

# The sensitivity of possessor raising and applicativization to tense in Laki

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## Outline

- How the person and number of subjects and pronominal objects are coded
  - in the present tense
  - in the preterite
- The pattern of PN marking in a transitive clause depends on tense
- How the PN properties of pronominal possessors are coded
  - These reveal a pattern of possessor raising in the preterite
- How the PN properties of pronominal prepositional objects are coded
  - These reveal a pattern of applicativization in the preterite
- Discussion of typological and historical implications

## Coding the person and number of subjects and pronominal objects

In the Laki language (Northwestern Iranian), the person and number of a finite verb form's subject and pronominal object arguments are, in general, expressed either as suffixes or as enclitics.

The precise manner in which these arguments' properties are realized varies according to the verb form's tense and valence.

## Coding a subject's person and number in the present tense

In the present tense, a verb carries a person and number (PN) **suffix** to express the agreement properties of its subject:

Table A. Subject-coding PN suffixes  
in the present tense

	SG	PL
1	-(e)m	-(i)men
2	-(i)n	-(i)nān
3	-i	-(e)n

1. *homa Ali=ya mown-inān.*  
you.PL Ali=DEF.OBJ see.PRS-SBJ.2PL  
'You (pl) see Ali.'

2. *mown-em=et.*  
see.PRS-SBJ.1SG=OBJ.2SG  
'I see you (sg).'

## Coding a pronominal object's person and number in the present tense

In the present tense, a transitive verb may carry a **PN clitic** expressing the properties of a pronominal object:

Table B. Pronominal object-coding PN clitics  
in the present tense

	SG	PL
1	=(e)m	=mān
2	=(e)t	=tān
3	=i	=(ā)n

3. *mown-em=et.*

see.PRS-SBJ.1SG=OBJ.2SG

'I see you (sg).'

4. *mar-em=ān.*

eat.PRS-SBJ.1SG=OBJ.3PL

'I eat them.'

## Coding a pronominal object's person and number in the present tense

3. *mown-em=et.*

see.PRS-SBJ.1SG=OBJ.2SG

'I see you (sg).'

4. *mar-em=ān.*

eat.PRS-SBJ.1SG=OBJ.3PL

'I eat them.'

In (3) and (4), the **subject-agreement suffix** and the **pronominal object clitic** are adjacent. But in the case of a compound verb, the two are separated: the subject-agreement suffix appears on the finite verb, and the pronominal object clitic on the compound's initial constituent:

5. *mearefi=tān*

introduction=OBJ.2PL

*ma-ke-y-men.*

HAB-do.PRS-SBJ.1PL

'We are introducing you.'

## Coding a subject's person and number in the preterite (intransitive verbs)

In the preterite, an intransitive verb carries a **PN suffix** to express subject agreement:

Table C. Subject-coding PN suffixes in the preterite tenses (intransitive verbs)

	SG	PL	
1	-(e)m	-(i)men	[as in the present except in the 3sg]
2	-(i)n	-(i)nān	
3	—	-(e)n	

6. *hat-inān.*

come.PST-SBJ.2PL

'You (pl) came.'

7. *Zia do aka hat arā māl ima.*

Zia last day come.pst to house our

'Zia came to our house yesterday.'

## Coding a subject's person and number in the preterite (transitive verbs)

In the preterite, a transitive verb expresses subject agreement by means of a **PN clitic**:

Table D. Subject-coding PN clitics  
in the preterite tenses (transitive verbs)

	SG	PL
1	=(e)m	=mān
2	=(e)t	=tān
3	=i	=(ā)n

[= Table B]

This subject-coding clitic is hosted by the first argument constituent of VP, which may be the verb itself (as in (9)):

8. *me ketew-a=m dā a det-al-a.*  
 I book-DEF=**SBJ.1SG** give.PST to girl-PL-DEF  
 'I gave the book to the girls.'

9. *wārd-en=**mān**.*  
 eat.PST-OBJ.3PL=**SBJ.1PL**  
 'We ate them.'

But: 3sg =i is uniformly enclitic to the verb.



## Coding a pronominal object's person and number in the preterite

In the preterite, a transitive verb's pronominal object is expressed by a **PN suffix** on the verb itself. These are the same suffixes as are used to code subjects in intransitive preterite clauses.

9. *wārd-en=mān.*  
eat.PST-**OBJ.3PL**=SBJ.1PL  
'We ate them.'

## Coding a pronominal object's person and number in the preterite

9. *wārd-en=mān.*  
eat.PST-OBJ.3PL=SBJ.1PL  
'We ate them.'

In (9), the **pronominal object suffix** and the **subject-agreement clitic** are adjacent. But in the case of a compound verb, the two are naturally separated: the pronominal object suffix appears on the finite verb, and the subject-agreement clitic in second position:

10. *parvāz=em dā-n.*  
fly=SBJ.1SG give.PST-OBJ.3PL  
'I flew them.'

11. *mearefi=tān kerd-imen.*  
introduction=SBJ.2PL do.PST-OBJ.1PL  
'You (pl) introduced us.'

## Three patterns of person/number marking in Laki

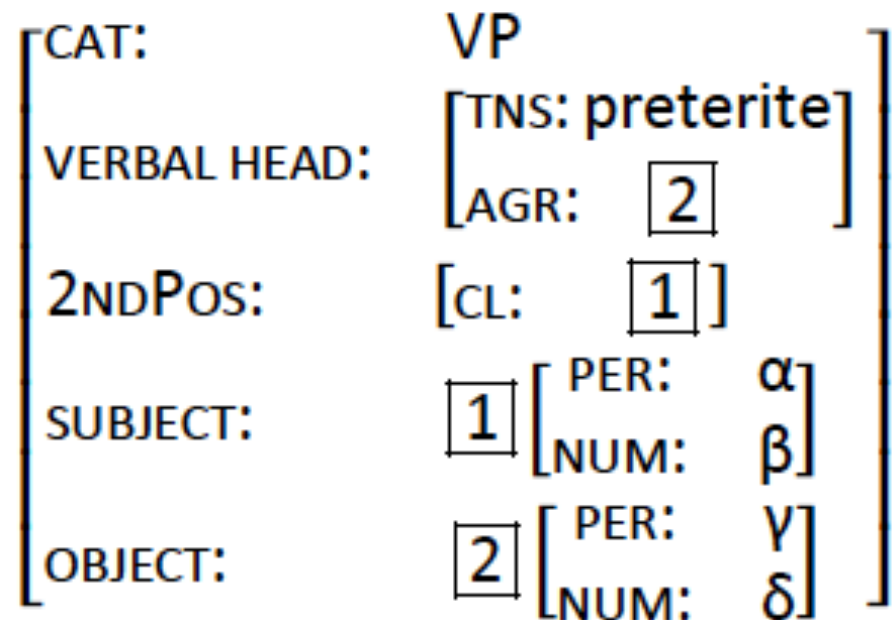
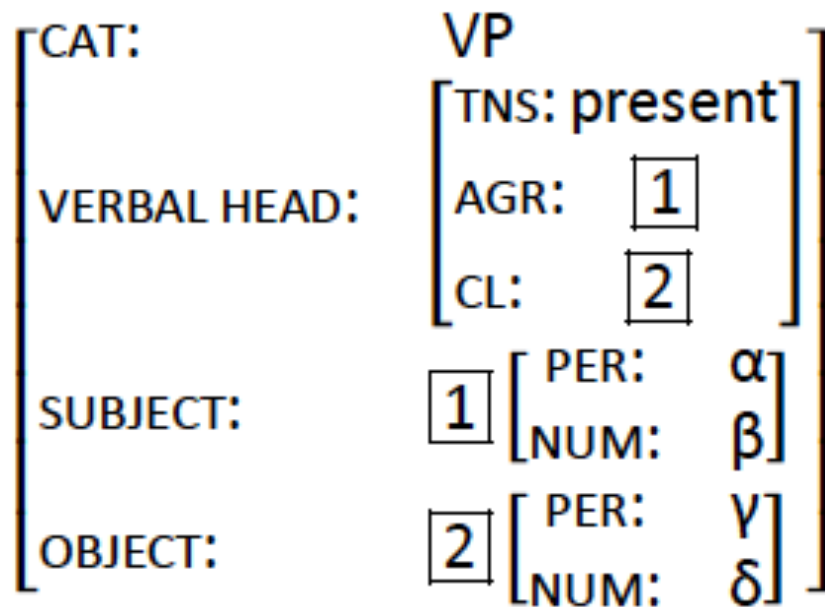
In summary, Laki verbs may be said to have three ways of coding subjects and pronominal objects:

	Subject	Pronominal object
Present	PN suffix (Table A)	PN clitic (Table B)
Preterite intransitive	PN suffix (Table C)	—
Preterite transitive	PN clitic (Table D)	PN suffix (Table C)

Similar patterns are observed in other varieties of Kurdish. Particular attention has been devoted to the Sorani Kurdish pattern in a number of places, e.g. Samvelian (2007), Bonami & Samvelian (2008), Karimi (2009, 2011), Walther (2011), Bonami & Crysman (2013), Karimi (2013), and Bonami & Stump (2017).

## The pattern of PN marking in a transitive clause depends on tense

The distinct patterns of PN marking in transitive clauses in the present and preterite tenses may be schematized as follows:



## The PN properties of pronominal possessors

When a NP has a pronominal possessor, the PN properties of the possessor are ordinarily expressed by means of a phrase-final PN clitic, as in (12).

12. *ketew kalen riyāziya=m*  
book big mathematic=POSS.1SG  
'my big mathematics book'

When a phrase such as (12) appears as a VP-initial object in a preterite sentence, it might be expected to host a second PN clitic expressing subject agreement. But this expectation cannot be fulfilled, because Laki grammar disallows adjacent PN clitics (\*PNcl-PNcl).

## The PN properties of pronominal possessors

That is, Laki morphology presents a dilemma. In the preterite, a transitive verb's subject is coded by a PN clitic hosted by the first argument constituent of the VP. If this first constituent is a NP with a pronominal possessor, this possessor cannot be expressed in the usual way (= as a clitic) in view of the ban on successive PN clitics.

Laki resolves this dilemma in a striking way.

## When a possessed NP appears as the first argument constituent of VP

Ordinarily,

- **subject agreement** is expressed by a **PN clitic** hosted by the NP;
- the PN properties of the **NP's possessor** are expressed on the verb by a **PN suffix** from Table C.

13. *ketew-a=m*      *x<sup>w</sup>an-i-n*.  
book-DEF=**SBJ.1SG** read-PST-**POSS.2SG**  
'I read (did read) your book.'

## When a possessed NP appears as the first argument constituent of VP

Thus, there is a dramatic difference in the morphosyntax of sentences (14) and (13):

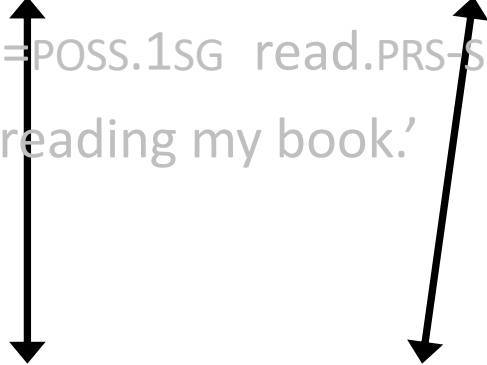
14. *ketew-a=m*                      *max<sup>w</sup>an-in*.  
book-DEF=POSS.1SG read.PRS-SBJ.2SG  
'You are reading my book.'

13. *ketew-a=m*                      *x<sup>w</sup>an-i-n*.  
book-DEF=SBJ.1SG read-PST-POSS.2SG  
'I read (did read) your book.'



## When a possessed NP appears as the first argument constituent of VP

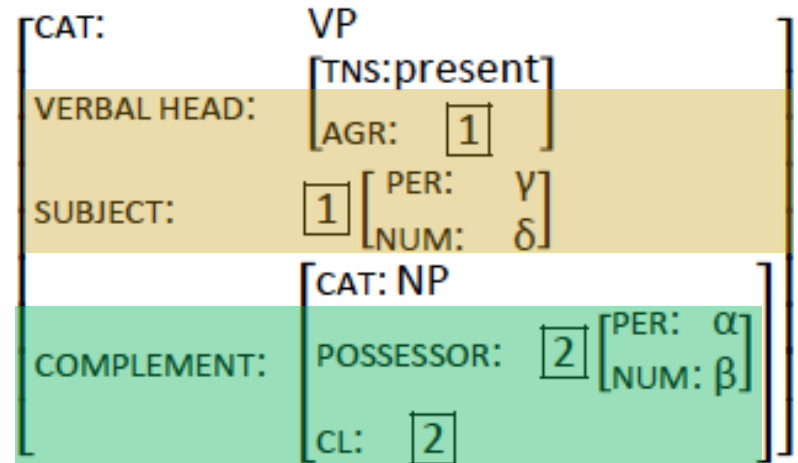
Thus, there is a dramatic difference in the morphosyntax of sentences (14) and (13):

14. *ketew-a=m*                      *max<sup>w</sup>an-in.*  
book-DEF=POSS.1SG    read.PRS-SBJ.2SG  
'You are reading my book.'
13. *ketew-a=m*                      *x<sup>w</sup>an-i-n.*  
book-DEF=SBJ.1SG    read-PST-POSS.2SG  
'I read (did read) your book.'
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 book-DEF=POSS.1SG    read.PRS-SBJ.2SG  
 ‘You are reading my book.’



13. *ketew-a=m*                      *x<sup>w</sup>an-i-n*.  
 book-DEF=SBJ.1SG    read-PST-POSS.2SG  
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14. *ketew-a=m*                    *max<sup>w</sup>an-in*.  
 book-DEF=POSS.1SG read.PRS-SBJ.2SG  
 ‘You are reading my book.’

CAT:	VP
VERBAL HEAD:	[TNS:present AGR: 1]
SUBJECT:	1 [PER: γ NUM: δ]
COMPLEMENT:	[CAT: NP POSSESSOR: 2 [PER: α NUM: β] CL: 2]

13. *ketew-a=m*                    *x<sup>w</sup>an-i-n*.  
 book-DEF=SBJ.1SG read-PST-POSS.2SG  
 ‘I read (did read) your book.’

CAT:	VP
VERBAL HEAD:	[TNS:preterite AGR: 2]
2NDPos:	[CL: 1]
SUBJECT:	1 [PER: γ NUM: δ]
COMPLEMENT:	[CAT: NP POSSESSOR: 2 [PER: α NUM: β]]

## Possessor raising

As these examples show, a preterite verb whose direct object has a pronominal possessor inflects exactly like a preterite verb with a pronominal direct object. In other words, Laki exhibits a kind of **possessor raising**, by which the PN properties of a direct object's possessor come to serve as those of the direct object itself.

## Restrictions on possessor raising in Laki

## Restrictions on possessor raising in Laki

If the possessed NP is modified by a relative clause,

- **subject agreement** is expressed by a **PN clitic** appearing at the end of the relative clause;
- the PN properties of the **NP's possessor** are expressed on the NP's head by a **PN clitic**.

15. *ketew-a=t*                      *ke*    *pāraka=m*                      *sani*  
book-DEF=POSS.2SG    that    last.year=SBJ.1SG    buy.PST  
'your book which I bought last year'

Here, the relative clause allows the two PN clitics to avoid violating the \*PNcl-PNcl constraint.

## Restrictions on possessor raising in Laki

Possessor raising is not in general observable in present-tense sentences.

16. *har ruž rafix-a=tān a mown-em.*  
every day friend-DEF=POSS.2PL OBJ see.PRS-SBJ.1SG  
'Every day I see your (pl) friend.'

## The PN properties of pronominal prepositional objects

When a PP has a pronominal object, the PN properties of this object are ordinarily expressed by means of a phrase-final PN clitic, as in (17).

17. *aben=em*  
to=OBJ.1SG  
'to me'

When a PP such (17) appears as a VP-initial argument in a preterite sentence, the possibility that it will host a second PN clitic expressing subject agreement is again excluded by the \*PNcl-PNcl constraint.

Laki avoids this outcome in a manner analogous to the possessor-raising solution.



## When a PP with a pronominal object appears VP-initially in the preterite

Ordinarily,

- **subject agreement** is expressed by a **PN clitic** hosted by the preposition;
- the **PN properties of the preposition's object** are expressed on the verb by a **PN suffix** from Table C.

18. *aben=em vet-in.*  
to=**SBJ.1SG** tell.**PST-OBJ.2SG**  
'I told you.'

## When a PP with a pronominal object appears VP-initially in the preterite

Thus, there is a dramatic difference in the morphosyntax of sentences (19) and (18):

19. *aben=m a m-uš-in.*  
to=OBJ.1SG OBJ HAB-tell.PRS-SBJ.2SG  
'You (sg) tell me.'

18. *aben=em vet-in.*  
to=SBJ.1SG tell.PST-OBJ.2SG  
'I told you.'

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 to=OBJ.1SG OBJ HAB-tell.PRS-SBJ.2SG  
 'You (sg) tell me.'

CAT:	VP
VERBAL HEAD:	[TNS:present]
SUBJECT:	[1] [AGR: [1]]
	[1] [PER: γ]
	[NUM: δ]
COMPLEMENT:	[CAT: PP]
	COMPLEMENT: [2] [PER: α]
	[NUM: β]
	CL: [2]

18. *aben=em vet-in.*  
 to=SBJ.1SG tell.PST-OBJ.2SG  
 'I told you.'

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 to=OBJ.1SG OBJ HAB-tell.PRS-SBJ.2SG  
 'You (sg) tell me.'

CAT:	VP
VERBAL HEAD:	[TNS:present]
SUBJECT:	[1] [AGR: [1]]
COMPLEMENT:	[CAT: PP] [COMPLEMENT: [2] [PER: α] [NUM: β]] [CL: [2]]

18. *aben=em vet-in.*  
 to=SBJ.1SG tell.PST-OBJ.2SG  
 'I told you.'

CAT:	VP
VERBAL HEAD:	[TNS:preterite]
2NDPOS:	[CL: [1]]
SUBJECT:	[1] [AGR: [1]]
COMPLEMENT:	[CAT: PP] [COMPLEMENT: [2] [PER: α] [NUM: β]]

## Applicativization

As these examples show, a preterite verb whose VP-initial PP complement has a pronominal object inflects like a preterite verb with a pronominal direct object. In other words, Laki exhibits a kind of **applicativization**, by which the PN properties of the pronominal object of a verb's PP complement affect the verb's inflection in just the same way as those of a pronominal direct object.

## Restriction on applicativization in Laki

## Restriction on applicativization in Laki

Applicativization only affects VP-initial prepositional phrases:

20. *aben=em vet-in.*  
to=1SG.SBJ tell.PST-2SG.OBJ  
'I told you.'

21. *vet=m aben=et.*  
tell.PST=1SG.SBJ to=2SG.OBJ  
'I told you.'



## Discussion

What is striking in all of this is that the observed patterns of possessor raising and applicativization are restricted to the preterite tenses. These are the very tenses in which a subject-agreement clitic risks violating the \*PNcl-PNcl ban.

On one hand, a subject-agreement clitic in VP-second position risks following a PN clitic expressing a direct object's pronominal possessor.

On the other hand, it also risks following a PN clitic expressing the pronominal object of an argument PP.

## Discussion

The incidence of possessor raising and applicativization in such cases heads off the possibility of any violation. It is as though in Laki, possessor raising and applicativization are a remedial presence motivated specifically by the \*PNcl-PNcl ban.

“Relation-changing operations” have, of course, been routinely attributed to the need to avoid violations of universal or language-specific constraints. But it is unusual for the incidence of such operations (however these are to be formalized) to correlate with the choice of tense.

## Discussion

In Laki, this correlation seems to be purely indirect. The contrasting patterns of PN marking in the present and preterite tenses are the vestige of a stage of split ergativity in the prehistory of Laki; many Iranian languages either retain split ergativity (as in Pashto) or have vestiges of it (as in Sorani Kurdish), though some have abandoned even these vestiges.

## Discussion

If Laki (like Persian) had simply abandoned the contrasting patterns of PN marking observed in the present and preterite tenses, it would thereby have avoided possible violations of \*PNcl-PNcl. Having preserved these contrasting patterns, it has instead apparently employed the innovations of possessor raising and applicativization to avoid such violations.

## Discussion

As a consequence, the exponents of person and number in the inflection of Laki verbs exhibit a high degree of polyfunctionality. Consider, for example, the sentences in (22)-(25), in which the verbs' 1sg PN suffix codes four underlying grammatical relations.

(22) *-em* codes subject:

*Zia o Ali mown-em.*  
Zia and Ali see.PRS-SBJ.1SG  
'I see Zia and Ali.'

(23) *-em* codes direct object:

*di-m=nān*  
see.PST-OBJ.1SG=SBJ.2PL  
'You (pl.) saw me.'

(24) *-em* codes indirect object:

*Zia o Ali aben=ān vet-em.*  
Zia and Ali to=SBJ.3PL tell-PREP.OBJ.1SG  
'Zia and Ali told me.'

(25) *-em* codes possessor:

*Zia o Ali dečarxa-ʔa=n di-m.*  
Zia and Ali bicycle-DEF=SBJ.3PL see.PST-POSS.1SG  
'Zia and Ali saw my bicycle.'

## Discussion

We look to future research for insights into the choice of an apparent complication (innovative possessor raising and applicativization) over an apparent simplification (innovative leveling of the patterns of PN marking across the present and preterite tenses).

Tašakora makam!

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