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Possessive indexes in Assamese

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with a comprehensive description of a set of possessive indexes found in Assamese, a language spoken in the eastern part of India, by a majority of people living in the state of Assam. Genetically, this language belongs to the group of Indo-Aryan languages and shares a close affinity with Bengali and Oriya languages due to their common source of origin. The possessive indexes of the language are found to be suffixed to the possessed noun in possessive constructions (Possessive NPs)) in terms of the category of person. Cross-linguistically, it is not very uncommon to find this kind of markers in possessive NPs (Siewierska 2004). But what makes Assamese interesting in this respect is that the set of markers found in Assamese is not derived from pronominal forms as attested in many languages of the world. Furthermore, the existence of possessive markers is an unusual phenomenon in Assamese in that it is neither common in NIA languages nor in South Asian languages (Paudyal 2008). Apart from a few geographically distant languages of Indo-Aryan origin, these markers are not available in any other Indo-Aryan languages which are close to Assamese, either geographically or genetically. Thus, this paper focuses on four aspects: a comprehensive description of the markers as stated above, a survey of the markers in other Indo-Aryan languages, the historical origin of the markers, and the origin of the system of marking.

KEYWORDS

Possessive indexes, cross-indexes, Person, Darai, Majhi, Austric languages, Santhali, Tibeto-Burman languages

Possessive indexes in Assamese[*]

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1 Introduction

The possessive indexes are found in a possessive construction in which a noun occurs with another noun phrase denoting a possessor. This kind of indexes is used to show the possessive relationship. It is common in world's languages to use this construction for showing possession. But languages vary from each other in terms of the way of using grammatical means for marking possession. The possessive construction of languages may differ on the basis of the kind of possessors and possessed nouns, i.e. what kind of person, animal or thing can play the role of possessors and possessed. Further, it may differ on the basis of possessive relationship it expresses. The possessive construction may also vary language to language in terms of the formal marking attached to the possessor, to the possessed noun or to both, or to neither (Dixon 2010).

Assamese employs a set of formal marking which is found on the possessed nouns. This set occurs in the possessive construction within a NP where the possessed noun is accompanied by a genitive case marked possessor. The genitive marking on the possessor is an obligatory feature of the possessive construction in Assamese. The presence of this marker does not depend on the nature of the possessor, whether it is animate, inanimate, common noun, human, pronoun or proper noun, or on the nature of the possessed noun whether it is alienably or inalienably possessed, or on the nature of the possessive relationship whether it expresses ownership, whole-part relationship, kinship relationship or association etc. Irrespective of the nature of the possessor, the possessed noun, and the possessive relationship, the marker is attached to the possessor, as exemplified in (1)-(4).

(1) *sʋali-zoni-r*   *soku-hal*
     girl-CLF.F-GEN   eye-CLF.pair
     'The eyes of the girl.'

(2) *ħimona-r*   *kesua-tʋ*
     Simona-GEN   child-CLF
     'The child of Simona.'

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(3)　　*mo-r*　　　　*gari-kʰɔn*
　　　　1SG-GEN　　car–CLF
　　　　'My car.'

(4)　　*ama-r*　　　　*ma*
　　　　1PL-GEN　　mother
　　　　'My mother.'

In (1), the possessor is the common noun, the possessed noun is inalienable, and the possessive relationship is the whole-part relationship; the possessor in (2) is the proper noun, the possessed noun is inalienable, and the possessive relationship is the kinship relationship; pronouns function as possessors in (3) and (4), the possessed noun is alienable in (3), but inalienable in (4), and the possessive relationship is the ownership in (3) and the kinship in (4). But irrespective of the different nature of the possessor, the possessed noun and the possessive relationship, the genitive marker is attached to each possessor in (1)-(4). The possessive indexes are found to occur in such possessive constructions where the role of possessor is played by pronouns, human proper and common nouns, and the role of possessed noun is played by a kind of inalienable possessed nouns which are used to refer to kinship relations. The markers are used to show the relation having between the possessor and the possessed noun in terms of the category of Person and Honorificity of the possessor.

　　The paper has the following structure. Section 2 talks about the terminology used in this work. Section 3 provides a brief discussion of pronominal forms which play an important role in the marking of possessive indexes. A comprehensive discussion of possessive indexes is presented in Section 4, which is followed by a survey of possessive indexes in other NIA languages in Section 5. Section 6 discusses the historical origin of the markers. The origin of the system of marking possessive indexes is described in Section 7 and the paper concludes with a summary of the findings in Section 8.

2　Terminology used in this work

　　Different terms are used in different studies conducted on the marking of possessed nouns across languages. Most notable ones are Possessive indexes (Haspelmath 2013), Pertensive (Dixon 2010), Pronominal suffixes (Grierson 1920), Possessive pronominal prefix (Chelliah 1997), Person agreement (Siewierska 2004), Possessive suffixes/affixes (Kroeger 2005; Dryer 2007), Pronominal affixes (Mithun 2003), Possessive agreement (Paudyal 2008), Pronominal possessive affixes (Dryer 2005; Dhakal 2011) etc. Of these terminologies, I follow the one suggested by Haspelmath (2013). Haspelmath proposes a conceptual framework for the syntactic status of bound person forms attached to verbs for expressing verbal arguments, to nouns for expressing possessors, and to adpositions for expressing adpositional complements. His proposal is based on a number of insights presented by Siewierska (2004) on the bound forms in a non-Eurocentric way. Instead of using the terms 'agreement markers' or 'pronominal affixes', he proposes the term 'indexes' to refer to the bound person forms. As a support of his proposal, he says that bound person forms in many languages of the world do not behave in a similar way as they do in some well-known European languages such as German, Russian, French, English (to some extent). The term 'agreement markers' is used to refer to the bound person forms of these European languages and it should not be imposed to other languages in which the syntactic nature of person forms is not similar with these European languages.

This is why he suggests a new term 'indexes' or 'person indexes', which can be applied to all languages in order to discuss bound person forms. According to him, indexes can be of three types on the basis of their occurrence with coreferential nominals (conominal): gramm-indexes with obligatory conominals, cross-indexes with optional conominals, and pro-indexes with no conominals possible. The term 'gramm-indexes' is used to refer to agreement markers. When the conominal is obligatory in a clause or in a phrase, the index tends to be highly grammaticalized and thus, it gets the status of an (grammatical) agreement marker. Haspelmath's study shows that the person forms attached to verbs in German, Russian, and English are agreement markers in that they cannot occur without the coreferential nominal. But the person forms added to verbs and possessed nouns in languages like Assamese cannot be considered as agreement markers on the same ground as they can be in the languages like German, Russian, and English, since the occurrence of the coreferential nominal is optional in Assamese. Further, even if it is known that the dual syntactic status of person forms found in languages like German, Russian and in languages like Assamese is discussed in terms of the distinction of canonical and non-canonical agreement markers, I prefer to follow the term 'indexes', since it is an established terminology used in literatures to refer to the system exists in Assamese. The markings on possessed nouns in Assamese are cross-indexes, not gramm-indexes, since the presence of the possessor is optional in the possessive construction.

3 Pronominal forms

It is very much essential to know about the pronominal system of Assamese before the discussion of pronominal possessors and the possessive indexes is presented.

Assamese has a set of independent personal pronominal forms which distinguishes three persons: first, second and third person. Two forms are used as first person pronouns: *mɔi* and *ami*. The first of these is the singular form and the second one is the plural form. The second person pronoun has three distinct forms in terms of the category of honorificity: *tɔi*, *tumi*, and *apuni*. The first of these is the second person inferior form, the second one is used as a familiar form and the third one is used as a second person honorific form. The category of number is not distinguished by the independent pronominal forms in the second person. Rather, a suffix is added to each form to denote plurality. Similar to the second person, the third person pronominal form distinguishes eight independent forms in terms of the category of honorificity, proximity, and gender: *i, ei, ɦi, tai, ɛ̃ʊ, tɛ̃ʊ, ekʰet, tekʰet*. *i* and *ei*, both are used to refer to the person who is inferior and close to the speaker, but the first of these is used to refer to male referents while the second one is used for female referents. Similarly, *ɦi* and *tai* are used to refer to male and female, inferior, distal referents respectively. *ɛ̃ʊ* and *tɛ̃ʊ* are the familiar forms used to refer to proximal and distal referents while *ekʰet* and *tekʰet* are the proximal and distal honorific forms. Similar to the second person, the category of number is not distinguished by the independent third person pronominal forms. A suffix is added to the stem to mark plural.

Among the independent forms discussed above, the first and the second person pronominal forms along with two third person forms go through some internal modification to the stem when case or number suffixes are added to them. Following Masica (1991), I use the term 'oblique stem' to refer to this kind of stems. Thus, *mʊ-* and *ama-* are the oblique stems of *mɔi* and *ami*. Likewise, *tʊ-, tɔ-, tʊma-*, and *apʊna-* are the oblique stems of *tɔi*, *tumi*, and *apuni*. Of the third person pronominal forms, only *i* and *ɦi* are modified. *i* becomes *ia-* and *ɦi* becomes *ta-* when the case suffix is added to them. When the independent pronominal forms occur as possessors, the forms change into the

oblique stems due to the genitive marker that is suffixed to them. The pronominal forms and their oblique counterparts are presented in a systematic manner in Table 1.

Person				Number			
				Singular		Plural	
				Independent Pronouns	Oblique stems	Independent Pronouns	Oblique stems
1				*moi*	*mʊ-*	*ami*	*ama-*
2	INF			*toi*	*tʊ-*		*tɔ-*
	FAM			*tumi*	*tʊma-*		
	HON			*apuni*	*apʊna-*		
3	INF	PROX	M	*i*	*ia-*		
			F	*ei*			
		DIST	M	*ħi*	*ta-*		
			F	*tai*			
	FAM	PROX	-	*ɛʊ̃*			
		DIST	-	*tɛʊ̃*			
	HON	PROX	-	*ekʰet*			
		DIST	-	*tekʰet*			

Table 1. Pronominal forms in Assamese

All the pronominal forms presented in the table can function as possessors, but some of the forms go through some internal modification when the genitive suffix is added to them and some remain unchanged, as shown in the table (Table 1). This is also evident from the examples given in (5) - (8).

(5)   **mʊ-r**   *gɔr*
      1SG-GEN   house
      'My house.'

(6)   **tʊma-r**   *gɔr*
      2FAM-GEN   house
      'Your house.'

But

(7)   **ɛʊ̃-r**   *gɔr*
      3FAM-GEN   house
      'His house.'

(8)   **ekʰet-ɔr**[1]   *gɔr*
       3HON-GEN   house
       'His house.'

4 The formal markings

        -r, *-ra*, and *-k*, these three markers are found to be added to the possessed nouns and they represent the category of person and the honorificity of the possessor. It has been already stated that not all possessed nouns can take these markers. Only the nouns which represent kinship relationship allow them to occur with. Assamese has a rich set of kin terms which represents both blood relationship and affinal relationship. Almost all the terms related to childbirth and affinal relationship obligatorily take the markers.
        Even though the distinction of honorificity is maintained by both the second person and the third person pronominal forms, the possessive indexes represent the distinction of second person pronominal possessor only. The possessed noun takes *-r* when the possessor is a second person inferior form and takes *-ra* when the role of the possessor is played by the second person familiar form, as presented in (9) and (10).

(9)   *tʊ-r*   *deuta-r*
       2INF.SG-GEN   father-2INF.POSS
       'Your father.'

(10)   *tʊma-r*   *deuta-ra*
       2FAM.SG-GEN   father-2FAM.POSS
       'Your father.'

        -k is used when the possessor is the second person honorific and the third person pronoun, as in (11) - (12).

(11)   *apʊna-r*   *deuta-k*
       2HON.SG-GEN   father-2HON.POSS
       'Your father.'

(12)   *ta-r*   *deuta-k*
       3INF.DIST.M.SG-GEN   father-3POSS
       'His father.'

        If the possessor is a first person pronoun, the possessed noun remains unmarked.

(13)   *mʊ-r*   *deuta*
       1SG-GEN   father
       'My father.'

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[1] The genitive *-r* has two allomorphs: *-r* and *-ɔr*. The former one is found with the stem ending with a vowel sound and the latter one is added to the stem that ends with a consonant sound.

In (13), the possessor is the first person pronoun and thus the possessed noun is unmarked. But in (9)-(12), the possessed nouns are marked by the distinct possessive indexes in terms of the category of person and the honorificity.

Although the category of honorificity and the proximity plays an important role in distinguishing third person independent pronominal forms, the index on possessed nouns does not represent these distinctions. Rather, the possessed nouns take invariable -*k* marker irrespective of the distinction of honorificity and proximity of the possessor, as shown in (14).

(14)   *ia-/ta-/ei-/tai-/eõ-/teõ-/*
        3INF.PROX.M-/3INF.DIST.M-/3INF.PROX.F-/3INF.DIST.F-/3FAM.PROX-/3FAM.DIST-/
        ekʰet-/tekʰet-r   *deuta-k*
        3HON.PROX-/ 3HON.DIST-GEN   father-3POSS
        'His/her father.'

It can be seen from (14) that the third person pronominal possessor has different forms in terms of the category of honorificity, proximity, and the gender. But the index on the possessed noun stays invariable irrespective of these distinctions.

It should be further noted that each of these three markers has two allomorphs, which are phonologically conditioned. -*r* has -*r* and -*ɛr*, -*ra* has -*ra* and -*ɛra*, and -*k* has -*k* and -*ɛk*. The first allomorph of each marker is added when the stem ends with the vowel *a*, and the second one is added when the stem ends with *i, u, ɔi, ou, a,* and consonant sounds. The illustrative examples are given in (15)-(17).

(15)   *tʊ-r*   *ma-r*
        2INF-GEN   mother-2INF.POSS
        'Your mother.'

(16)   *tʊ-r*   *bɔni-ɛr*
        2INF-GEN   sister-2INF.POSS
        'Your sister.'

(17)   *ta-r*   *nɔbou-ɛk*
        3INF-GEN   sister-in-law-3POSS
        'His sister-in-law.'

It has been stated earlier that almost all the kin terms require the obligatory presence of indexes. There are, however, a couple of terms which cannot take these markers. These terms are *ħɔntan* 'child', *kesua* 'baby', *bagin*² 'nephew', *lora* 'boy' and *sʋali* 'girl', as shown in (18) - (21).

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² *bagin* means sister's son.

(18) *tʊ-r*   *sɔntan/kesua/lora/sʋali³/b̤agin*
      2INF-GEN   child/baby/son/daughter/nephew
      'Your child/baby/son/daughter.'

(19) *tʊma-r*   *sɔntan/kesua/lora/sʋali/b̤agin*
      2FAM-GEN   child/baby/son/daughter/nephew
      'Your child/baby/son/daughter.'

(20) *apʊna-r*   *sɔntan/kesua/lora/sʋali/b̤agin*
      2HON-GEN   child/baby/son/daughter/nephew
      'Your child/baby/son/daughter.'

(21) *ta-r*   *sɔntan/kesua/lora/sʋali/b̤agin*
      3INF.DIST.M-GEN   child/baby/son/daughter/nephew
      'His child/baby/son/daughter.'

It can be seen from the examples (18) - (21) that all the terms functioning as possessed nouns remain unmarked irrespective of the different possessors. It should also be noted here that though the words *lora* 'boy' and *sʋali* 'girl' are frequently used to refer to son and daughter, there is another pair of words which is used to refer to them. This pair, however, requires the obligatory presence of possessive indexes, as illustrated in (22) - (26).

(22) *mʊ-r*   *pʊ/zi*
      1SG-GEN   son/daughter
      'My son/daughter.'

(23) *tʊ-r*   *putai-er/zi-er*
      2INF-GEN   son-2INF.POSS/daughter-2INF.POSS
      'Your son/daughter.'

(24) *tʊma-r*   *put-era/zi-era*
      2FAM-GEN   son-2FAM.POSS/daughter-2FAM.POSS
      'Your son/daughter.'

(25) *apʊna-r*   *put-ek/zi-ek*
      2HON-GEN   son-2HON.POSS/daughter-2HON.POSS
      'Your son/daughter.'

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³ It may be arguable whether the terms *child* and *baby* can be considered as kin terms or not. I had a conversation with one of my colleagues, Krishna Boro, who was working in Hakhun, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in North-East India, in this regard. In Hakhun, he said, the words for child and baby are marked in a similar way to body parts and to other kin terms. Similarly, the words for *lora* and *sʋali* are marked. Thus, it can be said that Hakhun speakers construe these terms as kinship terms, which is reflected in the formal coding.

(26)   *ta-r*   *put-ek/zi-ek*
           3INF.DIST.M-GEN   son-3POSS/daughter-3POSS
           'His son/daughter.'

There are also a few terms in which the distribution of possessive indexes is not consistent. These terms are *ḫotiza* 'nephew', *za* 'sister-in-law', and *deʊr* 'brother-in-law',[4] as illustrated in (27)-(32).

(27)   *tʊ-r*   *ḫotiza-ɛr*
           2INF-GEN   nephew-2INF.POSS
           'Your nephew.'

(28)   *tʊma-r*   *ḫotiza-Ø*
           2FAM-GEN   nephew
           'Your nephew.'

(29)   *apʊna-r/ta-r*   *ḫotiza-ɛk*
           2HON/3INF.DIST.M-GEN   nephew-2HON.POSS/3POSS
           'Your/his nephew.'

Similarly,

(30)   *tʊ-r*   *za-ɛr/deʊr-ɛr*
           2INF-GEN   sister-in-law-2INF.POSS/brother-in-law-2INF.POSS
           'Your sister-in-law/brother-in-law.'

(31)   *tʊma-r*   *za- Ø/deʊr- Ø*
           2FAM-GEN   sister-in-law/brother-in-law
           'Your sister-in-law/brother-in-law.'

(32)   *apʊna-r/ta-r*   *za-ɛk/deʊr-ɛk*
           2HON-GEN/3INF.DIST.M-GEN   sister-in-law-2HON.POSS/brother-in-law-3POSS
           'Your/his sister-in-law/brother-in-law.'

It is seen that the second person familiar index is not found to be attached to the possessed nouns in (28) and (31).

It is not always likely that the possessor is present in the construction discussed above. The absence of the possessor from this kind of construction is also frequent in Assamese, as demonstrated in examples (33)-(35).

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[4] *ḫotiza* is used to refer to brother's son, *za* is used to refer to husband's sister-in-law (the wife of one's husband's brother), *deʊr* is used to refer to husband's younger brother.

(33) *deuta-r-ɔk*   *mɔi*   *buz-ũ*   *babei*
      father-2INF.POSS-GEN   1SG   understand-1   for

      ɛja   *kɔr-il-ʊ.*
      this   do-PST-1
      'I have done this because I understand your father.'

(34) *tumi*   *ma-ra-r*   *lɔgɔt*   *mukʰamukʰi*   *nʊ-hʊa*   *kiyɔ?*
      2SG.FAM   mother-2FAM.POSS-GEN   with   face   NEG-be   why
      'Why don't you face your mother?'

(35) *bokuli-e*   *ma-k-ɔk*   *etija*   *ɛko*   *nɔ-kɔ-j.*
      Bokuli-ERG   mother-3POSS-DAT   now   anything   NEG-say-3
      'Bokuli does not say anything to her mother now.'

From (33)-(35), it can be seen that the presence of the possessor is not obligatory in the possessive construction. The possessive NP *deuta-r-ɔk* in (33), *ma-ra-r* in (34), and *ma-k-ɔk* in (35) is formed on its own without accompanied by a genitive marked possessor. This is the reason why Haspelmath (2013) suggests the term 'possessive indexes' to refer to the possessive marking used in the languages like Assamese instead of using the term 'agreement markers'.

5 Survey of these markers in other NIA languages[5]

The possessive indexing system is not a very common system in NIA languages. In addition to Assamese, only four languages are documented so far, which have this system. These four languages are Darai (Paudyal 2008), Majhi (Dhakal 2011), Bote (Dhakal 2017) and Danuwar Rai (Kuegler and Kuegler 1974)[6]. All these four languages are spoken in Nepal. Darai is found to be spoken in central and western part of Nepal including the districts of Tanahu, Gorkha, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Palpa and Dhading (Paudyal 2008) whereas Majhi is spoken in eastern part of Nepal mainly in the districts of Ramechhap and Sindhuli (Dhakal 2011). Bote is spoken in the districts of Tanahu, Nawalparasi, and Chitwan (www.ethnologue.com). Danuwar Rai, on the other hand, is spoken primarily in south of Kathmandu including the districts of Makwanpur and Sindhuli which are within the boundary of Inner Terai. However, the speakers of this language are also found in the Outer Terai as well as in the west of Kathmandu (Kuegler and Kuegler 1974). Figure 1 shows the

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[5] It should be noted here that the languages going to be discussed in this section have different varieties. The data presented here represents only those varieties which have been documented so far. The phenomenon considered in this work to be studied may not be present in all varieties of each language or it may appear differently in different varieties. Thus, there is a wide scope of investigating it throughout all the varieties of each language represented here.
[6] Kuegler and Kuegler (1974) mention the name of Tharu language along with Danuwar Rai and Darai with reference to the discussion of possessive indexes. They say that Tharu, which is spoken in Chitwan district and in central Outer Terai of Nepal, has the system of pronominal suffixes similar to Danuwar Rai. However, Dubi Nanda Dhakal pointed out that this phenomenon has not been seen in any variety of Tharu described so far in Nepal (Email communication, 2019). Since Tharu has many varieties, this feature may appear in some varieties about what Kuegler and Kuegler talked about but which have not been documented yet.

distribution of Assamese, Darai, Majhi, Bote and Danuwar Rai. The blue circles show the location of Bote while the orange circles show the location of Darai. The location of Majhi is shown by the red circles, Danuwar is represented by the black circles, and the location of Assamese is displayed by the purple circles.
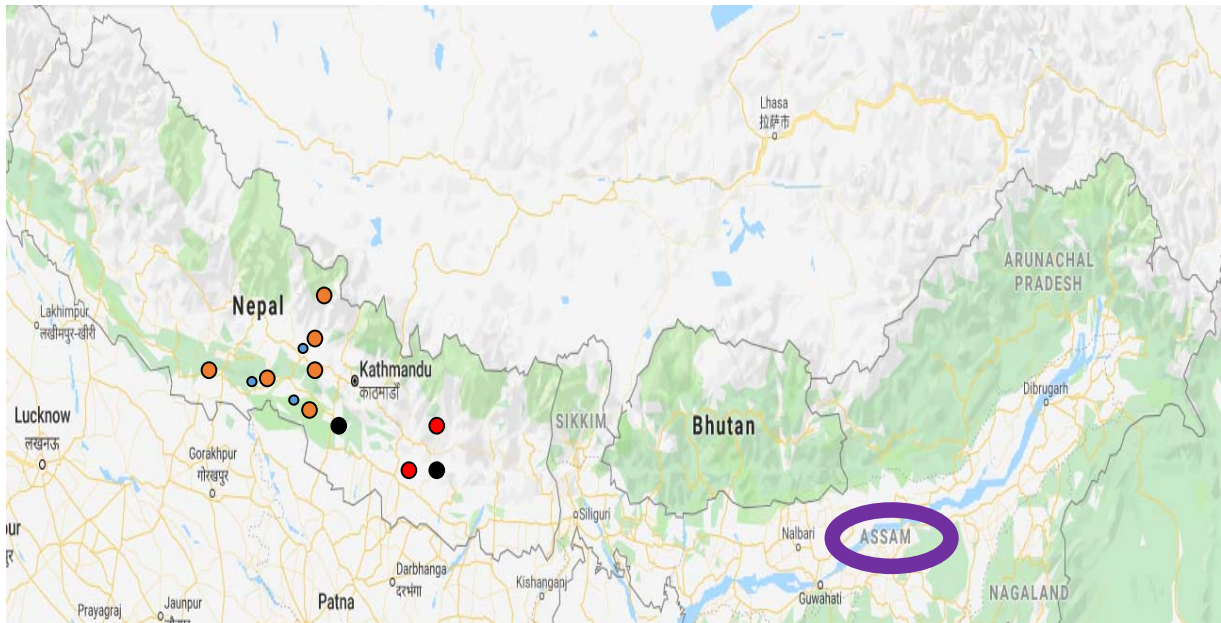

Figure 1. Map of India and Nepal showing the location of Assamese, Darai, Majhi, Bote, and Danuwar languages. This map is taken from google map.

Grierson (1920) identified some other NIA languages which employ possessive indexes. Those languages are Lahnda, Sindhi, etc. However, how far this system is developed in these languages is not well-accounted in his survey. Further, the indexing system found in Assamese, Darai, Majhi, Bote, and Danuwar Rai has a lot of similarities. But the data provided in Grierson (1919) from Lahnda and Sindhi do not tell us how far the system shows resemblance with our concerned languages. Thus the discussion of those languages is discarded from the present study. Darai, Majhi, Bote, and Danuwar Rai deserve attention, since the forms of their possessive indexes are very similar with Assamese. However, it should be noted here that the system seems to be more developed, productive, and regular in Darai, Majhi and in Danuwar Rai in comparison to Assamese and Bote. The following discussion deals with a comparison of these five languages.

The possessive indexing system in Darai bears a close resemblance with Assamese in three respects. Firstly, the indexes are suffixed to the possessed noun and some of them are almost identical with the markers in Assamese. Secondly, the possessed noun in which indexes appear is accompanied by a genitive case marked possessor, and thirdly, the form of the genitive case shares a close affinity with the genitive marker in Assamese. The following examples ((36)-(38)) show the possessive indexes in Darai. All examples are adapted from Paudyal (2008).

(36) a. *me-rʌ*   *bʰai-m*   b.   *ham-rʌ*   *bʰai-Ø*
      1SG-GEN   brother-1SG.POSS   1PL-GEN   brother
      'My brother.'   'Our brothers.'

(37) a. *te-rʌ*   *bʰai-r*   b.   *teu-rʌ*   *bʰai-u*
      2SG-GEN   brother-2SG.POSS   2PL-GEN   brother-2PL.POSS
      'Your brother.'   'Your brothers.'

(38) a. *ik-ra*   *bʰai-k*   b.   *onen-kʌ*   *bʰai-kan*
      3SG-GEN   brother-3SG.POSS   3PL-GEN   brother-3PL.POSS
      'His brother.'   'Their brothers.'

The second person plural marker is absent in the data provided by Dhakal (2011). It may happen due to the dialectal variation. Paudyal (2008) clearly mentioned that he has mostly collected data from Pipaltar dialect of Darai.[7] But Dhakal did not mention from which variety the data is collected. *-u*, which is considered by Paudyal as a second person plural marker, is analyzed by Dhakal as a marker of second person singular honorific. Furthermore, there is a variation found in the third person possessive pronouns. According to Dhakal, the third person singular possessive pronoun is *ukrə* and the plural is *usəbkə*, as shown in (39).

(39) a. *ukrə*   *bʰaik*   b.   *usəbkə*   *bʰaikan*
      u-rə   bʰai-k   usəb-kə   bʰai-kan
      3SG-GEN   brother-3SG.POSS   3PL-GEN   brother-3PL.POSS
      'His brother.'   'Their brothers.'

Similar with Darai, Majhi shows a close affinity with Assamese regarding both structures and forms, as exemplified below. The examples are adapted from Dhakal (2011).

(40)   *morə*   *bʰaem*
       məĩ-rə   bʰai-m
       1SG-GEN   brother-1SG.POSS
       'My brother.'

(41)   *torə*   *bʰaer*
       tui-rə   bʰai-r
       2SG-GEN   brother-2SG.POSS
       'Your brother.'

(42)   *hokrə*   *bʰaek*
       hoi-rə   bʰai-k
       3SG-GEN   brother-3SG.POSS
       'Your brother.'

---

[7] According to Paudyal (2008), Darai has three dialects: chitwan, Pipaltar, and Damauli. Out of these, Pipaltar is considered to be an archaic variety of the language.

The first and the second person plural markers are absent in Majhi. The third person plural one is *-kʰjan*, a slight variant of the Darai one. Similar with Assamese, the possessive indexes in Majhi are also suffixed to the possessed noun that is modified by a genitive case marked possessor.

Like Darai and Majhi, Bote exhibits a close relationship with Assamese in respect of marking the possessive indexes, as presented in (43)-(45). The data has been adapted from Dhakal (2017).

(43) *moro*   *buwa*
      mo-ro   buwa
      1SG-GEN   father
      'My father.'

(44) *tero*   *bubar*
      te-ro   buba-r
      2SG-GEN   father-2POSS
      'Your father'

(45) *okhro*   *bubak*
      o-khro   buba-k
      3-GEN   father-3POSS
      'His father'

Along with the second and the third person plural possessors, the possessive indexes are not used to mark the first person possessors irrespective of the distinction of singular and plural in Bote.

Danuwar Rai displays a close similarity with Assamese in regard to the marking of possessive indexes, as illustrated in (46)-(50). The data has been adapted from Kuegler and Kuegler (1974).

(46) *moraa*   *baabaa*
      mo-raa   baab-aa
      1SG-GEN   father-1POSS
      'My father.'

(47) *toraa*   *baaper*
      to-raa   baap-er
      2SG-GEN   father-2POSS
      'Your(sg) father.'

(48) *okraak*   *baapek*
      o-kraa(k)[8]   baap-ek
      3SG-GEN   father-3POSS
      'His/her father.'

---

[8] Because of the unavailability of data, it is not known whether the final *k* of the genitive morpheme is a separate morpheme or a part of the genitive. If we see the profile of the genitive morpheme across the Indo-Aryan languages, it is strange to find the final *k* in the genitive. However, without any further evidence, no assumption or claim can be made regarding the status of it.

(49) *tohoraa*   *baapehaarlok*
      toho-raa   baap-ehaar-lok
      2PL-GEN   father-2PL.POSS-PL
      'Your(pl) father.'

(50) *ukhrawhaak*   *baapekhaanlok*
      u-khra(whaak)   baap-ekhaan-lok
      3-GEN   father-3PL.POSS-PL
      'Their father.'

As shown in (46)-(48), Danuwar Rai has the suffixes *-aa*, *-er*, and *-ek*, to distinguish three persons. It has the suffixes *-ehaar* and *-ekhaan* to differentiate the second and the third person singular possessors from their plural counterparts. The distinction of number is not maintained by the first person index, as shown in (51).

(51) *haamraa*   *baabaalok*
      ham-raa   baab-aa-lok
      1PL-GEN   father-1POSS-PL
      'Our father.'

If the five languages are observed, it is seen that the possessive indexes and their distribution over the possessed nouns are almost similar. *-r* occurs as the second person index and *-k* occurs as the third person index in five languages. Further, the structure of the genitive construction in Darai, Majhi, Bote, and Danuwar Rai is also very alike with Assamese. The possessive indexes and the genitive modifier, both are optional in Darai and Majhi, as in (52)-(54).

Darai:

(52) *merə*   *gai*
      məi-rə   gao
      1SG-GEN   cow
      'My cow.'

(53) *merə*   *gaim*
      məi-rə   gai-m
      1SG-GEN   cow-1SG.POSS
      'My cow.'

(54) *bubak*
      buba-k
      father-3SG.POSS
      'His father.'

The first person singular possessive index *-m* in Darai is found to be added to the possessed noun *gai* in (53), but not in (52). Example (54) presents the evidence of the possessive index marked possessed noun occurring without the genitive modifier.

13

Majhi:

(55) *morə*   *bʰai*
      məĩ-rə   bʰai
      1SG-GEN   brother
      'My brother.'

(56) *morə*   *bʰaem*
      məĩ-rə   bʰai-m
      1SG-GEN   brother-1SG.POSS
      'My brother.'

(57) *cʰwaikʰjan*
      cʰwai-kʰjan
      child-3PL.POSS
      'His children.'

In a similar manner, the possessive index *-m* in Majhi is also found to be suffixed to the possessed noun *bʰai* in (56), but not in (55). The possessed noun in (57) occurs without the genitive modifier, as shown in (54).

Like in Darai and Majhi, the possessive indexes are also optional in Bote. But it is not known whether the possessed noun can occur without the genitive modifier or not in this language. Further, it is also not known whether the possessive indexes and the genitive modifier are optional in Danuwar Rai or not. The following examples (58)-(59) are from Bote, which show the occurrence of possessed nouns without being accompanied by the possessive indexes.

(58) *tero*   *buba*
      te-ro   buba
      2SG-GEN   father
      'Your father.'

(59) *okhro*   *buba*
      o-khro   buba
      3SG-GEN   father
      'His father.'

These five languages, however, have some dissimilarity in several respects. Firstly, unlike Darai and Majhi, the first person singular index is absent in Assamese. Assamese does not have any possessive index to mark first person possessors. Secondly, unlike Darai and Majhi, Assamese does not have a separate set of suffixes to distinguish the third person singular from the plural possessors. They remain unchanged irrespective of the distinction of the singular and the plural not only in the third person but also in the second person. Danuwar Rai differs from Darai and Majhi, on the one hand, in respect of marking the first person possessors. There is no any possessive index found to mark the first person plural possessor in Darai and Majhi while in Danuwar Rai, the same index is found to appear with both the first person singular and the plural possessors. Danuwar Rai differs from Darai and Majhi, on the other hand, in the marking of the second person plural possessor. From the data presented by Kuegler and Kuegler (1974), it is seen that Danuwar Rai has a different possessive index for marking the plurality of the possessor.

Assamese seems to be closer to Bote in comparison to other three languages. In both languages, the first person possessive index is absent. Further, the marker of possessive indexing is

exactly the same in both languages. However, they differ from each other in respect of marking the plural possessors. The possessive indexes do not appear with plural possessors in Bote, whereas they appear with both the singular and plural possessors in Assamese (see Table 2).

In addition, the nature of the possessive relationship, which is marked by the indexes, differs in these languages. In Assamese, and Majhi (Dhakal 2011), the system of indexing is found to mark the kin relationship while in Bote (Dhakal 2017), it extends to mark the ownership as well. In Darai (Paudyal 2008; Dhakal 2015), it extends to mark body parts along with the kin relationship and the ownership. The status of Danuwar in this regard is unknown. Furthermore, the system of possessive indexing in Darai, Majhi, and Danuwar Rai marks the category of both number and person of the possessor whereas in Assamese, it marks the person only, since the possessive indexes do not vary in terms of the distinction of singular and plural.

If the forms of indexes are observed in the five languages, it seems that the source of -*r* and -*k* is the same. It is assumed that they are the extended functions of genitive forms rather than they derived from free pronouns through various stages of historical development as assumed by Paudyal in Darai (2008). The reason of this line of thinking is discussed in the following section (see Section 6). The first person possessive indexes in Darai and Majhi, on the other hand, might have historically developed from free pronouns.

Table 2 and 3 show the independent pronouns, possessive pronouns, and the possessive indexes in Assamese, Darai, and Majhi. Table 4 shows the possessive indexes that occur in Bote and Danuwar Rai. It should be noted here again that the data of Darai and Majhi are taken from Dhakal (2011) and Paudyal (2008) while the data of Bote and Danuwar Rai are taken from Dhakal (2017) and Kuegler and Kuegler (1974).

Person	Independent pronouns	Possessive pronouns	Possessive indexes
1SG	*mɔi*	*mʊ-r*	*-Ø*
1PL	*ami*	*ama-r*	*-Ø*
2SG/PL.INF	*tɔi/tɔ-hɔ̃t*	*tʊ-r/tɔ-hɔ̃t-ɔr*	*-r*
2SG/PL.FAM	*tumi/tʊma-lʊk*	*tʊma-r/tʊma-lʊk-ɔr*	*-ra*
2SG/PL.HON	*apuni/apʊna-lʊk*	*apʊna-r/apʊna-lʊk-ɔr*	*-k*
3SG/PL.INF.M.PROX	*i/i-hɔ̃t*	*ia-r/i-hɔ̃t-ɔr*	*-k*
3SG/PL.INF.M.DIST	*ħi/ħi-hɔ̃t (ta-hãt)*	*ta-r/ħi-hɔ̃t-ɔr (ta-hãt-ɔr)*	*-k*
3SG/PL.INF.F.PROX	*ei/i-hɔ̃t*	*ei-r/i-hɔ̃t-ɔr*	*-k*
3SG.INF.F.DIST	*tai/ħi-hɔ̃t*	*tai-r/ħi-hɔ̃t-ɔr (ta-hãt-ɔr)*	*-k*
3SG/PL.FAM.PROX	*eʊ̃/eʊ̃-lʊk*	*eʊ̃-r/eʊ̃-lʊk-ɔr*	*-k*
3SG/PL.FAM.DIST	*teʊ̃/teʊ̃-lʊk*	*teʊ̃-r/teʊ̃-lʊk-ɔr*	*-k*
3SG/PL.HON.prox	*ekʰet/ekʰet-sɔkɔl/-lʊk*	*ekʰet-ɔr/ekʰet-sɔkɔl-ɔr*	*-k*
3SG/PL.HON.DIST	*tekʰet/tekʰet-sɔkɔl/-lʊk*	*tekʰet-ɔr/tekʰet-sɔkɔl-ɔr*	*-k*

Table 2. Independent pronouns, Possessive pronouns, and Possessive indexes in Assamese

Person	Independent pronouns		Possessive pronouns		Possessive indexes	
	Majhi	Darai	Majhi	Darai	Majhi	Darai
1SG	*məĩ*	*məi/mʌĩ*	*mo-rə*	*me-rə*	*-m*	*-m*
1PL	*haĩ*	*hame/hamẽ*	*ham-ro*	*ham-rə*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*
2SG	*tui*	*təi/tʌĩ*	*to-rə*	*te-rə*	*-r*	*-r*
2PL	*tora-lə*	*təi-səb/tahẽ*	*toralə-ko*	*terəsʌb-kə*	*-Ø*	*-Ø/-u*[9]
3SG	*hoi*	*u*	*hok-rə*	*ukʰ-rə*	*-k*	*-k*
3PL	*ho-lə*	*u-səb/unen*	*holə-ko*	*usəb-kə*	*-kʰjan*	*-kan*

Table 3. Independent pronouns, Possessive pronouns, and Possessive indexes in Majhi and Darai

Person	Bote		Danuwar Rai	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-aa*	*-aa*
2	*-r*	*-Ø*	*-er*	*-ehaar*
3	*-k*	*-Ø*	*-ek*	*-ekhaan*

Table 4. Possessive indexes in Bote and Danuwar Rai.

6 Origin of the forms

It can be assumed that the possessive indexes of these five languages have developed from the genitive forms. The reason of this assumption is that they look similar to the genitive markers that exist in Assamese as well as in many IA languages. This assumption, however, raises two important questions which need to be addressed here. Firstly, although the second person inferior *-r* and the second person familiar *-ra* is almost identical with the genitive marker *-r* in Assamese, what is the basis of considering *-k* as a genitive marker, since it does not exist in Assamese? Secondly, how can these markers be considered as genitives, since these are not used to mark the relationship between the dependent NPs and the head NPs? These two questions are discussed in the following subsections.

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[9] It is stated earlier that the second person plural possessive index is found to be marked by *-u* in the data collected by Paudyal from Darai (2008), but it is unmarked in the data collected by Dhakal (2011). Thus, *-Ø*, which is used to show the unmarked one, and *-u*, both are listed in the table.

6.1 Development of -*r* and -*k* genitives

To deal with the first question raised in the previous section, it needs to look at the history of genitive markers in Assamese and its cognates such as Bengali, Oriya, Maithili, Bhojpuri etc. It is already stated in Chatterji (1926), Kakati (1941), Masica (1991), that -*k* and -*r*, both markers are used as genitives in Magadhan languages. The use of -*k* as a genitive is attested in the texts of Caryapada, which are considered to be written in late Apabhramsa, the period just before the NIA languages such as Assamese, Bengali, Oriya have started to appear as distinct languages, and in Madhav Kandali's Ramayana, which is considered as one of the distinct earliest written specimens of Assamese attributed to around 14th century, as exemplified in (60)-(62).

(60)   *chānda-ka*   *bāndh*
        pleasure-GEN   bond
         'The bonds of pleasure.'

(Caryapada)

(61)   *āmā-ka*   *bhaya-ta*   *palā-i*   *thāk-anta*   *palā-ibāra*   *nāhi*   *thāi*
        1PL-GEN   fear-LOC   escape-NF   stay-3   escape-NF   no   place
        'He escapes for the fear brought by us; he has no place to escape.'

(Prahlad Charit)

(62)   *bharata-ka*   *lāgi*   *bhāla*   *nirm-iyo*   *nagara.*
        Bharat-GEN   for   good   build-2FAM.IMP   city
        'Build a beautiful city for Bharata.'

(Madhav Kandali's Ramayana)

As a source of these markers, Chatterji (1926) pointed out to some help words which were used in transitional MIA "either along with the genitive pleonastically or compounded with the base to indicate the genitive idea (§ 503)." One of these help words was *kēra* or *kēla*, which was the most popular one in MIA literature and which was also found all over northern India in later times. This word is assumed to have evolved from *kārya*, which has further developed into **kāira* in transitional or second MIA before it came to be used as *kēra*, in Magadhi *kēla*. He further stated that "*Māgadhī* Prakrit, like the Prakrits of other parts, took up < *kēra*(*kēla*) >, side by side with some of the other words. As in other dialects, the form was either used after the genitive, as an adjective qualifying the noun governed, or it was compounded with the noun-base into an adjective; but in either case, the whole sooner or later came to be regarded as one word, which brought about the voicing and dropping of the <-*k*-> in Eastern Magadhan quite early (§ 503)."

kara is assumed to be another possible source of the genitives -*r* and -*k* in Magadhan languages. According to Chatterji (1926), "It would seem that in Māgadhī Ap. <kara> was used with the pronoun originally, and then was extended to the noun. Reduced to <-*ara*> *-rå*, *-rạ̈>*, it occurs as the genitive affix in Assamese-Bengali and Oṛiyā, and also in Maithilī and other Bihārī speeches in the genitive of the first and second personal pronouns. The unreduced form <-*kara*> is here and there found as a survival in MB., possibly through Maithilī influence; it is met with in Oriyā in the plural, where the <-*k*-> is preserved by the <-*n*-> of the genitive plural affix (see supra, pp. 137, 724); and it occurs in the forms <-*kar, -karā, -kạ̈rā>* in the genitive and dative of the pronouns other than those of

the first and second persons in Maithilī, Magahī and Bhōjpuriyā (§ 503)." The following examples are from Maithili, which preserves *-kar* for the genitive of the third person pronoun and *-krā* for the third person dative pronoun. The examples are taken from Grierson (1903) and they represent the speech used in Darbhanga district (of present Bihar).

(63)　*ō-kar*　　　　*bāp*
　　　3SG-GEN　　　father
　　　'His father.'

(64)　*...kī*　*ō-kar*　　　*bāp*　*ō-krā*　　　*dēkh-kăĭ*　　*dayā*　　　*kăĭlthīnh,*
　　　that　3SG-GEN　　father　3SG-DAT　　seen-having　compassion　made
　　　'...that having seen him his father made compassion.'

The evidence of using the genitive *-r* to the first and the second person pronouns (inferior) is also found in this speech, as presented in (65) and (66).

(65)　*ham-rā*　　　*bāp-kẽ/ham-ar*　　　*hissā*
　　　I-GEN　　　father-GEN/I-GEN　　share
　　　'My father's.'/ 'my share.'

(66)　*tōh-ar*　　　*bhai*
　　　2SG.INF-GEN　brother
　　　'Your brother.'

As a source of the *-k*, Chatterji (1926) pointed out to MIA. *-kaa*, which is assumed to have derived from either Sanskrit *kṛta* or the adjectival suffix *-kka*. It is evident from the account provided by Chatterji that both the markers, *-r* and *-k* came to be used as genitives at the stage before the new Magadhan languages were evolved, irrespective of what their sources are. The existence of both markers as genitives is evident from their simultaneous usage in the texts of Caryapada and Madhav Kandali's Ramayana, as shown in (67)-(72).

(67)　*chānda-**ka***　　*bāndh*
　　　pleasure-GEN　bond
　　　'The bonds of pleasure.'

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Caryapada)

(68)　*rukhē-**ra***　　*tentali*　　*kumbhīr-ē*　　　*khā-i.*
　　　tree-GEN　　tamarind　crocodile-ERG　　eat-3
　　　'Crocodiles eat the tamarind of trees.'

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Caryapada)

(69)　*rājā-**ra***　　*ādeśa*　　*rām-e*　　*māth-e*　　*tul-i*　　*lo-il-ā.*
　　　king-GEN　　order　　Ram-ERG　head-LOC　raise-NF　take-PST-3
　　　'Ram **put** the order of the king on his head.'

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Madhav Kandali's Ramayana)

(70)   *kouśalyā-**ra***   *thāwa-ka*   *satvare*   *cal-i*   *go-il-ā.*
       Koushalya-GEN   place-DIRT   quickly   move-NF   go-PST-3
       'Went to the place of Koushalya quickly.'

                                                                                (Madhav Kandali's Ramayana)

(71)   *biśad-e*   *kouśalyā*   *koikeī-**ka***   *lāgi*   *ca-il-ā.*
       Sadness-INS   Koushalya   Koikei-GEN   towards   look-PST-2FAM
       'Koushalya looked at Koikei with sadness.

                                                                                (Madhav Kandali's Ramayana)

(72)   *ji*   *kārya-**ka***   *lāgi*   *tumi*   *pāñc-āhā*   *āmā-ka.*
       Whatever   work-GEN   towards   2FAM   send-2FAM   1PL-DAT
       'You send us for whatever purpose…'

                                                                                (Madhav Kandali's Ramayana)

The existence of both markers to serve the function of the genitive is also evident from their appearance as genitives in many NIA languages (see Masica 1991).

Though both the genitives, *-r* and *-k* are found to occur in Caryapada and Madhav Kandali's Ramayana, the use of the former was very frequent while the latter was infrequent in the texts. It can be assumed that the function of the genitive *-k* either gradually shifted to the dative during the time of late Apabhramsa, the example of which is well-attested in Caryapada, as shown in (73) or it might have originally developed as both genitive and dative.

(73)   *matiẽ*   *thākura-ka*   *parinibittā.*
       Minister   king-DAT   has checked
       'The minister has checked the king.'

The use of the dative *-ka* is very low in Caryapada, but it is high in the later texts such as Prahlad Charit and Madhav Kandali's Ramayana. This observation signals the gradual development of the dative *-ka*.

It can also be assumed that both the genitives, *-r* and *-k* were used side by side during the time when Assamese started to emerge as a distinct language. Thus, both are found in Caryapada and in early Assamese texts such as Prahlad Charit, Madhav Kandali's Ramayana etc (see examples (67-72)). Gradually, the genitive *-k* had started to disappear and at some point of the history of the language, the function of it was completely replaced by the dative. It is evident from the use of both the markers in two distinct functions, *-r* for the genitive and *-k* for the dative, in modern Assamese, as presented in (74) and (75).

(74)   *zonali-**r***   *deuta-k*   *ah-is-e.*
       Zonali-GEN   father-3   come-IPFV-3
       'Zonali's father has come.'

19

(75) *ħi*   *bihu-t*   *ma-k-ɔk*   *chadar*
      3SG.M.DIST.INF   bihu-LOC   mother-3-DAT   chadar

      e-kʰɔn   *di-s-e.*
      one-CLF   give-IPFV-3
      'He has given his mother a chadar in bihu festival.'

6.2 *Distribution and Function of –r and –k*

It is not unnatural in human languages for a form to be used in diverse functions in the course of development. It was assumed by Chatterji (1926) that the use of the genitive word *kara* was first restricted to the pronominal forms and then extended to nouns. Thus, it does not seem unreasonable to think that the use of *-r* has extended from possessors to a set of possessed nouns within a certain type of possessive constructions, as stated above. It is also reasonable to expect that this extension took place during the time when Madhav Kandali's Ramayana was written. The reason of this line of thinking is that the texts of Caryapada, which is considered to be composed before Ramayana, do not have the possessive indexing system. Further, the system was not very developed at the time of Madhav Kandali's Ramayana in comparison to the present time. Out of three markers available in modern Assamese, only two are found in the Ramayana text, as in (76) – (79).

(76) *toha-ra*   *bāp-era*
      2INF-GEN   father-2INF.POSS
      'Your father.'

(77) *bāp-er-aka*   *mār-i*
      father-2INF.POSS-DAT   kill-NF
      'By killing your father…'

(78) *bāp-ek-ara*   *hāt-e*
      father-3POSS-GEN   hand-INS
      'With the hand of his father…'

(79) *bhāi-ek-aka*   *mār-i*
      brother-3POSS-DAT   kill-NF
      'By killing his brother…'

The extended function of the genitive *-r* to other functions is not only evident in possessive indexes, it is also attested in the constructions in which the marker is added to a NP functioning as a predicate, as shown in (80).

(80) *kitap-kʰɔn*   *mʋ-r.*
      Book-CLF   1SG-GEN
      'The book is mine.'

Here, *-r* is not used to mark the basic function of the genitive modifier of a noun. Rather, it is added to the NP which functions as a predicate in the clause.

Further, *-r* is used to mark the NP in existential clauses for expressing predicate possession, as demonstrated in (81).

(81)   *mʊ-r*   *gari*   *as-e.*
          1SG-GEN   car   have-3
          'I have a car.'

It is also used to mark the NP which functions as a subject of experiential verbs, as in (82).

(82)   *mʊ-r*   *b̪ɔj*   *lag-is-e.*
          1SG-GEN   fear   need-IPFV-3
          'I am afraid.'

The use of the genitive *-k* has gradually disappeared in Assamese and the marker is shifted from the possessor to the possessed noun to indicate the possessive relation between them. The shifting is not only restricted to possessive indexes, but it is also found in the function of the dative as stated earlier (see example (75)). Further, it is used to carry the functions of imperative and optative in the second person honorific and the third person, as shown in (83) – (86).

(83)   *apuni*   *kam-tʊ*   *sʊnkale*   *kɔr-ɔk.*
          2SG.HON   work-CLF   soon   do-IMP
          'You do the work soon.'

(84)   *apuni*   *sʊnkale*   *b̪al*   *ho-i*   *utʰ-ɔk.*
          2SG.HON   soon   good   become-NF   rise-OPT
          'You get well soon.'

(85)   *ħi*   *etiaj*   *kam-tʊ*   *kɔr-ɔk.*
          3SG.M.DIST.INF   now   work-CLF   do-IMP
          'He does the work now.'

(86)   *ta-k*   *b̪ɔgɔban-e*   *rɔikkʰa*   *kɔr-ɔk.*
           3SG.M.DIST.INF-DAT   God-ERG   protection   do-OPT
          'May God protect you.'

One important question needs to be addressed here is that if the view that the indexes *-r* and *-k* are the extended functions of the genitives *-r* and *-k* is valid, why the distribution of these markers is not similar throughout the three persons of the possessor, i.e. *-r* is restricted to the second person inferior possessor, *-ra* is used to mark the second person familiar, and *-k* for the third person possessor, and why the second person familiar index is *-ra* instead of *-r*. The reason of using the genitive *-r* to the function of the second person inferior and the familiar indexes, and *-k* for the third person index seems to be historical. If the Chatterji's (1926) account regarding the evolution of *-r* and *-k* is considered again, it is found that the genitive word *kara* was developed into two forms

during late Apabhramsa. One is reduced *-r* and the other one is unreduced form with the preservation of *-k*. The former has appeared in languages such as Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Maithili, and other Bihari dialects as the genitive form of the first and the second person pronouns while the latter has occurred as a genitive and dative of the pronouns other than those of the first and second person pronouns in languages such as Maithili, Magahi, and Bhojpuriya. If this account is taken into consideration, it is not unlikely that the system of using the genitive *-r* with the second person pronouns and *-k* with those other than the first and the second person pronouns was also extended to the possessive indexing on possessed nouns. Even if the examples of the distribution of the genitive *-r* with the second person pronoun and the genitive *-k* with the third person pronoun are not attested in any early Assamese text, yet it can be assumed that the extended function of genitives *-r* and *-k* to the possessive indexing, and the different distribution of these two markers as a second person and a third person index took place at the time when Assamese language started to get a distinct shape. The following examples from Madhav Kandali's Ramayana can be considered as the evidence of these assumptions. Examples (76) and (78) are repeated here again for the purpose of illustration.

(87)   *toha-ra*   *bāp-era*
       2INF-GEN   father-2INF.POSS
       'Your father.'

(88)   *bāp-ek-ara*   *hāt-e*
       father-3POSS-GEN   hand-INS
       'With the hand of his father…'

Peterson's (2010, 2017) study provides further evidence which supports the analysis of the third person possessive index *-k* as an extended function of the genitive *-k*. It is found from his study that *-k* is used in many languages in Jharkhand "to mark person, generally the third person, singular, in various predicative categories" (2017:10). As evidence, he says that *-k* is used for the function of third person imperative in Sadri, an Indo-Aryan language and it can mark the third person, singular on predicative forms in North Munda languages. Further, he states that "Other IA languages of the region in which forms deriving from the genitive mark the 3rd person, singular, include Kurmali (Grierson, 1903: 149), Sadri Kol (Grierson, 1903: 159) and Panch Pargarniya (cf. the texts in Grierson, 1903: 168ff.). To the north as well, e.g. in Magahi, */k/* forms part of the marking for virtually all forms of transitive verb marking involving the 3rd person, …. (2017:10)." It is also found in Bengali which is discussed by Chatterji (1926: 989-990, §721) "in the imperative of the third person, …. in the 2nd, middle-grade honorific past and future and non-honorific 3rd person past and future, dialectally in the 3rd person past habitual (2017:10)." Chatterji (1926: 990-992, §722) also mentions that this form was used earlier in the third person in Oriya (cited in Peterson 2017: 10). All these evidences support the view of using the genitive *-k* for the third person.

Again, if the data provided by Paudyal (2008) form Darai and by Dhakal (2011) from both Darai and Majhi are considered, it is seen that the genitive marker used with third person possessors is more likely to be *-k* (with a slight variation) rather than *-r* as discussed by them. The examples (38)a. (39)a. and (42) are stated here again to support this reanalysis.

Example of Darai stated by Pudyal (2008)

(89) *ik-ra*   *bʰai-k*
   3SG-POSS   brother-3SG
   'His brother.'

Examples of Darai and Majhi presented by Dhakal (2011)

(Darai)
(90) *ukrə*   *bʰaik*
   u-rə   bʰai-k
   he-GEN   brother-3SG.POSS
   'His brother.'

(Majhi)
(91) *hokrə*   *bʰaek*
   hoi-rə   bʰai-k
   he-GEN   brother-3SG.POSS
   'His brother.'

  Paudyal (2008) and Dhakal (2011), both note that the third person singular pronoun in Darai is *u*. When it is used as a possessive pronoun, the form becomes *ikra* or *ukrə* in Darai. Again, according to Dhakal (2011), the third person singular pronoun in Majhi is *hoi* but when it is used in the function of the possessive pronoun, it becomes *hokrə* (cf. Table 3). If the analysis part of the data is observed, it is not clear why *-k* becomes a part of the pronominal base *i*, i.e., *ik*, in the example provided by Paudyal (2008) and why *-k* is omitted from the possessive pronoun in the examples presented by Dhakal (2011). If the forms used as possessive pronouns are carefully examined, the most likely analysis they deserve is that *u/i* and *hoi* are the third person singular pronouns and *-kra/-krə* is the genitive marker. This analysis is supported by the data from Maithili language, one of the close cognates of Darai and Majhi, in which the genitive *-kra* is reserved for the third person singular (cf. § 6.1). Further, the historical development of the genitives *-r* and *-k* also explains why the possible analysis of the genitive morpheme in the third person possessor in Darai and Majhi is *-kra/-krə*, rather than *-ra/-rə*. Interestingly, this reanalysis can reveal the story of that stage when the genitive forms started to extend their function to the possessive indexes. The data from Darai and Majhi may have preserved the evidence of an intermediate stage when the genitive *-k* was used with both possessors and possessed nouns. But gradually, the genitive *-k* has dropped out of use and it got superseded by *-r*, the examples of which are retained in languages such as Assamese, Bengali etc. It can also explain the fact that why the genitive *-k* rather than *-r* is used to mark the third person possessive relation.

  Darai presents further evidence which supports the analysis of the second person verbal index *-r* and the third person verbal index *-k* as extended functions of the genitive *-r* and *-k*. *-r*, which inflected for the second person, and *-k* for the third person, have gradually extended their functions not only to the possessive indexation but also to the verbal indexation in Darai, which is neither seen in Assamese nor in other three languages considered here. Verbs take *-r* to index both the second person subject and the object arguments and *-k* to index the third person subject and the object

argument (Paudyal 2008, Dhakal 2015). However, Dhakal mentions that all verbs cannot take these suffixes to index subject and object arguments. Only some sets of verbs belonging to both intransitive and transitive in past tense can take these suffixes to index the subject and the object arguments, as exemplified in (92)-(95). The examples are adapted from Dhakal (2015).

Intransitive verbs:

(92)   *toi   boshaler*
          toi   bos-hale-r
          you   sit-PST-2SG.POSS
          'You sat.'

(93)   *u   boshalek*
          u   bos-hale-k
          he   sit-PST-3SG.POSS
          'He sat.'

Transitive verbs:

(94)   *toi   bədkạ   tsidz   pahaler*
          toi   bədkạ   tsidz   pa-hale-r
          you   big   thing   find-PST-2SG.POSS
          'You found a big thing.'

(95)   *uhi   bədkạ   tsidz   pahalek*
          u-hı   bədkạ   tsidz   pa-hale-k
          he-ERG big   thing   find-PST-3SG.POSS
          'He found a big thing.'

Dhakal, further, states that the verbs take these two suffixes to index the possessive modifier of a NP irrespective of whether the NP functions as a subject, an object, or a predicative complement. Thus, even though they appear with verbs, they are not subject and object indexes. Rather, they are possessive indexes which occur on verbs than on nouns to index the possessors present in any verbal argument. Examples (96)-(100) illustrate it. These examples are also adapted from Dhakal (2015).

(96)   *terə   bhai   ghərəjə̃   aṭir*
          toi-rə   bhai   ghər-jə̃   aṭi-r
          you-[OBL]GEN   brother   house- LOC   be.COP-2SG.POSS
          'Your brother is at home.'

(97)   *ukhrə   bhai   ghərəjə̃   aṭik*
          toi-rə   bhai   ghər-jə̃   aṭi-k
          you-[OBL]GEN   brother   house- LOC   be.COP-3SG.POSS
          'Your brother is at home.'

(98) *uhĩ*   *terake*   *bhat*   *detair*
    u-hĩ   toi-ke   bhat   de-ta-ir
    he-ERG   you-[OBL]DAT   rice   give-NPST-2SG.POSS
    'He gives you rice.'

(99) *məi*   *ukhrake*   *bhat*   *dehalmik*
    məi   u-ke   bhat   de-hal-mi-k
    I   he-[OBL]DAT   rice   give- PST-1SG-3SG.POSS
    'I gave him rice.'

(100) *u*   *terə*   *bhair*   *həkhir*
    u   toi-rə   bhai-r   həkhi-r
    he   you-[OBL]GEN   younger brother-POSS.2SG   be.NPST-2SG.POSS
    'He is your younger brother.'

In (96), the verb does not index the subject NP. Rather, it indexes the second person singular possessive modifier of the head noun that occurs within the subject NP. In (97), the verb indexes the third person possessor *ukhre* occurring within the subject NP. Similarly, the verb in (98) does not index the object NP, but the second person singular possessive modifier occurring within the object NP. The verb in (99) indexes the third person possessor that occurs in the object NP. The verb in (100) indexes the possessor of the NP functioning as the predicative complement.

From these examples, it is seen that the verbs take the second person singular and the third person singular inflection to index the possessors rather than the subject and the object arguments where the possessors occur and it may motivate verbs to take the possessive indexes which are genitives in origin. This may be another reason why a particular set of verbs in Darai takes these two suffixes to index the subject NP inflected by the genitive markers (known as genitive or dative subjects), as shown in (101) and (102). Examples are adapted from Paudyal (2008).

(101) *te-rʌ*   *peT*   *botʰa-ir*
    2SG-GEN   stomach   hurt-2POSS
    'You have a stomach ache.

(102) *i-krʌ*   *peT*   botʰa-*ik*
    3SG-GEN   stomach   hurt-3POSS
    'He has a stomach ache.'

Again, if we closely look at the dative marked object NP in (98) and (99) given above and the dative marked subject presented below in (103), it seems that the verbal indexes have some connection with the forms *tera* and *ukhra* instead of the dative marked subjects and the objects *terake* and *ukhrake* . Since the verbs in Darai consistently employ these two suffixes to index possessors irrespective of whether the suffixes appear with verbs or with possessed nouns, it can be assumed that *tera* and *ukhra* came to be used earlier in the language, the evidence of which was   preserved by the use of verbal indexes. *-ke*, which was also a genitive, might have added to the forms later. It might have appeared when it started to extend its function from the genitive to the dative. Gradually, the use of the dative in these kinds of constructions became regular and productive, which leads *-ra* and-

khra to be frozen. Alternatively, it can be assumed that both genitives occurred side by side from the beginning. Later, *-k* gradually extended its function to the dative which is consistently used to mark objects and some kind of subjects mentioned in (98), (99), and (103). While *-ra* and *-khra* become fossilized in the kind of constructions presented above. However, further data is needed to come to such a conclusion. It is not yet known whether *-khrake* can be used with the nominal subject and the object.

(103)   *terəke*   *ris*   *uthiler*
         toi-ke   ris   uṭhi-le-r
         you-[OBL]DAT   anger   stand-PST-2SG
         'You were angry.'

In the support of the assumption that has just made, it can be referred to the description provided by Klaiman (1979) on the dative subjects in Bengali. She says that at the earliest recorded historical stage of Bengali language, "the dative subject could be, optionally associated with some body part expressions. …. This leads to one speculate that, since dative subjects had a tendency at this historical stage to co-occur with body part expressions, it was only natural for the genitive case to be generalized for the marking of dative subjects" (P. 282, 283). She further states that "Historically, then, it appears that the genitive marking of Bengali so-called 'dative' subject derives from the use of the genitive case for the marking of the inalienable possessor" (P.283). Since Darai and Bengali belong to the same group, it may provide a clue for why *tera* and *ukhra* are considered as the earliest forms. Further, if the genitive case was used in early Bengali to mark the inalienable possessors, it might be used in Darai as well, which is reflected in the markings of the possessed nouns and the verbs.

The reason of adding *-a* to *-r* in the second person familiar might be motivated by the use of the second person familiar verbal index *-a*, as shown in (104) and (105).

(104)   *tɔi*   *bɔhut*   *pɔrh-ɔ.*
         2SG.INF   so much   read-2INF
         'You read so much.'

(105)   *tumi*   *bɔhut*   *pɔrh-a.*
         2SG.FAM   so much   read-2FAM
         'You read so much.'

The reason of this line of thinking is that the use of the second person familiar possessive index is not found in any earliest text of Assamese such as Madhav kandali's Ramayana, Prahlad Charit etc. The use of the second person familiar verbal index, however, is very frequent in all the texts. It leads to think that *-ra* came to be used later by adding *-a* to *-r* for distinguishing the second person inferior possessor from the second person familiar with the analogy of the second person familiar verbal index. It should be further noted that even though modern Assamese develops three forms for the second person in terms of the distinction of honorificity, early Assamese had only two distinctions – the second person inferior and the honorific. *-a*, which was used with verbs as a marker of honorific for distinguishing the second person honorific from the inferior in early Assamese, has

gradually extended its function and added to the possessed nouns to mark the honorificity of the possessor as well.

Similarly, the system of using *-k* to mark the second person honorific and the third person possessors may analogous to the system of verbal indexing of the second person honorific subject and the third person subject, as in (106) and (107).

(106) *apuni*   *ketia*   *ah-il-e?*
       2SG.HON   when   come-PST-3
       'When did you come?'

(107) *ħi*   *ketia*   *ah-il-e?*
       3SG.M.DIST.INF   when   come-PST-3
       'When did he come?'

The examples have shown that the distinction of the second person honorific and the third person is not only neutralized in possessive indexes, but also in verbal indexes.

Further, the reason of using the marker *-k* for both persons will be uncovered if the view that the possessive index *-k* is an extended function of the genitive *-k* (of Magadhan language or used in Magadhi Prakrit) is considered as valid. It is seen from Grierson's account that *-k* with its unreduced form *-kar* and with a slight modification of the form *-ek* occurred with both the second person honorific pronominal possessor *apan* and the third person pronominal possessor, as in (108) and (109). The examples are taken from Grierson (1903, Vol. 5 -2), which represent one of the varieties of Maithili spoken in Darbhanga district.

(108) *apᵃn-ek*   *bētā*
       2SG.HON-GEN   son
       'Your son.'

(109) *ō-kar*   *bāp*
       3SG-GEN   father
       'His father.'

Because the genitive *-k* is added to the second person honorific and the third person possessors, this system of distribution is also extended to the indexing of the possessor. It is likely that *-k* was first used to mark the third person possessor and then was extended to mark the second person honorific. The absence of the honorific form in earlier texts such as Madhav Kandali's Ramayana, Prahlad Charit indicates that it is a later development in the language.

7 Origin of the possessive indexing system

Two questions need to be investigated in this section. Firstly, whether the possessive indexing system in Assamese is a natural development of NIA languages or it is a borrowed feature from other than NIA languages, since this system is not very common in NIA languages as stated above. Secondly, if the system is considered as a natural development or a borrowed feature, why is it

distributed in one NIA language from the far side of north-east India and in four other NIA languages found in Nepal as the system is completely absent in the NIA languages of central and western India? These two questions are discussed in the following sub-sections.

7.1 *The possessive indexing system: a natural development of IA languages or a borrowed feature?*

To deal with the first question, it needs to look at the areal situation where these five languages are found to be spoken. Assamese, Majhi, Darai, Bote, and Danuwar Rai, the five languages are surrounded mostly by the languages from Tibeto-Burman family and all the TB languages which have a contact with these five languages employ pronominal possessive affixes on possessed nouns. Thus, it can be said that the system of using possessive marking on possessed nouns in these five languages may be found due to the contact with TB languages. However, the person markers found on possessed nouns in TB languages differ from these five languages in terms of both structures and forms. They are used in TB languages as prefixes and derived from pronominal forms (Paudyal 2008; Jacquesson 2008; Chelliah 1997). Since the system of the possessive marking on possessed noun exists in many TB languages and the markers of those languages are considered to have derived from pronominal forms historically, it leads Grierson (1931) to make two assumptions – firstly, the system is used in Assamese on the model of Tibeto-Burman pronominal prefixes to nouns of relationship, and secondly, the markers in Assamese are relics of some abraded pronouns (cited in Kakati 1941). But it should be noted here again that apart from the first person index, the rest in Majhi and Darai are very identical with the markers in Assamese and the source of these markers are genitives, not pronouns. Similarly, the second person and the third person possessive indexes in Danuwar Rai and Bote also closely resembled the markers in Assamese, which lead to find the genitives as a common source of these markers.

Another language family, which is hypothesized to have a contact with Assamese once in the history is Austro-Asiatic. Munda languages, which belong to this family, and which are assumed to have a close contact with Assamese in the distant past (Kakati 1941), have possessive indexes. In Munda languages, the markers are suffixed to inalienable nouns, as illustrated in (110) and (111). Both the examples are cited from Peterson (2010).

Kharia, a South Munda language spoken in Jharkhand

(110)   *aba=ɲ*
         father=1SG
         'My father.

Santali, a North Munda language spoken in Jharkhand

(111)   *hɔpɔn=me*
         son=2SG
         'Your son.'

In both the examples, the markers are attached to inalienable nouns, but not with alienable nouns, as demonstrated in (112) and (113).

Kharia

(112)   *iɲ=aʔ*   *khoɽi*
        1SG=GEN   village
        'My village'

Santali (Peterson 2010)

(113)   *am=ak'*   *oɽak'*
        2SG=GEN   house
        'Your house.'

The examples from Munda languages cited above are similar with Assamese in three respects. Firstly, the person marker appears as suffixes in both languages. Secondly, the alienable nouns are not marked in both languages. Darai and Bote, however, are different from Assamese in this respect, since the possessive indexing of these two languages extends to mark ownership as well. Thirdly, the alienable nouns are obligatorily preceded by a possessor in the genitive.

Thus, it can be said that Munda languages may have influenced Assamese in the marking of possessive indexes. According to Kakati (1941), this feature is an influence of Munda (Kolarian) languages, not of Tibeto-Burman languages. Even if Assamese does not have a contact with Munda languages in the present time, Kakati provides two evidences which tell us about the contact of Assamese with Munda languages in the distant past. As a first evidence, he refers to Dr. S. Levi's observation which says that Kol (Munda) is listed in Vāyu Purāṇa among the people of Eastern India between Prāgjyotiṣa (modern Guwahati) and Videha (Tirhut). The second evidence is the references of Mahabharata which show the Kol as a tribe living in Eastern India which "is in the regions north of the Ganges and east of Bihar that the Assamese language in its formative period seems to have been individualized" (Kakati 1941, § 62).

Peterson (2010) and (2017) provides a discussion of the genitive *-k* which supports the view that there was a possible contact between Assamese and Munda languages in the distant past. In his discussion, he presents the use of the genitive *-k* with a slight variation in many Munda languages spoken in Jharkhand. Because the genitive *-k* is also found to occur in many Indo-Aryan (IA) languages spoken in that region and outside the region, Peterson left the question open for further investigation, which can decide whether the source of the genitive *-k* in Munda languages can be traced back to proto-Munda languages or it emerged in Munda languages as a result of contact with IA languages. Since Munda languages had a close contact with the languages such as Magahi, Maithili, which employ this genitive form and with Assamese which used this form in distant past, it is more likely for this marker to be present in Munda languages due to the contact with IA languages.

Another interesting point discussed by Peterson is that the function of the genitive *-k* is extended to mark some predicative categories in the third person in a number of Munda languages along with some Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Jharkhand and outside the Jharkhand (cf. § 6.2). It can also explain the existence of prior contact between IA languages such as Assamese, Darai,

Majhi and Munda languages , since the use of *-k* is restricted to the third person possessive relation in Assamese, Darai, Majhi, Bote, and Danuwar Rai (cf. § 6.2).

The possible contact of Munda languages with Indo-Aryan languages is also evident from the presence of a possessive index to mark inalienable possession in Sadri that belongs to the group of eastern Indo-Aryan languages along with Assamese, Darai, Majhi, Bote, and Danuwar. Sadri has the marker *=har* to mark inalienable possession, although only for a third person possession, as presented in (114) (Peterson 2017).

(114) *bhʌuji=har=mʌn*   *u=mʌn=ʌk*   *jʌmin*
       sister.in.law=3POSS=PL   3=PL=GEN   land
       'His/her sisters-in-law' 'their land'

Peterson argues that the use of *=har*, which was originally postnominal, as a marker of inalienable possession is a result of contact. Since this phenomenon does not exist in any IA languages of central India, it is more likely that Sadri has been influenced by the phenomenon of marking inalienable possession in Munda languages, (P. 5).

Though Assamese shares some close affinities with Munda languages regarding the marking of possessive indexes, at the same time, they show some differences. For instance, the inalienable noun is not preceded by a possessor in the genitive in Munda languages while in Assamese, it is. In Munda languages, the inalienable possession is "indicated by enclitic marking for the possessor on the possessum itself"(Peterson 2017:5). The possessor in the genitive is optional in Assamese. Secondly, the possessive indexes seem to be identical with personal pronominal forms (*ɲ~ iɲ* and *me~am*) in Munda languages while in Assamese, they are identical with genitive markers.

From the observation stated above, it can be concluded that there is a great chance of borrowing this feature from Munda languages to Assamese. However, Assamese shows a unique pattern with regard to this feature as it neither displays complete resemblance with Darai, Majhi, Bote nor with Munda languages, but seems to have internally developed a new pattern which is unusual among the languages of this region.

7.2 *Geographical distribution of the possessive indexing system of the IA languages*

This section deals with the second question why the distribution of this feature is so unusual over the NIA languages, a feature shared by all the five languages despite of Assamese being located quite distant from the other four languages. To answer this question, it needs to go back to the history of the regions where these languages are found to be spoken. It should be clearly noted here that many remarks, which will be presented here, will be based only on assumptions, since there is no sufficient historical records available to us on the basis of what we can delve into history and find the answer of this question.

Paudyal (2008) has already stated that Assamese, Darai, Majhi, Bote and Danuwar are genetically closely related. According to him "Darai along with other languages, Bote, Majhi, Danuwar, Tharu, Kuman, Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Magahi, Bhojpuri, Maithili form a linguistic group. Their source is traced back to the Ardhamagadhi Prakrit or Eastern Prakrit, which was brought to this area from Magadh (P. 188)." But surprisingly, in spite of sharing the same genealogical affiliation, the possessive indexing system is not found in other languages of the group

and it leads to make a strong generalization that the system is not a natural development of NIA languages but a borrowed feature.

If the historical accounts of the region, where Assamese is spoken, are considered, it is seen that the region was a larger kingdom during the war of Mahabharata, though the geographical boundary of it is reduced to the low valley of the Brahmaputra river including a bit hilly extension to the south in the present time. The kingdom was known as Pragjyotisha at that time and the geographical boundary of it included 'the greater part of modern Assam together with the Bengal districts of Jalpaiguri, Cooch-Behar, Rangpur, Bogra, Mymensing, Dacca, Tippera, part of Pabna and also probably part of east Nepal' (Barua 1933). Again, from the account of another great epic Ramayana, it is found that 'Pragjyotisha included, in the ancient times, the modern district of Purnea in Bihar and extended, on the north-west, as far as the Kosi' (Barua 1933). According to the Buddhist records and the Greek accounts of fourth century B.C., the western boundary of Pragjyotisha was the Kausika river (Kosi) and the northern boundary was the Bhutan hills and a part of Nepal. Different epigraphic records (rock inscriptions and copper-plates) discovered from this region also say that 'about the beginning of the sixth century A.D., the western boundary of Pragjyotisha was the Kosi river. Pragjyotisha therefore touched Videha (Mithila) on the west' (Barua 1933). If these accounts are considered to be true, there is a great chance of being in contact of Assamese with Darai and Majhi, because they were under the same kingdom.

From all the historical records available on Pragjyotisha, there is no any disagreement that Bihar was the part of Pragjyotisha in ancient time. Regarding the origin of Darai people, there is a myth found among Darai people that they were migrated from Darbhanga in Bihar to Nepal after Muslim invader (Darai). In accordance with the myth, the word Darai is derived from the Nepali word 'Daraya' which was used to refer to the people who fled to Nepal from Darbhanga district of Bihar because of war related violence. If this myth is taken into consideration, it explains something about the distribution of -*r* and -*k* with the second person and the third person respectively. It is already documented in the Grierson's survey (1931) that the use of the genitive -*r* with the second person possessor and the genitive -*k* with the third person possessor was found in a variety of Maithili spoken in Darbhanga (cf. Examples (52) and (55)). If it is assumed that the genitives -*r* and -*k* have extended their functions from the marking of possessors to the marking of possessed nouns at some point of the history of Magadhan languages, it can equally be assumed that Darai, which belongs to Magadhan group, may preserve the evidence of when the extension took place. Further, if Dr. S. Levi's account regarding the existence of Munda people (Kol) in eastern India is considered again, it may explain why possessive indexes are present in Assamese and Darai. If the Darai people are assumed to have inhabited in Darbhanga once in the history on the basis of the myth, it can be concluded that like Assamese, Darai language had also come into the contact of Munda languages. As a result of this contact, the system may have gradually entered into Assamese and Darai. But like Munda languages, they did not take the pronominal forms to mark the possessed nouns. Rather, these two languages used the genitives -*r* and -*k*, which might simultaneously be in use at that time, to mark the possessed nouns. This explanation, however, does not tell us anything about the possessive indexes of Majhi, Bote, and Danuwar, even though Assamese is more close to Majhi and Bote than Darai regarding the marking of this phenomenon. Moreover, it cannot explain why this phenomenon is not present in any Bihari languages such as Maithili, Magahi, Bhojpuri etc.

Peterson (2017) states that Mundari, Santali, Ho, Kharia and Sadri languages are now spoken in eastern Nepal and further to the east through the migration that took place mainly in the 19th century. It may explain the contact of Darai and Majhi with these languages as a result of which

the possessive indexes may occur in Darai and Majhi. But this explanation does not look at all convincing. If this phenomenon is considered to be borrowed from Munda languages, this borrowing took place during the time that Assamese language was individualized, not after that.

Further, if the distribution of these five languages is looked at, Majhi and Danuwar is spoken in the lower part of Nepal towards east; Darai and Bote is in the central part. As mentioned earlier, if the western boundary of ancient Pragjyotishpur extended to Kosi river, which is presently within the boundary of Nepal, and the northern boundary extended to some part of Nepal, it is not unusual to think that Assamese, Darai, and Majhi might come to a close contact at some point of the distant past. This possibility of contact is reflected in the possessive indexing system, especially in the marking of the second person and the third person possessors. If the view that the system is considered as an individual borrowing in five languages is accepted, it will be difficult to explain why these five languages chose genitives for marking the second person and the third person possessors instead of using some forms that are derived from free pronouns, similar to the first person index in Darai and Majhi.

8   Conclusion

The survey of possessive indexes in NIA languages reveals that typologically, Assamese, Darai, Bote, Majhi, and Danuwar form a group with regard to the coding of possessive indexes on possessed nouns from the perspective of both the structure and the form. The forms of possessive indexes are often assumed to have derived diachronically from independent pronouns (Mithun 2003). But the indexes in Assamese represent an opposite picture. They are assumed to have descended from the genitive forms rather than the independent pronouns. This assumption is supported by the diachronic development of the genitive forms *-r* and *-k* in Magadhan languages, the former of which is distributed to the first and the second person pronouns and the latter is restricted to the third person pronoun. Apart from their similarity in forms, the distribution of the possessive indexes is also alike to the genitive forms, which lead us to propose that they are the extended functions of the genitive forms *-r* and *-k*.

This feature does not look like a natural development of NIA languages or the individual languages concerned but a borrowed feature from Munda languages, which had a contact with these five languages during the stages when each language was individualized. It should also be noted here that even if this phenomenon is assumed to be borrowed from Munda languages, yet there is a door open for discussion, which can investigate whether it is borrowed from Munda languages or Tibeto-Burman languages. There is a possibility that the phenomenon was taken from surrounding Tibeto-Burman languages, but used in these languages following the pattern of native morphology. Suffixation, rather than prefixation is a part of Assamese, Darai, Majhi, Bote, and Danuwar morphology for which reason the possessive indexes are suffixed to possessed items than prefixed to them. It may also happen that Munda languages borrowed this phenomenon from IA languages such as Assamese and Darai or both Munda and IA languages borrowed it from Tibeto-Burman languages. The former possibility, however, has no point for discussion as the system is more developed and regular in Munda languages than Assamese. It is difficult to think for a borrowed language to have such a well-developed system if it is not very developed in the donor language.

Abbreviations

1	First person		INS	instrumental
2	Second person		INF	inferior
3	Third person		IPFV	imperfective
IA	Indo-Aryan		LOC	locative
MIA	Middle Indo-Aryan		M	masculine
NIA	New Indo-Aryan		NEG	negative
CLF	classifier		NF	non-finite
DAT	dative		NPST	non-past
DIRT	directional		OBL	oblique
DIST	distal		OPT	optative
ERG	ergative		PST	past
FAM	familiar		PL	plural
F	feminine		POSS	possessive
GEN	genitive		PROX	proximal
HON	honorific		SG	singular
IMP	imperative			

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