Ellen Hellebostad Toft: *Adverbal and adnominal genitive constructions in Old Norse.*
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Ellen H. Toft has presented a highly competent dissertation yielding valuable insights into both the details of the Old Norse genitive and the theoretical framework of cognitive linguistics. Toft takes the agenda of the usage-based model of cognitive linguistics seriously, opting for an empirical approach. By collecting and analyzing a database of authentic usage, Toft is able to provide a snapshot of the Old Norse adnominal and adverbal genitive at approximately the year 1250. This synchronic slice based on texts reflecting spoken usage gives us a closely calibrated view of the relative frequencies of various uses of the genitive. Theoretically the dissertation reflects current trends in cognitive linguistics, where corpus-based empirical methods are gaining ground. Overall, the dissertation makes a significant contribution in the way it addresses both practical and theoretical issues.

It is my job as first opponent to engage Ellen H. Toft in a discussion of the findings presented in her dissertation. I undertake this task by focusing on some of the challenges Toft encountered and suggesting some alternative interpretations for her data. I am primarily concerned with the radial categories Toft presents and her treatment of the adverbal genitive. I present alternative radial categories for both the possessive and the partitive uses of the genitive, and suggest a means to integrate the adnominal and adverbal, as well as prepositional genitive into a single semantic network. In this written version I have streamlined the presentation to focus only on these alternative radial categories, eliminating smaller points made in the oral defense concerning the scalar nature of animacy and idiomaticity.

Radial Categories

While there is no reason to question Toft's mastery of the theoretical concepts relating to the radial category, her application of this model to her data is in places problematic. She places schematic meanings/features directly in the radial categories, which I would argue clutters the category by mixing together actual usage types with abstractions that rightly belong on a different plane. This distorts the categories,

obscuring the place of the prototype. Identification of the prototype is further hindered by excessive reliance on frequency, which is only a symptom of prototypicality; to my knowledge no reliable correlation has been established and there are plenty of counterexamples in which prototype frequency is low (Schmid 2007). Prototypicality is more reliably identified in terms of density of features and of relationships to other members of the category (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2007). A prototype is a salient gestalt of features that serves as the semantic center of gravity for a radial category. Toft's selection of criteria for organizing her radial categories is limited, and as I show other criteria – including ones presented in the dissertation – yield more satisfactory results. I illustrate all these points in three concrete examples below.

Genitive of possession

Despite the fact that Toft presents the eight characteristics of Taylor's (1996) possession gestalt in full detail (pp. 112-113; see abbreviated version in Table 1), she does not use this gestalt to organize the radial category she posits for the Old Norse possessive genitive (p. 159, see Figure A). Instead, Toft bases her network on only two features: "Reference Point" and "Intrinsic Relationship". These two features are placed directly in the Figure, which shows which usage types they motivate. But where is the prototype? Toft tentatively suggests that paradigmatic possession (which, by the way, most completely reflects Taylor's possession gestalt) should be prototypical, but then rejects this idea on the grounds that paradigmatic possession represents only 10% of her data on the Old Norse possessive genitive (pp. 159-160).

[INSERT FIGURE A = Toft's Figure 11, p. 159 = Toft's Figure 3 from oral presentation. But if she presents it in her written version for NLT, you can just cross-reference it here.]
Figure A: Toft's radial category for the possessive genitive

Note also that "Paradigmatic GENPOSS" appears peripheral in Toft's diagram. Furthermore, there are some contradictions here: Toft tells us that "[t]he reference point schema thus serves as a unifying notion for possessive genitive constructions also in Old Norse" (p. 163). However, "Object GENPOSS" is not motivated by Reference Point in Toft's diagram.

Figure X suggests an alternative radial category for the Old Norse genitive of possession, arranging the same seven usage types Toft identifies according to Taylor's possession gestalt (with the eight characteristics a-h as in Table 1). The relevant characteristics are listed with each usage type and each line between types represents one or more shared characteristics (with thicker lines for multiple shared characteristics).

[INSERT FIGURE X here]
Figure X: Alternative radial category for the possessive genitive

(a)	possessor is human
(b)	possessed is inanimate, usually concrete object
(c)	relation is exclusive, with only one possessor
(d)	possessor has exclusive rights to possessed
(e)	possessed has either commercial or sentimental value
(f)	possessor received rights via purchase, inheritance, gift
(g)	possession is long term
(h)	possessed is in proximity of possessor

Table 1: Taylor's (1996) possession gestalt (abbreviated)

In this alternative diagram, Paradigmatic GENPOSS emerges as the obvious prototype with both the densest aggregate of characteristics and the most intense network of relationships to other usage types. Additionally, "Interpersonal GENPOSS" and "Object GENPOSS" are the most peripheral members of the category.

Partitive genitive

In Chapter 6 Toft identifies four usage types for the Old Norse partitive genitive and provides an excellent presentation of the parameters relevant to the semantics of the part-whole relationships that motivate the partitive genitive: the un/boundedness of both the part and the whole, the countability of the whole, and the autonomy of the part. Toft gathers these characteristics into a table (p. 213), and shows how they relate to the four usage types, but does not use them to build the radial category she presents (p. 214). Instead her network places an abstract schema, labeled "Inherent and restricted subpart of larger whole" in the center of a network with a single link from the schema to each usage type.

[INSERT FIGURE B = Toft's Figure 19, p. 214 = Figure 9 in her oral presentation]

One could argue that this structure is vacuous, since it specifies nothing more than a set of relations to a schema: there are no indications of any relations among the usage types. Furthermore, this diagram does not identify any prototype. In her discussion, Toft suggests that the evidence points toward the usage type "CompWhole" as the prototype, but then rejects that interpretation on the grounds that CompWhole is too similar to the possessive genitive, thus violating the assumption that a prototype must be maximally distinct from other categories (pp. 215-216ff.). Additionally, Toft cites a lack of supporting evidence from frequency, since three of her types, CompWhole, GenWhole and GenConstP, all have about the same frequency (approximately 30% of her data; p. 216).

I offer an alternative radial category that arranges the same four usage types based on the characteristics Toft herself identifies in the dissertation. This diagram lists the characteristics and their relationship to either the whole or the part for each partitive genitive usage type. Again, lines represent links based on shared characteristics.

[INSERT FIGURE Y]
Figure Y: Alternative radial category for the partitive genitive

This diagram has a non-vacuous structure that supports the identification of CompWhole as the prototype since this usage type shows the densest aggregate of characteristics and the most relationships to the other types: CompWhole is directly related to both GenConstP and GenSubstance via boundedness of the part, and is also related to GenWhole via boundedness of the whole.

I argue above that frequency is not a sufficient criterion for identifying or rejecting a prototype, so this argument should not hold against CompWhole either. Toft is concerned that CompWhole bears too many similarities to the possessive genitive to serve as the prototype for the partitive genitive. Here I believe that the level of cognitive categorization is a relevant and potentially confounding factor. It is well known in cognitive linguistics that the basic level for categorization is neither a very low subordinate level, nor a very high superordinate level, but rather an intermediate level (Lakoff 1987, Schmid 2007). An example of a basic level category is English *apple*, which is expressed by a single morpheme and associated with a

concrete prototype. Subordinate level categories are more specific, such as *Jonagold apple* and *Golden Delicious apple*, and superordinate level categories such as *fruit* are more diffuse and heterogeneous. It is likely that the genitive case is also a basic level category, as are all the other grammatical cases in Old Norse. At this basic level, it is indeed true that the prototypes for each case should be maximally distinct from each other, so that the prototype of the genitive, for example, is clearly distinct from that of the dative (though this does not exclude overlap at the peripheries). However, Toft's level of analysis here is the subordinate, not the basic level, since she is comparing two submeanings of the genitive, namely the possessive genitive and the partitive genitive. At the subordinate level the expectations typical for the basic level do not hold. On the contrary, we would expect the subordinate categories to be similar because they are linked together in a single basic level category. To return to the fruit analogy, there is no problem if Golden Delicious and Jonagold apples are very similar, but we would have a problem if prototypical apples and bananas seemed to overlap. The expectation that prototypes should be maximally distinct is simply irrelevant at the subordinate level and should not be a barrier to Toft in her analysis.

Adverbal genitive

In Chapter 8 Toft examines the Old Norse adverbal genitive. She first attempts an analysis based on the transitivity of the predicate, but this does not yield much more than the conclusion that the adverbal genitive does not usually represent prototypical transitive events, which is not very satisfying given that many accusative-governing verbs encode events that are similarly non-prototypical.

Toft then turns to a more promising strategy, focusing on the meanings of the verbs involved. Though she does manage to unite most of the verbs into five semantic groups, and she seems to believe that there should be some relation between the adverbal and adnominal genitive, probably via partitivity, Toft is ultimately unable to integrate these two subsystems of the Old Norse genitive (pp. 348-349).

I believe, however, that there is a way to unite the adnominal and adverbal uses of the genitive. Perhaps it was hard for Toft to see the connections because she excluded the use of the genitive with prepositions from her analysis. While it is certainly important for a dissertation to be limited and thus well defined, totally ignoring the prepositional use of the genitive put blinders on the analysis. A brief

glance at the prepositions that governed the Old Norse genitive reveals that they are the keys to the semantics of the entire case. Table 2 presents a list (adapted from Faarlund 2004), which I have organized into four groups (with some overlap) labeled WHOLE, REFERENCE POINT, SOURCE and GOAL.

semantic groups	Old Norse prepositions
WHOLE	*af hænnde* 'on the part of', *innan* 'within'
SOURCE	*(fyrir) sakar* 'on account of', *fra* 'from'
GOAL	*til* 'to'
REFERENCE POINT	*an* 'without', *utan* 'outside of', *(fyrir) sakar* 'on account of', *milli(/um)* 'between', *meðal* 'among, between', *at* 'at'

Table 2: Semantic grouping of Old Norse prepositions governing the genitive

I would assert that these four groups are all semantically linked to each other, motivated by a single schematic meaning. To illustrate this schematic meaning, consider Figure Z.

[INSERT FIGURE Z: Tom and Ben]
Figure Z: WHOLE, REFERENCE POINT, SOURCE and GOAL

Let's assume that what Ben is holding represents a genitive noun phrase. This Figure can have multiple static and dynamic interpretations. One static interpretation is that Tom is holding a part of the WHOLE that Ben has. Alternatively, we can view Ben's portion as a landmark, or REFERENCE POINT, for locating Tom's piece nearby. If we envision a dynamic scene, it could be the case that Tom has removed his piece from Ben's, which thus serves as a SOURCE. Or the reverse might be true, in which case Tom is in the process of replacing his piece, which makes Ben's the GOAL. Figure Z thus shows how partitivity (a.k.a. WHOLE) can motivate REFERENCE POINT, SOURCE, and GOAL submeanings. The joining of apparent opposites such as SOURCE and GOAL in a semantic network might seem counter-intuitive, but we see this kind of unification fairly often in languages (cf. marking of both recipients of 'give' and experiencers of 'take' with the dative case in many languages, Janda 1993). Note that this arrangement of meanings for the genitive case is also observed in Slavic languages (Janda 1999, 2006; Janda & Clancy 2002, 2006).

This network of genitive meanings is obviously relevant to the Old Norse adnominal genitive, where WHOLE and REFERENCE POINT motivate Toft's GENPOSS, GENCLASS and GENPART. Furthermore, these four genitive meanings can also be

used to organize the genitive-governing verbs listed in Toft's dissertation, as I show in Table 3, with the possible exception of the idiomatic *renna* 'get pregnant (of cows)'.

Whole	Source	Goal
unna 'grant'	*ørvilnast* 'despair, give up hope of'	*vænta* 'hope, expect'
ljá 'lend, grant, give'		*bíða* 'wait for'
fylla 'get filled'	*bindast* 'refrain from'	*spyrja* 'ask for'
Reference point	*missa/misti* 'lose'	*biðja* 'ask for'
geta 'speak of, mention'	*sakna* 'miss'	*krefja* 'demand, require'
minnast 'remember'	*þarnast* 'miss, lack'	*kveðja* 'demand, require'
virða 'value, assess, estimate'	*batna* 'recover from illness'	*beiða* 'urge, ask, beg'
virðast 'be valued'	*letja* 'dissuade, deter from'	*beiðast* 'request on s.o.'s behalf'
meta 'measure, estimate, assess'	*synía* 'deny'	*fá* 'get, have'
gá 'notice'	*gjalda* 'pay for (owe because of), suffer (because of)'	*afla* 'obtain'
kenna 'notice, perceive'	*hefna* 'avenge (due to a cause)'	*þurfa* 'need'
	skammast 'be ashamed of'	*búast* 'prepare oneself for'
	iðrast 'regret (due to a cause)'	*eggja* 'incite, spur, goad'
	saka 'blame'	*freista* 'try, attempt'
		bætast 'restore, get better'
		vitja 'visit'
		njóta 'enjoy, use'
		neyta 'use, enjoy'
		gæta 'protect, take care of'

I argue that Toft's analysis suffers somewhat from the fact that it was conducted in isolation from the wider context of genitive uses. An analysis of the prepositional genitive, even a cursory one, actually makes the task of analyzing the adnominal and adverbal genitive easier rather than harder. This alternative analysis confirms Toft's suspicions that the partitive (WHOLE) meaning is central to the overall meaning of the genitive case and that the adnominal and adverbal genitive are part of a unified system.

Conclusion

In concluding, I would like to point out that the three alternative analyses I present here merely take Toft's data and analyses to their logical conclusions. For the most part I have only used classification systems that Toft herself presents in the dissertation; at one point I referred to data excluded from the dissertation (prepositions), but of course this information was also available to Toft. The alternative analyses all confirm Toft's own tentative speculations. Overall, I find Toft's work highly insightful, displaying an admirable degree of both factual and theoretical expertise. However, she is at times too cautious and too timid, backing away from conclusions she has sufficient evidence for. I hope that in her future

scholarly contributions she will be bolder, rather than hiding her brilliance under a bushel of hedges.

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