

EXTRALINGUISTIC BASIS OF THE CATEGORY OF POSSESSIVITY

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The term category of possessivity seems preferable to the term category of possession commonly used in Oceanic studies because it is concerned with an abstract relation between the referent of the head of a construction with the referent of its grammatically dependent complement (of nominal or verbal nature). The possessive relationship may be expressed either in (1) a predicative or in (2) a determinative syntagm. In (1) either a special verb may function, such as English *to have*, German *haben*, Slovak *mať*, or a (usually) collocative construction as Russian *u nego jest'* (literally "with him there is") or Japanese *aru* ("to be") or Slovak dialectal *je mu* ("is to him"). In (2) the determinative syntagm, the possessive relationship is expressed either by means of a possessive pronoun or by means of possessive particles (or case affixes). An item may be related to its possessor in several ways, but at least in two ways labeled as contingent and necessary by John Lyons (Lyons 1969: 301). Other linguists use other terms, for example alienable versus inalienable (widespread in descriptions of Polynesian languages), subjective versus objective (e.g. C. Maxwell Churchward 1953), etc.

When perceiving the possessive construction as consisting of the term referring to the possessed item and of the term referring to its possessor, we are using figurative expressions. Possessing does not cover all contingencies. *Aka* "root" in the Maori construction *te aka o te rākau* "the root of the tree" poses as a possession of the tree, but only in the sense of being its organic part. Neither am I possessor of my father (Maori *tooku matua*) not to speak of my enemy (Maori *tooku hoariri*). In Maori, *hoa* "friend" is classified as alienable and *hoariri* "enemy" as inalienable. The two terms differ not because choosing a friend requires more activity than choosing an enemy, but rather because my behaviour to my friend is obviously more active.

Grammaticalized possessivity is so common in the Austronesian languages that N. F. Alieva (probably influenced by A. Capell) considers possession as the dominant feature of Austronesian grammar (Alieva 1988: 1-19). J. Lynch, M. Ross and T. Crowley distinguish two main types of possessive construction termed direct and indirect (Lynch – Ross – Crowley 2002: 40-43).

The category of possessivity is not restricted to one or another geographical region or a particular language family. O. P. Sunik reports its existence in Manchu-Tungus languages (Sunik 1947: 437) and A. V. Isačenko believes that nouns are divided into alienable and inalienable in Russian (Isačenko 1954: 141-145). Possessivity is widespread in Pacific languages, but I shall confine my attention to the Polynesian branch of the Austronesian family.

In Fijian, as the immediate Melanesian neighbour of the Polynesian languages, the dichotomy of alienable/inalienable is complemented with a more detailed sub-classification within the alienable domain and thus there are three alienable possessive marks, namely *mē*, *kē* and *nō*; *mē* indicates a potable entity, *kē* an eatable entity and *nō* is characterized by A. Schütz as neutral (Schütz 1985: 451).

The trend of development from the multiplicity of possessive classes to binarity as the simplest possible variant is interpreted by G. A. Klimov as confirming a widespread tendency to the simplification of an exceedingly elaborate classifications of referents. The simplification is ultimately stimulated by the semantic digitalization of the essentially analogous reality as well as by the limitations of human memory, while both factors lead to a plenty of vague solutions and sometimes make the choice of the adequate variant tricky. An analogical process of simplification of the rich inventory of classifiers (numeratives or counters) is known to be taking place in Japanese, Indonesian and other languages of South-East Asia (Klimov 1977: 276). This process goes hand in hand with the gradual retreat and loss of extralinguistic motivation and with the parallel intensification of the abstract nature of grammatical oppositions. As a consequence, there are nouns that are compatible with more than one classifier, as in the case of Indonesian: "... sering suatu nomina dipakai dengan beberapa kata bantu bilangan" (Alieva et al. 1991: 225). M. Kieda only remarks that in Japanese there are very many classifiers (counters in Japanese terminology, Kieda 1958: 115). For example S. Makino and M. Tsutsui include a list of 84 counters in their handbook (Makino – Tsutsui 1996: 686-697). The demotivation is a natural process; the original transparency is gradually replaced by opacity and in the case of multiplicity of relevant extralinguistic criteria the task of choosing the proper variant becomes increasingly formalized and exacting for the speaker. This means that language is capable of gradual emancipation from the bonds of past ways of thought. The emancipation of this kind proceeds at a fairly slow pace upon the level of grammar.

Possessivity cannot be completely identified with the nominal classification (such as genders), but both share the same extralinguistic basis. Possessivity is one of those categories that are quite transparently motivated by extralinguistic facts and have preserved this bond to a remarkable extent. In other words, they are felt to reflect the axiological structure of the social and cultural circumstances of the pre-contact era, which has left its imprint in the realm of grammar of the Polynesian languages. The initial social and cultural circumstances may have changed, but what has remained is a fairly abstract need to distinguish the alienable relation between the possessor and the possessed from its inalienable counterpart. And thus we find in the present-day Polynesian languages some

differences that evolved after their separation from the proto-language. Thus in Tongan *kui* "grandparent", *fa'ē* "mother" and *motu'a* "parent" are treated as alienable, while their Maori equivalents *tupuna*, *whaea*, and *matua* are perceived as inalienable. S. Elbert points out that in Rennellese the objects inherited as part of the traditional culture are *o*-possessed while borrowed objects prefer *a*-possessive constructions (Elbert 1988: 116). Tongan, however, seems to have fully incorporated loanwords into its possessive conception and thus *sāvieti* (from English "serviette") and *tauli* (from English "towel") are compatible with the alienable A-marker (S. Churchward 1953: 84).

The need to choose either an A-marker or an O-marker cannot be interpreted correctly without some knowledge of the socio-psychological background of language in general as well as of the particular linguistic community in question.

Some semantic content is hidden behind all grammatical categories but once the latter are formalized this semantic content tends to undergo erosion and/or reinterpretation. The category of possessivity is strictly speaking not a morphological category. It does not classify words as such, but rather their referents in relation to other referents transcending thereby the limits of linguistics in a way the numeratives do in the South-East Asian and Far Eastern languages from Indonesia to Japan as mentioned before (the criteria employed in this classification are multiple and occasionally overlapping). When judged in the light of contensive typology, the category of possessivity seems to be a relic of the typology of so called active structure (cf. G. A. Klimov 1977: 148-152). Another relic may be the existence of a restricted class of stative verbs standing apart from other verbs.

Hereafter I shall concentrate upon the discussion of diagnostic criteria which help the speakers to choose the adequate possessivity marker. The markers are nominal particles *a* and *o* which may be incorporated in the possessive pronouns (in the latter case they may undergo phonetic assimilation as in Tongan). I shall proceed inductively from the descriptions of this category in the particular Polynesian languages to their comparison in the effort and with the aim of identifying a common denominator of a non-formalized character. In most of the available descriptions we are concerned with an intermediate stage of such a search. Its results have been formulated as sets of rules (partly overlapping and partly inexhaustive), which allow for what the scholars are inclined to perceive as "exceptions". However, we have reasons to believe that behind the exceptions are cultural and social motivations hidden to the observers from outside.

C. Maxwell Churchward has studied the possessivity in Tongan in considerable detail. His terminology (subjective and objective possessives) is close to the interpretation of Polynesian possessivity in terms of differing degrees of activity: "If the possessive corresponds to the subject of a verb, a subjective possessive must be used, no matter whether the verb be transitive or intransitive, and no matter whether it denotes doing or having or existing or thinking or feeling or desiring or deciding or what: *'eku ui kinautolu* "my calling them..." (C. M. Churchward 1953: 79).

He characterizes the A-possessivity and O-possessivity as follows: "... the use of *'eku* (subjective or alienable) for "my" implies that I am active, influential, or formative etc. towards the thing mentioned, whereas the use of *hoku* (objective or inalienable) for "my" implies that the thing mentioned is active, influential or formative, etc., towards me..." (C. M. Churchward 1953: 81).

It is the relation between the possessor and the possessed that the speaker focuses upon. The presence of the A-marker indicates an active role of the possessor to the possessed, whereas the O-marker underlines that the possessor is not active in relation to its possession; to be precise, the A-forms are marked for activity, while the O-forms may be treated as unmarked. A possessor marked with the particle O is inert and passive in relation to its possession or is perceived as a recipient or beneficiary of something. Some interesting comparisons from Tongan confirm this: *'ene lao* (A-form) is a law which he makes, while *hono lao* (O-form) is the law by which he is governed; *'eku k̄atoanga* (A-form) is the festival provided by me and *hoku k̄atoanga* (O-form) the festival given in my honour, and likewise *'eku fala* (A-form) is the mat which I make unlike *hoku fala* (O-form) which is the mat I am lying on (C. M. Churchward 1953: 86).

The range of applicability of the O-marker is delimited by C. M. Churchward as follows: "(a) things which constitute me or characterize me (whether permanently or for the time being): that is to say, things which are parts of me or which are so closely connected with me that they almost seem to be parts of me, (b) persons or things which, in one sense or another, represent me, (c) my relatives, friends, associates, or enemies (naturally such persons help to determine what I am, what I do, or how I fare)*, (d) things which are provided for me or which devolve upon me or fall to my lot, (e) in general, persons or things which surround, support, control, or affect me, or on which I depend" (C. M. Churchward 1953: 82). C. M. Churchward adds a remark concerning some exceptions and states that "Many of these, however, and possibly all of them, can be explained on the basis of the general rule stated in par. 17" (C. M. Churchward 1953: 82).

Nouns marked as A-forms are exemplified by nouns denoting objects of everyday use, instruments such as *koloa* "goods", *pa'anga* "money", *hele* "knife", *kumete* "kava bowl", *me'afana* "gun", agricultural land as *ngoue* "garden", *ma'ala* "yam plantation", animals as *hoosi* "horse", *fanga puaka* "pigs", *fanga moa* "fowls" as well as food *me'akai* "food", *'ufi* "yam", *hu'akau* "milk", *vai* "medicine", *tapaka* "tobacco", and servants as *tamaio'eiki* "male servant".

Nouns of O-category are exemplified in C. M. Churchward by *sino* "body", *loto* "mind", *'ulu* "head", *ma'ama'a* "lungs", *toto* "blood", *hui* "bone", and C. M. Churchward adds to them nouns referring to the parts of a whole different

* This does not hold always because *kui* "grandparent", *motu'a* "parent", *tamai* "father", *fa'ē* "mother", *tama* "woman's son", *tamasi'i* "child", *fanau* "children", *fahu* "(man's) sister's son", *fefine* "woman, girl", and *ta'ahine* "woman, girl" when used in the sense of daughter. In other Polynesian languages the terms for relatives are classified as given to us in advance and compatible with the O-marker.

from the bodily parts: *kotoa* "whole", *konga* "part", *funga* "top", *'ato* "roof", *takele* "bottom", *faliki* "floor", *fanā* "mast"; nouns such as *anga* "habit", "custom", "nature", *ivi* "power, ability", *'atamai* "intelligence", *fōtunga* "appearance", *le'o* "voice, sound", *nanamu* "smell, odour", *ifo* "taste, flavour", *lanu* "colour", *'ila* "spot, stain", *mele* "blemish", *fo'ui* "fault", *mahaki* "disease", also: *'ao* "front of person, presence", *lolotonga* "midst". Nouns referring to clothes and other objects needed for bodily care are included here as well: *vala* "loincloth", *kofu* "dress", *tatā* "hat", *mama* "ring", *helu* "comb", *tokotoko* "walking-stick". An element of causative dependence seems to be present in the following nouns: *fua* "fruit, result", *ō* "outcome, natural consequence", *nunu'a* "natural retribution, nemesis", *ouau* "appurtenance, ordinance, affair". Things thought to be representative of the possessor are for example *fakafofonga* "representative", *fetongi* "substitute, successor", *hingoa* "name", *'uhinga* "meaning", *faka'ilonga* "symbol, sign", *malu* "shadow, shade", *'ata* "shadow, reflection, picture". C. M. Churchward includes the following items as relatives, friends, and companions: *kāinga* "relative", *tokoua* "brother or sister", *foha* "(man's) son", *'ofefine* "(man's) daughter", *mokopuna* "grandchild", *'ilamutu* "nephew, niece", *mali* "husband, wife", *hoa*, *mate* also "husband, wife", *takaua* "companion, colleague", *kaume'a* "friend", *kaungāngāue* "fellow worker", *fili* "enemy"; as mentioned before, quite a few relatives are "exceptions" to these rules compatible with the subjective, that is a-forms.

C. M. Churchward quotes many more examples of terms concerning existential aspects of persons, for example *tofi'a* "inheritance", *'inasi* "share, allotted portion", *fatongia* "duty, obligation", *ngāue'anga* "sphere of work", *tu'unga* "position, rank, status", *lakanga* "office, function", *mafai* "authority, right, legal power"; *nofo'a* "saddle", *mohenga* "bed"; *kolo* "village, town", *fonua* "land, country", *'api* "allotment of land, home", *fale* "house", *loki* "room, apartment", *pununga* "nest", *vaka* "boat, ship", *hala* "path, road"; *vai* "well, underground tank"; *nofo'anga* "dwelling-place", *tupu'anga* "origin", *pule'anga* "government", *Siasi* "Church (organization)"; *'eiki* "chief, lord", *'Otua* "God", *tu'i* "king, queen", *kuini* "queen", *palesiteni* "president", *taki* "leader", *le'o* "watchman, sentry", *fakamo'ui* "rescuer, saviour", *taula'eiki* "priest" (examples from C. M. Churchward 1953).

Trees in Tongan are compatible with the O-markers (*moli* "orange tree", *niu* "coconut palm"), but names of other plants rank among the a-forms (*talo* "taro", *kumala* "kumara", *kāpisi* "cabbages"). The fact that the subjective forms of the possessives are generally used when referring to a tree on which one is bestowing particular care (C. M. Churchward 1953: 87) may help to shed some light upon the semantics of the possessivity; the cultivation of these trees requires especially intensive activity!

H. W. Williams and W. H. Williams operate with the following criteria for Maori: (1) transitive actions, movable property, instruments, food, husband, wife, children, slaves, etc. require the A-marker, while the O-marker is used with intransitive actions, parts of anything, names, qualities, feelings, houses, land, canoes, inhabitants, water for drinking, medicine, clothes, parents and oth-

er relatives (except *tane* "husband", *wahine* "wife", and children or grandchildren with their collaterals, superiors, companions (incl. *hoa* when applied to husband or wife) (Williams — Williams 1950: 21-22).

Bruce Biggs in his description uses the terms dominance and subordination. He points out, just as other authors, that the same noun may be possessed by *a* or *o* according to circumstances (Biggs 1969: 43). It should be added that there are also nouns, which can be possessed in only one way (for example *wai* "water" in Maori). Biggs seems not to be aware of the importance of the criterion of organic appurtenance or inclusion when stating that: "It is a fairly general rule that portable possessions are marked by *a*, non-portables by *o*. But exceptions are not excluded. Parts of things, including all clothing, are possessed by *o*" (Biggs 1969: 43). Here it is not relevant that clothes are portable but the fact that they are perceived as someone's important part — being an organic part of a whole. Winifred Bauer (1993: 210) turns the attention to the differing meanings of the terms dominant and subordinate as used by Bruce Biggs in his textbook of Maori and by Pat Hohepa (Hohepa 1967). He regards the two categories (A and O) as unequal because O is clearly the unmarked member. This point has been made before (see Clark, 1976, 42-4)... (Bauer 1993: 210). However, the relationship between the two categories was defined as privative where the O category is beyond doubt the unmarked member as early as in 1964 (by Krupa 1964: 435).

In Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language (1911: 47-48) the classificatory criteria are defined as follows:

I. O-marker is used in the following instances:

1. Nouns denoting parts of the body: *fofoga o le alii* "eyes of the chief". Also *lima* "hand", *vae* "leg", *ulu* "head", *isu* "nose", *gutu* "mouth", and of all other parts of the body except the beard, 'ava, as *lana 'ava* "his beard"; but a chief's beard is *lona soesā*.
2. The mind and its affections: 'O *le toasā o le alii* "the wrath of the chief". It is the same with the will (*loto*), desire (*mana'o*), love (*alofa*), fear (*mata'u*), etc., for example, *O le mana'o o le nu'u* "The desire of the people"; 'O *le mata'u o le tama* "The fear of the boy".
3. Houses, and all their parts, canoes, land, country, trees, plantations; as *Pou o le fale* "posts of the house"; *Le tala o le fale* "the gable of the house"; *lona va'a* "his canoe"; *lona nu'u* "his native place"; *lona fanua* "his land"; *laau o le vao* "tree of the forest"; *lona maumaga* "his plantation of taro".
4. Peoples, relations, slaves; for example, 'o *ona tagata* "his people"; 'o *le faletua o le alii* "the chief's wife", *lona atali'i* "his son", *lona tamā* "his father; garments, etc., if for use; as *ona 'ofu* (except when referred to as property, riches, things laid up in store).

II. A-marker is used with:

1. Words denoting conduct, customs, manners, etc; such as *lana amio* "his conduct", *la latou masani* "their custom", 'o *le tā ea a le nu'u* "that is the custom of the place".

2. Language, words, speeches; for example, *'o le gagana a Kanana*, "the language of Canaan"; *'o ana upu* "his words"; *'o le fetalaiga a le alii* "the speech of the chief"; *'o le afioga a le Atua* "the word of God".
 3. Property of every kind. Except garments, etc., for use (those we wear).
 4. Servants, animals, etc.: *lana tavini* "her domestic servant"; *lana solofanua* "his horse"; *lana ta'ifau* "his dog".
 5. Food of every kind.
 6. Weapons, implements; for example, clubs (*uatogi*), knives, swords, bows (*āufana*), cups (*ipu*), etc.**
 7. Work; as *lana galuega* "his work".***
- III. Some words take either *a* or *o*, — *manatu*, "a thought", *laofi* "an opinion". Usually the meaning is altered by using *a* or *o* respectively, as *'o le upu o le ola* "the word of life", meaning the word about the life; but *'o le upu a le tagata* "the man's word" (which he speaks); *'o lana matemate* "his contrivance"; *'o le matemate o le ola* "the plan or method of salvation"; *o se tali a Matautu* "an answer given by Matautu"; *'o se tali o Matautu* "an answer given to Matautu" (this latter instance: the answer given to Matautu; Matautu received it from someone else, he is passive to it, and everything of which we are organic parts happened without our will. Even if this were no true common denominator, at least we have to do with a metonymic chain of links.

S. Churchward in his grammar of Samoan (Churchward 1951: 25-26) agrees with Pratt, who defines the A-marker as an active relation, while the O-marker is obviously a passive relation.

S. Churchward points out that sometimes different Polynesian languages may disagree. For example Tongan *fa'ē* takes *a* while Maori *whaeā* prefers *o* (H. W. Williams 1957: 484).

Sometimes even words of similar meaning within the same language may differ from the point of view of the possessivity classification. Thus *to'alua* "husband or wife", *tausi* "wife of a tulāfale" and *faletua* "chief's wife" take *o*, whereas *tāne* "husband", *avā* "wife", and *masiofo* "high chief's wife" take *a*; *tama* "child" takes *a*; *atali'i* "man's son", *afafine* "man's daughter", and *alo* "chief's son or daughter" takes *o*. Again, *'ula* "a necklace" takes *a*, but *pale* "a wreath" takes *o*. We say *'upu a le tagata* "words of a man"; but *'upu o le tusi* "words of the book"; our explanation is simple. Words in conversation are generated by human beings, but words in a book are obviously viewed first of all as part of the book as a whole.

Sometimes the same word takes either *o* or *a*, according to the relation indicated: *'o le nu'u o Ioane* "the town to which Ioane belongs"; but *'o le nu'u a Ioane* "the town of which Ioane is a pastor". In the former case Ioane cannot

** Exceptions are spears (*tao*), axes (*to'i*), *'oso* (stick or spade used for planting taro) which take *o*.

*** Except *faiva* "a fishing, a trade", which takes *o*.

exert any extraordinary activity in the direction of his town, but if he is the local priest he can actively influence it.

We are confronted with an analogous problem in the following examples: *'o le tali a Pai* "the answer given by Pai" – *'o le tali o Pai* "the answer given to Pai"; *la'u tupu* "my king, i.e. the king whom I have appointed", but *lo'u tupu* "my king, the king whom I obey" (Samoan examples freely quoted from S. Churchward 1951: 25-26).

Relatives may be interpreted as being organic parts of a family or a community and are divided into two classes in Samoan just as in Tongan and Maori – those compatible with the A-markers and those compatible with the O-markers.

The A-markers assume an active relation of the possessor to the possessed kinsman while the O-markers imply a passive (or rather non-active) attitude instead. The dividing line between "active" and "non-active" relatives in Samoan differs from both Tongan and Maori. In fact it is Maori that strictly preserves the contrast acquired – inherited relatives; in Tongan and Samoan this dividing line envisages the social hierarchy as well.

Margaret Mutu characterizes two contrastive types of possessing in Marquesan as follows (Mutu 1990: 123-126). The A-marker can be described in very broad terms as possession in which the possessor is dominant, active, superior, or in control of the possessed. The O-marker indicates possession where the possessor is subordinate, passive, inferior to, or lacking control over possession. Examples: *te vahana a te vehine* "the woman's husband", *te vehine a te haka'iki* "the chief's wife", *te kai a te puaka* "pig's food", *te tama a Kae* "Kae's son", *te tumu o te opata* "the base of the cliff", *ma 'uka o te ha'e* "on top of the house", *te ikoa o te henua* "the name of the land", *te motua o te vahana* "the husband's father", *vehine na ia* "wife for him", *potu na koe* "a cat for you", *tenei vaka no koe* "this canoe for you", *te kahu o ia* "his clothes", *No ai teenei haamani i patu-ia?* "Who is this book written about?", *'Ua pao te tekao no Taheta* "The story about Taheta is finished".

F. Zeween sums up the criteria for the application of the O-marker in Marquesan as follows: "It marks relation between myself and everything considered as integral to myself (including body and its parts, physical and psychological qualities and states, country and place of habitation, personal objects and vehicles of transportation, clothing, name, titles, social relations, relatives that are not acquired by myself), relations between a whole and its part, spatial relations, and numerical relations" (Zeween 1987: 78-80).

A problem may arise if speaking of possessing in an instance such as John's village, because John does not own it but he is affiliated with it. John cannot say that he owns the village; in fact he belongs to it since he lives within it and comes from it (cf. Mutu: 123-126).

In his paper on Hawaiian, H. Wilson characterizes the items compatible with the O-marker as important in the traditional culture, in close contact with the body, inherited, not portable, animals used for riding, and subordinate to the possessor (Wilson 1976: 40).

S. H. Elbert and M. Kawena Pukui define the O-marker as passive, inalienable and inherited, dominant, and benefactive, which may require some specification; the possessor is passive, while the possession is inalienable, inherited, benefactive, and dominant. The A-marker, on the other hand, is viewed as active, alienable, acquired, subordinate, and agentive (Elbert – Pukui 1979: 136-137). Examples of items compatible with the O-marker: *kupuna* “grandparent”, *makua kāne* “father”, *kaikua’ana* “older sibling of the same sex”, *kaikaina* “younger sibling”, *hoahānau* “cousin”, *hanauna* “generation”, *hoa* “friend”, *makamaka* “friend” (but *’aikāne* “friend” is compatible with the A-marker – obviously under the formal analogy with *kāne* “husband”), *kama’āina* “host”, *wa’a* “canoe”. Examples of items compatible with the A-marker: *keiki* “child”, *kaikamahine* “daughter”, *kāne* “husband”, *wahine* “wife”, *ipo* “sweetheart”, *malihini* “guest”.

In the Tokelau language the A-marker indicates possession which we have control over, something we can buy, or get in some way by our own will, or get rid of when we want, something we actively take part in, while the O-marker indicates a possession which we do not have control over, something which we have as a permanent possession or as an essential part of ourselves. Some words, however, occur with both: *Te fale a Mete* “Mete’s house” is the house built by Mete while *te fale o Mete* is the house where Mete lives (Even Hovdhaugen – Ingerd Hoem – Consulata Mahina Iosefo – Arnfinn Muruvik Vonen 1989).

Compatibility with the A-marker includes tools, books, all kinds of food, tools, wives, husbands, children, all animals except horses, work and labourers, while the O-marker refers to parts of the body (or of a whole), personal property, relatives except children, buildings, things used for transport, incl. horses, land, water and sea, trees and plants which have grown naturally, qualities and attributes, superiors, assistants and servants, and time – but not a point of time.

In Tikopian, Raymond Firth underlines the contrast between a-forms implying action of some kind towards the item specified, and o-forms implying more passive forms of personal relation, including bodily attachment and simple control (Firth 1985: XXXI-XXXII).

The classificatory criteria may sometimes correlate or clash. Clothes take O-marker but why precisely? Because they may with a grain of salt viewed as a part of the human body? When someone says, “my chief” (using the O-marker), the chief can hardly be viewed as a part of his person. Here it is the passivity and subordination of the speaker to the chief that prevails. However, I am obviously not passive to my clothes despite the O-marker. Firth analyses instances of words compatible with both O-markers and A-markers without being identical; the difference between them can be reduced to the above mentioned contrast of active (A-marker) and inactive (O-marker) possessivity, for example, *taku fekau* “work I have been actively engaged upon” – *toku fekau* “work assigned to me to do”; *taku tilotilo* “the photograph made by me” – *toku tilotilo* “the photography made of me or owned by me”. Food is possessed via the A-marker; its role consists in being prepared and eaten. In a somewhat analogous

manner *tama* "child" is possessed by means of the A-marker as an active product of its father and mother. But *toku taina* "my sibling", *toku iramutu* "my nephew", are classed as o-forms because their referents are relatives to which their uncles and aunts have no dominant role. Someone's wife is usually and neutrally termed as an o-form (e.g. *toku nofine* "my wife") but a crude colloquial expression *fafine āku* including an a-form suggests a more active proprietary role on the part of her husband (Firth 1985: XXXII).

Veronica M. Du Feu in her grammar of the Easter Island language simply enumerates classes of nouns compatible either with a or o; inalienable markers are used with parents, siblings, house, furniture, means of transport (cart, car, scooter, boat, aeroplane) clothes, feelings, native land, parts of the body (including one's mind), horse and its bridle; alienable markers occur with spouse, children, food, books, work, all animals except one's horse, all tools and gadgets, specified illnesses. Variation in usage for new items or subjective attitudes is minimal (Du Feu 1996: 102-103).

Two types of possessivity have been described by S. H. Elbert in his grammar of Rennellese. According to him, nouns compatible with the A-marker are termed light-weight, while those compatible with the O-marker are called heavy. The latter include body parts, sons, parents, most supernaturals, and most traditional possessions (land, canoes, adzes). A-objects include daughters, intelligence, thoughts, opinions... and small nontraditional possessions, such as axe (*aakisi*), knife (*kiba*), and the traditional fighting clubs (Were they considered ephemeral?)... One's own body parts take *o* unless they are used figuratively... as *toku gima* "my hand" and *taku gima* "my mitten", or are curses... Taking *a* are kin considered less permanent than those taking *o*, and to whom ego has caused the relationship, including children (*haanau*), daughter (*tama'ahine*), sons of a woman (*tomo*), but a son of a male (*hosa*) takes *o* ((Elbert 1988: 109-111).

The chief easily comparable criteria drawn for the particular complementary instances both under O-class and A-class are summarized below. They point to a considerable similarity or homogeneity.

SURVEY OF DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

Possessor's activity comprises producing something (including words), using some instruments, labour force catching animals or making use of them, consuming food, acquiring wives, acquiring/producing descendants.

Possessor's inactivity comprises essentially what is given to us in advance (relatives born without our efforts), superiors (in Tongan servants!), natural and social environment in which we live, vehicles of transportation to which we entrust ourselves, houses including furniture, land, trees (in TON only wild plants), our body and clothes enveloping it (as well as parts of any wholes), our feelings, emotions, moods, thoughts (because we are not their masters), attributes and qualities, and water that is not produced, but only acquired (from wells, streams, etc.).

Table 1. The O-Class

TON	relatives (partly)	houses boats	country, land village		body parts	clothes		
SAM	relatives peoples	houses canoes	country, land plantations	trees	body parts	garments	mind affection	water
MAO	relatives parents	houses canoes	land		body parts, names	clothes	feelings	water
TOK	relatives, superiors servants	horses, transp. vehicles	land	trees (wild) plants	body parts body parts	garments	attributes qualities	water
EAS	parents, siblings	houses, furniture horses	native land		body parts			

Table 2. The A-Class

TON	tools, utensils, weapons, vehicles	language, words, speech	food	animals relatives (partly)	work, play, activities
SAM	property of every kind, weapons, implements	language, words, speech	food	animals, servants	work, conduct, manners, customs
MAO	small property, (movable prop- erty), instruments		food	children, husbands, wives, slaves	transitive actions
TOK	tools, books, small objects		food	animals, wives, husbands, children	work labourers
EAS	tools, gadgets, books		food	animals	illnesses

Generally speaking in all instances the activity is socially and culturally motivated, but there are instances in which some physical conditioning is added.

It is worth adding that some discrepancies observed between the individual languages have to do with the inclusion of politeness into the play. Thus in Sa-

moan 'ava "beard" (neutral style) is classified as an A-form, while *soesā* "chief's beard" is classified as an O-form. Likewise Tikopians perceive O-class *fafine* wife as polite and A-class *fafine* as impolite. This contrast is present in the classification of sons; the sons of men are classified as O-forms, while the sons of women as A-forms in Rennellese and a similar phenomenon is observed in Samoan where a chief's son and a man's children are classified as O-forms unlike a woman's children.

The so-called exceptions seem sometimes to reflect inadequately set up classificatory criteria (for example in Biggs 1969: 43) and incomplete knowledge of the cultural and social milieu rather than "breaking rules". Or they may result from competitive if not partly conflicting diagnostic criteria (for example politeness and activity). Occasionally the need for additional criteria is felt. Politeness obviously plays a more important role in Tongan than for example in Maori and neither is the difference in sex negligible. The values valid within a community may undergo modification in time and, besides, conflicts in the classification as well as ambiguity no doubt stimulate changes and further evolution.

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