

Possessing Malakula: Developments from an Oceanic Inheritance

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Abstract: The Oceanic languages of Melanesia and Micronesia are well-known for the complexity of their possession constructions. Looking at new data from the island of Malakula, Vanuatu, this paper explores the variation in possession in a set of closely related languages and presents their commonalities derived through their shared ancestries as well as exploring the range of innovations that these languages have developed from that inheritance. While the distinction between direct and indirect or inalienable possession holds for these languages, a proportion of the languages have reduced the number of expected possession classifiers for indirect possession to one. At the same time a new form of prepositional possession marking has emerged out of the classifier system to make among other meanings, part-whole, purposive and locational constructions.

Key words: Possession, direct, indirect, classifier, part-whole

1. Introduction

At the heart of this paper is a survey of a range of constructions that seem to centre around notions of possession in the Oceanic language of Aulua¹, spoken in coastal southeastern Malakula, Vanuatu. These constructions include the well-known distinction between direct and indirect possession. Moreover, constructions related to direct possession seem to indicate part-whole constructs, marking of purpose and location of nouns. More broadly the paper also addresses this range of constructions in Melanesian languages of the Oceanic subgroup with particular reference to other languages of Malakula and the North and Central Vanuatu subgroup. In doing so, I shall argue that Aulua has retained a relatively conservative method of marking possession where other nearby and closely related languages have maintained the indirect/direct possession distinction but have reduced the functional load of the possessive classifiers. Where Aulua has innovated is in an extension of part-whole syntax that allows for two different types of compounds and a way of marking an anaphoric whole.

The structure of this paper is as follows: firstly a brief account of the Aulua language and its relation to languages of the island of Malakula and those on nearby islands which

constitute the North and Central subgroup of Malakula. This survey is followed by an account of typical or expected patterns in Oceanic Melanesian languages with respect to the two major patterns of possession marking. We then inspect the Aulua language against the expectations of Oceanic patterning and compare to a set of recently documented languages spoken mainly to the north. We then come to a pattern that has emerged out of the Oceanic inheritance with the use of a preposition to mark particular kinds of possessive-like relationships. This pattern seems to appear in the languages of the north and centre, whereas Aulua in the southeast has innovated in another direction. It may be that Aulua's relative geographic isolation from these other languages might be the reason for this difference.

1.1 Introducing the Aulua language

Known only as *Surua Tahadil*, 'our language' to its speakers, Aulua is the language of a community of approximately five hundred centred on three main villages. As a village vernacular, the language competes in many formal domains of language use with Bislama, the national creole of Vanuatu, used with strangers, newcomers and in the Presbyterian church service. The languages of education as mandated by the Republic of Vanuatu are French and English, the tongues of the former co-rulers of the Condominium of the New Hebrides as Vanuatu was known prior to independence in 1980.

The island of Malakula is home to at least twenty six languages all belong to the North and Central Vanuatu (NCV) subgroup of the Oceanic group according to such sources as the Ethnologue (Lewis 2009). However remnants of languages spoken in independent communities in the rugged geography of the mountainous interior are being uncovered in non-ancestral areas including coastal villages in other language locales as the result of internal migration suggesting a larger number than previously expected. Clark (1985) suggests a number of local language groups internal to NCV cover the island in his work on this, the major linkage covering the islands. In addressing the issue of subdivisions on Malakula alone, Lynch (2006) suggests



Figure 1 Malakula, showing languages of this study Those in *italics* are of lesser importance.

a Proto Malakula originally spoken in the north of the island splitting into western and east coast community from which a northern and eastern group diverged. The last development was the split between southeastern and northeastern. Interestingly, with respect to the position of Aulua, Lynch (Lynch 2006: 19) is unclear as to whether it is a northeastern or southeastern language. The map below gives a fairly schematic picture of the locations of the languages discussed in this paper. What is not presented on the map is the large river Pangkumu that still remains a barrier to movement along the coast. By and large it separates the Aulua speaking area from the Unua locale. It may be acting as something of an isogloss. They same maybe said with respect to the geography to the south of Aulua. The large bay, Port Sandwich is surrounded by swampy land which is difficult to traverse. To this day, travellers prefer to abandon the trucks that run along the coast and take to the sea to get Lamap at the southeastern tip of the island.

The languages apart from Aulua surveyed here are primarily those documented recently by New Zealand linguists working on the Endangered Languages of Malakula project, or students of Terry Crowley, who championed field linguistics in Melanesia in New Zealand academic institutions. These include, Nese, Avava, Tape, Naman, and Unua, and as where relevant reference will also be made to Neve’ei, Tirax, V’ënen Taut and Uripiv. Note that the geographic isolation referred to above may be reflected in the separate category for Aulua in Clark (1985) and Lynch’s (2006) account of the relationships among these languages.

Table 1: Various subgroupings of languages in this study

	Tryon (1976)	Clark (1985) group	Lynch (2006)
Uripiv	Coastal	8	Northeastern
Tirax	Coastal	9	Northeastern
V’ënen Taut,	Central	10	Western Core
Tape	Central	10	Western Core
Neve’ei	Central	11	Western peripheral
Naman	Central	11	Western Core
Avava	Central	12	Northeastern/western
Unua	Coastal	13	Northeastern
Aulua	Coastal	14	Eastern north?south?
Port Sandwich	Coastal	16	Southeastern

2. Possession constructions in Non-Polynesian Oceanic

Broadly speaking, the languages of two of the three regions of the Oceanic Pacific share a system of possession marking. Polynesian has developed along an entirely different pathway. The widely discussed semantic and syntactic system of marking possession as found in many of the Melanesian and Micronesian languages of Oceanic is alive and well in Aulua. That is, the distinction made between what is often called inalienable and alienable possession exists in this language. Typically, in these languages inalienability is associated with direct suffixation strategies; the possessed noun hosting a suffix indexing the possessor. The same suffixes are deployed in the indirect construction used to denote alienability. A classifier of some type is introduced to host it. The fact that a suffix is hosted elsewhere and not on the possessed noun gave rise to the expression, ‘indirect possession’. In the following subsections exploring these structures, illustrations from the North and Central Vanuatu linkage, are provided, before narrowing down on Aulua and Malakula variants of them.

2.1 Indirect possession

Alienability is understood as a type of possession relationship which is controllable by the possessor such that the possessor may terminate the possession relationship. The classic structure for alienable possession in is one of the most well explored areas of the syntax of the non-Polynesian sub-branches of Oceanic (Lichtenberk 1983, 1985, 2009; Lynch 1973, Palmer and Brown 2007, Song 1997, Pearce, 2010). We should expect to find the same or similar series of possessive suffixes as displayed in direct possession marking, this time affixed to a third element, most frequently called a classifier. Apart from hosting the possessor suffix a usual function of the classifier is to index some semantic quality of the possessed item. This particular structure has been argued to have its roots in Proto Oceanic. In sum, the typical classifier in a Melanesian possession construction has a number of functions. By its very presence it encodes alienability. Further, it gives some semantic property of the possessed item and lastly, it hosts a suffix encoding agreement features of a possessor. Abma, a language of Pentecost Island visible on the eastern horizon from most of eastern Malakula, is used here to demonstrate possession.

Abma

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------|---------|------|-----------------------|
| (1) | ka-n | lok | bet | ‘my taro pudding’ |
| | CLF.ED-3SG | pudding | taro | (Schneider 2007: 227) |

- (2) ka-k kanleutan ‘my taro pudding’
 CLF.ED-3SG food (Schneider 2007: 229)

These two examples show the contrast between a first and third singular possessor attaching to the class classifier. Below, however, a different noun requires a different classifier to host the suffix:

- (3) no-k vihni-an ‘my thoughts’
 CLF.GEN-1SG think-NMZ (Schneider 2008: 155)

Here the classifier has the shape, *no-*, suggesting a different semantic feature of the noun *vihnian* is being highlighted. In Abma, *ka-* identifies the possessed noun as in a state ready for consumption hence this classifier would be under normal circumstances incompatible with ‘thoughts’.

Cross-linguistically, where the possessor is a nominal a number of variations on the marking of the possessor on the classifier are deployed. Some languages allow the classifier to act as a free morpheme, while others attach the third person suffix to the classifier. This last strategy is found in Abma as demonstrated in (4) below.

- (4) Ko-n-ba gan te-an, igo bila-n Butsungos
 2SG-IRR-NEGL eat PART-PRHB because CLF.RESOURCE-3SG.POSS Butsungos
 'Don't you eat (it), because it belongs to Butsungos.'
 (Schneider 2008: 163).

In the Abma sentence (4) the elided noun is presumably edible; however in the second reference to it, the possessed is classified as a (valued) resource. Pragmatically, this choice of the resource classifier over the edible classifier, *ka-* encodes the reason for the prohibition – it is not that the item is inedible, but that it is valued by its owner. The choice shows us that speakers elects an appropriate possession classifier not on an abstract conceptual basis with a notion such as [+/- edible] stored with each noun in the mental lexicon, but instead they must choose a classifier on the basis of the state of the real world item in question. A fruit on the tree or an animal still living is most likely to be possessed via the general possession classifier rather than the edible classifier as neither is in a state to be eaten. Once the pig is killed and prepared to be cooked, or the fruit has been harvested from the tree then and only then will the edible classifier be chosen.

2.2 Direct possession

For inalienable nouns, those we might consider uncontrollable and passive possessions, non-Polynesian Oceanic languages general deploy suffixes indexing possessors directly attached to the possessed noun. Using Tamabo the language of Malo, just to the north of Malakula, we can see how the suffixation patterns work:

- Tamabo
- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>(5) tamanatu-ku
 husband-POSS.1SG
 ‘my husband’</p> | <p>(6) bau-m
 knee-POSS.2SG
 ‘your knee’</p> |
| <p>(7) leo-na
 voice-POSS.3SG
 ‘his voice’</p> | <p>(8) walata-m
 floor.mat-POSS.2SG
 ‘your mat (for sleeping)’</p> |
- (Jauncey 2002: 615)

In the case of nominal possessors, again there is a range of strategies. In languages such as Tamabo the construction is sensitive to the type of noun.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(9) naho-ni voi
 Face-LINK mum
 ‘mum’s face’</p> | <p>(10) vuti-ni Abae
 hill- LINK Ambae
 hills of Ambae</p> |
| <p>(11) tamanatu-i vavine
 husband-LINK woman</p> | <p>(12) hisa-i vuria
 name-LINK dog</p> |
- (Jauncey 2002: 615)

As presented above, proper names and address terms appear with what Jauncey calls the link morpheme *-ni*, while common noun possessors are indexed by *-i* (Jauncey, 2002: 615). In other languages the possessed may remain unaffixed or accept a default construct state affix usually of the shape *-n* when a possessor NP is present. The function of the construct state affix is not to show agreement, but acts as a dummy affix for those languages where the inalienable noun is obligatorily bound. The deployment of direct possession for body parts and kin terms in the Tamabo examples is no surprise as we should consider these the quintessential inalienably possessed elements. Lichtenberk (2009: 264-268) lists common classes of nouns that might be possessed this way, though it might be best read as implying

some rather than all members of these classes will be inalienable.

- A. Parts of wholes, including body parts
- B. Body products
- C. Entities on the surface or touching the skin
- D. Mental organs, states, products of cognitive processes
- E. Attributes of shape and size
- F. Spatial and temporal relations
- G. Kin and sociocultural relations
- H. Patient or stimulus, especially of emotion
- I. Emphatic pronominal forms

The patterns of possession in the Aulua language will be presented in the next section which shall be inspected with respect to the patterns in syntax and semantic of Non-Polynesian as outlined above:

3. Aulua Possession

Indeed Aulua presents the common patterns of Oceanic possessive marking. It maintains the distinction between direct and indirect possession and aligns each predictably with respect to alienability. However, Aulua does have some elements in its array of possession strategies which present interesting variations on the Oceanic theme and as we shall see has innovated in this area of the grammar in ways both similar and different to other languages of the island. We shall begin with identifying the conservative nature of the basic possession structures with respect to the syntax and semantics.

3.1 Inalienable possession

Direct possession in Aulua is used for body parts (Lichtenberk's A), some body products (B) things that touch the skin (C) and kin (G) primarily. As to the morphological marking of the possessor, there is a full set of suffixes which uniquely identify all person and numbers of the possessor, set out in the table with selected examples below, the suffixes show minor allomorphy.

Table 2: Direct possession for three roots, ‘hand’, ‘clothes’ and ‘father’

	var- ‘hand’ (A)	mol- ‘clothes’ (C)	teme- ‘father’ (G)
1sg	var-iq	mol-iq	teme-q
2sg	var-im	mol-im	teme-m
3sg	var-na	mol-na	teme-n
1 dl incl	var-dara	mol-dara	teme-dara
1 dl excl	var-marua	mol-marua	teme-marua
2 dl	var-murua	mol-murua	teme-murua
3 dl	var-rua	mol-rua	teme-rua
1pl incl	var-dil	mol-dil	teme-dil
1pl excl	var-midil	mol-midil	teme-midil
2pl	var-mudul	molmudul	teme-mudul
3pl	var-er(a)	mol-her(a)	teme-r(a)

- (13) tabaloh ho i-bten-ahan-a o ni-nroge **nrab-iq** i-se-bu
 woman TOP 3SG-REAL.say-APPL-3sg oh 1sg-REAL.feel skin-POSS.1sg 3sg-NEG-REAL.good
 ‘The woman said “Oh I feel it on my skin that it is not good.”’
- (14) avahal **anitu-m** ara-tu re **qeli-m** be se-nrose ve-lis-a
 today child-POSS.2sg 3PL-IRR.stand in side-POSS.2sg DIS NEG-can IMM-see-3SG
 be ba-vohol aeq u-mes.
 DIS times-IRR.one you 2sg-die
 ‘Now your children will grow up by your side, but you will not see it because you will die.’
- (15) tamari ho i-qul ana-me-lis **gud-na** her ana-bten sare-a
 child TOP 3sg.return SS-IMM-see family-POSS.3SG PL SS-REAL.say to-3SG
 tabaloh ho
 woman TOP
 ‘The young man returned and saw his family and talked to them about the woman.’
- (16) ni-risvar-ahana met-ah-ve bohoh **nahs-en** a Lavequlqul
 1sg-IRR.talk-APPL-3SG eye-PRT-water REAL.one name-POSS.3sg PA Lavequlqul
 ‘I will talk about a spring, its name is Lavequlqul.’

- (17) **anet-rua** i-bi net-uh tetu
 child-POSS.3DL 3SG-REAL.be child-PRT male
 ‘The child of the two of them was male.’
- (18) amidil *mangki* mel-se-dobo-beloqot bav **bahvs-emidil**
 we.INCL.PL monkey 1pl.INCL.NEG-INCH-walk.about with guts- POSS.1INCL.PL
 ‘We monkeys walk around with our guts inside us.’
- (19) *ale* nemen butea ara.qul.qul buhu **tivs-er**
 DIS bird all 3PL-return.RED towards lace-POSS.3PL
 ‘All the birds returned to their homes.’

On the surface it appears that the minor allomorphy in the singular is condition by the phonological shape of the stem. It appears that vowel harmony is responsible for the forms with ‘father’ where the vowel of the stem echoes that in the third singular affix. Similar forms with the front mid-high vowel *lemeq*, *lemem*, *lemen* – ‘*tongue-1sg/2sg/3sg*’. A few stems with a mid-high back rounded vowel also show a deviation in the possessive morpheme, *hono* ‘his/her face’, *asono* ‘his/her spouse’ for example. However this is not carried through in the non-third singulars *honiq*, *honim* ‘*face-1sg/2sg*’. Further evidence presented in the section on the non-possessed state below demonstrates that rather than a vowel harmony solution, there appears to be a distinction made via the final segment of the stem. That is, consonant final stems, take what might be called the ‘a’ series, and have the 3rd singular form of the suffix as *-na*, exemplified by *var-na*, ‘his/her hand’. The 3rd singular suffix for vowel-final stems is simply, *-n*.

Direct possession in Aulua is not sensitive to the type of nominal acting as the possessor. When a proper noun is present the third person affix is attached. Because the suffix shows agreement it cannot be considered a linking morpheme as described for Tamabo above. However because number agreement is optional, particularly with non-human nouns, often the singular form is used in pragmatically plural contexts.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (20) bahvs-en manggki
guts-POSS.3sg monkey
‘monkey guts’ | (21) bat-era asmaq her
head-3pl man PL
‘the men’s heads’ |
|--|---|

- | | |
|---|---|
| (22) nahs-en a Lerov
name-POSS.3sg PA Lerov
'by the name of Lerov' | (23) tem-en a Lewi
father-POSS.3sg PA Lewi
'Lewi's father' |
|---|---|

There is a method in Aulua for avoiding mention of a possessor with nouns belonging to the inalienable class. While rare in spoken data it is possible to elicit forms where the possessor is not known or recoverable from morphemic encoding. Rather a suffix, with two allomorphs, *-da* for nouns ending in a consonant and *-d* for those ending in a vowel.

Aulua

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (24) nuns-da 'a/the nose' | (25) harsed 'a/the face' |
| (26) var-da 'a/the hand' | (27) meted 'a/the eye' |
| (28) hon-da 'a/the face' | (29) nilvad 'a/the tooth' |

There are some anomalies however in that some nouns that can undergo direct possession do not accept a non-possessed suffix. 'Blood' can be possessed, for example, 'my blood', *nrieq*. Without a possessor the form is usually expressed as *nenre*. The initial syllable the accreted article from Proto NCV, *na (cf Crowley 1985, Pearce 2007). Now satisfied that Aulua behaves as we might expect for a Melanesian Oceanic language, we now turn to its neighbours.

3.2 Direct possession on Malakula

While the distinction between alienable and inalienable or direct and indirect possession is preserved in the languages surveyed here, the division of nouns into alienable and inalienable classes is overlapping but not identical. This is an unremarkable fact of Oceanic Melanesian languages where there is wide variation in the assigning of nouns to these classes. Further, the mechanics of the structure are not identical. This is to be expected in Oceanic Melanesia. Though Tirax lacks the dual number category, Aulua and Tirax are rather unusual on Malakula in having a full paradigm of suffixes as this appears to be the norm elsewhere: Araki (François 2002: 46) Raga (Crowley 2002a: 628) Tamabo (Jauncey 2002: 610). In fact, a full paradigm can be traced back to Proto Oceanic (Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002: 67). Nese and V'enen Taut (Fox 1979) on the other hand have not one but two series of inalienable suffixes. Crowley argues for distinguishing close and distant indirect possession. Adapting the original I have collapsed into one table, Crowley presents the following paradigms. Note that the blanks in the distant paradigm represent not certified

absences but probable gaps in the data (Crowley 2006a: 57).

Table 3: Two series of direct possession suffixes in Nese

	close inalienable possession				distant inalienable possession			
	sg	dual	trial	plural	sg	dual	trial	plural
1 incl		-rrerru	rretil	-rr	-ak			-arr
1 excl	-k	-nanrru	nantil	-nan				
2sg	-m(e)	-m'irru	m'itil	-m'i	-am			
3sg	-n	rrerru	rretil	-rr	-m			

Crowley (2006a: 55) makes a somewhat fuzzy semantic distinction between these two types of possession.

A close inalienable relationship involves the possession of items from which one cannot ordinarily be physically removed, and this set prototypically comprises body parts, body products and kin terms. A distant inalienable relationship, on the other hand, is prototypically involved with items that one is intimately associated with but from which one can be physically removed. This includes certain bodily manifestations which are temporary or atypical (e.g. *nukhuskhus*- 'sweat', *lulua*- 'vomit' and *navas*- 'sore') rather than permanent or normal (e.g. *naj*- 'excrement')

I am not convinced entirely, however, of this characterisation since Crowley also suggests that a number of other nouns which are not impermanent body processes are characterised as being possessed with the distant inalienable series. These include the important kin term, 'wife' as well as intimate possessions such as 'basket' 'penis wrapper' and 'sleep mat'. The fact that 'home', 'house' and 'garden' are included might suggest a 'valued possession' reading for this series. Perhaps an overarching analysis for this construction might be to label it 'valued possession'; a concept that often has a classifier in other Melanesian languages. However without further investigations with native speakers, it is impossible to ascertain the exact set of meanings for this paradigm.

Returning to languages with single paradigms for direct possession suffixing material, we will see that there is a rather wide variance in how these work. Tape, for example, has a defective paradigm in that only third person suffixes are available for all numbers, i.e., singular, dual, trial and plural. In the first person only inclusive forms appear in the non-singular, as is the case with non-singular second persons (Crowley 2006c: 135). Most of the other survey languages seem to have suffixes for direct possession only in the singular.

For non-singular forms there are a number of different strategies utilised in the different languages. Avava for example uses the third singular possessor form followed by a cardinal pronoun:

Avava

- | | | | | | |
|------|---|-----------------|------|---|------------|
| (34) | bat-n
head-POSS.3SG.
'our heads'
(Crowley, 2006b, pg.48) | git
1PL.INCL | (35) | onos-n
nose-POSS.3SG
'their noses'
(Crowley, 2006b, pg.47) | ier
3PL |
|------|---|-----------------|------|---|------------|

This arrangement seems to collapse with the notion of the linking morpheme seen in Tamabo, as we can contrast 'his nose' with grandfather's nose.

- | | | | |
|------|-------------------------|---------------------|---|
| (36) | onos-n
nose-POSS.3SG | bbum
grandfather | 'Grandfather's nose'
(Crowley 2006b: 47) |
|------|-------------------------|---------------------|---|

In fact Crowley reports that the suffixing strategy for the first and second singular (but not third) in Avava competes with the pattern for the non-singular pronominal as well as nominal possessors. That is, a noun marked as having a third person possessor/construct state marker can be followed by the first or second independent pronoun. This means that forms such as *mata-ngg* 'my eye' compete with *mata-n na* (Crowley 2006b: 48). The same strategy can be found in Naman. Note the appearance of the possessor suffix *-n* below:

- | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|-------------------|--|------------------|-----------|
| (37) | jëbë-n
grandfather-POSS.3SG
'his grandfather' | jëbë-n
grandfather-POSS.3SG
'our grandfather' | kamem
1PL.EXCL | jëbë-n
grandfather-POSS.3SG
'the women's grandfathers' | nevdoro
woman | air
PL |
|------|---|---|-------------------|--|------------------|-----------|
- (Crowley 2006d: 71).

Pearce (n.d.) in her discussion of Unua possession notes a similar alternation with direct possession for the singular forms. For the non-singular forms no such variation is permissible and the full pronoun follows the possessed noun. However of interest is the fact that if there is a reversal of constituent order with a singular possessor then a construct state suffix looking like a marker of a third person possessor is attached to the possessum.

Unua variants

- | | | | |
|------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| (38) | nati-n | nati xini | xini nati-n |
| | child-POSS.3SG. | child 3SG | 3sg child- POSS.3SG |
| | his/her child | ‘his her child’ | ‘his her child’ |

Based on Pearce (n.d.: 11-12.)

Note that only when the possessor NP precedes the possessed, the suffix is required. She also implies a link suffix, or construct state exists for Unua nouns that belong to the direct possession class when a possessor need only be implied. This is illustrated below:

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----------------|-----------|-----|---------------|---------|-------|------|--|
| (39) | go | rrese-n | i-vena | go | i-kroxni | i-ke | nati | raru | i-gnare |
| | and | mother-POSS.3SG | 3SG -come | and | 3SG -look.for | 3SG-see | child | 3DL | 3SG -other |
| | | | | | | | | | ‘and the mother came and looked for their other child’ |

Pearce (n.d.: 11-12.)

This implicit possessor construction suggests a parallel to the Aulua –d/-da suffix. However as we saw above this form in Unua looks more like a construct state affix. Aulua’s system of affixation to create a form with an unspecified possessor is unusual on Malakula. Other languages either allow the noun to appear free or have pairs of forms to create possessed and ‘non-possessed forms’. Nese on the other hand has a range of strategies:

Nese

identical

- | | | | |
|------|-------------|------------|---------|
| (30) | nukhuskhus- | nukhuskhus | ‘sweat’ |
| (31) | lulu- | lulu | ‘vomit’ |

different stem

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|----------|
| (32) | nem- | naine | ‘house’ |
| (33) | nout- | naute | ‘garden’ |

(Crowley 2006a: 63)

Given that languages can use this juxtaposition strategy and that the Aulua direct possession paradigm contains some forms which look similar to non-singular pronouns we must here make sure that this is the case. Repeated below are the non-singular possessor suffixes and the concomitant pronouns:

Table 4: possessor suffixes and pronouns in Aulua

	possessor	pronoun
1sg	-(V)q	anu
2sg	-(V)m	aoq
3sg	-n(a)	hen
1 inclusive dual	-dara	adara
1 exclusive dual	-marua	amara
2 dual	-murua	amaru
3 dual	-rua	haro
1 inclusive plural	-dil	adil
1 exclusive plural	-midil	amidil
2 plural	-mudul	amudul
3 plural	-er(a)	her

Apart from the distinctive forms for the third dual pair, there is no denying similarity here, but some important differences must be noted. The third person forms in Aulua (including singular *hen*) have retained an initial velar fricative. There is evidence that all the non-singular forms once had a velar initial as can be seen in the indirect possession. If this is the case then there is certain an argument for the erosion of full pronouns to possessors in many of the forms. If this is the case, then we can claim that the development of a full paradigm of possessor markers was an independent development for Aulua, filling the gaps of the non-singular paradigm.

Returning to those languages which have an incomplete paradigm, juxtaposition of possessor and possessed is not the only way of dealing with non-singular possessors in these languages. Port Sandwich, the south easternmost language of Malakula, has singular suffixes; non singular pronouns must be inserted not directly after the possessed now but after an intermediary form:

Port Sandwich

- (40) Mara-ngg pene-n sa xaü
 eye-POSS.1SG sister-3SG PREP? 2DL
 ‘my eye’ ‘the two of you’s sister’
 (Crowley 2002b: 654)

The intrusion of this form between possessor and possessed is an interesting development in the marking of direct possession as it seems to be a move towards a remodelling of inalienable possession on the norms of alienable possession, to which we shall soon return. Before doing so, let us inspect the range of semantic fields that are possessed via direct possession.

Table 5: Classes of nouns which can participate in direct possession structure

	Aulua	Avava	Naman	Nese	Neve'ei	Tape	Tirax	Unua
kin	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
bodypart	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
bodyproduct	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
intimate	x		x	x		x		x
animal				x				
plant				x				
domestic				x				
cultural		x		x			x	
part-whole		x	x			x		
location		x	x	x				

Note that an 'x' in the plant and animal categories implies that an expression such as 'my X' where X belongs to that class can be encoded via direct possession. Notably, most languages seem to allow part-whole constructions for plants and animals parallel to the human body part category. It should also be acknowledged that some grammars were more exhaustive in their approach to listing categories available for inalienable possession.

As can be seen above, Nese exhibits the most complex array of categories for direct possession. The following quotation from Crowley (2006a: 54) presents three categories which are unusual in that they are directly possessed and as the other Malakula languages of the study attest below, they are certainly alienable items in the cultures to the south of Nese.

- domestic animals with which are particularly important in the cultural context, i.e. *nubkhus*- 'pig', in contrast to alienably possessed *neviri* 'dog' and *nato* 'chicken'
- wild animals which constitute a core part of the traditional diet, i.e. *nanaj*- 'fish', in contrast to alienably possessed *nanankho* 'bird', the

- meat of which is eaten only occasionally as opportunities arise
- items relating to land ownership and associated with an individual's belonging to a particular place, i.e. *nev'enu-* 'home', *nekhm'el-* 'meeting house', *nema-* 'house', *nouta-* 'garden', *nerra-* 'fence around garden'

In Aulua, not a single example given here for Nese can be possessed in the direct construction, despite the obvious importance elements of place as well as the familiarity with dogs, chickens and fish. The expansion of direct possession in Nese then is twofold. It has developed two types of inalienable possession and has expanded the range of items usually considered inalienable in Oceanic Melanesian languages. Given the wide array of nouns that can undergo direct possession in Nese we might expect there to be a shift away from the deployment of classifiers in alienable possession structures, a question to which we now turn.

3.3 Indirect possession

While Non Polynesian Oceanic languages might have staggering numbers of classifiers (cf Senft 1996) a simpler system with a minimal number of two classifiers can be found in Aulua. The general classifier *tah-* only contrasts with the alimentary classifier *nah-* in this language. Food and drink which are at a state where they are ready to be consumed are possessed with this form which hosts a possessive suffix. The possessed element is usually the left most element in the construction:

- (41) nabog ho i-bies medul-na ana-doh i-me-beloqot
 day COMP 3SG-REAL.bear egg-POSS.3SG SS-REAL.stay 3SG-IMM-walk-about
 ana-qlo-hon vagan **nahen**
 SS-look-APPL food CLF.ED-3SG

'One day she (the hen) bore eggs and then went out to search for her food.'

- (42) u-ven ren tuluta sare telve vagan side **nahadil**
 2SG -IRR.GO in garden for IRR.harvest food some CLF.ED-1 INCL.PL

'Go to the garden to harvest some of our food.'

- (43) u-ven u-lis **nesah bohoh naham** ni-lig ren tabawan
 2SG -IRR.GO 2SG -see thing REAL.one CLF.ED-2SG 1SG-put on sand

'You will go and see something (edible) i put on the sand.'

All non-alimentary material is classified via *ta-*. This means this classifier is the general, default or neutral category.

- (44) bahe i-bte-nahan *Mangki* tar-sarih sahe namal lobon **tahmidil**
 Shark 3sg-REAL.SAY-APPL monkey 1incl.dl-descend for chief big CLF.GEN-1pl.excl
 i-mahta
 3sg-sick

‘Shark said to Monkey “Let’s go down for our chief is sick.’

- (45) e u.qul.qul.garah u-lis nema **tahdara** i-ior.
 hey 2sg-look-return-back 2sg.see house CLF-GEN.1dl.incl 3sg.burn

‘Hey look back, you see our house is burning down!’

- (46) Tom u-toh-nrogo qari her nahal meve va.vohol **tata tahoq**
 Tom 2sg-IRR.stay-quiet flyingfox PL DEM high MULT.IRR-one dad CLF.GEN-2sg
 t-i-vin-i-a

FUT-3sg-IRR.shoot-TR-3sg.O

‘Tom, be quite, there are flying fox up there, I am going to shoot them.’

Note the indirectly possessed *tata* in (46). Kin terms that originated from address terms are not able to be directly possessed. Inspecting the snippets of narrative data above can see that the paradigms of the two classifiers are a little different. Set out below are the two series:

Table 6: The suffixed indirect possession classifiers of Aulua

	general classifier	Alimentary classifier	Pronoun
1sg	tuhunu/g/q	nahaq	anu
2sg	tahoq	naham	aoq
3sg	tahen	nahen	hen
1 inclusive dual	tahdara	nahdara	adara
1 exclusive dual	tahmara	nahmara	amara
2 dual	tahmaru	nahmaru	amaru,
3 dual	taherua/taharo	naherua/naharo	haro
1 inclusive plural	tahadil	nahadil	adil
1 exclusive plural	tahmidil	nahmidil	amidil
2 plural	tahmudul	nahmudul	amudul
3 plural	taher	naher	her

There are a number of different forms produced by different speakers though they do, by and large, resemble the patterns found in the direct possession paradigms. We note, though, the presence of the velar fricative, represented by <h> in the orthography. I argue that the bases for the classifiers were vowel final. The presence of the fricative can be explained in two ways. For the third person series, the affix is identical to the pronouns, *hen, haro, her*. I argue that the presence of the velar in the other persons is most likely due to reflexes of initial consonants in the pronominal paradigm of Proto NCV laid out below.

Table 7: The pronouns of Proto North Central Vanuatu, (Clark 2009: 266)

		singular	plural
1	incl		*qama(mi)
	excl	*nau	kida
2		*iɔo	*qamaya
3		*n(a)ia	n(a)-ira

The languages of Malakula have largely retained a consonant in these positions, usually some kind of velar. It appears that Aulua participated in this island-wide development. At a later stage however, most of the initial segments were lost in Aulua, leaving velar fricatives only on the third person pronouns.

Table 8. Pronominal Paradigms in a few of the selected Malakula languages (IPA)

Tape (Crowley 2006c: 113)					
		singular	dual	trial	plural
1	incl		naakədru	naakədətəl	naakəd
	excl	kənək	kəmemru	kəmemtəl	kəmem
2		naakəm	kəmru	kəmtəl	kəm
3		en	eru	eritəl	er
Nese (Crowley 2006a: 49)					
		singular	dual	trial	plural
1	incl		nekrerru	nekrretil	nekrre
	excl	ɣina	kananrru	kanantil	kanan
2		ɣunoy	kam'iru	kam'itil	kam'i
3		ɣai	kharru	ɣarritil	ɣarr

Avava (Crowley 2006b: 38)					
		singular	dual	trial	plural
1	incl		gitdru	gitntl	git
	excl	na	kopmdreu	kopmtl	kopm
2		oŋ	kamdru	kamtl	kam
3		e	ierdru	iertl	ier
Neve'ei (Musgrave 2007: 29)					
		singular	dual	trial	plural
1	incl		getdru		get
	excl	no	gememru		gemem
2		gu	gemru		gem
3		i	ardru		ar

If we understand that from the third singular down the paradigm, the appropriate pronoun was simply attached to the base, then we can account for the form of the classifiers. The subsequent loss of non-third initial velars forced a reanalysis of the morpheme to *tah-* accounting for the forms of pronominal series in the singular as well.

Leaving behind pronominal possessors, we now see conflicting patterns in indirect constructions with nominals. For some speakers the construction is sensitive to a proper noun/common noun contrast. For them the classifier appears unaffixed before proper nouns, but with a construct state affix *-n* with common nouns. However the variability spreads in both directions with some speakers using the suffixed form before proper names. Others do not attach the construct suffix before common noun possessors:

Aulua

- (47) tata **ta** Tom
 dad CLR.GEN Tom
 ‘Tom’s Dad’

- (48) nema bohoh namiqia **ta** Mark
 house REAL.ONE PROX3 CLF.GEN Mark
 ‘The house over there belonging to Mark’

- (49) *nema ta vavu taherua*
 House CLF.GEN grandmother CLF.GEN-3DL
 ‘The house of their (dual) grandmother’
- (50) *nrivarene bohoh ta-n masarab*
 Talk-NMZ REAL.ONE CLF.GEN-CONST old.man
 ‘an old timer’s story’
- (51) *mudo-nabo ta-n tovar*
 Piece-song CLF.GEN-CONST wave
 ‘a little song about/for the waves’
- (52) *nrivarene ta-n Metahvequlqul*
 talk-NMZ CLF.GEN-CONST name of spring
 ‘The story of Metahvequlqul Spring’
- (53) *nrivarene ta lah-ene*
 talk-NMZ CLF.GEN marry-NMZ
 ‘story about marriage’

Given that the existence of classifiers for alienable possession is well attested in the Central and Northern Vanuatu languages such as Paamese (though the author does not refer to them as such, Crowley, 1982: 114), Raga (Vari-Bogiri 2007) Araki (Francois), it would be the default expectation to find classifiers in other languages of Malakula beyond Aulua. In fact this is the case. Classifiers are reported for V’enen Taut (Fox 1979). Achin has the following set: *sa-* general, *na-*, cooked food, *ma-*, drink and *ra-*, raw food (Capell and Layard 1980: 63 cited by Song 1998: 255). In the focus languages of Malakula, Tirax and Tape have maintained this Oceanic pattern. For the former, Brotchie identifies four, *dre-* alimentary classifier, *hle-* for roads and paths. There are also two general possessor classifiers *na-* “used in general to indicate when the possessor is not human” and *sa-* for human (n.d: 35). (We shall be returning to *na-* in the final section) Likewise, Tape uses classifiers for chewable foods, other food items, drinks and a general possession class, Aligning it, according to Lynch (2006: 27), with V’enen Taut and Uripiv languages.

Tape

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(54) nuo mēno-m
water CLF.DRINK-2SG
'your water (for drinking)'
(Crowley 2006c: 133)</p> | <p>(55) niji jomo tēvēlēkh
sugarcane CLF.CHEW woman
'The woman's sugarcane (for chewing)'
(Crowley 2006c: 134)</p> |
| <p>(56) mētiu de pwērpar
coconut CLF.ED pig
'the pig's coconut (for eating)'
(Crowley 2006c: 134)</p> | <p>(57) nisip ese kēmemru
knife CLF.GEN 2DL.EXCL
'our (dual excl) knife'
(Crowley 2006c: 134)</p> |

Proto Oceanic seems to have deployed a range of possession classifiers, including three general possessors, **ta-*, **sa-*, **na-* as well as a food classifier, **ka-* and a drink classifier, **m^wa-* (Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002:77-79). These classifying languages of Malakula then have innovated in various directions, expanding the categories of food, for example.

Nese has two different morphemes that host suffixes in indirect constructions. Below we can see the same noun possessed by two different forms, *sa-* and *ji-*. We might expect that speakers are selecting different salient features of the dog in these constructions but Crowley (2006a: 51) suggests that they are interchangeable without effecting meaning and do not work as classifiers do in NCV languages.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>(57) nevirī sa-k
dog CLF-POSS.1SG
'my dog'
(Crowley 2006a: 54)</p> | <p>(58) nevirī jin-i lekhtarr merrji
dog CLF-POSS.3SG woman old
'the old woman's dog'
(Crowley 2006a: 53)</p> |
|---|---|

While Nese has two phonologically different but semantically indistinct morphemes for indirect possession, the other languages of this study Naman, Unua, and Avava have retained a single form for this work. Lichtenberk (2009: 115) recommends we still refer to these as classifiers despite the fact they no longer can be used to encode specific semantic features of the possessed noun. This fact is easily demonstrated by the following examples, which in the 'classifying languages' would be candidates for different possessive bases.

Naman

(59) *nowe sa-m*
 water CLF-2sg
 ‘your water (to drink)’

(61) *lamas sa-m*
 garden CLF-2sg
 ‘your garden’

(Crowley 2006d: 75)

Aulua

(60) *nave nah-am*
 water CLF.ED-2sg
 ‘your water (to drink)’

(62) *sikarav tah-oq*
 garden CLF.GEN-2sg
 ‘your garden’

Lichtenberk (2009: 115) argues for the classifier for these forms label for these forms because they are the result of processes of historical change to the classifier system, moreover they continue to create a structure which contrasts with the direct, inalienable possession structure. For many of these languages, those with more typical contrasting classifying systems and those with the single classifier, there is a further contrast that can be made. That is, a related phenomenon appears to be a structure to mark both part-whole relations and purposive structures. In many of these languages, a form, something like *nen*, *nan* or *na* mediates these relationships. Pearce exemplifies the use of this element as below, suggesting a spatial relationship, provenance and or part whole construction meanings for the arrangement *N nV(n) N*:

Unua

location	part-whole	purpose
(63) <i>rivux nen noxobb</i> middle <i>nV(n)</i> fire ‘middle of the fire’ (Pearce n.d.: 17)	(64) <i>xenen nen nani</i> flesh <i>nen</i> coconut ‘coconut flesh’ (Pearce 2010: 144)	(65) <i>nabbu nen nue</i> bamboo <i>nen</i> water ‘bamboo for carrying water’ (Pearce 2010: 144)

4. Parts, wholes, purposes and locations

The semantic functions that the Unua examples demonstrate above warrant a closer cross-linguistic inspection. They appear to range over the three different structures discussed so far, direct possession, indirect possession and this *nV(n)* construction, which Crowley has called prepositional (Crowley 2006d: 75). Taking part-whole relations as our first call, let us examine how these are achieved in the other languages of focus of this study.

Avava	Naman	Tape
(66) atah nan aga	(67) rel nen noag	(68) novo ne pēte
flower <i>nV(n)</i> tree	rail <i>nV(n)</i> ship	seed <i>nV(n)</i> breadfruit
‘the flower of the tree’	‘the rail of the ship’	‘breadfruit seed’
(Crowley 2006b: 53)	(Crowley 2006d: 78)	(Crowley 2006c: 128)

The form in Tape may also take a third singular/construct state suffix when the whole is unexpressed, making constructions such as *tang ne-n*, ‘it’s placenta’ (Crowley 2006c: 129). The fact that it takes a suffix does not make it look any less prepositional. Malakula languages have suffix-hosting prepositions. It does, though, make the construction look more like indirect possession with *ne/ne-n* acting as a classifier. This is the approach taken by Brotchie (n.d.). Her analysis of *na-* clearly presents it as one of the four classifiers in Tirax, where its predominant role is as a marker for non-human possessors. (Lynch, 2006) who remains silent over *na-* in this language, presents Tirax as having only two classifiers. Perhaps his analysis suggests that in the examples with *na(-n)* below we are dealing with a preposition.

Tirax

(69) lēba na nxa	(70) bet na-n
root <i>nV(n)?</i> tree	head <i>nV(n)?-3sg</i>
‘roots of the tree’	‘its (a snake’s) head’
(Brotchie n.d.: 35)	(Brotchie n.d.: 36)

It seems in Tirax and Tape, two languages that have classifiers, there is little to distinguish the prepositional analysis and the classifier analysis. Returning to Aulua, another language with classifiers in indirect possession structures, we can see that a distinctive construction is often used. In Aulua there is no form related to the *nV(n)* preposition/classifier above, rather the noun representing the ‘part’ in a part whole construction is seen with the suffix – *ah*. Most usually the noun is an obligatorily bound stem, though the ‘part’ can come from another word class. Note too the vowel harmony in example (73).

Aulua

(71) ner-ah nahula	(72) nisu-ah namul	(73) bol-oh nevet
leaf-PRT coconut	juice-PRT orange	hole-PRT stone
‘coconut leaf’	‘orange juice’	‘cave’

While the *nV(n)* construction looks prepositional or indirect in flavour in these languages,

Aulua creates part-wholes that look more similar to direct possession strategies. In fact, many of the languages that have this part/whole purposive *nV(n)* also use direct possession for such things. Avava phrase:

Avava

- (74) aruu-n aga
 leaf-poss. 3sg
 ‘leaf of tree’
 (Crowley 2006b: 48)

Similarly in Naman and Neve’ei, Crowley, (2006d: 70) and Musgrave (2007: 71) report on a range of botanical nouns that use the direct possession strategy to create part-whole relations. Returning to the Aulua *-ah* construction for a moment, there are two related phenomena to be touched on. Part-whole compounding can also take place. In this construction the part and whole are tightly bound together. If ‘the whole’ has the initial *nV* syllable representing the accreted article, then it loses it. Pearce (2007: 330) notes a similar pattern of initial *nV* syllable loss in compounding in Unua. Curiously, however, the loss may occur on the first or the second of the two nouns in that language. In Aulua, ‘the part’ obligatorily retains the *nV* syllable:

- | Aulua part-whole | tight part-whole |
|---|--|
| (75) ner-ah nahula
leaf-PRT coconut
‘coconut leaf’ | (76) ner-ah-ula
coconut-PRT-coconut
‘coconut leaf’ |
| (77) van-ah nevus
fruit-PRT banana
‘banana (fruit)’ | (78) van-ah-vus
fruit-PRT-banana
‘banana (fruit)’ |

Unua

- (79) nabet → bet moxman (80) nareb → nue reb
 post post man mud water mud
 ‘centre post’ ‘Pangkumu River’
 Pearce (2007: 330)

In the Aulua part-whole construction, ‘the whole’ can be referred to anaphorically. However parts in such constructions have additional morphology on them. In the following instructive text regarding coconuts we can see how the anaphoric relationship can stretch over the distance of quite some clauses.

Aulua

(81) *nahula i-bro-hon-a u-lig-a re-ten*
 coconut 3SG-grow-APPL-3SG 2sg-put-3SG PREP-ground
 ‘The coconut grows, you put it in the ground.’

(82) *u-qlanqlo-hon-a bene-ven nedem i-bes*
 2SG-care-APPL-3SG REAL.come-IRR.go year 3SG-REAL.four
 ‘You look after it for four years.’

(83) *i-lig van-ah-te*
 3SG-put flower-PRT-AN
 ‘It puts out its flowers.’

(85) *van-ah-te i-doh ben ben ben nivsah-ula*
 flower-PRT-AN 3SG-REAL.stay REAL.go REAL.go REAL.go spathe-PRT-coconut
 ‘It flowers remain a while and then there’s the spathe.’

In this sequence, *-te* refers back to the subject of the entire discourse, *nahula*, ‘coconut’ which is also the first clause of this fragment. As the object of a series of verbs it is referenced via the agreement marker *-a* until the new noun where the ‘anaphoric whole’ suffix appears. ‘Coconut’ also appears in the final sentence in the tightly bound compound. Aulua then has innovated in its own direction with respect to part-wholes in having an affix that can be directly hosted by the part, which does not resemble the third singular/construct state suffix in direct possession constructions. From here, we return to the major functions of the *nVn* preposition.

Purposives

Below are examples of purposive *nV(n)* from the centre of the island. While Crowley clearly analyses *nen* in Tape as bimorphic, this has not necessarily been pursued as an analysis of this phenomenon in Oceanic languages.

(86) Avava apak nan adam mound <i>nV(n)</i> yam 'yam mound' (Crowley 2006b: 53)	(87) Naman nokho nen bues 'rope <i>nV(n)</i> pig 'rope for a pig' (Crowley 2006d: 77)	(88) Tape melëkh ne-n kava <i>nV(n)</i> -3SG ' (Crowley 2006c: 129)
---	---	---

Having no *nV(n)* preposition for this type of construction, Aulua aligns purposives with indirect possession, deploying the general classifier *ta-* for such constructions. This suggests that the suffix *-ah* and the anaphoric index *-ah-te* is restricted to part-whole constructions. However simple juxtaposition is also available:

Aulua

(89) nema ta(-n) house CLASS.GEN(-CONST) 'house for selling - shop'	pos-ene sell-NMZ	(90) nema lotu house prayer 'house of prayer, church'
---	---------------------	---

Comparing the last two functions of the *nV(n)* prepositional construction it seems that Aulua is some distance from the other languages of focus of this study. The final meaning that can be assigned to this construction, the creation of a relational location. As presented in table 5 above, Avava, Naman and Nese could create locations through the direct affixation of *-n*, a 3rd singular/construct state marker to a base.

(91) Location	Avava	Naman
'front'	bongo-	nokho-
'back, behind'	udruu-	bokhte-
'side'	sikile-	galë-
'top'	ngalngali-	ningulë
'middle'	lupa-	nelva-
'under'	lapa-	melevë-

Aulua has a similar range of forms for marking locations and positions and in fact these pattern with the part-whole construction. Semantically we can argue that these constructions suggest the location of 'the part' with the respect to 'the whole'. Intriguingly the metaphorical extension of the meanings of body parts such as 'head' *bat-* and 'rib' *qeli-* reinforces this interpretation. In this way we can see below that 'rib' accepts suffixes from

the direct possession paradigm as well as *-ah*. Note the variability of the vowel in ‘the part’ suffix.

Aulua

(92) ara-tu re qeli-m
 3PL-IRR.stand in side-POSS.2sg
 ‘They will stand at your side.’

(93) ara-ben qel-oh-te ara-krasa nema i-mapupu
 3PL-REAL.go side-PRT-AN 3PL-pull-away house 3SG-break.
 ‘They went round the side and broke the house, pulling it down.’

(94) tamari ho qole lel-ih-buqo oro-man lahas-ni ho oro-nrov
 youth TOPA gain in-PRT-fence 3DL-make like-DEM TOP 3DL-REAL.run
 ‘Again the boys got inside the fence, and doing that they ran off.’

In the narratives from which (93) and (94) were extracted, ‘the wholes’, a house and a fence respectively, had been the location of extended scenes in the story hence the ability for them to participate in these constructions. The *nV(n)* construction appears widespread in the Malakula languages of focus in this study beyond Aulua. This innovation appears to capture the meanings of purpose, part-whole and location in many of the languages. Beyond these meanings, in a few languages *nen* also has a role in the possession of some body parts. Being so typical of direct possession, parts of the body bring us back to where we began.

The permeability of categories of possession is a widely acknowledged phenomenon in Oceanic possession (Lichtenberk 2009, 273). More than the fact that the contextual information can see a single noun classified as general, edible or valuable in any given instance, or that not all members of a semantic field such as kin term or bodypart will be directly possessed, is the crossing over the boundaries of the types of possession discussed here. In many languages we see nouns behave as inalienable, as alienable, and on Malakula as appropriate to the prepositional constructions. In Avava for example we find this triplet:

(95) batu-m	(96) bat-n	ong	(97) bat	nan	ong
head-POSS.2sg	head- POSS.2sg	2sg	head	<i>nV(n)</i>	2sg
‘your head’	‘your head’		‘your head’		

(Crowley 2006b: 55)

Likewise in Aulua, many nouns, in particular, body parts participate in all three constructions, cross the boundaries between direct, indirect and part-whole behaviours.

(98)	nri-eq	(99)	nenre ta-hen	(100)	dri-ah-te
	blood-POSS.1sg		blood CLF.GEN-3sg		blood-PRT-AN
	‘my blood’		‘his/her blood’		‘the blood of it’

5. Concluding discussion

Against a backdrop of expectations of syntactic and semantic behaviour with respect to Melanesian Oceanic patterns of possession marking, we have now examined data from Aulua and selected other languages of Malakula. While retaining the semantic distinction between inalienable and alienable possession, the languages have done different things with their Oceanic inheritance. Some languages have reduced the number of classifiers to a single item, indexing not some contextualised semantic quality of the possessed but simply that it is considered inalienable. These languages appear to have also innovated in creating a so-called ‘prepositional possessor’ with a range of functions that are also covered by the two classic types of Melanesian Oceanic possession. Nese appears to have fossilised at a stage before the final reduction in number of classifiers was complete with competing semantically equivalent remnants of two. Aulua however has reduced the number of classifiers but has not moved towards a simplified contrast between direct and indirect. Unlike the classifying languages to the north, there has been no specialisation or semantic reorganisation of Aulua’s innovation is the development of a part-whole construction of quite a different type from the prepositional structures developed elsewhere on the island.

Further there have been historical changes in the inalienable type of possession. Languages have developed two distinct series of direct suffixes, distinguishing close from distant as well as in the case of Nese an extreme expansion of the types of nouns that are considered inalienable. Overall possession structures, one of the more complex parts of Melanesian Oceanic grammar has been transformed by the speakers of Malakula languages surveyed here.

The permeability of the categories of possession is a key element to the shifting and complex nature of possession in Malakula languages. The metaphorical space of possession can be mapped and remapped by speakers of the language, creating structures to suit the pragmatics of their message. Over time this has seen the emergence of new structures, finer distinctions made in direct possession, and new ways of marking specific meanings associated with the notions of belonging and possessing.

Abbreviations

AN	anaphoric whole in part-whole construction,	APPL	applicative affix for remote objects,
CHEW	chewable food,	CLF	classifier,
COMP	complementiser,	CONST	construct state affix,
DIS	discourse marker,	ED	edible,
EXCL	exclusive,	GEN	general,
IMM	immediate aspect,	INCH	inchoative aspect,
INCL	incl,	IRR	irrealis mood,
NEG	negative,	NEG1	first part of two part negation,
NMZ	nominalizer,	PART	partitive,
POSS	possession,	PRHB	prohibitive,
PRT	part,	REAL	realis mood,
RED	reduplication,	TOP	topic marker

Note

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