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Possessives in Aromanian. A comparison with Albanian and North-Calabrian dialects

Benedetta Baldi; Leonardo M. Savoia

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Abstract

In this article we aim to provide a principled analysis of a complex of phenomena concerning the way the possession relation is manifested and its morpho-syntactic expression. We will focus on the possessive structures of Aromanian varieties spoken in Southern Albania, the Rëmen of Libofshë (Fier) and Vlleht of Këllez (Gjirokastër), where possessives follow the head noun with which they agree and are preceded by the invariable Possessive introducer (PI) a both within DPs and in predicative contexts. The comparison with Albanian and Southern Italian possessives inspires a lexicalist approach where variation stems from the interplay between different morpho-lexical tools and the universal basic combinatory mechanism (Chomsky 2005). We consider the following phenomena: (i) The nature of a in Aromanian possessives and the structure of possessive; (ii) Genitive and linker-like elements: di in Calabrian, pre-adjectival article in Albanian; (iii) Kinship terms possessives with enclitic position in Aromanian and Southern Italian dialects. The conceptual constraints shaping the possessive systems are based on categorial properties regarding the nominal domain: (differential) lexicalization of the $\bar{F}_{0, \bar{G}H}$ -features of DP, 1st/2nd/3rd singular vs plural, kinship terms vs other nouns, linearization of semantic relations and externalization.

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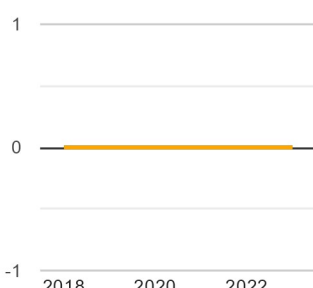
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POSSESSIVES IN AROMANIAN. A COMPARISON WITH ALBANIAN AND NORTH-CALABRIAN DIALECTSⁱ

BENEDETTA BALDI, LEONARDO M. SAVOIA¹

Abstract. In this article we aim to provide the analysis of a complex of phenomena concerning the way the possession relation is manifested and its morpho-syntactic expression. We will focus on the possessive structures of Aromanian varieties spoken in Southern Albania, the Rëmen of Libofshë (Fier) and Vlleht of Këllez (Gjirokastrë), where possessives follow the head noun with which they agree and are preceded by the invariable Possessive introducer (PI) *a* both within DPs and in predicative contexts. The comparison with Albanian and Southern Italian possessives inspires an approach where variation stems from the interplay between different morpho-lexical tools and the universal basic combinatory mechanism (Chomsky 2005, 2020). We consider the following phenomena: (i) The nature of *a* in Aromanian possessives and the structure of possessive; (ii) Genitive and linker-like elements: *di* in Calabrian, pre-adjectival article in Albanian; (iii) Kinship terms possessives with enclitic position in Aromanian and Southern Italian dialects. Possessive systems are organized on the basis of the interpretive properties involved in the nominal domain: (differential) lexicalization of the ϕ -features of DP, 1st/2nd/3rd singular vs plural, kinship terms vs other nouns, linearization of semantic relations and externalization.

Keywords: possession relation in syntax, morpho-syntax of possessives, genitive, Aromanian, Albanian, Calabrian dialects.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the properties and distribution of possessives in the Aromanian varieties spoken in Southern Albania, the Rëmen of Libofshë (Fier) and Vlleht of Këllez (Gjirokastrë), considered also in comparison with other Romance varieties and Albanian². Similarly to Romanian, in Aromanian varieties, within DPs possessives follow the head noun with which they agree, and are preceded by the invariable Possessive

ⁱ We are grateful to the friends and colleagues Rodica Zafiu and Bruno Mazzone for their advice and help in finding dialectological materials.

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² All the data that we present and discuss in this work have been collected in the last few years through field research with native and resident speakers, which were requested to produce some types of sentences in their native language (Aromanian, Albanian or South-Italian dialect) – elicited by presenting them the corresponding forms in Albanian or in Italian. Linguistic judgments provided by informants on alternative possibilities were in turn kept in consideration.

introducer (PI) *a*. This structure appears also in predicative and pronominal contexts. The phenomena we will take into account include the following:

- The nature of *a* in Aromanian possessives and the structure of possessive
- Genitive and linker-like elements: *di* in Calabrian, pre-adjectival article in Albanian
- Kinship terms possessives with enclitic position in Aromanian and Southern Italian dialects.

A point, that has become an increasingly important test bench for the theory, is the role of the micro-variation between similar systems and contact phenomena in bilingual areas, as in the case of Aromanian in South Albania. Exploring variation and comparing contact languages allows us to have a more subtle and profound understanding of the linguistic facts to the extent they manifest conceptual structure of language. Thus, with the present article we aim to provide a more comprehensive treatment of a complex of phenomena that has been the object of our recent reflection. Our purpose is to deepen the notion of possession and its morphosyntactic expression. In this line, we will assume the model proposed in a number of contributions by Manzini *et al.* (2014, 2015, 2019), Franco *et al.* (2015), Savoia *et al.* (2020), testing it with systematic data concerning possessives, genitives/ datives, prepositional phrases in Aromanian and other languages. The comparison with Albanian and South-Italian varieties, presented here, inspires the reflection on the possessive structures, based in turn on a non-cartographic treatment of the structural phenomena. In keeping with Chomsky *et al.* (2019: 18) the mapping from syntax onto representations accessible to the interpretive systems C-I and SM involves morphophonological properties: it is ‘the locus of much, perhaps all variation between languages’. Thus, variation stems from the interplay between different morphological tools and the universal basic combinatory mechanism (Chomsky 2005). This is the perspective that characterizes our theoretical model in treating variation in possessive systems.

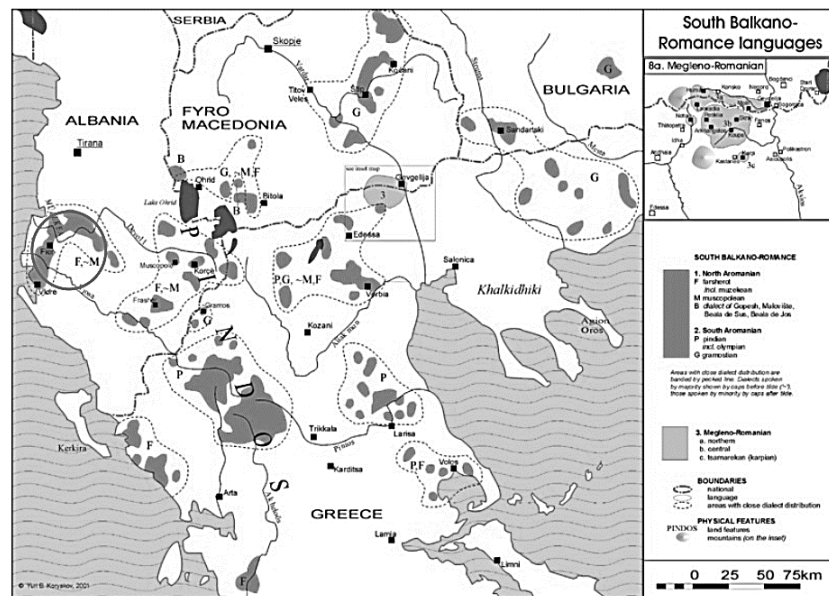
2. AROMANIAN POSSESSIVES³

As a first step we will present the distribution and possessive forms collected in the Aromanian varieties of Libofshë, Divjakë and Fier in Myzeqeja region, and in Këllez in the region of Gjirokastër. Table 1 shows the distribution of Aromanian varieties in South-Balkan territory and, in particular, Muzakean Aromanian is approximately circumscribed by circle in the South-Western Albania. The data elicited from informants living in Myzeqeja are homogeneous, in the sense that no substantial phonological or morphosyntactic differences emerged in the performances of speakers, except, obviously, for personal or familiar style differences. So, the Aromanian grammars spoken in Divjakë, Fier and Libofshë are strictly congruent on the same system. For the sake of consistency and

³ Aromanian data have been gathered through interviews with native informants in the Aromanian communities of southern Albania, specifically in Libofshë, a village near Fier, in Divjakë and in Fier for the variety generally named Rëmën, spoken in the district of Fier (region of Myzeqeja/Musachia), and in Këllez for the Vlleht variety of the Gjirokastër region. Our informants of Libofshë are an old man and a young man; in Fier we have interviewed some middle-aged informants, and for Këllez we have interviewed the Vlleht speaker and Gjirokastër University colleague Spiridhulla Poçi, whose grammar of Vlleht we have used and quoted in this article.

simplicity we mostly refer to the data collected in Libofshë, where our investigations were more thorough and detailed thanks to the availability of informants. We have systematically compared and verified these data with the ones obtained in the other adjacent communities speaking similar dialects, which however will be in turn exemplified, even if in a non-systematic way.

Table 1



The region of Myzaqeja/ Musachia is circumscribed by the circle. In particular, F = farshërot and musokean varieties, M = Muscopolean varieties.

Within the DP 1st/ 2nd (singular and plural) person possessors are lexicalized by postnominal possessive elements agreeing with the head noun and are preceded by the Possessive Introducer (PI) *a*. As regards the agreement with the possessed noun it is of note that the possessive shows the gender and number contrast, generally morphophonologically registered. Definite nouns show the definite inflection including the postnominal definiteness element, whereas indefinite ones lack this specification⁴. The Rëmen nominal paradigm is reduced compared to the Romanian one, while retaining the

⁴ As is well known both Aromanian (like Romanian) and Albanian have a postnominal exponent traditionally named postposed article. Following Manzini and Savoia (2007, 2018) we characterize this morphological element as a definite inflection of the noun, sufficient to externalize the definiteness properties of DP. Within the cartographic framework, Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Giusti (1998) assume that Albanian postposed article is directly generated on N and N+Article move in a high position where they license D. Turano (2002) treats this element as a definiteness formative in D, incorporated in the noun as a result of the movement of N to D.

basic distinctions. For the sake of clarity, we provide a schematized characterization of the nominal inflectional Rëmen system on the base of the data registered in Libofshë, in (1a, b). (1) Aromanian nominal inflections (Pal = palatalization of the final C)

a.	Definite paradigm				
		msg	fsg	mpl	fpl
	Nom/Acc	u	a	(Pal/λ)-i	l-i
	Dat/Gen	u	i	λ-u/ (Pal)u-r-u	r-u/l-u
b.	Indefinite paradigm				
		msg	fsg	mpl	fpl
	Nom/Acc	∅	ə	Pal/i	i
	Dat/Gen	∅	i	i	i

The declension of the Këllez variety is very similar except for some minor morpho-phonological difference (Poçi 2009).

Coming now to the data, the Possessive Introducer (PI) *a* precedes the possessive in all contexts, hence differently from Standard Romanian where PI occurs only in indefinite contexts (Dobrovie-Sorin 2013, Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013; Nicolae 2016 for Old Romanian). (2a,a') illustrate singular feminines and masculines, and (2b,b') plural feminines and masculines respectively. The same forms also occur in predicative contexts, illustrated in (3a, a') and in (3b,b'), and in pronominal contexts in (3c). In Aromanian the simple occurrence of PI + possessive is however attested, cf. (2c). For the sake of comparison, in (4) dative is shown, where PI precedes the oblique forms of the personal pronouns. The 3rd person pronominal possessors are lexicalized by the oblique form of 3rd person pronouns, as in (6a, b), i.e. the usual oblique structure characterizing genitive contexts, in (5a, b) (Manzini and Savoia 2014, 2018). In these contexts, the introducer takes the form *o* in front of the masculine and plural forms, in (5a) and (6a), whereas *a* precedes feminine singular pronouns, in (6b), and *ali* feminine definite nouns, in (5b).

(2)	a.	libr-a	a	mɛu/tau/nɔst(ər)
		book-FSG	PI	my.FSG/your.FSG/our
		'my/your/our book'		
	a'.	libr-ə	a	mɛl-i/tal-i/nɔst-i
		books-FPL	PI	my-FPL/your-FPL/our-FPL
		'my/your books'		
	b.	kɛn-li	a	ɲeu/tou/nɔstər
		dog-DEF.M	PI	my.MSG/your.MSG/our
		'my/your/our dog'		
	b'.	kɛɲ-li	a	ɲeλ-i/toλ-i/nɔst-i
		dog.PL-DEF.M	PI	my-MPL/your-MPL/our-PL
		'my/your/our dogs'		
	c.	un kəmif	a	mɛu
		a shirt	PI	my.FSG
		'a shirt of mine'		

Libofshë

- a. libr-a a mɛu/tau
 book-FSG PI my.FSG/your.FSG
 ‘my/your book’
- b. fitʃor-u a tou
 boy-MSG PI your. MSG
 ‘your son’
- (3) a. atseu esti a mɛu/ tau
 that.FSG is PI my.FSG / your.FSG
 a’. atseu esti a ʃeu/tou
 that.MSG is PI my.MSG/your.MSG
 ‘It is mine/yours’
- b. kəmiʃ-li səntə a mel-i
 shirt-DEF.PL are PI my-PL
 ‘the shirts are mine’
- b’. atse-i kɛʃ-li səntə a ʃeΛ-i
 that-PL dog-DEF.PL are PI my-MPL
 ‘those dogs are mine’
- c. tsə dau a mɛu / tou
 to.you I.give PI my.FSG your.MSG
 ‘I give you mine’
- a. kəmeʃ-a esti a mɛu
 shirt-FSG is PI my.FSG
 ‘the shirt is mine’
- b. kən-li esti a ʃeu
 dog-DEF.M is PI my.MSG/
 ‘the dog is mine’
- a. aist kəmeʃə esti a mɛu / tau
 this shirt-FSG is PI my.FSG / your.FSG
 ‘this shirt is mine/yours’
- c. de-ʃ a mɛu
 give-me PI my. FSG
 ‘Give me mine’
- (4) ʃ/ts u ar datə a ʃia/tsea
 to.me/you it have.3PL given PI me.OBL/you.OBL
 ‘They gave it to me/you/her’
- a. atseu ts u da a tsəja
 he to-you it he.gives PI you. OBL
 ‘he gives it to you’
- i o m datə o tsu-i / o fitʃor-u / a-l-i ʃet-i
 him/her it I.have diven PI him- OBL PI boy-MSG PI-DEF-OBL girl-OBL
 ‘I have given it to him / to the boy/ to the girl’

- (5) a. mən-a o fitfor-u
hand-FSG PI boy-MSG
'the hand of the boy/the girl'
- b. mən-a a-l-i mujer-i / di mujer-i
hand-FSG PI-DEF-FOBL woman-F.OBL of woman-F.OBL
'the hand of the woman'
- a. libr-a o fitfor-u / a-l-i fēt-i
book-FSG PI boy-MSG PI-DEF-OBL girl-OBL
'the book of the boy/ the girl'
- a. dest- ru o mən-əru
finger- PL PI hand-PL
'The finger of the hand'
- b. dest-u a-li mən-i
finger-MSG PI-DEF-OBL hand-OBL
'The finger of the hand'
- (6) a. sər-a o γu-i / γ-əɾə
sister.DEF.FSG PI him-OBL them-pl.OBL
'his/their sister'
- frat-li o γu-i
brother-DEF.MPL PI him-OBL
'his brothers'
- b. sər-a a je-i
sister.DEF.FSG PI her-OBL
'her sister'
- frat-li a je-i
brother-DEF.MPL PI her-OBL
'her brothers'
- a/b. libr-a o tsu-i /a tsje-i
book.FSG PI him-OBL PI her-OBL
'his/their sister'
- b. mən-a a je-i / o γu-i
hand-FSG PI her-OBL PI his-OBL
'her / his hand'
- Libofshë
Divjakë
Fier
Libofshë
Divjakë
Fier

PI *o* is, regardless of other conditions, favored in alternation with *a* in masculine contexts where the noun ends with the inflection *-u*, as in (7a). This suggests an analysis of *o* as the assimilatory result of the sequence *u+a*, in (7b), according to the morpho-phonological process of sandhi schematized in (7c)⁵, where the phonological element [U],

⁵ A similar sandhi process is observed also in other Aromanian varieties, such as the one of Kruševo in Macedonia (Gołąb 1984).

rounded, is associated with [a] generating the mid vowel [o]. The first position deprived of its phonological content, is not realized (as suggested by the brackets).

- (7) a. fitfor-u o tou / neu
 boy-DEF.MSG PL.M your.MSG my.MSG
 ‘your/ my son’
 b. ɲ u ar datə → ɲ o r datə
 to-me it have.3rd given
 ‘(s)he has given me it’

Libofshë

- c. sandhi rule:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{[A]} \\ (x) \quad x \\ \vdash e \\ \text{[U]} \end{array}$$

According to this analysis, the alternant *o* preserves and generalizes the masculine singular value also in dative or post-prepositional contexts, now independently of the final inflectional vowel of the preceding word, as in (8a, b):

- (8) a. dəninti o ɣu-i / a jei
 in front of PL.M he-OBL PI she-OBL
 ‘in front of him/ her’
 b. i o m dat o kusurin-u-lu o tou
 him it-have.1st given PL.M cousin-DEF.MSG-OBL PL.M your.MSG
 ‘I have given it to your cousin’

In the variety of Këllez (Poçi 2009), we find a similar distribution of possessive forms as in Rëmen of Myzeqeja, with the difference that the introducer is the invariable element *a*. It, again, lexicalizes locative relations, in (9a), also in complex prepositions, in (9b), and the recipient with *give*, (9c).

- (9) a. el nədzi a kase
 he came to house
 ‘he came to house’
 b. deninti a ɲia / je
 in front of me her
 ‘in front of me/ her’
 c. ɲ-u dedi a ɲia
 to.me-it he.gave to me
 ‘he gave it to me’

Këllez

The introducer *a* precedes possessive elements within DPs, in (10a,a’) for masculine and feminine singulars and (10b,b’) for masculine and feminine plurals. Predicative contexts are illustrated in (11a,a’) and (11b,b’) form masculine/ feminine singular and plural respectively. Finally, in (11c) the pronominal occurrence is provided.

- (10) a. kənə-li a jnel/tel/nɔst/ lu-i
 dog-DEF.MSG PI my.MSG/your.MSG/our/ he-OBL
 ‘my/ your/ our/ his dog’
- a’. kərək-la a mj-a/t-a/nɔst-ε/ lu-i
 chair-DEF.FSG PI my-FSG/your-FSG/our/ he-OBL
 ‘my/ your/ our/ his chair’
- b. kən-jε a jne-i/te-i / lu-i
 dog-DEF.MPL PI my.MPL/your.MPL/he-OBL
 ‘my/ your/ his dogs’
- b’. kərək-li a mɛl-i/ tɛl-i/ nɔst-i / lu-i
 chair-DEF.FPL PI my.FPL your.FPL our he-OBL
 ‘my/ your/his chairs’
- Këllez
- (11) a. aist e a jnel/tel / lu-i
 that.MSG is PI my.MSG your.MSG he-OBL
 ‘that is mine/ yours/ his’
- a’. aist-ε e a mj-a/ t-a/ lu-i
 that-FSG is PI my-FSG your-FSG he-OBL
 ‘that is mine/ yours/ his’
- b. aits sɛntə a jne-i / te-i
 those.MPL are PI my-PL your-PL
 ‘those are mine/ yours’
- b’. aist-i sɛnt a jnel-i/ tel-i
 those-FPL are PI my-PL your-PL
 ‘those are mine/ yours’
- c. loi a mel / lu-i
 took.1st PI my.MSG he-OBL
 ‘I took mine/ hers’
- Këllez

On a par with Romanian, enclitic possessives characterize kinship terms, as illustrated in (12) for Libofshë and (13) for Këllez. (12) and (13) attest the possibility of duplicating the possessive element by means the postnominal form. The enclitic form is reduced and is followed by the definite inflection; the lexical base may in turn include the gender inflection, as in the example in (13).

- (12) a- am vɔdzut frat-n-u a/o jneu
 have.1st seen brother-my-DEF.MSG PI my.MSG
 ‘I have seen my brother’
- b. frat-n-i a jneɔ
 brother-my-DEF.MPL PI my.MPL
 ‘my brothers’
- c. məjɛr-m-a
 wife-my-DEF.FSG
 ‘my wife’

Libofshë

- (13) a. tatə-t-u (a tel)
 father-your-DEF.MSG (PI your.MSG)
 ‘your father’
 b. nipot-u-ŋ-u
 nephew-def.MSG-my-DEF.MSG
 ‘my nephew’

Këllez

In the scheme in (14) the paradigm of pronominal elements in Rëmën of Libnofshë and the other communities is summarized. Apart from the nominative form, in (14a), pronominal elements are preceded by an introducer, in dative in (14b) and in genitive in (14c). Needless to say, genitive is nothing but the possessive:

(14)		1sg	2sg	3sg	3pl	1pl	2pl
	a. direct form	mini	tini	eu/ia	eΛ/eli	noi	voi
	b. dative	a ŋia	a tsea	o ŋui/a jei	o ŋorə	a nau	a vau
	c. genitive	a mēu	a tau	o ŋui/a jei	o ŋor(ə)	a nōstər	a vōstər
		etc.					

Libofshë/ Fier/ Divjakë

The introducers we have exemplified are etymologically related to the standard Romanian possessive articles *al/ a/ ai/ ale* preceding genitive DPs (Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013). Their origin is disputed: either from preposition *a* + definite article or from the demonstrative (Giurgea 2013). Proponents of the D categorization (in fact D–N, where N is the invariable *a* base) like d’Hulst *et al.* (2000), Dobrovie-Sorin (2000) argue that the *al* elements are essentially agreement heads, taking a genitive Spec. In this approach, *a* is the invariable nominal base to which the enclitic article attaches (d’Hulst *et al.* 2000, Giurgea 2012, Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013, Dobrovie-Sorin *et al.* 2013). Cornilescu (1995: 126–127) identifies the *al* series with the category D, suggesting its role to be that of a case-marker: “AL is a functional D head which assigns Gen[itive] to its QP/DP complement, on condition that the latter has an inflectional Q/D head” (see also Giurgea 2012). According to a different explanation *a* derives from Latin preposition *ad* (Capidan 1932) and *al* series results from the *a* preposition followed by the enclitic article, leading him to assign a Case-marking role to these elements (Grosu 1994). Analogously, Cornilescu and Nicolae (2013) surmise that in genitive structures *a+l* is composed of the preposition *a* followed by the definiteness element *l* (see below). An invariable form *a* is attested in Old Romanian (Pană Dindelegan 2016) and is used both in ‘regional Romanian’ (as suggested by an anonymous reviewer) and in Aromanian (Capidan 1932). Naturally, if *a* goes back to the Latin preposition *ad*, it can be explained why in Old Romanian and in regional varieties *a* is the dative introducer (Pană Dindelegan 2016).

The data we have presented above generally match the ones reported and discussed in the literature on Aromanian spoken in the South Albania. Nevertheless, the Myzaqeja’s dialects seem not to have been systematically investigated in previous research. More specifically, an anonymous reviewer poses a question about *atsēu, mēu, tau* being feminine singular and not masculine, on the basis of the traditional descriptions of Aromanian. The documentation presented in Capidan (1932: 413–419), Saramandu (1984: 443–445), Goļăb (1984) assigns *meu/ ŋeu, tău* to masculine but *mea, ta* to feminine. Although closely related

to Muzekean varieties, slightly different systems are generally considered; this seems not to be the case of Vlleht variety of Këllez, in fact spoken in farshërot area, in which the inflection of possessives is similar to the one reported in the traditional literature. Interestingly, Capidan (1932: 419) connects the masculine form with final *-l* to an analogical result from the feminine, and observes the presence of velarized outcomes of final liquids, like *-ɫ*, for the varieties of South Albania (Capidan 1932: 348). These observations suggest that the final *-u* can be the result of an original *ɫ*, in feminine as well. Anyway, our informants of Myzaqeja, i.e. of Libofshë, Fier and Divjakë, use the system that we illustrate in (2) and (3), whereby singular masculines are *ɲeu/tou* ‘my/ your’, plural masculines *ɲeɫ-i/toɫ-i*, while singular feminines are *mɛu/tau* and plural feminines *meli/tali*. Analogously, *atɛu* is feminine and *atseu* is masculine; velarization has affected also the 3rd person masculine singular pronoun *eu* ‘he’ < *el (Capidan 1932: 409). It is of note that in the masculine the stressed vowel is high-mid [e] whereas in the feminine the stressed vowel is low-mid [ɛ], so preserving its original aperture degree. These varieties, in fact, lack diphthongs *ea* and *oa* from *e* and *o* respectively, although the authors assume that the current outcomes derive from original diphthongs (see Papahagi 1932, Kramer 1989)⁶.

Romanian and Aromanian possessive articles have different properties:

- Romanian Possessive Articles agree with the head noun of the genitive construct behaving like other types of linkers, while Aromanian PIs agree with the possessor (Manzini, Savoia 2014, 2018, Franco *et al.* 2015).
- In Aromanian possessive articles introduce datives as well; in Romanian possessive articles only occur in genitives, while datives are introduced by the preposition *la* (selecting accusative; Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013).

Genitive constructions have attracted much interest in the literature on Romanian, which however generally does not highlight the comparability of so-called ‘possessive articles’ with Linker phenomena. In a crosslinguistic perspective, Linkers have been differently treated, for instance as copulas or case assigners. These analyses however meet problems and are unsatisfactory from different points of view (see discussion in Manzini *et al.* 2015). Vice versa, in the predicative theory of Linkers followed here, Linkers are seen essentially as bound or expletive Ds – which brings them close to a characterization as agreement heads.

3. EXPANDING THE COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: POSSESSIVES IN ALBANIAN AND IN SOUTHERN ITALIAN DIALECTS

Aromanian possessive structures in (1)–(12) raise the issue concerning the nature of the prepositional element *a*, and, more generally the internal structure of possessive phrase. We may wonder what its interpretation is in these contexts, and, further, how its lexical

⁶ Aromanian in South Albania is a minority and contact language, possibly, in some communities a heritage language, depending on the different areas (see the discussion in Caragiu 2006). Specifically, the dialects we illustrate seem not to be described in the scientific literature (cf. Papahagi 1932, Capidan 1932, Caragiu 1975, Saramandu 1984) and it is reasonable to think that some grammatical differences separate the dialects spoken in different areas. We remind that our inquiries have been carried out with naive speakers and their spontaneous way of using the language, avoiding the influence of standardized forms of Aromanian.

properties allow it to occur as the introducer of possessive. This calls to mind the possessive constructions of the languages where a Linker, ultimately a D or a prepositional element, introduces the possessive inside DPs and in predicative contexts (Manzini *et al.* 2015, Franco *et al.* 2015). We will deepen this point integrating the present framework with the data from the contact language of Aromanian, i.e. Albanian, and possessives in Southern Italian dialects. In particular, we find an interesting correspondence in the fact that, whatever its syntactic status is, the Aromanian introducer occurs also in pronominal occurrences, cf. (2c) and (10c), recalling the pronominal article in Albanian possessives.

Introducers of possessives take different forms. In Albanian they are determiners, agreeing with the possessed noun – the N head or the subject of the predicative sentence. Aromanian shows the invariable form *a* before 1st/2nd person possessives and the agreeing alternants *a/ali/o* before 3rd person pronouns and nouns, where the introducer agrees with the possessor. In Calabrian the introducer is the preposition *di*; the article and the possessive agree with the possessum, i.e. the nominal head or the subject of predication, independently of the presence of the preposition *di*.

3.1. Albanian

In Albanian, a Linker (Manzini *et al.* 2014, Franco *et al.* 2015), precisely an element D, a sort of definite article, introduces the possessive – and generally postnominal adjectives. Possessives follow the inflected noun and agree in gender/ number with the possessum (subject/head noun), and the Linker (where it occurs), that may alternate according to the case of the possessum. (15a) illustrates nominative masculine and feminine definite forms, (15b) accusative masculine and feminine definite forms, (15c) plural definite forms. (15d) exemplifies the infinitive context, where the definite linker is inserted and the possessive includes a richer referential inflection. (15'a, b, c) show masculine, feminine and plural forms respectively, in predicative contexts. 3rd person possessors are externalized by the genitive form of the 3rd person pronoun, (*a*)*tij* 'of his', (*a*)*saj* 'of her', (*a*)*tyre* 'of them', that in pronominal occurrences is followed by the definiteness/ case inflection as shown in (15a, b), in (15'c) and (16). The data come from the regional Albanian of Gjirokastrë (Southern Albania). The distribution of linker is no longer entirely clear inside DPs, where the article is recognizable only in accusative and genitive forms and in the plural, as illustrated in (15a, b, c). On the contrary a complete structure appears in predicative contexts, in (15'a, b, c) and in pronominal occurrences in (17a, b, c), where possessives show the gender and number inflection. Moreover, 1st and 2nd person possessives show some sort of the internal case inflection, however difficult to analyze⁷, as in the examples in (15)–(17). The examples, if the case of the noun is not specified, are in nominative form.

- (15) a. *libr-i* *i- m* / *i* *ti-j*
 book-DEF.MSG OBL-1st DEF.MSG 3rd.MSG-OBL
 'my/ his book'

⁷ The morphemic segmentation of Albanian possessive forms is not very transparent and in many cases only conjectural, as highlighted in Mann (1977) and Demiraj (1986). In this sense, the proposed analysis is substantially tentative.

- tʃant-a i- m- ε / ε ti-j
 bag-DEF.FSG OBL-1st- DEF.FSG DEF 3rd.MSG-OBL
 ‘my/ his bag’
- b. mə jɛp libr-i-n t i-m / ε ti-j
 to.me give.2nd book-DEF-ACC DEF OBL-1st DEF 3rd.MSG-OBL
 tʃant-ən t i-m-ε / ε ti-j
 bag-DEF.ACC DEF OBL-1st-DEF DEF 3rd.MSG-OBL
 ‘give me my book/ bag, his book/ his bag’
- c. libr-a-t ε m-i
 book-PL-DEF DEF 1st-OBL
 ‘my books’
 tʃant-a-t ε m-i-a
 bag-PL-DEF DEF 1st-OBL-PL
- d. ɲə kəmiʃ ε i- m- i- a
 a shirt DEF OBL 1st OBL FSG
 ‘a shirt of mine’
- (15’) a. ky əft i i-m-i
 this.MSG is MSG OBL-1st-OBL
 ‘this is mine’
 b. kʲə əft ε i-m-i-a
 this.FSG is FSG OBL-1st-OBL-FSG
 ‘this is mine’
 c. kətə jan tə m-i-a-t / ti-j-a-t
 these.F are DEF 1st- OBL-PL-DEF 3rd-OBL-PL-DEF
 ‘these are mine/ his’
- (16) patʃ t i-m-i-n / t i-m-ε-n
 I.saw DEF DEF OBL-1st-DEF-ACC DEF DEF OBL-1st-DEF-ACC
 ‘I saw mine’

Gjirokastër

The same D element, agreeing with the head noun, precedes genitives, in (17a), so recalling the distribution of the PI in Aromanian; finally, in dative contexts the same oblique inflection as in genitive appears while the linker is absent, as in (17b).

- (17) a. ky əft i burr-i-t
 this.MSG is MSG man-OBL-DEF
 ‘this is of the man’
 b. i-a ɖatʃ burr-i-t
 him-it I.gave man-OBL-DEF
 ‘I gave it to the man’

Gjirokastër

Interestingly, also in Albanian, possessives may present a different position with kinship terms, prenominal instead of postnominal. In postnominal position, in (18a), the noun has definite inflection, in (18b), whereas in prenominal position the inflected form of the possessive precedes the indefinite form of the noun, as in (18b).

- (18) a. mɔtr-a i-m-ε
 sister- DEF.FSG OBL-my-FSG
 ‘my sister’
- b. i-m-ε mɔtər
 OBL-my-FSG sister
 ‘my sister’

Gjirokastër

What we see is that the possessive is able to entirely subsume the lexicalization of the definiteness properties of DP if it aligns on the left of the noun, in a scope position, as in (18b).

3.2. Southern Italian dialects: Calabrian systems

In most South Italian dialects possessives obligatorily combine with the definite determiner and, within DPs, occur in postnominal position (except Sicilian and South-Calabrian). Moreover, a type of construct in which the preposition *di* ‘of’ precedes determiners and possessives is attested (Rohlf’s 1968 [1949], Sornicola 1997), as in Calabrian dialects of Albidona (North Calabria) and Iacurso (Central Calabria) presented here. Hence, we find the sequence *of+definite article+possessive* inside DPs and in predicative occurrences. Whether or not they are preceded by *di*, the possessive and the determiner agree with the possessum.

The following data illustrate the relevant possessive structures. In indefinite DPs, in (19a)–(20a), the introducer followed by the definite article is usually lexicalized. In definite DPs, in (19a’)–(20a), the introducer and the article is only marginally lexicalized. (19b’) illustrates the possessive used as a pronoun, where the introducer is possible, while suggesting a partitive interpretation. It is of note that this structure goes together with the postnominal position of possessives in DP, although an implicational relation between the two types of distribution does not seem to hold. In all cases the article and possessive agree with the noun in subject position, as illustrated in (19b) and (20b) or the nominal head, in (19a) and (20a).

- (19) a. n-u libbrə d u miəjə
 a-MSG book.MSG of MSG my.MSG
 ‘a book of mine’
- n-a kammisə d a mɛjə
 a-FSG shirt.FSG of FSG my.FSG
 ‘a shirt of mine’
- a’. u libbrə miəjə
 MSG book.MSG my.MSG
 ‘my book’
- b. st-a kammisə jɛ (dd) a mɛjə / nɔstə
 this-FSG shirt.FSG is of FSG my.FSG our.FSG
 ‘this shirt is of mine/ ours’
- ssə libbrə su (dd) i miəjə
 these book.MPL are of MPL my.MPL
 ‘these books are of mine’

- b'. ddʒə pəʎʎatə (d) u miəjə
 I.have taken of MSG my.MSG
- Albidona
- (20) a. duna-mi l-a kammis-a mi-a / dɛ l-a mi-a
 give-me DEF-FSG shirt-FSG my-FSG of DEF-FSG my-FSG
 n-a kammis-a dɛ l-a mi-a
 a-FSG shirt-FSG of DEF-FSG my-FSG
 'give me my shirt/ a shirt of mine'
- b. st-a kammis-a ɛ (dɛ) l-a mi-a / nɔstr-a
 this-FSG shirt-FSG is of DEF-FSG my-FSG our.FSG
 'this shirt is of mine/ ours'
- Iacurso

Ledgeway (2009) traces this construction in Old Neapolitan back to an original partitive. Nevertheless, the partitive reading is excluded: e.g. (19a) does not mean 'one of my xs' but simply 'my'. Moreover, the article and the inflection of possessives agree with the possessum, subject or head of the DP, whereas in the real partitives the possessum specifies a set (belonging to the possessor), as in (21).

- (21) n-u fiʝʝ-u dɛ l-i tu-ɛ
 one-MSG son-MSG of DEF.MPL your-MPL
 'one son of yours'

Iacurso

Based on the data we have presented, we see that in Southern Italian dialects possessives require a definite determiner (see also Ledgeway 2009 for Old Neapolitan). In the case of singular kinship terms, we find the enclitic form without determiner, as in (22), possibly including the inflection of the noun, as in (22a).

- (22) a. fiʝʝ-u-ma
 son-MSG-my
 'my son'
- b. fratə-mə
 brother-my
 'my brother'

Iacurso

- (23) l-i fiʝʝual-i mi-ɛ
 DEF-MPL son-MPL my-PL
 'my sons'

Albidona

Iacurso

Plural contexts generally exclude enclisis, as in (23). We may think that a plural possessum however reduces the denotational import of the possessive, implying more than one referent.

4. POSSESSIVE SYNTAX

In traditional cartographic literature possessives originate in a low position inside the NP from where they may move to higher positions. Consistently with the idea that prenominal and postnominal (or thematic) position of possessives can be ‘transformationally related’ (Kayne 1977), Cardinaletti (1998: 18) assumes that, at least for Romance languages, the same basic structure underlies pre- and postnominal possessives, as reported in (24)–(25) for Italian. The postnominal order is derived by the movement of N to a functional head ‘between N and D’ (Cinque 1994). The prenominal order is obtained by moving in turn the possessive element to the inflectional domain of the DP, as in (25).

- (24) [DP *la* [XP ... [YP *casa*_k [NP *sua* [t_k ... ‘his/her house’
 the house his/her
- (25) [DP *la* [XP *sua*_i ... [YP *casa*_k [NP t_i [t_k ...
 the his/her house

Italian

The idea of Cardinaletti (1998) is that these two positions involve two different alternants, to the effect that postnominal position would host a focalized element endowed with complete referential features, differently from prenominal possessives, lacking such interpretive properties, in the line of the contrast between strong and deficient pronouns proposed in Cardinaletti and Starke (1994). Prenominal possessives, as they are devoid of the functional layer, need to be licensed in the functional domain of the Agreement head (AGRS) of the DP. Morphological differences between prenominal and postnominal elements should be a clue of their different syntactic nature. So, for instance in Spanish prenominal possessives would represent weak clitic forms, such as *mi libro* ‘my book’, adjoining to D and excluding the determiner. On the contrary, postnominal possessives, as in *el libro mio* ‘the book mine’, showing a full inflectional specification, would be endowed with a complete functional layer. In Italian, where there is no morphological difference between pre- and postnominal possessives, Cardinaletti concludes that the syntactic behavior of prenominal forms, combining with definite articles, suggests that they are deficient/weak forms. French prenominal possessives, showing the same type of nominal inflection of clitic pronouns, would be in turn deficient clitic elements. Finally, Italian postnominal and predicative possessives would be strong, differently from French, lacking strong possessives, i.e. simple possessives in copular contexts. As to pronominal forms preceded by the article the idea of the author is that they, in Italian as well as in French, are elliptical forms including a weak possessive and an empty noun.

Kinship nouns, as well known, give rise to specialized constructions in many languages. In generative literature, the lack of article is related to the high position inside DP, substantially in D (cf. Longobardi 1995, 1996). This specifically applies to contexts where the kinship noun rules out or precedes the possessive, as in the case of enclisis. More to the point, it is interesting to note that Romanian varieties, Aromanian included, and South-Italian ones (Rohlf's 1968 [1949], Manzini and Savoia 2005) present an identical behaviour in admitting the enclitic occurrence of possessives on kinship nouns. The same constraints emerge in excluding plural possessors and, generally, plural possessed nouns. In other words, only the reference to 1st/2nd/3rd singular persons and to a single specific individual are able to satisfy the referential requirements of the DP excluding the definite determiner.

In Romanian, possessives are ‘immediately preceded either by the definite article [on the noun]⁸ or by the genitival particle *al*’ (Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013: 347). Hence, in predicative contexts the possessive element requires the genitive particle *a+l* as its licenser. The crucial point of Cornilescu and Nicolae (2011) proposal concerning Standard Romanian (Cornilescu 1995) is that possessives are a D element with a phi-incomplete NP restriction. In other words, possessives are a sort of genitive structure but defective for the features referring to the possessor, except the person. According to Cornilescu and Nicolae (2011), the phi-incompleteness forces the possessive element to search a licenser, valuing its uninterpretable features, specifically its case, by resorting to Agreement with the possessed N, case bearing. In genitive structures, it is the element *a+l*, including the preposition *a* followed by the definiteness element *l*, that licenses the following noun in genitive case. Hence, the analysis suggests the same underlying representation for genitives and possessives, the latter being defective for the phi-features of possessor. The contrast between postnominal or prenominal position in different languages does not result in different basic structures, however including a sort of concealed genitive. This intuition will underlie our following analysis.

The preceding approaches agree in assuming a low structural position for possessives and connecting their surface position with the movement induced by licensing mechanism. A common point also concerns the defective nature of possessives inside the DP. However, it is evident that an analysis based on hypothetical categories, as an empty noun, or on the translation of C-I interpretive level into the structural organization is very costly. The same is true for separating homophonous forms (syncretisms) by assigning them different structural representations, as in the case of the pre- vs postnominal occurrences of Italian possessives. We may wonder what parametric choice could prompt languages to hide what they intend to mean.

Our idea is that the distribution of possessives, their interaction with definite determiners and their inflectional morphology is due to their inherent interpretive properties. The link between inflectional morphology and the position of possessives is not clear. In many languages there is no difference between different positions of possessives, as in the case of Albanian (cf. (18a, b)). Moreover, in a dialect such as the one of Iacurso in (20), possessives show distinct inflections only on a minority of forms: *miE*, *tuE*, *sue* cover the singular masculine and the plural in all possible contexts. Also in the case of kinship terms, the recourse to specialized alternants and the contrast between singular and plural possessors (cf. (22)–(23) clearly involve the externalization of the definiteness requirements in DP, bringing to a subtle variation.

4.1. A minimalist approach to possession

The nature and specifically the common relational properties underlying genitive, dative and locative in many languages undergo various types of syncretism whereby the same exponent lexicalizes either all or a subset of them (Franco *et al.* 2015, Manzini and Savoia 2018, Baldi and Savoia 2019, 2020). By way of example, the oblique can encompass dative and genitive, as in first declension of Latin, or in Albanian and in

⁸ An anonymous reviewer notices that possessives can also follow a prenominal adjective, like *frumosul meu sof* ‘handsome.the my husband’, in turn endowed with the definite article.

Romanian where the indirect case lexicalizes both the possession in the nominal domain (genitive) and the one associated to the event domain (dative). This type of syncretism is illustrated by the Albanian examples in (17a) for genitive and (17b) for dative, with the difference that the Linker appears only in genitive contexts.

The key idea we adopt is that in all these contexts the conceptual property of ‘inclusion’ is involved, in the sense initially discussed in Manzini and Savoia (2010, 2011a, b, 2014) whereby all types of possession, including inalienable and psych state possession, fall under the same basic relation of part-whole [\subseteq]. This proposal relates with the analysis of possession in Belvin and den Dikken (1997:170) according to whom ‘entities have various zones associated with them, such that an object or eventuality may be included in a zone associated with an entity without being physically contained in that entity [...] The type of zones which may be associated with an entity will vary with the entity’. Hence, possession is understood as a type of ‘zonal’ inclusion, as already explained in Manzini and Savoia (2010: 416–417):

Our idea is that the traditional genitive corresponds roughly to a (quantificational) inclusion relation. This is particularly obvious in the so-called partitive like *tre dei ragazzi* ‘three of the boys’ where ‘the boys’ specifies a larger set to which the ‘three’ singled out belong; inalienable possession and attribution of mental states are equally clear instances since in *il naso di Gianni* ‘John’s nose’ or *la follia di Gianni* ‘John’s folly’, the nose or fear are part of the collection of properties that we call ‘John’. It is worth noting that the same category of ‘(zonal) inclusion’ is independently arrived at by Belvin and den Dikken (1997) as the interpretive content of the verb ‘have’, cf. ‘the set has three members’, ‘John has a strange nose’, ‘John has a peculiar folly’ etc. On this basis, we take that the scope of *-s* as a so-called genitive specification is the entire noun phrase; thus the genitive argument is interpreted as ‘including’ the head noun referent.

The gist of this proposal is that genitives, partitives and also locatives can be thought of as expressions of the same primitive relation of inclusion. A crucial question concerns the relation between cases and prepositions. A consolidated theoretical approach (Fillmore 1968) identifies the case inflection with prepositions, so that the elementary introducers such as Romance descendants from Latin *de/ad* or English *of/to* would be the interpretively equivalent to genitive and dative respectively. In keeping with Manzini *et al.* (2019), Franco *et al.* (2020), Savoia *et al.* (2020), an oblique case or preposition is a predicate introducing a relation between the argument it selects and an external argument. This means that the oblique case or prepositions are endowed with interpretable properties, namely inclusion/superset-of, formalized as [\subseteq], so that a single property is associated with the conceptual cluster underlying oblique and *of/to*-like prepositions. If we are on the right track, the similarity between partitive, corresponding to the set inclusion, and genitive, corresponding to the occasional or inalienable property, is reflected by the lexical content introduced by *di/of*, schematically as in (26).

(26) *di/of*: \subseteq

A potentially similar analysis of possession is proposed by Cornilescu and Nicolae (2011) assuming a small clause headed by an abstract predicate [BELONG], lexicalized by an overt preposition or the morphological case. At least two main differences emerge. First, in our proposal the predicative structure introduced by (26) (cf. (32)) implies no underlying

small clause and the predicative relation of the structure possessum – preposition/ oblique is interpreted at C-I interface. Secondly, the inclusion relation is a more basic concept, of which the notion of belonging is one of possible readings. About this, it is interesting to take into account the analysis of partitive in Zamparelli (2008), where *di* is identified with an operator selecting two arguments, of which the specifier is the ‘residue’ from the whole specifier+complement introduced by *of/di*. In what follows we will aim at unifying the structural treatment of possessives and prepositional constructs, i.e. the crucial path followed by Cornilescu and Nicolae (2011).

Let us start looking at the genitive vs dative distinction expressed by the basic prepositions of the type of **de* and **ad* in Romance languages – *of* and *to* in English – in (27a,b) where Italian examples are provided.

- (27) a. Il libro di Carlo
The book of Charles
b. Ho dato il libro a Carlo
I have given the book to Charles

At first glance, *di/ of* in (27a) seems to specialize in introducing the possession relation between ‘Carlo’ and ‘il libro’ associated with the genitive, while *to* in introducing the dative. Based on (26), both the possession relation in (27a) and the one in (27b) can be understood as the lexicalization of an inclusion relation, in (28a)-(28b) respectively. The idea is that the dative in (27b) is the possessor of the argument ‘libro’, essentially like in the genitive, although in this case the predicative relation between possessor and possessum is introduced by an agentive *v*, as in (28b), as suggested in Manzini *et al.* (2019).

- (28) a. ... [DP il libro/ the book [PP di/of_⊃ [DP Carlo/Charles]]]
b. [_v CAUSE [DP il libro/the book [PP a/to_⊃ [DP Carlo/Charles]]]

The connection between the second internal argument of ditransitives and possessives goes back at least to Kayne (1984: 202), which observes that ‘The possessive interpretation should also be compatible with ‘V [NP_{dative} NP]’, with the first NP having inherent Case. [...]’. The semantic proximity between the Romance prepositions *di/ de* and *a(d)* is manifested by the possessive uses of *a* (for French cf. Kayne 1977, Cardinaletti 1998). As noticed by Manzini and Savoia (2011) Romance languages also have inherent possession datives as in *Ho lavato i capelli a Maria* lit.: ‘I have washed the hair to Mary’, i.e. ‘I washed Mary’s hair’. Moreover, in Southern Italian dialects *a* can introduce the possessor, as in (29), for a North-Apulian variety:

- (29) ε ffiɲə a mme/ essə
(s)he.is son to me / her
‘(s)he is my/ her son’

Castelluccio (Foggia)

As pointed out by Franco *et al.* (2020), frequently, location in natural languages is externalized by the same cases or adpositions which introduce genitive, dative,

instrumental, i.e. non-spatial obliques, or in more traditional terms the two are syncretic. Consider, for instance, the distribution of locative *a* and *di* in Italian in (30). (30a) illustrates the motion context and (30a') the state context. In both cases, a person split emerges, whereby the animate ground requires a different preposition, i.e. *da* (< *de+ab/ad*) from the inanimate one. The occurrence of *di* is very limited and concerns only the locative contexts, as in (30b).

- (30) a. vanno a casa / da te
 They go to home / to you
 a'. sono a casa / da me
 They are at home / in my house
 b. escono di / da casa
 They come out of the house

The simplest assumption is that the oblique preposition involved in the encoding of motion events do not contribute a specific, fixed spatial meaning to the sentence (Franco *et al.* 2020). On the contrary, prepositions relate a complement to a motion event as general relators, by establishing an inclusion/possession or part-whole relation between them. If the elementary prepositions such as Romance *a(d)*, *de/di* are analyzed as instantiations of the part-whole relation in (26) (Franco *et al.* 2020, Savoia *et al.* 2020, Manzini *et al.* 2019), it is natural to ask oneself how different readings can be explained. The idea we develop here is that 'the inclusion predicate, corresponding to a case inflection or to an adpositional head, does not have sufficient lexical content to characterize, say, specific (sub)types of possession or location.' (Franco *et al.* 2020: 12). As a consequence, the specialized meanings, possessor, location, and others, arise from the lexical content of the embedded noun, the semantic properties of the verb or of the adverbial/axial expansion in complex prepositions. Of course, there are prepositions crucially introducing locative reading. In this case the lexical entry of preposition is lexically restricted, as for instance *in* 'in', that includes a restriction implying 'proper containment' on the internal argument, as suggested in (31a,b).

- (31) a. loro sono in casa / nel salotto
 They are in home / in the living room
 b. in: [\subseteq CONTAINMENT PROPER] x

Among other aspects, two properties emerge in the distribution of prepositions in (30)–(31), which appear in other languages, including Aromanian, i.e. the sensitivity to the type of location, animate vs inanimate reference, and absence of definite article with a subset of locations, as for instance *casa/ home*. In conclusion, our proposal, supported by the preceding discussion, is that *of/di / oblique case* are the externalization of the elementary predicate connecting two arguments (possessor and possessum) in a part/whole relation, ad in (32).

- (32) *di/of/oblique*: [*possessum*] [_{P/Oblique} \subseteq [*possessor*]]

Locatives are a special reading of the inclusion relation deriving from the interaction of basic relation elements, the event and the argument of the preposition.

4.2. Genitive and Locative in Aromanian

Let us consider the Aromanian data, focusing on the two prepositions *a* and *di*. We see that *a* introduces several types of possession, in (5), (6), (7a), and datives in (4), (9c).

Moreover, it combines with motion or state verbs in (33a) and (33b). High ranked referents, are introduced by the preposition *ya*⁹ ‘at, to’

- (33) a. atseu ini a kas
that.MSG comes to home
‘He comes to home’
- b. esti a kas
he.is at home
‘He is at home’
- c. eu ini ya mini/tini/noi/voi/atseu/atseu
he comes to me/you/us/you.PL/him.MSG/her.FSG
‘He comes towards me/you/us/them/him’
atseu nedzi ya fet-a a meu
that.MSG goes to girl-FSG PA my.FSG
‘he goes to my/ his daughter’

Libofshë

Interestingly, *di*, in addition to genitive, as in *di mujeri* ‘of the woman’ in (5b) and (34a,b), encompasses different types of relation, from genitive proper to locative (cf. Nedelcu 2016 for a historical view), as for instance benefactive in (35a), part of whole (matter), in (35b), agentive in (35c). The comparison between the genitive with *di* in (34a,b) and with the introducer *a* (‘to’), in (34a’,b), shows that *di* allows the possessor noun to be in the indefinite form, as attested in Romanian for prepositions if noun is devoid of adnominal elements (Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea and Mardale 2013). However, our informants admit also the definite form, as in (34b). Finally, *di*, in (35d), is able to license infinitives, as generally in Romance languages (Manzini and Savoia 2018).

- (34) a. mujer-a di fitforə
woman-DEF.FSG of (the) boy
a’. mujer-a o fitfor-u
woman-DEF.FSG PI/to boy-DEF.MSG
‘The woman of the boy’
- b. bōts-a di / o mujer-li
voice-DEF.FSG of / to woman-DEF.FPL
‘The voice of the women’
- (35) a. o ar faptə di mini
It they.have made of me
‘They have made it for me’
- b. un gōtə (di) jinə
a glass of wine
‘A glass of wine’
- c. aist kəmiŋ-li səntə yatə di ia
these shirts-FPL are washed of her
‘These shirts are washed by her’

Libofshë

⁹ In the Musacean varieties the original **l* in simple onsets has changed to *ɣ*, a phenomenon that Capidan (1932: 349) attributes to the Farșeroți dialect. In particular, *ya* ‘to’ is the same as *la* of Romanian and other Aromanian dialects.

- d. vijn di ti vǎḍeri
I.came of you see
'I came to see you'

Fier

What we may conclude is that for example the benefactive reading in (35a) may be brought back to a reading where *mini* 'me', i.e. the beneficiary, is a sort of possessor of *o* 'it', as in (36),

- (36) o ar fapṭə [ɛp di [NP mini]] 'They have made it for me'

Both *di*, in (37), and *a*, in (38), occur in complex prepositions, typically with locative reading, where a locative word or morpheme (Axial parts in Svenonius 2006) restricts the spatial specification associated with the noun introduced as a genitive (cf. Franco *et al.* 2020). As noted, *di* introduces nouns in indefinite form, as illustrated in (37a, b), a possibility admitted also by *a*, in (38b). (37a') exemplifies 1st/2nd person pronouns occurring with *di*.

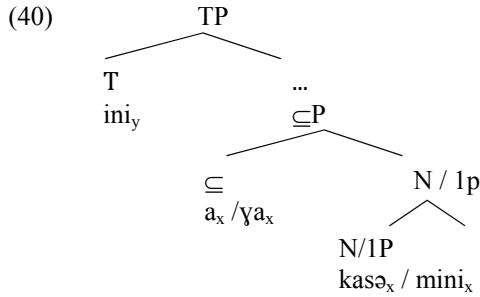
- (37) a. dǎninti di fiṭṭorə / fətə
in front of (the) boy (the) girl
'In front of me/ the boy / the girl'
a'. dǎninti di mini / tseu
in front of me she
'In front of me/ her'
b. ndzənə di ʃǎdzutə
over of chair
'Over the chair'
- (38) a. dǎninti o yu-i / o fiṭṭor-u / a-li ʃǎdzut-a
in front of.MSG he-OBL to.MSG boy-DEF.MSG to-FSG chair
'In front of him/ the boy / the chair'
b. dǎninti a ʃǎdzutə/ fətə
in front to chair girl
'In front of the chair / the girl'

Libofshë

When introduced by *a*, 1st and 2nd person are lexicalized as possessives agreeing with the spatial noun as the possessum, as in (39a), exactly like in nominal contexts, repeated in (39b).

- (39) a. dǎninti a meu / a tau
in front PI/to my.FSG PI/to your.FSG
'In front of me/ you'
b. fət-a a meu / a tau
daughter.DEF PI/to my.FEM PI/to your.FEM
'my / your daughter'

In the theoretical framework we have depicted in the preceding discussion, state-in and motion interpretations substantially depend on the locative event whose they specify a complement, so that the DP is understood as spatially including the argument of the event, as in the structure in (40) for the sentences *ini a kas* ‘(s)he comes home’ vs. *ini ya mini* ‘(s)he comes to me’ in (33a, c). In (40) the prepositions are assigned the property \subseteq .



The relation between locative preposition and licensed noun is confirmed by the fact that prepositions are sensitive to its lexical properties, as in the case of *ya* and animate DPs (cf. Franco *et al.* 2020). As hypothesized in (31b), prepositions may be specialized for spatial specifications in terms of a lexical restriction on the elementary relator \subseteq , as in (41).

(41) *ya*: [[LOC, ANIMATE] \subseteq]

Complex PPs, where *di* introduces a nominal complement, highlight a clear part-whole interpretation, where the spatial part specifies spatial properties of the object noun, as suggested in (42a). The idea that the spatial part of the complex preposition is properly a noun and not a functional category of preposition (as supported by Svenonius 2006) is evidenced by the fact that with a personal referent the possessive element can be introduced, agreeing with the spatial noun, as in (42b).

(42) a. $dən$ [_{NP} *inti* [_{⊆P} *di* [_{DP} *mini*]]] ‘in front of me’
 b. $dən$ [_{NP} *inti*_{FSG} [_{⊆P} *a* [_{POSS} *mεu*_{FSG}]]]]

In (42) the locative element (Axial Part) embeds its ‘possessor’, more precisely, its ‘zonal inclusion’ space fixed by the noun. In this, we adhere to the analysis of Franco and Manzini (2017), whereby there is no need to assume a special category Axial Part in the sense of Svenonius (2006). On the contrary, the relation between the complement DP (Ground) and the spatial point specification introduced by the preceding element is adequately expressed by means the structure N [P [DP]]. The initial preposition, if present as in (42), lexicalizes the sequence as a complement of the verb.

5.1. A first picture

Descriptively, all of the languages we have presented show a possessive structure where the possessive combines with the definite article or inflection. More precisely we have the distribution in (45), evidencing at least some common crucial properties, among which the introducer and the compatibility with the definiteness exponent.

(45)	Aromanian	Albanian	Calabrian
<i>introducer (P or D)</i>	+ P	+ D	+ P
<i>agreement with possessum</i>	+	+	+
<i>postnominal</i>	+	+	+
<i>definite article/inflection:</i>			
<i>in all contexts</i>	+ (cf.(2c))	+	+
<i>in definite contexts</i>			
<i>in pronominal contexts</i>		+	
<i>alternant with kinship terms</i>	+	+	+

What we expect a possessive structure to include is a morpho-syntactic tool for externalizing the part-whole relation in (32), by lexicalizing the operator [\sqsubseteq] and the relation between possessor and possessum. The lexicalization of definiteness properties will vary in relation to the lexical system of the language, to the effect that there are languages in which possessives entirely subsume referential properties of the DP, whereas in others, such as the varieties investigated here, an independent realization of definiteness in the DP is required:

- ✓ Referential properties of possessives: in some languages they are sufficient to satisfy definiteness properties of DP; in others, they require definiteness elements or other introducers, as in the cases we study in this article.
- ✓ Kinship terms give rise to specialized alternants and constructions in many languages: kinship terms are relational in nature (Dobrovie-Sorin 2013) and imply an inherent (possessor).
- ✓ Different orders of possessives reflect different ways to externalize the relation between possessor and possessum: in the varieties here examined possessives generally follow the possessed noun.

Manzini and Savoia (2014, 2018), Franco *et al.* (2015) treat Albanian linkers as D heads that introduce the adjective, the possessive and the genitive, contributing to satisfying the argument of the adjectival predicate, or, in the case of genitives, the argument of the binary relation that connects the possessor and possessum in genitive phrases. Albanian genitive/ dative inflection can be analyzed as the exponent externalizing the basic relation of part-whole inclusion [\sqsubseteq], equivalent to the relation lexicalized by the preposition *of*.

Albanian possessives at least in some of their forms show traces of a specialized case morphology expressing the inclusion relation, a sort of internal inflection. The special distribution of the agreement morphology in these constructs leads us to reconsider their organization in the light of the recent proposals of Chomsky (2015; 2020a,b) concerning the operation of pair-merge as the way of treating head raising in the formation of inflected verbs. According to Chomsky (2020a: 50) modification, as in adnominal adjective expressions such as *young man*, is a merge operation based on the Link, corresponding to

the categorizers n that links sequences of elements based on agreement (Chomsky 2020a: 51). Extending this proposal, Manzini (2021), Manzini et al. (2020) treat the inflectional categories characterizing a word n or v , as the label for the class and number features of nominal agreement, as indicated in (46a,b).

- (46) a. $[\text{NP } t^{\text{f}}\text{ant-}a_f\text{-}t_{\text{DEF.PL}}] < [\varepsilon_{\text{DEF.PL}}, [\text{POSS } m\text{-}i_{\text{OBL-a}}\text{-}a_{\text{PL}}]] >$ (cf. (15c))
 ‘my bags’

Gjirokaštër

In (46) the pair-merge operation gives rise to the combination $[\varepsilon_{\text{DEF}} [\text{POSS } m\text{-}i_{\text{OBL-a}}\text{-}a_{\text{PL}}]]$, where the Link ε and the ϕ -features of the possessive agree. This structure is merged with the noun based on the agreement in the ϕ -features creating the *N Linker Adj* sequence. What we see about possessive constructs is that in some languages the referential features of the possessum need to be instantiated also within the phase of the possessor, as in the generalization in (47):

- (47) Both arguments of the \subseteq predicate are instantiated within the \subseteq P phrase.

As a consequence the external argument is introduced as a linker or a stacked affix: Albanian Linkers satisfy the requirement in (47).

5.2. Calabrian

Calabrian data may be treated as instantiations of a structure similar to the one of Aromanian insofar as a prepositional element occurs in both of them, in Calabrian the preposition *di*. We are assuming that *di*, as the genitive/ possessive preposition, contributes to lexicalizing the possessive relation (Baldi and Savoia 2019). In (48) for Iacurso, *dε* ‘of’ duplicates the externalization of \subseteq , while agreement exponents of article and possessives externalize the referential properties associated with the possessum.

If we tentatively apply this analysis to the pseudopartitive possessive structures of the Southern Italian dialects, a reasonable hypothesis is that prepositions P, as predicates requiring to be saturated by arguments, work as probes over DPs. In the case of the elementary relator *di/of*, its external argument, saturates the referential features of P in correspondence of the usual structure part-whole *head noun - possessive/ partitive*. In the structures of Calabrian dialects in (20), the requirement in (47) forces the preposition to include the agreement properties of the embedded argument. Substantially, the definiteness properties of D are realized in P forming single element behaving as a sort of Link. In the present case, we must conclude that *dε+Article* behaves like a type of article, the part-whole relation/Oblique is associated with the nominal features. Hence, we can pair-merge P and D in $\langle P, D \rangle$, yielding the work space in (48a), where $\langle P, D \rangle$ is merged to $[D \text{ NP}]$ yielding (48b).

- (48) a. $\langle [\subseteq d\varepsilon], [\text{FSG } l\text{-}a] \rangle [[\text{FSG } l\text{-}a] [\text{POSS } m_i\subseteq\text{-}a_{\text{FSG}}]]$
 b. $[\text{FSG}/\subseteq d\varepsilon [l\text{-}a]] [[\text{POSS } m_i\subseteq\text{-}a_{\text{FSG}}]]$

The amalgam $d\varepsilon+la$ is formed by affixing the φ -features of D to $d\varepsilon$, i.e. $[_{FSG} [_{\subseteq} d\varepsilon [_{FSG} la]]]$, whose label corresponds to the agreement features necessary for merging with the noun, for instance $[_N kummi\text{-}a_{FSG}]$ in (20a), thus instantiating the Link of modification.

The other side of the question is that in these dialects it is not possible to say **na kammisa mia*, in the sense that the possessive assigns in any case a definite reading to the possessum, or, more precisely, treats it as belonging to a definite set, here ‘my shirts’.

5.3. Aromanian

If we analyze Aromanian introducer a as a preposition the parallel with Southern Italian varieties is evident. In both cases possessives, while agreeing with the noun, are introduced by a prepositional element PI/to. In Aromanian the possessive agrees with the head/subject noun, but it requires an independent lexicalization of the inclusion relation by means of the prepositional introducer. In other words, the prepositional element in turn lexicalizes the possessive relation (Savoia *et al.* 2020): the feature clusters in the head noun and on the possessive are associated to the same argument, i.e. the possessum, as in (50).

We can explain the Aromanian possessive constructs as yielded by the same pair-merge operation applied in (46) and (48), and responding to the requirement formulated in (47). The Possessive Introducer a , on a par with *di/d\varepsilon* ‘of’ in South-Italian dialects, provides a duplicate of the part-whole relation between possessum and possessor/embedded noun. The amalgam $a+(\textit{agreement of})$ possessive is formed by affixing the φ -features of the possessive; again the amalgam is labelled by the φ -features of the possessum, as in (49). In other words, we suggest to treat the φ -features involved in the agreement between the possessive, PI and the head-noun, as an instantiation of D. More precisely, following the model discussed in Chomsky (2015, 2020), pair-merger of the prepositional element a , P, to the φ -features of the possessive in (49a), in $\langle P, \varphi\text{-features} \rangle$, creates the work space, where $\langle P, \varphi\text{-features} \rangle$ is merged to $[D NP]$ yielding (49b).

- (49) a. $\langle [_{MSG} /_{\subseteq} a], [\varphi\text{-features}_{MSG}] \rangle > [_{Poss}]_{\text{eu}} \varphi_{\text{MSG}}$ cf. (2b) Libofshë
 b. $[_{NP} k\varepsilon n\text{-}li_{MSG}] \langle [_{MSG} /_{\subseteq} a [_{MSG}]], [_{Poss}]_{\text{eu}} \varphi_{\text{MSG}} \rangle$

Descriptively, $a+\textit{possessive}$ behaves like a type of article, in the sense that the part-whole relation/Oblique is associated with the nominal features. The analysis of *di* (Oblique case) as the externalization of the elementary predicate connecting two arguments (possessor and possessum) via a part/whole relation can be applied also to genitives, thus reflecting the similarity between them.

As we have seen in (12)–(13), kinship terms in Aromanian as well as in Southern Italian dialects (cf. (22)) present the enclisis of possessives, excluding the definite article, as in (51). We may think that two properties make kinship terms able to satisfy the referential requirement of the possessive DP: their relational nature (Croft 1991, Dobrovie-Sorin 2013, Giusti 2016) implying an inherent internal argument (a kind of possessor); their lexical content tracing back to a shared knowledge. These properties define an inherent referentiality allowing a kinship noun like *frat\vare* ‘brother’ to externalize the definiteness properties of DP. This explains why plural forms are not able to satisfy the required definiteness and specificity properties and usually enclisis is limited to singular nouns. In

fact, our informants restrict enclisis to 1st/2nd/3rd singular possessors and generally to singular possessed nouns (cf. for Romanian Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013), confirming the crucial role of the referential properties underlying these special structures. In Aromanian, similarly to Southern Italian forms, enclisis may be doubled by the postnominal possessive, as illustrated in (50). Thus, the enclitic is followed by the definite inflection of the noun; the latter introduces the first member of the relation *brother of*, of which the 1st person realized by the possessive *frat- / fr-* is the argument.

We can think that in a sequence like *frat-fr-u(o) fr-u* ‘my brother’ the inflection *-u* is associated with the combination *frat-fr-* insofar as *-u* is the usual gender/ number inflection of the first class masculines and the inflectional properties of the possessives are expressed differently. If so, the two heads *frat-* and *-fr-* form the amalgam in (50a), where the latter is subcategorized for the kinship noun class, in (50a’). *-u* is merged to this combination yielding (50b). Finally (50b) is merged to the possessive, as in (50c)

- (50) a. < [frat_{MSG}], [poss J1] >
 a’ -fr, ___ [kinship noun]
 b. < [frat - J1_{N.MSG}], [-u_{MSG}] >
 c. [frat-fr-u_{N.MSG}] < [MSG /_⊆ o [msg]], [Poss neu_{MSG}] > cf. (12a) Libofshë

Since 3rd person possessives are expressed by genitives of 3rd person masculine pronouns, the PI *o* (however its origin might be, cf. discussion surrounding (7)) requires the gender/Class specification [masc] on the following noun, the possessor, as in *sora o yui* ‘his sister’ (cf. (6a)), in (51). Obviously, the inflection *-i* being the oblique exponent of the 3rd person pronoun, does not lexicalize the possessed argument *sora* ‘sister’, but the genitive relation.

- (51) c. [sora-a_{N.FSG}] < [MSG /_⊆ o], [vu-i_{OBL.MSG}] > cf. (6a) Libofshë

We may wonder in what sense the elementary prepositions we have examined are able to satisfy the properties of Linkers, that usually are D type elements (Manzini et al. 2014, 2015). D Linkers provide a copy of one of the arguments of a predicative structure (Manzini and Savoia 2018), here the possession structure, normally a clitic duplicate of the possessum/head noun, as in the case of Albanian. In Aromanian *a/o*, on a par with *di/de* ‘of’ in South-Italian dialects, provides a duplicate of the genitive inflectional properties of the possessor/embedded noun.

Indefinite DPs require some special attention. We saw that in Southern Italian dialects these contexts favour the insertion of the prepositional element, as shown in (19a)–(20a); the crucial property is that in these structures the possessive agrees with the head noun and does not introduce a partitive reading. A comparable indefinite structure with the insertion of *de* preceding PI and with the usual agreement with the head noun appears also in Aromanian, Vlleht of Këllez in (52a), on a par with Romanian (Dobrovie-Sorin and Nedelcu 2013), in (52b). In Aromanian the simple occurrence of PI + possessive is however attested, cf. (52c), for Libofshë.

- (52) a. un fitʃoʁ d a nel
 a.MSG son of PI my.MSG
 ‘a son of mine’

- b. un elev de-al meu
 a pupil(M) de-al.MSG my.MSG
 ‘a pupil of mine’ (Dobrovie-Sorin and Nedelcu 2013: 341)
- c. un kəmif a mɛu
 a shirt PI my.FSG
 ‘a shirt of mine’

As regards the constructs with *de*, Dobrovie-Sorin and Nedelcu (2013: 341) note that ‘The semantic effect triggered by the presence of *de* preceding the genitive is not partitivity, but rather “anti-uniqueness”: the structure indicates that the referent of the whole possessive phrase (the entity being possessed) is not the only one that stands in a certain relation R to the entity denoted by the genitive’. This characterization brings the structures in (52) very close to the Calabrian ones in (19)–(20), analyzed in (32) – and to the Aromanian structures introduced by the PI in (34)–(35) – where the preposition doesn’t introduce a partitive reading but duplicates the inclusion relation. By hypothesis, the anti-uniqueness effect can be seen as due to the indefinite quantifier *un* ‘one’, as specifying the member of a set restricted by the possessor’s properties.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS: PHASE AND PARAMETERS

We have proposed that the inclusion relation \subseteq between possessum and possessor, understood as the interpretive property underlying possessive structures, is lexicalized in more ways in the Romance linguistic domain. The ability of possessives to contribute to fixing the reference to the possessum by means of the interpretive content of possessor is a property highlighted in the literature (Dobrovie-Sorin 2013: 327); not by accident cross-linguistically possessives are often in complementary distribution with Ds or interact with the latter in special ways. They may be inserted instead of D, or combine with D, externalizing the relevant referential properties within the DP Phase, assuming DP to be a Phase¹⁰. In keeping with Manzini *et al.* 2020: 201, the Phase domain of DP includes the universal syntactic objects D and NP, and Agreement, i.e. the coincidence on a single referent of ‘sets of φ -features bundles’. The idea is that in a phasal domain, D, as the referential category of the DP (and Phase head), is expected to externalize definiteness properties (gender and number), as in (53).

- (53) If φ -feature (set) F is externalized at phase XP, it is externalized on phase head X.
 (Manzini *et al.* in press: 199)

¹⁰ Chomsky (2001: 14) identifies phases, CP and vP, with lexical subarrays, i.e. structures, computed at the SM and C-I interfaces by the operation of Transfer. The procedure is constrained by the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC) in (i). The idea is that, in a structure $[_{ZP} Z \dots [_{HP} \alpha [H YP]]]$, where Z and H are heads, the complement YP of H is not accessible to operations at ZP.

(i) PIC: The domain of H is not accessible to operations at ZP; only H and its *edge* are accessible to such operations

Nothing prevents D and its complement from realizing φ -features differently. Moreover we may find asymmetries between elements within the DP, as in (54), synthesizing the distribution of agreement on the possessed referent:

(54) <i>Agreement</i>	possessive	Introducer	D/definite inflection
Aromanian	+	–(/+)	+
Albanian	+	+	+
Calabrian	+	–	+

If (53) captures a basic property of DP Phase – and, possibly of Phases in general –, we conclude that possessives are instantiations of the D domain. In this framework, the complementary distribution of D and possessive may be referred to an Externalization Parameter (cf. Manzini *et al.* in press: 193) depending on whether possessive is able to externalize (a sub-set of) the φ -features associated with D specifying the possessum as in (55), where D is the definite article or definite inflection.

- (55) Externalization parameter:
 φ -features externalized (i) uniformly: on D and possessive (and D introducer)
(ii) on the possessive
(iii) on D with uninflected possessive (possibly in enclisis)

Aromanian, Albanian and Southern Italian dialects (like Standard Italian) select (55i), while French selects (55ii). Finally, some Romance varieties admit also (55iii) showing proclitic or enclitic possessive forms which do not agree for number and/or gender (Manzini and Savoia 2005). Interestingly, this possibility is not connected with the presence of article, but may characterize both systems with complementary distribution between possessives and articles and systems which combine articles and possessives. In the case of kinship terms, their referential properties favor or force a specialized externalization of D, giving rise to a sort of differential marking phenomenon sensitive to their inherent referential nature.

As to different orders between prenominal and postnominal position, we conclude that they reflect different ways to externalize definiteness properties of DP, generally in Romance varieties associated with D in prenominal position. Taking account of (32), what appears is that the postnominal occurrence of possessives externalizes the argumental structure of inclusion by linearizing the possessum as the external argument outside of the possessor phrase. The reverse order, i.e. prenominal order like in French, Spanish and Standard Italian, where the possessor precedes the possessum, is to be connected with the referential scope of possessor in fixing the reference of possessed noun.

Languages vary, parameterizing according to the interpretive properties of their lexical elements. We take a weak approach to parameterization, whereby parameters are nothing but ‘categorical splits’, for instance, as in the case of possessives, the externalization of nominal properties:

the proposal we are putting forward is that lexicons are merely ways of partitioning an abstract categorial space [...] Let us assume that there is a universal inventory of concepts, and that the lexicon represents a way of realizing it. (Manzini and Savoia 2011: 7, 8)

We see that the conceptual forces shaping the possessive systems we have investigated are driven by categorial properties regarding the nominal domain: (differential) lexicalization of the ϕ -features of DP, 1st/2nd/3rd singular vs plural, kinship terms vs other nouns, linearization of semantic relations and externalization. The microvariation involving pre- and postnominal position of possessives, the interaction with determiners/ definite inflection and the agreement phenomena call in question any strictly core syntax treatment, favoring an approach based on the relation between syntactic organization and interpretive properties.

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