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## Attributive Possession and the Contributions of Roots

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A large amount of typological work points towards the following generalizations (Ultan 1978; Seiler 1983; Haiman 1983; Nichols 1992; Heine 1997; Haspelmath 2008; see also also Karvovskaya and Schoorlemmer 2017, p.291; Myler 2016, pp.50-55 for discussion): (a.) If there is a contrast between alienable and inalienable possession with respect to the presence of morphological structure, alienable possession is always more morphologically marked; and (b.) inalienable possession involves a tighter structural bond between possessee and possessor. An intuitively satisfying account of these facts appeals to selection by roots: inalienable noun roots denote relations and select a complement directly, whereas alienable roots denote simple predicates, thus requiring an additional Poss head to introduce a possession relation.

I argue against a root-selection approach to inalienable possession, using a detailed case study of attributive possession in the Mayan language Tzutujil (Dayley 1985). Tzutujil (like other Mayan languages) provides instructive exceptions to (a.) and (b.), the proper analysis of which motivates the following claims: (i) “relational” noun roots are not, in fact, semantically relational; (ii) instead, inalienable relations are introduced by specific variants of little-n; (iii) in contrast, as on existing accounts, alienable possession relations are introduced by a head Poss, higher in the structure than nP. Claim (i) goes against much existing work (Alexadiou 2003; Karvovskaya & Schoorlemmer 2017; Myler 2016) but supports Adger (2013); claim (ii) implies that at least inalienable possession relations have to be introduced rather lower in the structure than argued in Adger (2013); claim (iii) is not novel (see the works cited earlier in this paragraph and Barker 1995), but I show that my analysis has novel implications for the place of (iii) in understanding the typology of the alienable vs. inalienable contrast cross-linguistically.