

# The zoom-on-possessee construction in Kam (Dong): the anatomy of a new construction type<sup>1</sup>

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(Received 6 December 2003; revised 6 December 2004)

Kam, a Kadai language spoken in Guizhou province (People's Republic of China), has a family of intransitive possessive constructions with the word order 'Possessor–Verb–Possessee'. (The basic word order in Kam is SV and AVO.) While two recent papers have featured this unique construction type for an array of other Southeast Asian languages, they fail to acknowledge its distinct semantic value in contrast to the related construction type 'Possessee–Possessor–Verb'. The former construction type displays a so-called 'zoom-effect': the possessor is predicated IN, AT or THROUGH his/her/its possessee; the predication zooms from the possessor on his/her/its possessee. The latter construction, in contrast, views the possessee as an entity separated from its possessor, and the predicate as applying solely to the possessee. After illustrating the 'zoom-effect' for a representative sample of Kam constructions, I demonstrate that 'zoom-effects' do not merely exist when the possessee–possessor compound has the zero-role (= intransitive subject) as above, but also when it assumes other semantic roles (e.g. patient, force, etc.). A general definition of this construction type, called 'zoom-on-possessee construction', is proposed; it enables us to unify and account for an array of hitherto disparate construction types that run in the literature under labels such as 'proprioceptive state expressions', 'body part locative constructions', 'dative of affect', etc. Furthermore, I discuss in some detail whether zoom-on-possessee constructions are better accounted for within a multi-stratal or a mono-stratal framework and, finally, whether the concept of noun-incorporation has any relevance.

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[1] I wish to warmly thank Wu Shihua, a native Kam from Sanjiang county, who spent considerable time with me in Kunming (P. R. of China) in 2002–2003 to discuss the empirical basis of this and other works. Special gratitude also goes to Noel Johnston for comments on an earlier version of this paper. I am also grateful to two anonymous *JL* referees for their constructive criticism leading to a greatly improved version of the paper.

List of abbreviations used in the article:

3P PL	Third person plural pronoun	DP	Dynamic perfect particle
3P SG	Third person singular pronoun	NUM	Numeral
3P SG POSS	Third person singular possessive pronoun	NUM:3	Numeral with its value
CL	Classifier	N <sub>Pec</sub>	Possessee noun
COP	Copula	N <sub>Por</sub>	Possessor noun
DAT	Dative	V	Verb
DOUH	The string <b>tau</b> <sup>33</sup> in Kam orthography	ZoP	Zoom-on-possessee
DOUH:touch	DOUH with its verbal meaning		

See also footnotes 5 and 6 below.