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Passive Possession in Oceanic

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This paper reviews the notion of passive possession in Oceanic, a phenomenon in which possessors that are acted on by the possessum, or at least have no control over it, are marked distinctively using either direct marking, which is used prototypically to mark inalienability, or an indirect marker used prototypically to mark items intended for consumption. The paper surveys seven Oceanic languages from diverse subgroups and reappraises Lynch's (2001) proposals regarding passive possession. It concludes that contrary to previous investigations, subject matter possessors, possessors that are acted upon, and possessors of nominalised verbs are typically treated differently in Oceanic grammars; that the standard exemplar language Standard Fijian is actually highly atypical; and that true passive possession is unlikely to have been directly possessor-indexed in Proto-Oceanic.[*]

1. Introduction

Oceanic languages typically have two distinct constructions for marking nominals to index their possessor. In the 'direct' construction, possessor-indexing suffixes attach directly to the possessum noun, while in the 'indirect' construction the suffixes attach to one of several possessive classifiers or bases, rather than to the possessum noun itself.

This is often referred to as a distinction between an inalienable construction and an alienable one. However, although those terms do capture the prototypical functions of the constructions, they refer to semantics, not morphology or syntax. Instead, the structural terms 'direct' and 'indirect' will be used here, particularly since they make no presumptions about the semantics encoded by the constructions.

Having said that, the direct construction does typically mark nouns in an inalienable relationship with their possessor, such as body parts and other items in a part-whole relationship and various kin terms.

In most Oceanic languages the indirect construction involves either two bases, distinguishing items intended to be consumed from a general residual category, or a three-way system distinguishing items intended to be eaten, items intended to be drunk, and a general residual category. Of course, languages in some Oceanic subgroupings such as Micronesian and Admiralties have many more classifiers, while some have only one indirect marker.

In addition to the prototypical functions, where direct possession encodes inalienability, and 'consumed' or 'eaten' indirect possession encodes a relation where the possessum is intended to be consumed, nouns that are superficially apparently semantically anomalous

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turn up in these constructions, a fact that has been the subject of some discussion in the literature on Oceanic possession (see Lichtenberk (1985), Lynch (1973, 1996, 2001), Pawley (1973)). It has been observed that this often occurs in phrases expressing a possessive relationship where the possessor does not own the possessum, but instead is affected by it in some way or referred to by it, or where the possessum is a characteristic of the possessor. Lynch (2001) surveys a range of languages and argues that many of these non-prototypical functions represent 'passive possession', following Lynch (1996) and Geraghty's (1983) discussion of the phenomenon in Fijian. Lynch's passive possession is a notion similar to that referred to by Pawley (1973:161–163) and Lichtenberk (1985) as 'subordinate possession'.

Lynch identifies languages where his notion of passive possession is directly marked, and others where it is marked using a 'consumed' base. Lynch (2001:195) defines passive possession as:

(1) a. possession by the logical object of a nominalised verb, for example, 'my being hit';

b. possession of nouns referring to things done to or about the possessor, for example, 'my wound (I received)' or 'her story or song (told or sung about her)';

c. possession of nouns in a relationship that might precipitate suffering on the part of the possessor, for example, enemy; weapon to be used on the possessor;

d. possession of other nouns which can be seen as being 'suffered' by the possessor, for example, parasites, disadvantage, etc.

Lynch concludes that his passive possession is typically marked by direct suffixation, and argues that this can be reconstructed for Proto-Oceanic. He argues that the 'eaten' or 'consumed' base marking of passive possession results from parallel development, influenced by 'suffer' semantics associated with the verb 'eat' in some languages, and a formal similarity between the 'eaten' base and a benefactive preposition (2001:209–212).

However, a pattern emerges from Lynch's examples that is worthy of closer examination. In the various languages he presents data from, nouns that are possessed using an 'eaten' or 'consumed' base refer to entities or items that act on, or are used against, or affect the possessor, typically negatively, such as enemies, and weapons that will be used against the possessor. On the other hand, the 'passively possessed' nouns in Lynch's data that are directly possessed typically refer to pictures, stories, songs, or news that are about the possessor.

This pattern suggests that the two semantic types are treated differently: that entities that act on or affect the possessor are possessed using 'consumed' indirect marking, while items of which the possessor is the subject matter are directly possessed. In effect, this splits his definitional category in (1b).

This prompts a hypothesis in which undergoer possessors are treated differently to subject matter possessors in Oceanic: the former is typically marked in the same way as items intended to be eaten, using a distinct base in an indirect construction, and the latter is typically marked directly in the same way as possessions in an inalienable relation. This hypothesis involves the following redefinition of passive possession:

(2) 'Passive possession' is the distinctive morphosyntactic treatment of the possessor-indexing of nouns referring to items that are in a relationship with their possessor such that they act on or directly affect the possessor, rather than being controlled by that possessor.

Under this definition, items that are about or for the possessor do not represent passive possession, but some other semantic relationship such as characteristic possession.

This paper tests that hypothesis by surveying in more detail five of the languages Lynch identifies as employing direct passive possession. If Lynch's hypothesis is right, these should provide counter-examples to the alternative hypothesis proposed here. They have also been chosen to cover a broad range of Oceanic subgroups. In addition, the survey also looks at Standard Fijian, because that language is usually used as the exemplar of passive possession (see Lynch 2001:97) and because it adds the Central Pacific subgroup to the survey. It also looks at Mussau, because it adds the St. Matthias subgroup. The languages surveyed are:

(3)

Loniu	(Admiralties)
Mussau	(St. Matthias)
Manam	(Western Oceanic, North New Guinea)
Motu	(Western Oceanic, Papuan Tip)
Kokota	(Western Oceanic, Meso-Melanesian)
Gela	(Southeast Solmonic)
Standard Fijian	(Central Pacific)

2. Direct possession of nouns

This section looks at direct possessor-indexing of nouns. It does not examine possessor-indexing of nominalised verbs, which is discussed in section 4.

2.1. Direct possessor-indexing of intimate possessions

In all seven languages surveyed here, the direct possessor-indexing of nouns follows the typical Oceanic pattern, occurring when the possessum noun refers to inalienable items such as body parts and most kin terms. In Standard Fijian, direct marking appears to be restricted to these prototypical relations. But in the other languages, direct possession also encodes relationships described for Gela as 'a particularly close, personal, and perhaps unchangeable relationship between the possessor and the possessed' (Miller 1974:264), a grouping that extends to certain items not normally treated as inalienable crosslinguistically, and for Manam as '"intimate" or "close"' (Lichtenberk 1983:282).

In Gela, Manam, and Motu this includes the kind of items that may be considered intimate possessions, in the sense that they are in close contact with the possessor's body,

or at least play a crucial role in the possessor's domestic and personal life. In Gela 'close possessions' like 'bedding', 'house', 'village', and so on are directly possessed (Miller 1974:265–266).

(4) a. na vale-na na vunaɣi
ART house-3SG.PSSR ART chief

'the headman's house' (Gela: Miller 1974:249)

b. na komu-da ita
ART village-1INCL.PSSR weINCL

'our (inc.) village' (Gela: Miller 1974:249)

c. na gime-da
ART bedding-1INCL.PSSR

'our (inc.) bedding' (Gela: Miller 1974:265)

In Manam and Motu intimate possession is more restricted. It is limited to traditional garments like grass skirts, loincloths, and so on, as in (5) for Manam and (6) for Motu. These are directly possessed when the possessor is actually wearing them. Otherwise they are marked with the general indirect construction.

(5) a. baligo-gu
grass.skirt-1SG.PSSR

'my grass skirt (when I am wearing it)'

b. baligo ne-gu
grass.skirt GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR

'my grass skirt (when I am not wearing it)'
(Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:301, see also p. 282)

(6) a. kekeni rami-na
girl grass.skirt-3SG.PSSR

'the girl's grass skirt'

b. kekeni e-na rami
girl GENPOSS-3SG.PSSR grass.skirt

'the girl's grass skirt'
(Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:30)

In Kokota intimate possession is also limited, extending to include bedding at least.

(7) pagu-gu ara
bed-1SG.PSSR I

'my bed' (Kokota: Palmer n.d.)

In Loniu, the direct possessor-indexing of intimate possessions occurs with a wider range of items than Gela, including houses and land, and various man-made objects. These can be directly possessed, depending on the 'mutability of the relationship between possessor and possessed… One can… buy and sell houses, and so forth… [but] family holdings… are long term… [P]ossessions [such] as land, houses, tools and canoes… seldom leave the family' (Hamel 1994:48). The less mutable relationships are expressed by a direct construction.

(8) a. um^{w}ɛ-w
house-1SG.PSSR

'my house' (family holding)

b. um a yo
house LOC I

'my house' (residence) (Loniu: Hamel 1994:48)

c. kɔhɔna u
land weEXCL.DU

'our land holding'

d. kɔ ɔa u
land LOC weEXCL.DU

'our land' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:49)

e. tap^{w}a-m
basket-2SG.PSSR

'your basket'

f. tɔp a wɔw
basket LOC youSG

'your basket' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:20)

In Mussau, direct possession occurs with 'items which are considered to be intimate possessions like "house" [and] "canoe"' (Ross 2002:156).

(9) a. ale-qi
house-1SG.PSSR

'my house' (Mussau: Ross 2002:157)

b. olima-na ateba namuu-g ateba
canoe-3SG.PSSR SG chief-LINK SG

'the chief's canoe' (Mussau: Ross 2002:157)

Standard Fijian does not mark intimate possessions in a special way, treating them as any other possession and marking them with a general indirect possessor-indexing host. This extends to bedding and clothing, and even traditional garments when worn.

(10) a. (na) no-qu malo
ART GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR loincloth

'my loincloth (whether worn or not)' (Standard Fijian: Geraghty p.c.)

b. (na) no-qu vulāqeti
ART GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR blanket

'my blanket' (Standard Fijian: Geraghty p.c.)

Standard Fijian, therefore, has no formally distinct category of intimate possession.

2.2. Direct possessor-indexing of characteristics

Characteristics of the possessor are also directly marked in Gela, Loniu, Motu, and Kokota, as (11), (12), (13), and (16) show. No data is available for characteristic possession in Mussau.

(11) a. na sule-na na iγa
ART bigness-3SG.PSSR ART fish

'the size of the fish' (Gela: Miller 1974:271)

b. na volapa-na na tiola
ART width-3SG.PSSR ART canoe

'the width of the canoe' (Gela: Miller 1974:271)

c. na hau-na na lutu
ART length-3SG.PSSR ART work

'the length of [time] the work [takes]' (Gela: Miller 1974:271)

(12) a. ɛrɛnɛʔi-m muwan
attitude-2SG.PSSR bad

'your bad attitude' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:137)

b. kɔnɔ
taste/flavour.1SG.PSSR

'my taste/flavour' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:27)

(13) a. goada-na
strong-3SG.PSSR

'his strength' (Motu: Lawes 1896:4)

b. aonega-na
wise-3SG.PSSR

'his wisdom' (Motu: Lawes 1896:4)

In Manam, characteristics are typically expressed as stative verbs. In these cases the possessors of the characteristics are directly indexed because that is the pattern for indexing possessors of nominalised intransitive verbs, rather than because they express characteristics (see section 4.2 below). However a few characteristics are nouns, and these are directly possessor-indexed.

(14) a. ara-gu
name-1SG.PSSR

‘my name (I am known by)’ (Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:282)

b. ara ne-gu
name GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR

‘my name (a possession of mine I can bestow if I choose)’
(Manam: Turner 1986:115)

c. boau-m
smell-2SG.PSSR

‘your smell’ (Manam: Turner 1992:3)

The direct possessor-indexing of characteristics in these languages includes characteristic actions and ways of behaving, as shown here for Gela:

(15) a. na lutu-na na vunaγi
ART work-3SG.PSSR ART chief

‘the headman’s duties’ (Gela: Miller 1974:272)

b. na gehegehe-na
ART action-3SG.PSSR

‘his doings, ways’ (Gela: Miller 1974:272)

The contrast is shown by a comparison of the directly indexed characteristic ways in Kokota in (16a) and the indirectly indexed temporary actions and ways in (16b).

(16) a. puhi-na-na kastom-na ka γai
way-3SG.PSSR-that custom-that LOC weINCL

‘the way of that custom of ours’ (Kokota: Palmer 2009:159)

b. ira no-u puhi aγo
thePL GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR way youSG

‘your way’ (ad hoc rule for game) (Kokota: Palmer 2009:159)

Examples like these don’t conform to the definition of passive possession proposed earlier, because in these kinds of examples the possessum is not acting on or directly affecting the possessor. And examples like (15) and (16) confirm that this is not passive possession, because the possessor has the semantic role of agent in relation to the ways and actions that they possess.

2.3. Direct possessor-indexing for subject matter

Direct possession is also used in all six languages other than Standard Fijian with pictures, stories, songs, letters, books, and so on, as (17) through to (22) show, but only when the possessor is the person or thing the picture or story is about. This contrasts with the general indirect possession of these items by the one who is the 'author, owner, viewer, performer, admirer of, [or] listener to a story, song, picture, etc.' (Lichtenberk 1983:302)

(17) a. na toγale-mu
ART picture-2SG.PSSR
'your picture (of you)'

b. ni-mua na toγale
GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR ART picture
'your picture (in your possession)'
(Gela: Miller 1974:276)

c. na tutugu-gu
ART story-1SG.PSSR
'my story (about me)'

d. ni-gua na tutugu
GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR ART story
'my story (which I wrote)'
(Gela: Crowley 2002:531)

e. na uloulo-na na vunaγi
ART lament-3SG.PSSR ART chief
'the chief's funeral song, made and sung about him' (Gela: Miller 1974:273)

f. na belo-na
ART bell-3SG.PSSR
'its bell' (i.e. 'the bell signifying s.th.') (Gela: Miller 1974:277)

(18) a. anunu-'a-gu
image-PROD-1SG.PSSR
'my picture (of me)'

b. anunu ne-gu
image GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR
'my picture (I own)'
(Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:302)

c. nanarita'a-gu
story-1SG.PSSR
'my story (about me)'

d. nanari ne-gu
story GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR
'my story (I invented, told)'
(Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:303)

(19) a. totoγale-gu ara
picture-1SG.PSSR I
'my picture (depicting me)'

b. no-gu totoγale ara
GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR picture I
'my picture (I own)'
(Kokota: Palmer 2009:157)

c. buka-na nau-ne
book-3SG.PSSR village-this

'a book about this village'

d. no-gu buka ara
GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR book I

'my book' (I own)
(Kokota: Palmer 2009:157)

e. ia **histori-na** **nau-ne**
ART history-3SG.PSSR village-this

'the history of this village'

f. **no-gu** **histori-na**
GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR history-that

'my history' (I have custom rights to)
(Kokota: Palmer 2009:158)

(20) a. Morea sivarai-na
Morea story-3SG.PSSR

'Morea's story' (about Morea)

b. Morea e-na sivarai
Morea GENPOSS-3SG.PSSR story

'Morea's story' (told by Morea)
(Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:30)

(21) a. m^{w}alihi-n
story-3SG.PSSR

'his/her story'

b. m^{w}alih a iy
story LOC s/he

'his/her story' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:29)

(22) a. kiukiu-qi etea
story-1SG.PSSR SG

'my story (about me)'

b. kalu-qi kiukiu etea
GIFT-1SG.PSSR story SG

'the story I tell'
(Mussau: Ross 2002:157–158)

The pattern of direct possessor-indexing nouns to their subject is found throughout Oceanic in a range of subgroups, as Lynch's data shows (a sample is presented here):

(23) a. taŋi-gu
song-1SG.PSSR

'my song (sung about me)'

b. taŋ ro-gu
song GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR

'my song (which I sing)'
(Yapese: Lynch 2001:204)

(24) a. (thau) rauparaupa-ku
(I) picture-1SG.PSSR

'my picture (depicting me)'

b. (thau) ɣe-ku rauparaupa
(I) GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR picture

'my picture (I took)'
(Aroma: Lynch 2001:196–197)

(25) bolu-ŋgu
story-1SG.PSSR

'my story (about me)' (West Ambae, Southern Oceanic: Lynch 2001:202)

(26) a. roŋe-i
news-1SG.PSSR
'news of/about me'

b. ah-i rohŋ
CLF-1SG.PSSR news
'my news (to tell)' (Ponapean: Lynch 2001:203)

3. 'Consumed' possessive marking of nouns

Most Oceanic languages have an indirect possessive construction involving the possessor-indexing of a base that is used with items intended to be consumed, or more specifically eaten. In a scattering of languages across Oceanic, the 'consumed' base also occurs with items that aren't intended to be consumed, but that are in some way seen as acting on or affecting the possessor. This section looks at this phenomenon in relation to nouns. The 'consumed' possessor-indexing of nominalised verbs is discussed in section 4.

The standard exemplar language of this phenomenon is Standard Fijian. In (27) a weapon is possessed using the 'eaten' base when it is not owned by the possessor but is to be used on him or her, and an enemy is possessed using the 'eaten' base, not the general base as might be expected. This conforms to the definition of passive possession suggested earlier.

(27) a. ke-nai wau
EATPOSS-3SG.PSSR club
'his club (he is to be killed with)'

b. no-nai wau
GENPOSS-3SG.PSSR club
'his club (he possesses)'
(Standard Fijian: Schütz 1985:460)

c. ke-mu meca
EATPOSS-2SG.PSSR enemy
'your enemy'

b. no-mu itau
GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR friend
'your friend'
(Standard Fijian: Geraghty 1983:242–250)

However, Standard Fijian goes further. Characteristics are also possessed using the 'eaten' base, as in (28), if they are beyond the control of the possessor, such as size or weight, or if the possessor has no control over the characteristic because the possessor is inanimate.

(28) a. ke-na levu
EATPOSS-3SG.PSSR big
'his/her/its size' (Standard Fijian: Geraghty 1983:249)

b. ke-na yaga
EATPOSS-3SG.PSSR usefulness
'its usefulness'

c. no-na yaga
GENPOSS-3SG.PSSR usefulness
'his/her usefulness'
(Standard Fijian: Schütz 1985:459–460)

In addition, the subject matter of a story, song, etc., is also possessed in this way. This extends to examples such as those in (29), where kava is possessed using the 'eaten' base, not when it is intended to be eaten, but when the possessor is the person in whose honour

it is being drunk; likewise a dance is possessed in this way by the person the dance is about or who it is being held for.

(29) a. ke-na yaqona
EATPOSS-3SG.PSSR kava

'his kava' (drunk in his honour)

b. me-na yaqona
DNKPOSS-3SG.PSSR kava

'his kava' (which he drinks)

c. no-na yaqona
GENPOSS-3SG.PSSR kava

'his kava' (which he owns) (Standard Fijian: Geraghty 1983:248, p.c.)

d. ke-na meke
EATPOSS-3SG.PSSR dance

'his dance (concerning him)'

e. no-na meke
GENPOSS-3SG.PSSR dance

'his dance (which he possesses)'
(Standard Fijian: Schütz 1985:460)

Standard Fijian actually turns out to be atypical in this respect. None of the other languages surveyed here use a 'consumed' base with characteristics or with subject matter, and the same is true of almost all other Oceanic languages. As discussed in section 2, Oceanic languages typically use direct possessor-indexing with these kinds of relationships.

However, the use of a 'consumed' base with entities that act on or affect the possessor, 'passive possession' in the narrower sense proposed here, is found in a significant scattering of languages across Oceanic. In all the languages surveyed here a special base occurs with items related to consumption. In Manam, Kokota, and Loniu this 'consumed' base is entirely confined to these items. In these languages, items that act on or are used on the possessor, such as enemies and weapons, are indirectly possessed using the residual general indirect base. However, in Gela, Motu, and Mussau, a 'consumed' base is used with relations that conform to the definition of passive possession proposed here.

In Gela, for example, Fox defines the base γa- as occurring with things to eat and drink, but also with "certain things which it is felt act on you rather than you on them"(Fox 1941:11). A handful of such nouns occurring with the 'consumed' base are scattered through the Gela literature. The semantics is not entirely clear in all cases, but the pattern does seem to involve items that act on or affect the possessor, such as shields that protect the possessor, enemies, spirits, and so on, as in (30), or entities that made the possessor who they are, such as ancestral spirits, generations, clans, and myths, as in (31).

(30) a. γa-gua na tako
CNSPOSS-1SG.PSSR ART shield

'my shield' (Gela: Fox 1941:11)

b. na γa-miu na kana
ART CNSPOSS-2PL.PSSR ART enemy

'your enemies' (Gela: Ivens 1937:1080)

c. na ɣa-dira na mate
ART CNSPOSS-3PL.PSSR ART death

'their deaths' (Gela: Ivens 1937:1092; Pawley 1973:162)

(31) a. na ɣa-gua na keramo
ART CNSPOSS-1SG.PSSR ART spirit

'my ancestral spirit' (Gela: Crowley 2002:531)

b. na ɣa-gua na tutugu
ART CNSPOSS-1SG.PSSR ART story

'my traditional story…about myself or my lineage, or how I got to be where I am today' (Gela: Crowley 2002:531)

c. ni-gua na tutugu
GENPOSS-1SG.PSSR ART story

'my story (which I wrote)'

d. na tutugu-gu
ART story-1SG.PSSR

'my story (about me)'
(Gela: Crowley 2002:531)

The limited Motu data also shows some evidence of the 'consumed' base occurring with items that are not intended for consumption. In (32a)–(32b), for example, the distinction is between enemies thought of as being in a close personal relationship, with direct marking, and enemies thought of as acting on the possessor, with 'consumed' marking.

(32) a. a-gu inai
CNSPOSS-1SG.PSSR enemy

'my enemy'

b. inai-gu
enemy-1SG.PSSR

'my enemy'
(Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:35)

c. a-na uru
CNSPOSS-3SG.PSSR generation

'his generation'

d. e-na uru
GENPOSS-3SG.PSSR generation

'his generation'
(Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:35)

Unlike the other languages surveyed here, Mussau has a larger set of separate classifiers. Even so, it is the food classifier that is used with items that are the "cause of suffering" (Ross 2002:157).

(33) a. ane-qi ai etea
FOOD-1SG.PSSR wood SG

'the stick that hit me'

b. ai-qi ai
TREE-1SG.PSSR wood

'my (tall) tree'
(Mussau: Ross 2002:157)

A 'consumed' or 'eaten' base is used with items that act on or affect the possessor in a scattering of the languages surveyed here, from widely separate subgroups of Oceanic. Lynch (2001) presents evidence of this function in other scattered languages, as the data in (34) shows.

(34) a. ko-ŋ koi bizin
CNSPOSS-1SG.PSSR enemy PL

'my enemies' (Mangap-Mbula, North New Guinea: Lynch 2001:200)

(35) a. ra-na ram
CNSPOSS-3SG.PSSR club

'its club (to kill it with)' (Tolai, Meso-Melanesian: Lynch 2001:201)

b. nam ra-na kankan
DEM CNSPOSS-3SG.PSSR anger

'his anger (directed at him by others)' (Tolai, Meso-Melanesian: Mosel 1984:38)

(36) o'o 'a-na
spear CNSPOSS-3SG.PSSR

'his spear (intended to kill him)' (Arosi, Southeast Solomonic: Lynch 2001:201)

(37) a. â-m âi
CNSPOSS-2SG.PSSR stick

'your stick (which you are going to be hit with)'
(Paamese, Southern Oceanic: Lynch 1996:98)

b. ipu â-m
loss CNSPOSS-2SG.PSSR

'your loss/disadvantage (in playing a game)'
(Paamese, Southern Oceanic: Lynch 2001:201)

4. Possession of nominalised verbs

4.1. 'Eaten' possession of nominalised verbs in Standard Fijian

In Standard Fijian nominalised verbs are indirectly possessed, and can be marked with the general or 'eaten' possessive base, as shown in (38). The distinction made is between dominant and passive possession. The A argument of a nominalised transitive verb is possessor-indexed using the general base, but the O argument is indexed using the 'eaten' base.

(38) a. no-mu i-vacu
GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-punch
'your punch' (you threw)

b. ke-mu i-vacu
EATPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-punch
'your punch' (you received)
(Standard Fijian: Geraghty 1983:244, 248)

c. no-mu i-caqe
GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-kick
'your kick' (you gave)

d. ke-mu i-caqe
EATPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-kick
'your kick' (you received)
(Standard Fijian: Geraghty 1983:249)

e. no-mu i-roba
GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-slap
'your slap' (you gave)

f. ke-mu i-roba
EATPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-slap
'your slap' (you received)
(Standard Fijian: Geraghty 1983:249)

However, again Standard Fijian goes further than the other languages surveyed. The data in (29) shows that nouns possessed by their subject matter are marked with the 'eaten' base. In fact many semantically relevant nominals in Standard Fijian are actually nominalised verbs, as in (39), and here again the 'eaten' base is used if the possessor is the subject matter of the story or picture, but the general base if the possessor owns the story of picture as a thing.

(39) a. ke-mu i-talanoa
EATPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-narrate
'your story' (about you)

b. no-mu i-talanoa
GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-narrate
'your story' (you tell)
(Standard Fijian: Geraghty 1983:248)

c. ke-mu i-tukutuku
EATPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-report
'your report' (about you)

d. no-mu i-tukutuku
GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-report
'your report' (you made)
(Standard Fijian: Pawley 1973:159, 162)

e. ke-mu i-taba
EATPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-picture
'your photo' (of you)

f. no-mu i-taba
GENPOSS-2SG.PSSR NMLZ-picture
'your photo' (you own)
(Standard Fijian: Geraghty 1983:239–240, 248)

Again Standard Fijian is the standard exemplar, but again its system is atypical. Data from the languages surveyed here suggests that Oceanic languages typically index the possessor of nominalised verbs using a direct construction, and with quite a different argument possessor pattern, as the other languages in this survey show.

4.2. Direct possessor indexing of intransitive verbs

The literature on Mussau does not mention the possession of nominalisations. But in Gela, Manam, Kokota, Motu, and Loniu, nominalised verbs are possessed using the direct construction.

With nominalised intransitive verbs in all these languages the sole core argument is the possessor, regardless of whether it is an unergative or unaccusative subject.

(40) a. na mai-a-na
ART come-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'his coming' (Gela: Fox 1941:7)

b. na mate-a-gu
ART die-NMLZ-1SG.PSSR

'his dying' or 'his being killed' (Gela: Codrington 1885:524)

c. na kutu-a-na
ART fall-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'his fall' (Gela: Fox 1941:7)

(41) a. [na di-gu] = vai
1SG.SBJ.RL bathe-1SG.PSSR = LOC

'while I was bathing' (lit. 'at my bathing') (Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:43)

b. [mahuta-gu] ai
sleep-1SG.PSSR LOC

'while I was sleeping' (lit. 'at my sleeping') (Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:43)

(42) a. puri-ya-m
work-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'your work' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:152)

b. čim-a-m
buy-NMLZ-2SG.PSSR

'your purchase' (lit. 'your buying') (Loniu: Hamel 1994:152; see 1994:265)

c. ilɛ mɛʔis-a-n
3SG.SBJ.go become.cooked-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'its becoming cooked' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:130; see 1994:202)

d. pa-ŋatah-a-n
?-be.hot-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'his/her/its warmth' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:33, see 1994:210)

(43) a. ŋau pura-ŋa-gu
I arrive-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'my arrival' (Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:296)

b. pile-ŋa-di
speak-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'their speaking' (Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:281)

c. be'e moatubu-ŋa-Ø
bag be.heavy-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'the bag's heaviness' (Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:282)

d. udi amari-lo eno-ŋa-Ø
banana sun-LOC remain-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'the banana's remaining in the sun for a long time'
(Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:281)

e. ŋai ebulo-ŋa-Ø
s/he be.angry-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'his/her being angry' (Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:289)

(44) a. n-e-ke zaho-na manei
RL-3S-PFV go-3SG.PSSR s/he

'his leaving' (Kokota: Palmer n.d.)

b. za-zaho-di-re palu mane are
RED-go-3PL.PSSR-those two man those

'the ways of those two men' (Kokota: Palmer n.d.)

c. **boka-gu-na ka kuiti aro-hi**
be.able-1SG.PSSR-that LOC trick those-EMPH

'my ability with those tricks' (Kokota: Palmer n.d.)

d. ia haɣe-na naprai
theSG ascend-3SG.PSSR sun

'the rising of the sun' (Kokota: Palmer n.d.)

It is clear that this does not represent passive possession because unergative S arguments can be indexed in this way and are treated in the same way as unaccusative S arguments. As Lichtenberk points out, in (43a), 'the possessor is the performer of the action and may have a choice in the matter of possession, may be in physical control of the head noun' (1983:296). This is clearly not passive possession.

4.3. Direct possessor indexing of transitive verbs

In Gela, Motu, and Loniu, the possessor of nominalised transitive verbs is the object.

(45) a. na labu-a-gu
ART hit-NMLZ-1SG.PSSR

'my being hit' (Gela: Fox 1941:7)

b. na lavi keha-a-gu
ART take be.separate-NMLZ-1SG.PSSR

'my being taken away' (Gela: Fox 1941:7)

c. bosa-a-gu
speak-NMLZ-1SG.PSSR

'my being spoken of' (Gela: Codrington 1885:524)

d. na va tuɣuru puŋusi-a-na
ART go stand be.against-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'his going and being stood against' (Gela: Codrington 1885:525)

(46) a. i-duru-mu
NMLZ-help-2SG.PSSR

'your helper' (Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:29)

b. i-ubu-dia
NMLZ-feed-3PL.PSSR

'their feeder' (Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:29)

c. i-utu-na
NMLZ-cut-3SG.PSSR

'its cutter' (Motu: Lister-Turner and Clark n.d.:29)

(47) a. puri-ya-n
work-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'its work' (i.e. the work of doing it') (Loniu: Hamel 1994:143)

b. hɛ-ya-n
wash-NMLZ-3SG.PSSR

'the washing of it.' (Loniu: Hamel 1994:69)

In these languages with intransitive verbs the S is possessor, and with transitives it is the O. The possessor is therefore the absolutive argument. And in Loniu at least, a nominalised transitive verb that is directly possessed by its absolutive argument can also be indirectly possessed by its ergative argument, using the general base.

(48) [ta-ya pʷɛlɛyah] a yo
catch-NMLZ parrotfish LOC I

'my [area for] catching parrotfish' (lit. 'parrotfish's catching of mine')
(Loniu: Hamel 1994:79)

However, it is clear that this is not passive possession, because intransitive subject possessors can be agents, as in (40) and (41a), (42)–(44a), and (44b). Direct marking of nominalised verbs in these languages therefore indexes the absolutive argument, regardless of semantic role.

In Manam the situation is different. The indexed possessor of a nominalised transitive verb may be the A or O argument. If only the O is expressed with the nominalised verb, that O is indexed as possessor, as in (49a). However, if both the A and O are expressed, it is the A that is indexed, as in (49b).

(49) a. udi tanom-a-di
banana plant-NMLZ-3PL.PSSR

'the planting of the bananas' (Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:281, 298)

c. 'ai'o udi tanom-a-ŋ
youSG banana plant-NMLZ-2SG.PSSR

'your planting bananas' (Manam: Lichtenberk 1983:281, 298)

This is even more clearly not passive possession than Gela, Motu, and Loniu, because not only can agentive S arguments be directly possessor-indexed, but transitive A arguments can be, and if given the choice, the grammar opts to index the A rather than the O—the opposite of what would be expected if this represented passive possession.

The situation with transitive verbs in Kokota is unclear, so it is not known whether direct possessor-indexing of nominalised verbs targets the absolutive argument as in Gela and Loniu, or any core argument, as in Manam, but again agentive S arguments may be indexed.

In all these languages, and unlike in Standard Fijian, the 'consumed' indirect construction does not occur marking nominalised verbs. Again the Standard Fijian system is atypical. Nominalised verbs in that language seem to have been integrated into the wider system of using the 'eaten' base to mark passive and characteristic possession. The typical Oceanic pattern, on the other hand, appears to involve direct possessor-indexing of nominalised verbs, and this can probably be reconstructed for Proto-Oceanic, perhaps indexing the absolutive argument.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the marking strategies distinguishing various non-prototypical semantic types of possessive relationships found in the present small survey are shown in the following table. Note that in this table a field entry 'unmarked' does not mean that possession of this type of possessum is not marked. Rather it means that this type is treated in the same way as any other possessed item or entity by marking with a general indirect marker, and this type of possession is therefore not formally distinguished in the relevant language.

Marking of non-prototypical possessive semantic relations

	intimate possession	characteristic possession	possession by subject matter	passive possession	possession of nominalised verbs
Standard Fijian	unmarked	'consumed' indirect	'consumed' indirect	'consumed' indirect	general (dominant)/ 'consumed' (subordinate) indirect
Loniu	direct	direct	direct	unmarked	direct (absolutive)
Mussau	direct	?	direct	'consumed' indirect	?
Manam	direct	direct	direct	unmarked	direct (A outranks O)
Motu	direct	direct	direct	'consumed' indirect	direct (absolutive)
Kokota	direct	direct	direct	unmarked	direct
Gela	direct	direct	direct	'consumed' indirect	direct (absolutive)

A number of tentative generalisations on the nature of relevant semantic types of non-prototypical possession in Oceanic can be drawn from the findings in the table:

(50) a. Standard Fijian is atypical in that 1) it does not formally distinguish intimate possession; 2) it treats possession of characteristics and subject matter possessors in the same way as passive possession by marking them with the 'eaten' ('consumed') base; and 3) it treats possessed nominalised verbs in the same way as possessed nouns. The place of Standard Fijian as the starting point in much of the literature on passive/subordinate possession has therefore influenced previous conclusions.

b. Intimate, characteristic and subject matter possession is typically marked by direct possession. These probably do not represent distinct emic categories, but rather the treatment of various kinds of relationships as being in some way akin to inalienable or part-whole relationships, with stories about an individual or an individual's personal characteristics being part of that individual in the same way as his or her spirit, voice, name, and so on.

c. Passive possession, in the sense of possession of an entity or item that acts on, is used on, or affects in some way the possessor, is typically treated in a different way to possession of items of which the possessor is subject matter. This means that true undergoer (patients or theme) possessors and subject matter possessors represent distinct semantic types that happen to be atypically treated alike in Standard Fijian. Lynch's (2001:195) semantic type presented in (1b) conflates the two, reflecting Standard Fijian but not capturing the formal distinction found in other Oceanic languages.

d. The notion of 'subordinate possession' conflates passive, subject matter, and characteristic possession, and is meaningful in languages like Standard Fijian, which treat all three alike. In other languages, such as those surveyed here, no such umbrella category exists.

e. Passive possession is unmarked in some Oceanic languages, and in the languages in which it is marked, it is marked using a 'consumed' or 'eaten' base. There are two implications of this: not all Oceanic languages have a formal category of passive possession, and passive possession is never directly marked.

f. Possession of nominalised verbs is typically treated in a different way to the treatment of nouns. Often it involves direct possession of the nominalisation and often indexes the absolutive argument, but with no reference to semantic role, thus treating unergative and unaccusative S arguments alike.

Lynch's notion of passive possession encompasses three distinct semantic and formal types discussed above: passive possession in the narrower sense proposed here, possession by subject matter, and possession of nominalised verbs. He argues (2001:204–205) that his passive possession is marked directly in some Oceanic languages, and using a 'consumed' or 'eaten' base in others—a conclusion reached by regarding direct marking for subject matter and of nominalised verbs as treatment of the same semantic/formal category as the 'consumed'/'eaten' marking of the narrow notion of passive possession proposed here. He concludes reasonably that only one marking strategy would have existed in Proto-Oceanic,

and argues that it would have been the direct strategy for two reasons: first, in his survey the direct strategy is represented in every first and second order subgroup of Oceanic while the 'consumed'/'eaten' strategy is not; and second, a diachronic shift from direct marking to indirect marking in languages or groups employing the indirect construction is more plausible than a shift from indirect marking to direct marking in those languages and groups with direct marking, conforming to a trend in Oceanic.

The findings presented in the table and the resulting conclusions present a different picture. Possession by subject matter, along with possession of characteristics and intimate possession is likely to have been directly marked in Proto-Oceanic, assuming the findings of the survey presented here are representative. Possession of nominalised verbs is also likely to have been directly marked, perhaps indexing the absolutive argument, although that is less firmly supported by the present findings. Passive possession in the narrower sense employed here is not distinguished in some Oceanic languages, and is marked with a 'consumed' or 'eaten' base in others. These findings only support a reconstruction in which one of those two situations pertained in Proto-Oceanic. If we claim that Proto-Oceanic had no formally distinguished category of passive possession, it would be necessary to argue that the formal distinguishing of passive possession itself arose independently as a parallel development in a disparate range of geographically and genetically separate Oceanic languages. Given the cross-linguistic typological rarity of a category of passive possession, and given that it is treated in the same unusual way across Oceanic, sharing its marking with items intended to be eating, this seems unlikely. The alternative—that passive possession was formally distinguished in Proto-Oceanic and was marked in the same way as the possession of items intended for eating, but that this unusual phenomenon was lost in a range of Oceanic languages—seems more plausible. It is therefore likely that 'eaten' marked passive possession occurred in Proto-Oceanic.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations conform to the Leipzig Glossing Rules (www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/LGR08_09_12.pdf) with the exception of the following:

CNSPOSS	'consumed' indirect possession	LINK	link
DNKPOSS	'drunk' indirect possession	PROD	product
EATPOSS	'eaten' indirect possession	PSSR	possessor
EMPH	emphatic	RED	reduplication
GENPOSS	general indirect possession	RL	realis

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