

# TRANSITIVE NOUNS AND SPLIT POSSESSIVE PARADIGMS IN CENTRAL GUERRERO NAHUATL<sup>1</sup>

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**1. Introduction.** In this paper we discuss a hitherto undocumented Nahuatl possessive construction in which subject and object prefixes, instead of the expected subject and possessive prefixes, cooccur on certain two-place nominal predicates. These forms, superficially similar to transitive verbs, occur only when the pronominal object prefix coreferences first or second persons. In all other cases the standard Nahuatl possessed predicate noun construction is employed. The result is a split paradigm of two-place relational predicate structures. In 2 we present data from Central Guerrero Nahuatl where this phenomenon is found. In 3 we consider comparative evidence from Huichol, Cora, Hopi, and Cahuilla, which suggests that the presence of both predicate nominal and transitive verbal constructions for the expression of two-place possessive predication may be a general Uto-Aztecan trait which has been retained in the one dialect of Nahuatl which we present (see figure 1). We then briefly discuss the relative nominal vs. verbal nature of these two constructions. The comparative data indicate that they are not in fact two discrete and diametrically opposed categories, but rather clusters of properties which in any given language may diverge to

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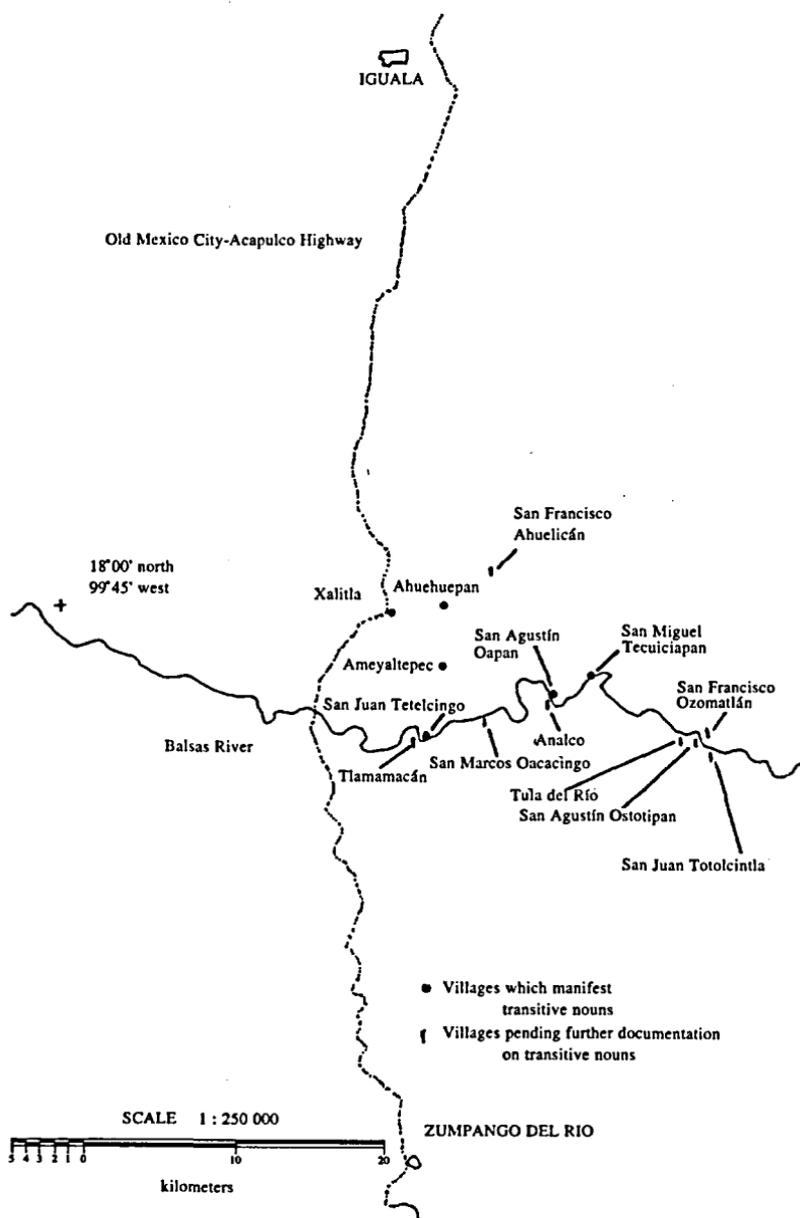


FIG. 1.—Nahuatl-speaking villages of the Oapan region. Sources: Secretaría de Programación y Presupuesto (1981a; 1981b; 1984a; 1984b; 1984c).

a greater or lesser extent from prototypical predicate nominal and transitive verbal structures, producing intermediate types and partially overlapping phenomena.

## 2. Two-place relational predication in Central Guerrero Nahuatl.<sup>2</sup>

Typically, when nouns function predicatively they are most directly interpretable as one-place predicates. In Nahuatl, as in many languages, this semantic interpretation of predicate nouns is matched formally by cross-

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the Nahuatl data cited throughout this paper are from Ameyaltepec, a village of approximately 2,000 inhabitants located in Central Guerrero near the Balsas River. The data were collected by Amith. Nearly identical forms were found in San Agustín Oapan, an ex-*cabecera* (head village) from which Ameyaltepec, a pre-Hispanic offshoot, achieved formal independence in the mid-eighteenth century (Amith, in preparation). San Juan Tetelcingo and San Miguel Tecuciapan, *sujetos* in the early colonial *cabecera-sujeto* complex controlled by Oapan, likewise manifest the two types of possessive constructions discussed in this paper, as do more recently settled villages such as Ahuehuepan (an eighteenth-century offshoot of Tetelcingo) and Xalitla (an eighteenth-century offshoot of Ameyaltepec). We suspect that similar data might also be found in other Nahuatl-speaking towns that were part of the same early colonial polity, such as San Francisco Ahuelicán and San Marcos Oacacingo (both, like Ameyaltepec, pre-Hispanic offshoots of Oapan) and San Juan Totolcintla and San Agustín Ostotipan (whose early political status is somewhat distinct from those villages that were part of the Oapan *cabecera-sujeto* complex). Tula del Río and Analco (formed by migrants from Oapan) and Tlamamacán (inhabited by migrants from San Juan Tetelcingo) were settled in the nineteenth century, and we suspect should manifest the patterns exhibited by their respective parent villages. Andrés González (personal communication) has informed us that in San Francisco Ozomatlán, a former *sujeto* to Oapan, transitive morphology on possessed predicates is not used. Nevertheless, speakers understand these forms and recognize them as typical of other villages in the region. We have found no mention of transitive person marking on possessed predicate nouns in published descriptions of Nahuatl nor among the speakers we have canvassed from other areas: Valentín Peralta Ramírez from San Jerónimo Amanalco, Texcoco; Antonia Osorio Naranjo from Huazalinguillo, Hidalgo; Martín García Illescas from Santa Cruz Huitziltepec, Mpio. Molcaxac, Puebla. The researchers we have discussed this construction with (Karen Dakin, Yolanda Lastra, Michel Launey, Cristina Monzón, David Tuggy, Leopoldo Valiñas) likewise have been unaware of any similar pattern in the Nahuatl dialects which they have studied from other areas. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the transitive verbal construction we discuss is restricted to a historical and political unit of villages whose language, in the pages below (although the examples are from Ameyaltepec), we refer to as “Nahuatl from the Oapan region” or as “Central Guerrero Nahuatl” (see accompanying map in figure 1). According to the sixteenth-century *Relación Geográfica de Iguala* (Acuña 1985:350) this region was part of a larger area known as “*la provincia de la cuixca*” whose inhabitants, for the most part, spoke a rustic form of Nahuatl (cf. Harvey 1972:300; for isoglosses of *cuixca* Nahuatl, cf. Coe and Whittaker 1982). Oapan, however, was apparently more influenced by certain Mexica-introduced innovations than Ameyaltepec (viz. Oapan *nino-*, *to-* [derived from *tito-*], and *nimi-* as opposed to Ameyaltepec *nimo-*, *timo-*, and *timi-* for first-person singular reflexive, first-person plural reflexive, and first-person singular subject–second-person singular object). For a suggestion that *cabeceras* are more likely to manifest Mexica or nonlocal linguistic traits, cf. Lockhart (1982) and Amith (1989).

TABLE 1  
AMEYALTEPEC NAHUATL PRONOMINAL ELEMENTS

	Independent Pronouns		Subject Pronouns		Object Pronouns		Possessive Pronouns	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1	<i>newa</i>	<i>tewameh</i>	<i>n(i)</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>t(i)</i>	<i>ne:č-</i>	<i>te:č-</i>	<i>no-</i>	<i>to-</i>
2	<i>tewa</i>	<i>nanwameh</i>	<i>t(i)-</i>	<i>nam</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>mič-</i>	<i>ame:č-</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>mo-</i>	<i>amo-</i>
3	<i>yewa</i>	<i>yewameh</i>	∅-	∅-	<i>k(i)-</i>	<i>kim-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>im</i> <sup>4</sup>
Indefinite [+human]						<i>te:-</i>		<i>te:-</i>
Indefinite [-human]						<i>la-</i>		

<sup>1</sup>The vowels of the 1sgS prefix *ni-* and of the 2sgS and 1plS prefix *ti-* (as well as of a few other morphemes) are to some degree epenthetic. They may or may not be "lost" before following vowels (cf. Tuggy 1981). The *l* of the 3sgO prefix is more transparently epenthetic. The expected combination *ni-mič-* ('1sgS-2sgO') is generally realized as *ti-mič-*.

<sup>2</sup>The final nasals of this prefix, of 3plO *kim-*, and of 3plPossr *im-* assimilate in point of articulation to following non-nasal consonants. We treat all nonlabial nasals as *n* although before velars and word boundaries nasals are velar. Before nasal consonants, the final nasal of *nam-* (2plS) is lost, whereas both *kim-* (3plO) and *im-* (3plPossr) acquire a following epenthetic *i*, viz. *imi-na:n* 'their mother' and *kimi-miktia* 'he kills them'.

<sup>3</sup>Word-initially *a* deletes. It is retained elsewhere, e.g., *n-ame:č-* (1sgS-2plO).

<sup>4</sup>In Oapan, as in Classical Nahuatl, the 3sgPossr is *i:-* and its plural equivalent is *i:m-*. However, in Ameyaltepec the vowels are short.

referencing the person and number of their subjects with the same pronominal morphemes used to cross-reference subjects of verbs. These are prefixed directly to the predicate noun. In the present tense there is no overt copula. This structure is illustrated in the following two paradigms, one of a predicate noun (1) and the other of an intransitive verb (2). The same set of subject prefixes is used in each case. Table 1 gives Nahuatl pronominal forms from Ameyaltepec.

- (1) *la:ka-λ*<sup>3</sup> 'man'  
*ni-λa:ka-λ* 'I am a man'  
*ti-λa:ka-λ* 'You (sg.) are a man'  
*yewa ∅-λa:ka-λ*<sup>4</sup> 'He is a man'  
*ti-λa:ka-meh* 'We are men'  
*nan-λa:ka-meh* 'You (pl.) are men'  
*yewameh ∅-λa:ka-meh* 'They are men'
- (2) *čo:ka* 'cry'  
*ni-čo:ka* 'I cry'  
*ti-čo:ka* 'You (sg.) cry'  
*∅-čo:ka* 'He/she/it cries'

<sup>3</sup> *-λ* is an absolutive suffix for unpossessed and nonincorporated vowel-final nouns. In plural unpossessed forms it is usually replaced by *-meh*.

<sup>4</sup> Predicate nouns with a third-person subject often, but not necessarily, utilize an independent pronoun to cross-reference the zero morpheme subject prefix. For this reason we have included the appropriate independent pronoun in our paradigm.

<i>ti-č̣o:ka-n</i> <sup>5</sup>	'We cry'
<i>nan-č̣o:ka-n</i>	'You (pl.) cry'
<i>θ-č̣o:ka-n</i>	'They cry'

Not all predicate nouns, however, necessarily correspond to monadic predicates. The classic examples of nouns that function as two-place predicates are kinship terms, which typically express a relationship between two arguments (cf. Wallace 1970 and Leech 1974:247–62). One does not normally say that someone, *x*, is a brother, *BROTHER*(*x*), but rather that he is a brother of someone else, *y*, *BROTHER* (*x*, *y*). In this sense, then, kinship terms are akin to transitive verbs. In fact, in languages such as Algonquian (cf. Bloomfield [1946]1970:452, 462–63, 471), Iroquois (Sapir 1917:88; Floyd Lounsbury, personal communication), Chinook (Silverstein 1976), Yuman (Langdon 1978), Seri (Moser and Marlett 1989), Jemez (Ken Hale, personal communication), and sixteenth-century Tarascan (on the basis of data provided by Cristina Monzón), kinship terms can, at least in part, be conjugated as transitive verbs.<sup>6</sup> The semantic roles of the two arguments in a kinship relation, however, are not especially similar to those of a prototypically transitive verb, not even if expressed as macro-roles such as those proposed by Foley and Van Valin (1984). Rather than an agent and a patient (or actor and undergoer), one has what might be termed a REFERENT and a RELATUM. For example, in the sentence *John is Mary's brother*, we consider *John* to be the referent and *Mary* to be the relatum. We call the lexical element identifying the relation the RELATOR, in this case, *brother*.

<sup>5</sup> The suffix *-n* marks plural subject in certain tenses of verbs.

<sup>6</sup> Curiously, all examples of the verbal treatment of kin terms which we have localized thus far come from North American languages. In this regard Greenberg (1987:48), while describing some general features of his proposed Amerind language family, notes the following:

Whereas the ergative set [of markers] is also widely used for nominal possession, the objective set is often used for nominal predication. The noun is then treated as a stative verb: 'I am a man' often parallels 'I sleep.' The third-person object marker is commonly zero, as against the *i ~ t* marker discussed above. We may add a further typological fact. Kinship nouns that have a relational meaning are sometimes treated like transitive verbs when they are predicated—for example, 'she is my mother' is, as it were, 'she mothers me.' Complete agreement in this typological scheme may be found in languages as distant as Salishan in the northwestern United States, Nahuatl in Mexico, and Chiquito in Bolivia.

Clearly Greenberg is aware of the existence of the transitive expression of kinship relations in Amerindian languages, though the appropriate example illustrating the T-V construction corresponding to 'she is my mother' would be 'I mother her' according to our ideal type. It is something of a mystery to us how Greenberg could claim, as he seems to do, that Nahuatl is one of the languages that sometimes treats kinship terms as transitive verbs since such is not the case in the descriptions of Nahuatl available prior to this paper. It seems more likely that the "complete agreement" that he refers to in fact only applies to the parallelism in the marking of the subjects of 'I am a man' and 'I sleep' and the fact that the third-person subject pronoun is zero.

TABLE 2  
IDEAL TYPES OF TWO-PLACE RELATIONAL PREDICATES

Construction Type	Nature of Relation	Morphological Schema	Subject	Possessor/Object
Predicate Nominal	Equational (=)	Subject=[Possr+Noun]	Referent	Relatum
Transitive Verbal	Relational (→)	[Subject→Object]Verb	Relatum	Referent

A preliminary survey of such two-place relational predicates suggests that the grammatical structures used to express them can be grouped around two ideal types. In the first, the referent is equated with the relator as a predicate noun possessed by the relatum. English uses this type, which we call a PREDICATE NOMINAL (P-N) or EQUATIONAL construction. In the second, the relator is treated as a transitive verb, with the relatum and referent expressed respectively as the subject and object. We call this a TRANSITIVE VERBAL (T-V) or RELATIONAL construction. These two ideal types are summarized in table 2.<sup>7</sup> We call these two types IDEAL since the transitive verbal construction is not always completely verbal and the predicate nominal construction is not necessarily wholly nominal.<sup>8</sup>

In all previously documented Nahuatl dialects, dyadic possessive predication is of the equational type in which the relatum is referenced by a possessive pronoun prefixed to the nominal relator, and the referent is signaled by a subject pronoun prefixed to the possessed relator. Some examples of this construction, taken from Classical Nahuatl, are given in (3) (for a complete paradigm, cf. Andrews 1975:390).

- (3a) *ni-mo-na:n*  
1sgS-2sgPossr-MOTHER<sup>9</sup>  
'I am your mother'

<sup>7</sup> Note that a striking difference between the predicate nominal and the transitive verbal constructions is the near reversal of the manner in which referent and relatum are grammatically encoded (cf. last two columns of table 2). For this reason we have considered calling these two types "direct" and "inverse," respectively, terms used by Seiler (1982a). However, these latter terms imply that one type ("direct" or predicate nominal) is basic, and that the other type ("inverse" or transitive verbal) is derived or somehow less natural. We wish to avoid this implication, although it does seem that the transitive verbal structure is typologically less frequent. At the same time we believe that it is the transitive verbal (relational) vs. the predicate nominal (equational) nature of the distinction that is most significant, and not the reversal of grammatical encoding, a position we develop in more detail elsewhere (Amth and Smith-Stark, forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> It is probable that the phenomenon we are describing is a particular instance of what Ross (1972) has called the "category squish," a linear continuum with the cardinal categories Verb and Noun at its two extremes.

<sup>9</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this paper: 1, 2, 3 = first, second, and third persons, respectively; As = assertative; Caus = causative; dem = demonstrative; Dist = distributive;

- (3b) *ti-no-kone:-w*<sup>10</sup>  
2sgS-1sgPossr-CHILD-Possd  
'You are my child'
- (3c) *∅-to-kone:-w*  
3sgS-1plPossr-CHILD-Possd  
'He/she is our child'
- (3d) *t-amo-kone:-wa:-n*  
1plS-2plPossr-CHILD-Possd-pl  
'We are your (pl.) children'
- (3e) *nam-i:-kone:-wa:-n*  
2plS-3sgPossr-CHILD-Possd-pl  
'You (pl.) are his/her children'
- (3f) *∅-te:-kone:-wa:-n*  
3plS-IndefPossr-CHILD-Possd-pl  
'They are someone's children'

In the Oapan region, however, this predicate nominal (P-N) pattern is found almost exclusively with third-person referents (4) or when the indefinite pronoun *te:-* signals the relatum (5).

- |     |                               |                                 |
|-----|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (4) | <i>yewa ∅-no-na:n</i>         | 'She is my mother'              |
|     | <i>yewa ∅-mo-na:n</i>         | 'She is your (sg.) mother'      |
|     | <i>yewa ∅-i-na:n</i>          | 'She is his/her/its mother'     |
|     | <i>yewa ∅-to-na:n</i>         | 'She is our mother'             |
|     | <i>yewa ∅-amo-na:n</i>        | 'She is your (pl.) mother'      |
|     | <i>yewa ∅-imi-na:n</i>        | 'She is their mother'           |
|     | <i>yewameh ∅-no-kone:-wan</i> | 'They are my children'          |
|     | <i>yewameh ∅-mo-kone:-wan</i> | 'They are your (sg.) children'  |
|     | <i>yewameh ∅-i-kone:-wan</i>  | 'They are his/her/its children' |
|     | <i>yewameh ∅-to-kone:-wan</i> | 'They are our children'         |

Fut = future; Indef = indefinite; Impf = imperfect; IP = independent pronoun; O = object; Or-Rel = ordered relation; P1 = Cahuilla subject of verb and possessor; P2 = Cahuilla subject of predicate noun; P-N = predicate nominal; pl = plural; Possd = possessed; Possr = possessor; Pret = preterit; Refl = reflexive; Rdpl = reduplicated syllable; S = subject; sg = singular; T-V = transitive verbal; Transr = transitivizer; Vbzs = verbalizer.

<sup>10</sup> Possessed nouns in Nahuatl lose their absolutive suffix (and at times their root-final vowel) and often add a possessed suffix. In this case, *kone:λ* 'child' loses the absolutive suffix *-λ* and adds the singular possessed suffix *-w(a)*. However, given that the root of *na:n-λi* 'mother' is consonant final, it does not take the singular possessed marker. For a more detailed account of Nahuatl possessed forms and their historical sources, see Dakin (1991).

- yewameh  $\emptyset$ -amo-kone:-wan 'They are your (pl.) children'  
 yewameh  $\emptyset$ -in-kone:-wan 'They are their children'
- (5) newa ni-te:-kone:-w 'I am someone else's child'  
 tewa ti-te:-kone:-w 'You are someone else's child'  
 yewa  $\emptyset$ -te:-kone:-w 'He/she is someone else's child'  
 tewameh ti-te:-kone:-wan 'We are someone else's children'  
 nanwameh nan-te:-kone:-wan 'You (pl.) are someone else's children'  
 yewameh  $\emptyset$ -te:-kone:-wan 'They are someone else's children'

In the preceding examples, the referent is cross-referenced by a prefixed subject pronoun (optionally reinforced by an independent pronoun), and the relatum is cross-referenced by a prefixed possessive pronoun. This is in accord with the standard pattern, illustrated in (3) for Classical Nahuatl.

In contrast to the above, however, when the referent is not third person and the relatum is not the indefinite pronoun *te:-*, possessed predicate nouns in Central Guerrero Nahuatl express their two arguments in a way formally identical to the expression of the two arguments of a transitive verb. There is, however, no other indication of verbal morphology. In fact, the relator occurs in its possessed form, that is, the special, morphologically marked form of nouns usually used concurrently with possessive prefixes. This transitive verbal (T-V) construction, in which the relator occurs with a first-second-person referent, is illustrated in the following paradigm (6).

- (6) ti-ne:č-kone:-w 'I am your child'  
 $\emptyset$ -ne:č-kone:-w 'I am his/her child'  
 na-ne:č-kone:-w<sup>11</sup> 'I am your (pl.) child'  
 $\emptyset$ -ne:č-kone:-w 'I am their child'
- ti-miŋ-kone:-w 'You (sg.) are my child'  
 $\emptyset$ -miŋ-kone:-w 'You (sg.) are his/her child'  
 ti-miŋ-kone:-w 'You (sg.) are our child'  
 $\emptyset$ -miŋ-kone:-w 'You (sg.) are their child'
- ti-te:č-kone:-w 'We are your (sg.) children'  
 $\emptyset$ -te:č-kone:-w 'We are his/her children'  
 nan-te:č-kone:-w 'We are your (pl.) children'  
 $\emptyset$ -te:č-kone:-w 'We are their children'

<sup>11</sup> Geminate nasals are reduced to a single nasal except in those cases in which the first nasal is a complete morpheme. In this case *nam-ne:č-* assimilates to *nan-ne:č-* and then simplifies to *na-ne:č-*. However, *o:hmat* ('I felt/knew it') is derived from {*o:+n+k+mati+PRET*} in which 3sgO {*k-*} is deleted to avoid a CCC sequence and 1sgS {*n-*}, a complete morpheme, assimilates to following *m*. It does not simplify to a single nasal but is instead realized as *h*, as a result of a general phonological process.

<i>n-ame:č-kone:-w</i>	'You (pl.) are my children'
<i>Ø-me:č-kone:-w</i>	'You (pl.) are his/her children'
<i>t-ame:č kone:-w</i>	'You (pl.) are our children'
<i>Ø-me:č-kone:-w</i>	'You (pl.) are their children'

Compare the preceding forms with the following transitive verb paradigm (7) (from which we eliminate reflexive constructions).

(7) <i>ti-ne:č-lasola</i>	'You (sg.) love me'
<i>Ø-ne:č-lasola</i>	'He/she/it loves me'
<i>na-ne:č-lasola-n</i>	'You (pl.) love me'
<i>Ø-ne:č-lasola-n</i>	'They love me'
<i>ti-mič-lasola</i>	'I love you (sg.)'
<i>Ø-mič-lasola</i>	'He/she/it loves you (sg.)'
<i>ti-mič-lasola-n</i>	'We love you (sg.)'
<i>Ø-mič-lasola-n</i>	'They love you (sg.)'
<i>ni-k-lasola</i>	'I love him/her/it'
<i>ti-k-lasola</i>	'You (sg.) love him/her/it'
<i>Ø-ki-lasola</i>	'He/she/it loves him/her/it'
<i>ti-k-lasola-n</i>	'We love him/her/it'
<i>nan-ki-lasola-n</i>	'You (pl.) love him/her/it'
<i>Ø-ki-lasola-n</i>	'They love him/her/it'
<i>ti-te:č-lasola</i>	'You (sg.) love us'
<i>Ø-te:č-lasola</i>	'He/she/it loves us'
<i>nan-te:č-lasola-n</i>	'You (pl.) love us'
<i>Ø-te:č-lasola-n</i>	'They love us'
<i>n-ame:č-lasola</i>	'I love you (pl.)'
<i>Ø-me:č-lasola</i>	'He/she/it loves you (pl.)'
<i>t-ame:č-lasola-n</i>	'We love you (pl.)'
<i>Ø-me:č-lasola-n</i>	'They love you (pl.)'
<i>ni-kin-lasola</i>	'I love them'
<i>ti-kin-lasola</i>	'You (sg.) love them'
<i>Ø-kin-lasola</i>	'He/she/it loves them'
<i>ti-kin-lasola-n</i>	'We love them'
<i>nan-kin-lasola-n</i>	'You (pl.) love them'
<i>Ø-kin-lasola-n</i>	'They love them'
<i>ni-te:-lasola</i>	'I love someone'
<i>ti-te:-lasola</i>	'You (sg.) love someone'
<i>Ø-te:-lasola</i>	'He/she/it loves someone'
<i>ti-te:-lasola-n</i>	'We love someone'
<i>nan-te:-lasola-n</i>	'You (pl.) love someone'
<i>Ø-te:-lasola-n</i>	'They love someone'

In the T-V construction illustrated in (6) the relatum is expressed by the same subject prefixes employed in both predicate nouns and verbs, whereas the referent is expressed with a third set of prefixes, those used to cross-reference an object (cf. table 1).

The situation is somewhat complicated by the fact that the T-V pattern is not totally obligatory when the referent is first or second person. Though the relational construction is highly preferred in spontaneous speech, speakers will, at times, produce P-N forms when the relatum is also first or second person but NEVER when it is third person. This pattern is summarized in table 3 and is illustrated by the examples in (8).

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| (8)  | Predicate Nominal/<br>Equational  | Transitive Verbal/<br>Relational  |
| (8a) | <i>ni-te:-na:n</i><br>1sgS-IndefPossr-MOTHER<br>'I am someone else's mother'        | NO AVAILABLE FORM   |
| (8b) | $\emptyset$ - <i>no-na:n</i><br>3sgS-1sgPossr-MOTHER<br>'She is my mother'          | * <i>ni-k-na:n</i><br>1sgS-3sgO-MOTHER<br>NOT ACCEPTABLE                              |
|      | <i>ni-mo-na:n</i><br>1sgS-2sgPossr-MOTHER<br>'I am your mother'<br>RARELY USED FORM | = <i>ti-ne:č-na:n</i><br>2sgS-1sgO-MOTHER<br>'I am your mother'<br>COMMONLY USED FORM |
| (8d) | * <i>ni-i-na:n</i><br>1sgS-3sgPossr-MOTHER<br>NOT ACCEPTABLE                        | $\emptyset$ - <i>ne:č-na:n</i><br>3sgS-1sgO-MOTHER<br>'I am his/her mother'           |

We have been unable to note any semantic or pragmatic difference between the predicate nominal and transitive verbal types other than the obvious one that T-V forms mark speakers as from the Oapan region speech community. If there once was a difference in the meaning or use of these two types of expressions, apparently this has been lost in Central Guerrero Nahuatl.

The inherent lexical content of the possessed noun does not seem to be a factor limiting the occurrence of relational expressions. The T-V pattern is normally found when the relator refers to a culturally recognized interpersonal relationship, not just kin relations, provided that the referent is first or second person (9a and 9b). However, even when asked to go beyond such socially normal situations and address an animal or an object, the same distribution of the transitive construction occurs (9c and 9d).

TABLE 3

## TYPE DISTRIBUTION OF TWO-PLACE RELATIONAL PREDICATES IN AMEYALTEPEC NAHUATL

Referent	Relatum	Construction
1/2/3	Indefinite	Always predicate nominal
3	1/2	Always predicate nominal
1/2	1/2	Almost always transitive verbal
1/2	3	Always transitive verbal

- (9a) *ti-ne:č-ba:leh*  
2sgS-1sgO-FRIEND  
'I am your friend'
- (9b) *∅-mič-meka-w*  
3sgS-2sgO-LOVER(male)-Possd  
'You are her lover'
- (9c) *ti-mič-ičk<sup>w</sup>in*  
1sgS-2sgO-DOG  
'You are my dog'
- (9d) *ti-mič-ma*  
1sgS-2sgO-HAND  
'You are my hand'

An interesting aspect of relational constructions is that they do not disambiguate the two uses of the subject prefix *ti-*, which can cross-reference either a second-person singular or a first-person plural relatum,<sup>12</sup> nor the two uses of the zero subject morpheme, which can cross-reference either a third-person singular or a third-person plural relatum. Note that in Nahuatl morphosyntax in general there is never any possible ambiguity in the interpretation of subject prefixes given the obligatory use of various plural suffixes, whether the predicates be verbs (10), nouns (11), or adjectives (12).

- (10a) *ti-či:npo:ni* 'You (sg.) stick your rear end in the air'  
*ti-či:npo:ni-n* 'We stick our rear ends in the air'
- (10b) *∅-k<sup>w</sup>alahki:sa-s* 'He/she/it will drool'  
*∅-k<sup>w</sup>alahki:sa-s-keh* 'They will drool'
- (11a) *ti-šole:nko* 'You (sg.) are a fool'  
*ti-šole:nko-meh* 'We are fools'

<sup>12</sup> In Ameyaltepec, because of the surface realization of {ni+mič} as *timič-*, an additional ambiguity between first-person singular and first-person plural relatum is introduced when the referent is 2sgO *mič-*, e.g., *timična:n* 'You are my/our mother'.

- (11*b*) *yewa*  $\emptyset$ -*ta-li* 'He is a father'  
*yewameh*  $\emptyset$ -*ta-teh*<sup>13</sup> 'They are fathers'
- (12*a*) *ti-susuwa:tik* 'You (sg.) are effeminate'  
*ti-susuwa:tik-eh* 'We are effeminate'
- (12*b*)  $\emptyset$ -*piʔolaʔ-ki* 'He/she/it is lazy like a pig'  
 $\emptyset$ -*piʔolaʔ-keh* 'They are lazy like pigs'

In the predicate nominal construction we have been discussing, this same type of disambiguation is possible, since plurality on possessed nouns is signaled by the suffix *-wan*<sup>14</sup> (13).

- (13) *yewa*  $\emptyset$ -*no-meka-w* 'He is my lover'  
*yewameh*  $\emptyset$ -*no-meka-wan* 'They are my lovers'

However, as the paradigm in (6) illustrates, the T-V construction is anomalous in that, unlike all other predicates, no suffix is used to distinguish between forms with singular and plural subjects. Thus, the following isolated relational phrase is potentially ambiguous:

- (14)  $\emptyset$ -*ne:č-tah*  
 3sgS-1sgO-FATHER 'I am his/her father' or  
 3plS-1sgO-FATHER 'I am their father'

Compare (14) to the corresponding unambiguous Classical Nahuatl equational forms in:

- (15*a*) *ni-i:-tah*  
 1sgS-3sgPossr-FATHER  
 'I am his/her father'
- (15*b*) *ni-i:n-tah*  
 1sgS-3plPossr-FATHER  
 'I am their father'

Oapan-area speakers may disambiguate constructions such as that in (14) with an independent pronoun to refer not to the referent, which would be the unmarked usage (16*a*), but rather to the relatum (16*b* and 16*c*). Another mechanism is the marked independent expression of the relatum which may (16*d* from Oapan) or may not (16*e* from Tetelcingo) be included in the predicate.

<sup>13</sup> In Ameyaltepec the plural marker is *-teh* (*-tih* in Oapan) after consonant-final noun stems and *-meh* after vowel-final noun stems. In this case, the underlying *h* of the stem *tah* 'father' is lost after first motivating the use of the postconsonantal plural allomorph *-teh*.

<sup>14</sup> The suffix *-wan* is morphologically complex; it consists of the possessed noun suffix *-w(a)* and the plural marker *-n*.

- (16a) *newa ne:čtah* 'I am his/their father'  
 (16b) *yewa ne:čtah* 'I am his/her father'  
 (16c) *yewameh ne:čtah* 'I am their father'  
 (16d) *yon ko:koneh, néwa né:štah* 'Those children there, I am their father'  
 (16e) *un ko:koneh, nehwa nitahle* 'Those children there, I am the father'

An unexpected feature of plural marking in T-V constructions is the fact that the plural possessed suffix *-wan* is generally not used. Note that this plural marker would not be a particularly appropriate way to mark a plural relatum (subject in T-V constructions) given that *-wan* functions to mark plurality on the relator, which is independent of the plurality of the relatum. However, *-wan* is not used in T-V constructions even when the referent/relator is plural, where its occurrence might be expected.<sup>15</sup>

In sum, the Nahuatl T-V constructions are odd. They manifest an incomplete or "defective" paradigm in the context of general Nahuatl morpho-syntax: (1) no suffix is used to distinguish singular from plural subjects; and (2) the singular possessed suffix *-w(a)* is used independently of the number of the relator stem.

One of the most intriguing questions presented by the transitive verbal pattern is that of the grammatical functions of the referent and the relatum. In the possessed predicate noun construction (3–5), there is no problem in identifying the referent as the subject and the relatum as a possessor constituent of the predicate noun itself. However, although the morphology of the transitive pattern used in (6) suggests that the relatum is subject and that the referent is an object, there are two pieces of evidence which suggest that they are not typical subjects and objects.

First, evidence from the use of independent pronouns indicates that the referent, although cross-referenced by object pronouns, behaves more like a subject. As illustrated in (4) and (5), in the predicate nominal construction

<sup>15</sup> There is some evidence, however, that speakers occasionally may employ *-wan* in transitive verbal constructions to express plurality of the relatum, BUT ONLY WHEN THE REFERENT/RELATOR IS ALSO PLURAL. Thus *te:čkone:wan* 'we are their/\*his children' but *yewameh ne:čkone:w* 'I am their child'.

One speaker from Ameyaltepec produced the form given in (i) under elicitation conditions.

- (i)  $\emptyset$ - $\overrightarrow{te:č-kone:-wan}$   $\overleftarrow{to-ta-tah}$   $dió:s$   
 3sgS-1plO-CHILD-pl/Possd 1plPossr-Rdpl-FATHER GOD  
 'We are the children of God'.

Nevertheless, the majority of speakers from both Ameyaltepec and Oapan specifically reject such uses of *-wan* in T-V constructions with a singular relatum.

it is normal for the referent to be expressed by an independent pronoun in initial position, although it is also common for the independent pronoun to cross-reference the possessor. In transitive verbal predication the unmarked use of an independent pronoun is for it to refer to the referent even though the referent is expressed by an object prefix (16*a*). In these constructions the use of an independent pronoun to cross-reference the relatum (16*b* and 16*c*) is also possible, though highly marked.<sup>16</sup> This suggests that the referent maintains the same discourse function in both T-V and P-N constructions, despite the differences in its morphological realization. Note, moreover, that the unmarked use of independent pronouns with intransitive and transitive verbs is to cross-reference the subject (17*a* and 17*b*). The use of an independent pronoun to cross-reference the object (17*c*) is marked.<sup>17</sup>

(17*a*) *newa ni-čo:ka-s*  
1sgIP 1sgs-CRY-Fut  
'I will cry'

(17*b*) *tewa ti-ne:č-lašla:wili:-s*  
2sgIP 2sgS-1sgO-PAY-Fut  
'You will pay me'

(17*c*) *newa ti-ne:č-lašla:wili:-s*  
1sgIP 2sgS-1sgO-PAY-Fut  
'It is I whom you will pay'

Compare the unmarked (17*b*) to the unmarked usage of the independent pronoun in transitive verbal two-place predicates (18*a*). The contrast in unmarked usage of independent pronouns with verbs, as opposed to their usage in relational two-place predication, is well illustrated in (18*b*) from Oapan.

(18*a*)  $\overbrace{newa\ ti-ne:č-na:n}^{[ ]}$   
1sgIP 2sgS-1sgO-MOTHER  
'I am your mother'

(18*b*)  $\overbrace{n\acute{e}wa\ ni-h-nelt\acute{o}ka,}^{[ ]}$   $\overbrace{t\acute{e}wa\ ni-mis-č\acute{u}wa:-w}^{[ ]}$ <sup>18</sup>  
1sgIP 1sgS-3sgO-BELIEVE 2sgIP 1sgS-2sgO-WIFE-Possd  
'I believe that you are my wife'

<sup>16</sup> The concept of markedness we are assuming involves expectations about frequency in spontaneous speech and likelihood of use in the absence of special motivating circumstances.

<sup>17</sup> It would be highly unusual, if not impossible, to use two independent pronouns in a single clause.

<sup>18</sup> Note the metathesis in Oapan of *ni-miř-suwa:w* to *ni-mis-č\acute{u}wa:w*.

There is a second piece of evidence that indicates that the discourse function of the referent in T-V constructions is not that which is typical of objects. This evidence is provided by possible answers to information questions. In English, if someone asks *Who are you?*, the most likely reply would probably have *I* in subject position, appropriate for old information or topic. *I am your mother* would be a natural answer, not *You are my child*. In the Nahuatl T-V construction, despite the fact that the referent is morphologically expressed as object rather than subject, it is nonetheless an appropriate topic in answering questions (19b), whereas the relatum, though morphologically expressed as subject, is not (19c).

(19a) *akinon tewa?*

WHO 2sgIP

'Who are you?'

(19b) *newa ti-ne:č-na:n*

1sgIP 2sgS-1sgO-MOTHER

'I am your mother'

(19c) *newa ni-mič-kone:-w*

1sgIP 1sgS-2sgO-CHILD-Possd

'You are my child'

INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSE

The facility with which the referent, cross-referenced by the object marker, can be signaled by an independent pronoun, and the manner in which it functions in natural answers to information questions, indicate that the referent is not a typical object. Despite the difference in morphological marking of the referent in P-N and T-V constructions, its discourse function in both cases is similar and atypical of that of an object of canonical transitive verbs.

This brings us to a second important question concerning the T-V pattern: the extent to which the relators with transitive person marking are verbal rather than nominal in nature. There are at least four ways in which the Central Guerrero Nahuatl T-V pattern is less than fully verbal. First, as we have just observed, it is not a typical transitive construction in that the referent manifests a discourse function more usual of a subject than an object. In this sense the construction is less transitive verbal and more predicate nominal.

Second, except for the subject-object prefix schema, the T-V construction takes none of the other morphological markings associated with transitive verbs, such as tense/aspect or plural markers, directionals, or reflexives. Tense/aspect inflection for these constructions is the same as that for nominal predicates, using an independent inflected copula (for example, *yes* future and *katka* past), and unlike that for transitive verbs. Note the following

examples of tense/aspect inflection with a one-place nominal predicate (20), a P-N construction (21), a T-V construction (22), and a transitive verb (23).

- |      |   |                           |
|------|---|---------------------------|
| (20) | <i>ni-<math>\lambda</math>a:ka-<math>\lambda</math></i>       | 'I am a man'              |
|      | <i>ni-<math>\lambda</math>a:ka-<math>\lambda</math> yes</i>   | 'I will be a man'         |
|      | <i>ni-<math>\lambda</math>a:ka-<math>\lambda</math> katka</i> | 'I was a man'             |
| (21) | <i>yewa <math>\emptyset</math>-mo-na:n</i>                    | 'She is your mother'      |
|      | <i>yewa <math>\emptyset</math>-mo-na:n yes</i>                | 'She will be your mother' |
|      | <i>yewa <math>\emptyset</math>-mo-na:n katka</i>              | 'She was your mother'     |
| (22) | <i>ti-ne:<math>\check{c}</math>-na:n</i>                      | 'I am your mother'        |
|      | <i>ti-ne:<math>\check{c}</math>-na:n yes</i>                  | 'I will be your mother'   |
|      | <i>ti-ne:<math>\check{c}</math>-na:n katka</i>                | 'I was your mother'       |
| (23) | <i>ti-ne:<math>\check{c}</math>-kekelowa</i>                  | 'You tickle me'           |
|      | <i>ti-ne:<math>\check{c}</math>-kekelo:s</i>                  | 'You will tickle me'      |
|      | <i>o:-ti-ne:<math>\check{c}</math>-kekeloh</i>                | 'You tickled me'          |

Third, the presence of the possessed noun suffix *-w(a)* in the T-V construction is clearly a nominal trait not found on verbs, though the fact that it does not become *-wan* when the referent is plural makes it atypical of nominal constructions as well.

Finally, a fourth characteristic which suggests the nonverbal nature of Nahuatl T-V constructions is the fact that the morphological shape of all singular relators is consonant final, either because the stem is consonant final or through the suffixation of *-w* with vowel-final stems. On the other hand, the present tense singular stem of a verb must end in a vowel.

In terms of the two ideal types summarized in table 2, then, the T-V construction in Nahuatl is not fully transitive verbal. The only transitive verbal feature of Central Guerrero Nahuatl relational constructions is the formal representation of relatum and referent as subject and object. On a continuum which has the two ideal types of table 2 as its extremes, the Nahuatl relational construction would be located toward the predicate nominal pole.

In the following section we show that the marginally verbal construction we have just described can reasonably be considered the survival of a more verbal construction of Uto-Aztecan origin, which has gradually lost most of its verbal traits in Central Guerrero as a consequence of its semantic convergence with the predicate nominal construction.

**3. Uto-Aztecan parallels to the Central Guerrero Nahuatl transitive verbal construction.** The transitive cross-referencing pattern on relators described above for Central Guerrero Nahuatl, and the apparent inversion of the expected way of marking the referent and the relatum, are surprising given the comparative Nahuatl evidence. However, important parallels in Huichol,

Cora, Hopi, and Cahuilla, languages belonging to three additional branches of the Uto-Aztecan family, indicate that the Central Guerrero transitive verbal construction is in fact a retention of an archaic pattern which has been lost in all other known Nahuatl dialects. Although each of the five Uto-Aztecan languages we discuss has T-V structures which vary in different ways from our ideal type, we suggest that the variation found among two-place predicates in these languages is the result of processes which have either strengthened or attenuated the contrast between verbal and nominal structures.

**3.1. Huichol.**<sup>19</sup> In Huichol, terms of interpersonal relationships occur in two types of expressions, paralleling Nahuatl equational (*a*) and relational (*b*) structures:

(24a) *pe-pi-ne-hamku*  
2sgS-As-1sgPossr-FRIEND

'You are my friend'

(24b) *ne-matsi-hamku*  
1sgS-2sgO-FRIEND

'I consider you my friend'

(25a) *Ø-pi-ne-?iya*  
3sgS-As-1sgPossr-WIFE

'She is my wife'

(25b) *ne-p-i-?iya*  
1sgS-As-3sgO-WIFE

'She's a wife for me'

Transitive verbal forms (24b and 25b) signal metaphoric extension of the connotative aspects of a natural or legally sanctioned relation. We could, therefore, translate (25b) as 'I (take/regard) her (as) wife' or 'I'd like her to fulfill the connotative aspects of wifehood for me (i.e., as a potential sexual partner)'. The transitive expression is not semantically equivalent to the predicate nominal expression, but instead functions to communicate a pragmatic interest in affecting the nature of an interpersonal relationship. The patient role of referent and the agentive role of relatum, which are suggested by the morphosyntactic marking, are thus semantically prominent.

<sup>19</sup> Our Huichol data were kindly provided by Julio Ramirez, Gabriel Pacheco, and Hector Carrillo, all native Huichol speakers working at the Centro de Investigación de Lenguas Indígenas, Universidad de Guadalajara and by Paula Gómez, a linguist at the same Center presently involved in a long-term research project on Huichol grammar and lexicon directed by José Luis Iturrioz Leza.

Transitive verbal forms in Huichol are not only semantically more active or agentive than their Nahuatl counterparts but, as temporal inflection reveals, formally more verbal as well. In Huichol, full nominals, including those that are possessed, require the verbalizing suffix *-ti* before tense inflection in copular predicates (26).<sup>20</sup>

In contraposition to these structures, in which a verbalizing element is physically present, two-place relational predicates are verblike in that they are directly inflected for tense without any intervening verbalization process (27).<sup>21</sup>

(26a) *pe-pi-ne-yéu-ti-kai*  
2sgS-As-1sgPossr-FATHER-VbZR-Impf  
'You were my father'

(26b) *pe-pi-ne-?iya-ti-ni*  
2sgS-As-1sgPossr-WIFE-VbZR-Fut  
'You will be my wife'

<sup>20</sup> It is also possible to derive fully transitive forms from nouns that express interpersonal relations through affixation of the transitivizing suffix *-ta*.

(i) *ne-matsi-ti-?iya-ta-ni*  
1sgS-2sgO-Distr-WIFE-Tranzr-Fut  
'I will make you my wife'

In Nahuatl, a parallel system exists. Transitive verbs can be derived from several of the relators we have discussed (ii).

(ii) *ti-ne:č-tah*  
2sgS-1sgO-FATHER  
'I am your father'  
*ti-k-mo-ta-tia*  
2sgS-3sgO-Refl-FATHER-Caus  
'You (e.g., an orphan) adopt him as your father'

<sup>21</sup> Iturriz Leza (1987:246) notes the verbal character of nouns which express interpersonal relations in his discussion of the verbalizing suffix *-ti*: "El carácter débilmente derivativo de *-ti* se pone de manifiesto en el hecho de que los nombres relacionales como *hamtku* ['amigo'] . . . , *iya* 'esposa', etc. no lo necesitan. Estos comparten con los verbos la propiedad de expresar una relación entre dos términos y de tener una posición vacía o valencia." [The weakly derivative nature of *-ti* is clear from the fact that relational nouns like *hamtku* ['friend'] . . . , *iya* 'wife', etc. do not require it. These nouns share with verbs the property of expressing a relation between two terms and having an empty slot or valence.]

Compare the situation in Huichol with that in Yaqui, where Jelinek and Escalante (1988) have shown that Yaqui nouns can be inflected directly for tense, aspect, and mode. The resulting construction indicates that the subject possesses the noun. For example, *'empo karine* (you HOUSE-Fut) means 'You will have a house' (cf. also Langacker 1977:44). They argue that these are incorporated noun constructions.

- (27) *ne-p-i-?iya-ni*  
 1sgS-As-3sgO-WIFE-Fut  
 'She will be a wife for me'

The nominal nature of the relator is not a property of the root itself, which is multifunctional (verbal or nominal). Rather, it must be established by the presence of a possessive affix. In a similar manner, the verbal function of the same root is established by the prefixation of S-O pronominal prefixes in the T-V predication.

The Huichol system, although in many ways parallel to Nahuatl, exhibits significant differences: (1) transitive verbal two-place predication occurs in all person combinations of referent and relatum although certain combinations may be avoided in speech, due to the possible undesirable connotations of the utterance; (2) transitive verbal predication contrasts semantically and pragmatically with nominal predication; (3) transitive verbal expressions are more highly verbal than in Nahuatl, since they not only utilize subject-object morphology but they also inflect for tense/aspectlike verbs, and not like nouns.

**3.2. Cora.**<sup>22</sup> A pattern similar to that of Huichol is evidenced in Cora, a language closely related to Huichol in the Corachol branch of Uto-Aztecan. Kin terms are multifunctional in that they may be either predicate nominal (*a*) or transitive verbal (*b*), depending upon the inflectional affixes with which they cooccur. Note the following forms from the Jesús María dialect.

- (28a) *a?atáaní ya?uh-ra?an puéen*  
 who OFFSPRING-3sgPossr BE  
 'Whose child is he?'
- (28b) *a?atáaní ra-ya?uh-ka*  
 who 3sgO-OFFSPRING-Habitual  
 'Who was it who fathered him?' or  
 'Who has him as his child?'
- (29a) *ai=pú ya?uh-ra?an puéen*  
 Dem=3sgS OFFSPRING-3sgPossr BE  
 'He is his child'
- (29b) *ai=pú ra-ya?uh*  
 Dem=3sgS 3sgO-OFFSPRING  
 'He has fathered him' or  
 'He has him as his child'

<sup>22</sup> The material from Jesús María was generously provided by Eugene Casad. We have also benefited from discussions with Natividad Gómez, a speaker of the Santa Teresa dialect working at the Centro de Investigación de Lenguas Indígenas, Universidad de Guadalajara, and Roberto Zavala, a linguist at the same Center who has done work on Cora.

In (28*b*) and (29*b*) the root *yaʔuh* functions verbally in the context of subject-object prefixes and aspectual suffixes. It acts as a noun when followed by a possessive suffix (28*a* and 29*a*). The Cora data coincide with the Huichol pattern: kin terms may behave as verbs or nouns, with no morphological derivational process distinguishing the two forms. Moreover, in both Huichol and Cora the verbal significance is retained in transitive verbal predication, as indicated by the translations. Although our data are limited, it would appear that Cora T-V expressions, unlike Huichol, are propositionally equivalent to their P-N counterparts.

**3.3. Hopi.**<sup>23</sup> In Hopi, equational (*a*) and relational (*b*) constructions are in free variation (30–32). There does not seem to be any semantic or pragmatic difference in their employment. There are no restrictions on the relative persons of referent and relatum nor on the lexical nature of the relator, which is not limited to humans.

(30*a*) *um ita-ngu-'u*  
2sgS 1plPossr-MOTHER-pausal

'You are our mother'

(30*b*) *itam ung yu-'y-yungwa*  
1plS 2sgO MOTHER-Possd-Impf.pl

'You are our mother'

(31*a*) *pam i-ki-'i*  
that(S) 1sgPossr-HOUSE-pausal

'This is my house'

(31*b*) *nu' put ki-'y-ta*  
1sgS that(O) HOUSE-Possd-Impf.sg

'This is my house'

(32*a*) *um yu-'at*  
2sgS MOTHER-3sgPossr

'You are his/her mother'

(32*b*) *pam ung yu-'y-ta*  
that(S) 2sgO MOTHER-Possd-Impf.sg

'You are his/her mother'

The Hopi data are formally and semantically similar to the Central Guerrero Nahuatl paradigm in that there is no semantic difference which

<sup>23</sup> We are grateful to Kenneth Hill and Emory Sekaquaptewa at the University of Arizona, Tucson, for supplying us with our information on Hopi. All examples are from the Third Mesa dialect.

distinguishes the P-N from the T-V structures. Furthermore, in the transitive verbal construction, the referent is encoded as object, the relatum as subject, and the relator is morphologically marked as possessed. However, there is no split paradigm.

**3.4. Cahuilla.**<sup>24</sup> Cahuilla manifests a split paradigm which conflates equational and relational constructions as in Central Guerrero Nahuatl, while at the same time retaining the types of semantic and pragmatic contrasts between P-N and T-V predication observed in Huichol.

Cahuilla utilizes a transitive verbal construction in expressions which Seiler glosses as “inverse” or “establishing.”<sup>25</sup> These contrast with an equational construction, which he labels “direct” or “inherent.” Unlike Huichol and Cora, Cahuilla “inverse” structures are not limited to kinship and other relations among humans, although they are not as freely used as in Hopi. They can refer to relations between a human possessor and body parts or, in certain cases, artifacts. Notice that in many languages these last two possessed types are grouped with kin terms as items inalienably or inherently possessed.

Cahuilla has three sets of pronominal prefixes. Seiler glosses these as “P1,” “P2,” and “Object.” In non-“inverse” constructions they function as follows:

- P1 = Subject of verbs and nominal possessor
- P2 = Subject of predicate nouns
- Object = Object of verbs

However, in the “inverse” or “establishing” construction, “P2” refers to what we have called the relatum and “Object” coreferences the referent. The following examples illustrate “direct” (33) and “inverse” (34) predication:

- (33) *?et-ne-nési*  
 2sgP2-1sgP1-NIECE  
 ‘Thou art my niece’

- (34) *?e-hen-nési-k(a)(t)*  
 2sgO-1sgP2-NIECE-OrRel  
 ‘I am one who is related to you, the niece’ or  
 ‘I am your aunt’

An important difference between the above two constructions is the fact that in “inverse” expressions the noun stem (relator) is followed by the suffix

<sup>24</sup> Data from Cahuilla, and detailed discussion of possession in general, are found in the items by Seiler cited in the bibliography. In the examples that follow we retain Seiler’s translations.

<sup>25</sup> In our discussion of Cahuilla we distinguish Seiler’s terminology from our own by maintaining his terms in quotation marks.

*-k(a)(t)*. This suffix occurs both in nominalized verbs, where it signifies an "inceptive" action, and in "inverse" constructions, where it functions as an "ordered relation" suffix. Seiler interprets Cahuilla "inverse" expressions as nominal, basing his argument on, among other factors, the use of "P2" prefixes and of plural markers restricted to nouns. However, it appears to us that the kinship terms in these expressions are first used verbally, allowing the prefixation of an "Object" marker. They are then nominalized through the suffixation of *-k(a)(t)*, consequently allowing the use of the "P2" prefixes, which are otherwise associated only with nominal predicates. That is, unlike the other languages we have examined, the Cahuilla T-V predications are overt nominalizations. Two-place relator predicates in Cahuilla, then, occur with either "P2+P1" prefixes (unmarked and "direct") or "O+P2" prefixes (marked and "inverse") but not with a fully verbal "O+P1" prefix schema.

Significantly, Seiler points out the pragmatic concomitants to each of the two types of predication. "Direct" expressions are employed when the possessive relation is inherent, while "inverse" expressions are used when the relationship is not taken for granted but instead needs to be specifically established. For Seiler, the degree of inherentness in a relation is not a simple reflection of the nature of the relation being commented upon but is closely related to the relative position of "possessor" (relatum) and "possessum" (referent) with respect to speaker/EGO.

According to Seiler, then, the utilization of "direct" vs. "inverse" predication depends, at least in part, upon a lexico-semantic naturalness hierarchy that distinguishes those entities most likely to function as relatum (those closest to EGO) and those most likely to function as referent (those furthest from EGO). When the relatum outranks the referent on the scale  $1 > 2 > 3$ , the predicate nominal construction is favored, being almost obligatory with a first-person relatum and a third-person referent. On the other hand, when the referent outranks the relatum, the transitive verbal construction is preferred, being obligatory with a first-person referent and a third-person relatum.

Seiler further notes that the motivation for using "inverse" or "direct" expressions in any given combination of relatum and referent often depends on speaker choice in the realm of discourse pragmatics. When both referent and relatum are third person, choice of predicate structure represents speaker's interest in obviation of one or the other argument. A decision to use "inverse" or "establishing" expressions might occur when the topic/subject is deceased and the speaker wishes to avoid mentioning the kinship term which directly relates this person to the relatum.<sup>26</sup> Thus, instead of a "direct" expression

<sup>26</sup> It is as if the avoided kinship term functions as a proper name. Note that in many cultures speakers avoid mentioning the name of a deceased person.

translating as 'She is her aunt', a Cahuilla might use: 'She is related to her, the niece'. Seiler, in general, concentrates more on the ramifications of a lexico-semantic naturalness hierarchy in influencing preference for one or the other type of predication than on discourse pragmatics and specific examples of use. Undoubtedly, the precarious situation of Cahuilla as a spoken tongue, even at the time of Seiler's initial investigation, made a study of the pragmatic aspect of variable expression of two-place predication difficult.

**3.5. A Uto-Aztecan trait.** The foregoing discussion clearly establishes that the two types of two-place relational predication described for Central Guerrero Nahuatl are also present in at least four other Uto-Aztecan languages from three additional branches of the family. The formal and functional characteristics of these constructions vary somewhat from language to language. The P-N structures seem fundamentally nominal in all cases. However, the T-V structures show important variations in the degree to which they correspond to the ideal T-V type presented in table 2. In table 4, we summarize what we consider to be the salient features by which the transitive verbal constructions in the languages treated here differ.

As table 4 indicates, predicate nominal and transitive verbal constructions are not discrete and diametrically opposed categories. These ideal types are simply prototypical centers of fuzzy sets whose basic elements are a series of morphosyntactic properties, some of which are more central and important than others. Thus, any particular expression in a given natural language may manifest some properties associated with predicate nominal constructions and other properties associated with transitive verbal constructions.

Based on the data we have presented in this paper, we offer the following preliminary comments on how individual languages may manifest specific T-V or P-N forms which deviate from the ideal types given in table 2:

- (1) A transitive verbal construction is less verbal if the relatum and referent do not behave like typical transitive subjects and objects, respectively (e.g., in Central Guerrero Nahuatl the referent/object seems to have topic properties more typical of subjects).
- (2) A transitive verbal construction is more verbal when, like canonical verbs, it can be inflected for tense-aspect (e.g., Huichol) and more nominal when tense-aspect inflection follows the patterns observed with predicate nouns (e.g., Central Guerrero Nahuatl).
- (3) In a given language, a relator stem is more verbal if it has a morphological and phonological shape consistent with being a verb and inconsistent with being a noun. It is more nominal if it has a morphological and phonological shape consistent with being a noun and inconsistent with being a verb.

TABLE 4  
SUMMARY OF WAYS IN WHICH TRANSITIVE VERBAL CONSTRUCTIONS  
VARY ACROSS UTO-AZTECAN LANGUAGES

Language	Morphological Expression of Relatum- Referent Relation	Existence of Semantic or Pragmatic Difference between P-N and T-V Expressions	Existence of a Split Paradigm	T-V Expressions Limited to Interpersonal Relations	Basic Nature of Relator	Possessed Marker on Relator	Nature of Tense/ Aspect Inflection
Nahuatl	S-O	No	Yes	No <sup>1</sup>	Nominal	Yes	Copular
Huichol	S-O	Yes	No	Yes	Nominal?	No	Direct
Cora	S-O	Yes	No	Yes	Nominal?	No	Direct
Hopi	S-O	No	No	No	Nominal?	Yes	Direct
Cahuilla	P2-O	Yes	Yes	No <sup>2</sup>	Nominalized	No	?

<sup>1</sup>Can be extended to other relators on the condition that referent continues to be first or second person.

<sup>2</sup>Accepts body parts and some artifacts.

- (4) The transitive verbal-predicate nominal contrast is more salient when morphosyntactic distinctions are accompanied by pragmatic-semantic distinctions, as in Huichol and Cahuilla, and less salient when not so accompanied, as in Hopi and Nahuatl.

In spite of the differences summarized in table 4, the T-V constructions in all the languages we have discussed share two key features: (1) the referent is formally marked like an object and the relatum is marked like a subject; and (2) kinship terms can function both as possessed nouns (in P-N constructions) and as quasi-transitive stems (in T-V constructions). The fact that Central Guerrero Nahuatl, Huichol, Cora, Hopi, and Cahuilla share these features suggests that alternate equational and relational expression of two-place predicates was a Proto-Uto-Aztecan trait which has survived in Central Guerrero Nahuatl but which has been lost in all other known Nahuatl dialects.<sup>27</sup>

**4. Conclusion.** In this paper, we have presented a previously undescribed split possessive paradigm in the Nahuatl of a small number of

<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere (Amith and Smith-Stark, forthcoming) we offer a more theoretical discussion of the pragmatic dimension of the P-N and T-V distinction and how this reflects an underlying tension in possessive relations, which can be naturally given or socially mediated. We discuss split paradigms and show that the nature of the split in Nahuatl has formal parallels with the split paradigms of Cahuilla and Chinook. We suggest that the split paradigm in Central Guerrero Nahuatl is the result of an earlier loss of the semantic and pragmatic distinctions between the P-N and T-V forms still discernible in Huichol and Cahuilla, and that as a result the transitive verbal paradigm has acquired more nominal characteristics (tense/aspect inflection through the copula, suffixation of the nominal possessed marker *-w(a)*, and subjectlike functions associated with the referent/object) than cognate structures in other Uto-Aztecan languages.

towns in the Oapan region of Central Guerrero, Mexico. This paradigm combines the standard Nahuatl possessed predicate noun construction with unexpected forms which we would suggest calling TRANSITIVE NOUNS since they contain subject-object prefix combinations, usually limited to transitive verbs, added to stems which otherwise function as nouns. The fact that both the predicate nominal and the transitive verbal constructions coexist in several other Uto-Aztecan languages suggests that the transitive nouns in the Oapan region, so bizarre when viewed in terms of Nahuatl alone, may in fact be the last vestiges of a widespread Uto-Aztecan phenomenon.<sup>28</sup> The transitive verbal constructions vary considerably from language to lan-

<sup>28</sup> We have examined and rejected two other possible explanations for the transitive verbal pattern observed in Central Guerrero Nahuatl: diffusion and local innovation.

The diffusion hypothesis rests on the possibility that Oapan area Nahuatl was influenced by contact with a language using the transitive verbal pattern. Cristina Monzón has brought to our attention data which indicate that sixteenth-century Tarascan, a language which may well have been in contact with Central Guerrero Nahuatl, had a transitive verbal construction for kin relations. Additionally, in Mesoamerica, there are several ergative or active languages that have an apparent transitive verbal pattern, though this turns out to be simply the way the predicate nominal construction looks, given the morphological structure of these languages. The subject of a predicate noun in such languages is marked like the subject of an intransitive or inactive verb, which is the same marking used to signal the patient of a transitive verb. In addition, these languages have possessive pronouns that are formally identical to the pronouns used to cross-reference the agent of a transitive verb. That is, they are consistent with Plank's observation (1979:31, n. 15) that: "In general, there seems to be a tendency to constructionally identify agent/patient and possessor/possession configurations in ergative rather than in accusative systems." As a result, a possessed predicate noun construction, with a possessive pronoun and a subject pronoun, turns out to have exactly the same cross-referencing pronouns as a transitive verb, with the referent corresponding to the patient and the relatum to the agent. Such is the case in various ergative languages of the Mayan family and in Amuzgo, an active language (cf. Smith-Stark and Tapia García 1986). Given these morphological characteristics the parallelism between possessed predicate nouns and transitive verbs is patently well motivated and in no way represents a transitive verbal construction opposed to a predicate nominal construction. However, we reject the diffusion hypothesis for two reasons: (1) the possibility of contact with Tarascan and the relevant facts in Tarascan morphology require further study before anything definite can be said about this language as a possible source (or target) of diffusion; and (2) we have found no evidence of contact between Oapan area Nahuatl and any ergative or active language of the type we have described, and it is unlikely that such contact, if it had existed, would only have affected the possessed predicate noun construction to produce the transitive verbal pattern.

The local innovation hypothesis holds that the transitive verbal pattern in Central Guerrero Nahuatl could simply be a spontaneous, internally motivated innovation not shared by other dialects. However, we have found no clear motivation for such an innovation given the structural characteristics of Nahuatl.

In sum, the difficulty of sustaining either the diffusion or local innovation hypothesis, combined with the Uto-Aztecan comparative evidence we have cited in the preceding section, has led us to reject the first two hypotheses and propose that the Central Guerrero pattern is a retention.

guage, combining different proportions of nominal and verbal properties. Seen from this perspective, Nahuatl transitive nouns are marginal not only in terms of Nahuatl dialectology. They are also marginal as transitive verbal constructions, since they have lost virtually all verbal characteristics, having become incorporated, both functionally and semantically, into a fundamentally nominal paradigm.

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