP deletion is restricted to subjects possessing some special properties.

It is pointed out in fact that a bearing on subjecthood (cf. note 20), then the difference between the following sentences could bear on the question at hand. Consider:

- (12) a. *haya lavem rak acram.
were to-3am only themselves
b. *haya lavem rak et acram.
acc
c. *haya lavem rak acram.
was
d. Haya lavem rak et acram.
'they had only themselves.'

The only acceptable sentence, (12d), is the one where the possessed nominal exemplifies loss of the nominative case, less of control over verb agreement, and reflexivity. Some of the other sentences, where the possessed nominal has been reflexivized but where its coding properties have not been lost, is well-formed. This suggests, at the least, that loss of subject behavior properties (in this instance the ability to be reflexivized) cannot be overtly manifested when the NP in question still retains its coding properties.

In this connection note also that in G1H the conservative reflexives always occur with either a preposition or the accusative marker *et*. This suggests that they do not manifest subject case marking.

See also (1976) for explicit arguments that Modern Hebrew does not have a *basefer* movement rule.

It has been suggested to me that the basically conservative nature of morphology may constitute a contributing factor to the lack of further reanalysis in the status of the possessor nominal. This suggestion is based on the observation that in Hebrew a change of case from the dative (here the case of the possessor nominal) to the nominative (regular subject case) involves a radical morphological change in the case of most personal pronouns. Consider the following personal pronouns in the dative

and in the nominative, respectively:

	Dative	Nominative
1 sg	li	ani
2 m	leka	ata
f	lek	at
3 m	lo	hu
f	la	hi
1 pl	lanu	axanu
2 m	laxem	axem
f	laxen	axen
3 m	lahem	hem
f	lahen	hen

It seems plausible that there are cases where such morphological alternations could block possible processes which might otherwise be operative. However, the 'radical' morphological alternations occur only with the personal pronouns, and even here not with all of them. Note, therefore, the systematicity in the third person plural pronouns. The dative marker, *le*, is just added to the nominative pronoun. Likewise, whenever the dative is nonpronominal, its morphological form systematically consists of dative marker + NP (e.g. *moše* (nominative)/*lemoše* (dative); *yešet* ('they' nominative)/*leyšet* ('to a boy' dative); *haya* ('the girl' nominative)/*lahaya* ('to the girl' dative), with a systematic loss of [h]).

If morphological conservatism were involved as a crucial factor, then we would expect to find changes of dative to nominative at least in those cases which are systematically related (we find such systematic instances of case change from *nominative* to *accusative*). However, no such dative to nominative change occurs even in the most morphologically systematic instances. It may be suggested, in this context, that the conservative nature of morphology makes the loss of existing morphology more unlikely than the introduction of new morphology, and thus the dative to nominative change, which involves a loss of existing morphology, is less likely to occur than the nominative to accusative change, which involves just introduction of new morphological marking. However, there is no evidence in Hebrew, other than the data which we attempt to account for, that supports this contention about the difference between loss of existing morphological marking and introduction of new morphology. I therefore suspect that, even if it is a contributing factor, morphological conservatism is not crucial in the lack of further reanalysis of the possessor nominal.

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