

Title: The History of Predicative Possession in Slavic: Internal Development vs. Language Contact
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Evidence from early Slavic texts supports the existence of three possessive constructions in late Proto-Slavic: the verb *iměti*, a dative possessor and an *u* + genitive construction. Old Church Slavic (OCS) used mainly *iměti* for predicative possession, e.g. (1) from Codex Marianus.

(1) вѣси вѣрѣ имѣтъ вѣ нѣ

However, the prevalence of *iměti* in OCS may be due to Greek influence, since other early Slavic texts make frequent use of dative possessors and *u* + genitive, in addition to *iměti*. E.g. (2) and (3) from early entries of the Russian Primary Chronicle (Laurentian copy):

(2) како есть ѣбѣчаи имѣ (cf. како есть у нихъ обычаи, Trinity copy)

(3) и брака оу нихъ не бываше

The *u* + genitive was not restricted to Old East Slavic, as Vasilev (1973) shows in examples from Old Serbian, e.g. (4):

(4) koliko li vojske u njego jest

In most modern Slavic languages *iměti* expanded and became the primary means for expressing predicative possession, but in Russian *u* + genitive expanded instead. I argue that (1) the expansion of *u* + genitive in Russian was promoted by Finnic substratal influence, since Finnic languages use a comparable impersonal possessive construction with the adessive case; (2) language contact facilitated the expansion of *iměti* in other Slavic languages. In particular, Czech *jmieti* (modern *mít*) became the basic expression of predicative possession as a result of adstratal influence from neighboring German. The dative possessor has not undergone a comparable expansion in modern Slavic languages. Thus contact has contributed to the elimination of some possessive constructions, with the result that most modern Slavic languages now have fewer than the Proto-Slavic three.

References:

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