

"FOR MY PART...": THE GRAMMAR AND SEMANTICS OF PART POSSESSION IN THE LANGUAGES OF TANNA

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ABSTRACT

The possessive systems of the Oceanic languages of Melanesia have traditionally been analysed as including, among other categories, a direct suffixed construction which is used with kinship terms and parts of the body and of wholes. In this paper, I show that the possession of part terms in the languages of Tanna (Vanuatu) is rather more complex than this. Different part terms participate in different construction types, and a distinction must be made between those part terms which are seen as being relatively inalienable, and are thus normally not removed, and nouns which refer to less inalienable parts, which are regularly or easily removed or exuded, or which refer to things added to a manufactured object. A brief comparison suggests that something similar occurs in a number of other Melanesian languages, and that the traditional analysis may be inadequate.

The possessive systems of the languages of Tanna¹ are generally similar to those of other Oceanic languages of Melanesia. In one respect, however, they are very different: there are a number of different construction-types by which natural or manufactured parts of wholes are possessed. This paper discusses the grammar of part possession in these languages, attempts to explain the semantics of the different constructions, and relates these findings to those from other Oceanic languages which also show considerable complexity in this area, like Paamese (Crowley 1991, in press).

¹ Tanna is the second most southerly of the inhabited islands of Vanuatu. Five languages are spoken on the island: North Tanna, Whitesands, Lenakel, Southwest Tanna and Kwamera. Data are drawn from Lindstrom (1986) for Kwamera, Lynch (1973, 1977, 1978) for Lenakel, Lynch (1982) for Southwest Tanna, and my own field notes. I am grateful to Monty Lindstrom for clarifying many aspects of Kwamera grammar, as well as to Terry Crowley, Paul Geraghty and Ulrike Mosel for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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A small number of other nouns are possessed in a kind of direct construction which I will call the **prefixed** construction, in which the possessive pronoun is suffixed to a possessive marker, and this constituent is then prefixed to the noun:⁴

- (11) Kwamera *ki-n-kapwa*
 MKR-3SG-head
 'his/her/its head'

The situation presented so far is quite complex: e.g. front teeth are possessed in one way, back teeth in another, the head in a third and the Adam's apple in a fourth; and there are further complexities which I will discuss later. In addition, there is not always full agreement between different Tanna languages as to which construction is used for the "same" noun. This is very briefly illustrated in the examples below, in which only nouns which are formally as well as semantically cognate are compared.

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| | Lenakel | Kwamera |
| (12) | DIRECT | PASSIVE |
| | <i>nisgaa-n</i> | <i>naninha ira-n</i> |
| | intestines-3SG | intestines LOC-3SG |
| | 'his/her/its intestines' | |
| (13) | PASSIVE | DIRECT |
| | <i>tinapaat la-n</i> | <i>nipati-n</i> |
| | horn/tusk LOC-3SG | horn/tusk-3SG |
| | 'its horn, its tusk' | |
| (14) | PREFIXED | PASSIVE |
| | <i>ne-n-kauga</i> | <i>kauga ira-n</i> |
| | MKR-3SG-jaw | jaw LOC-3SG |
| | 'his/her/its jaw' | |
| (15) | ACTIVE | PASSIVE |
| | <i>tila taha-n</i> | <i>tira ira-n</i> |
| | mast MKR-3SG | mast LOC-3SG |
| | 'its mast' | |

⁴ That the possessive marker + pronoun suffix constituent is prefixed to the following noun – rather than being an independent word, for example – can be confirmed by a number of word-level phonological rules which operate on constructions like (11), which I will not detail here.

PART POSSESSION IN THE LANGUAGES OF TANNA
 TABLE 1: DIRECTLY POSSESSED BODY PARTS IN KWAMERA

THE HEAD

kapofe- 'head, intellect'
takuré- '[top of] head'
níkenhi- 'back of head'
nukwané- 'head, intellect, hair'
nípwaná- 'forehead'
(ka)nípati- 'horn, tusk'
nenimé-, nímrhi- 'eye, face'
nífregi- '[outside of] ear'
nakwa-regi- '[inside of] ear (fish) gills'
nípasegi- 'nose'
timé-, tinmé- 'temple'
nikapu- 'cheek'
nakwa- 'mouth, opening'
tírhu- '[outside of] mouth'
narami- 'tongue, (fire) flame'
(kwa-)revu- '[front] tooth'
nigaha- 'gums'
níkumu- 'chin'

ARMS AND LEGS

nuá- 'neck'
takuré- 'shoulder'
nurá- 'shoulder'
tíkirkova- 'armpit'
rígí-, rígi- 'arm, hand'
tírígí-, tírígírígí- 'wing'
nukuru- 'elbow, knee'
níkwa-rígí- 'finger'
nukupwé- 'fist, top joint, top knuckle'
nísu- 'leg, foot'
nuvá- 'thigh'
kwatpi-nísu- 'calf'
(kwa-)nkwa-nísu- 'toe'

THE TORSO

nípra-, (kwa-)npri- 'body, trunk, substance, meaning'
(kwá-)numhi- 'skin, bark'
teki- 'skin, bark'
numwheri-, numrhi- 'body hair, fur, feathers'
rírevu- '(fish) scale'
nusá- 'flesh'
nikarkrí- 'bone'
taku-taa- 'back'
(kwa-)npwenhi- 'chest'
nanhi- 'breast'
típu- 'belly'
nípuregi- 'navel'
títípu- '(animal) meat in stomach region'
kurukwá-, tarukwá- 'hip, waist'
kakureníhi- 'hip, buttocks'
(kwa-)npiki- 'tail'
kapsenhi- 'tail-feather'
nuktegi- 'crotch'
(kwa-)rue- 'vagina, vulva'
kofe- 'vagina, vulva'
kwanihi- 'penis'
nukupwé- 'glans penis'
(kwa-)naré- 'testicle, egg'
tíkí-nímrhi- 'operculum'

INTERNAL ORGANS

nakanmapwu- 'liver'
rerí- 'heart, voice, sound'
kwankanhe- 'gall bladder'
níkwa-nkwerí- 'kidney'

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2. KWAMERA PART POSSESSION

In this section, I will look in detail at the constructions used with different types of part nouns in Kwamera,⁵ and will propose some explanations for why different kinds of parts are possessed by different construction-types.

2.1 *Body parts*

Most nouns referring to parts of the body of humans or animates are, as might be expected, possessed in direct constructions. Table 1 lists these directly possessed body parts.⁶

Only three body parts are possessed by the prefixed construction. These are:

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| (16) Kwamera | - <i>kapwa</i> | 'head' |
| | - <i>kúa</i> | 'anus' |
| | - <i>mwanipitare</i> | 'dorsal fin' |

Quite a number of nouns referring to body parts, however, are possessed by the passive construction. Table 2 lists all that I have been able to find.

In general, the distinction drawn by Crowley (in press) for Paamese between inseparable and separable body parts seems to be valid here. Nouns possessed in direct (suffixed or prefixed) constructions are, generally, permanent parts of a human or animal body, the removal of which would be life-threatening or, at the least, quite painful. Passively possessed body parts, however, can be conceived of as being more separable or "temporary": in a number of cases, these refer to internal or external organs which are removed from butchered animals; others, like (*kwan-*)*pis-ivur* 'fingernail, toenail', are easily – and frequently – removed from a human body without pain.

5 I use Kwamera as the "example" language here because Lindstrom's dictionary of Kwamera has a wider range of part terms than does that of any other Tanna language. There are also one or two fewer minor complications in Kwamera, and it will be useful to establish more general patterns first, and to deal with minor complications later.

6 I will normally only list simple roots and not compound forms, except where the first part of the compound does not appear to occur separately: thus I do not list *nise-nenimé* 'tear', since *nise* 'fluid' and *nenimé* 'eye' are both listed individually. Parentheses in cited forms enclose optional elements; e.g. (*kwa-*)*revu* 'tooth' means that both *revu-* and *kwa-revu-* occur with this meaning; where (*kwa-*) is followed by two consonants, *i* is inserted between these consonants in the unprefix form (e.g. the unprefix form of (*kwa-*)*npiki* 'tail' is *nipiki*). I have adopted Geraghty's (1983) glossing convention of putting a specified possessor in parentheses before the noun and using the + sign to indicate examples of typical possessors: e.g. '(insect) antenna' implies that the typical possessor of the antenna is an insect, '(cat, truck+) purr' refers to the purr of a cat, a truck engine, or other similar possessors. Additional information in glosses is given in square brackets. Glosses are often less specific than in the original source, for economy of presentation.

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TABLE 2: PASSIVELY POSSESSED BODY PARTS IN KWAMERA

THE HEAD

kula 'brain, skull'
kwanakwevur 'grey hair'
ruapah '[back] tooth'
kanhúr 'side of neck'
kauga 'jaw; gate, (door) frame'
rukwinau 'throat'
ureiov 'uvula'
(kanis)kanis '(insect) antenna'
kiririg '(fowl) comb and wattle'

ARMS AND LEGS

kwan-pispis '(hand) finger'
pis-asori 'thumb'
pis-esa 'index finger'
pis-aiov 'middle finger'
pis-etum 'ring finger'
karperi 'ring finger'
pis-ouihi 'little finger'
(kwan-)pis-ivur 'fingernail, tonail'
nipispis 'finger/toenail, hoof'
kumwer 'wrist, shin, ankle'
kurpas 'heel'
tapwag '(hand) palm, (foot) sole;
tapwag '(hand) palm, (foot) sole;
 (tree) fork'

THE TORSO

nerpwa, nuk 'fat, grease'
kwanparum 'shoulder-blade'
kwanig 'backbone'
nuksepik 'backbone'
kunimwa 'small of the back'
poki 'small of the back, (turtle) shell'
nipigapiga 'ribcage, chest'
(kwa-)nakáu 'rib, side;
 (coconut) midrib

kwarukwarua 'goose-bumps'
kamosmwherin 'goose-bumps'
kapipi, kasirasír '(animal) meat
 and muscle on backbone'
kasiru '(animal) meat and
 muscle near pelvis'
takure-táu 'dorsal fin'
nipategov 'pubic area'

INTERNAL ORGANS

nikenaku 'heart'
típaruvareva 'lungs'
naninha 'guts, intestines'
típweua 'stomach, intestine'
kohi 'colon, large intestine'
kwanimweinimer 'spleen'
nimwa-iakwéin 'uterus'
nimahan 'placenta, afterbirth'
neganega '(pig+) internal membrane'
kwa-nimik '(egg) yolk'

A third category comprises nouns which can not be directly possessed on grammatical, rather than semantic, grounds. Forms such as *pis-asori* 'thumb' or *nimwa-iakwéin* 'uterus' are morphologically complex nouns, the second morpheme being of a type which does not accept pronominal suffixes: thus *pis-asori* is 'finger-big', the second morpheme of which is the adjective *asori*, and *nimwa-iakwéin* is 'house-man', ending in the noun *iakwéin* which may not enter into a direct construction.

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There remain, however, a few passively possessed nouns which are not satisfactorily explained in these terms, among them *ruapah* 'back tooth', *kurpas* 'heel', *kumwer* 'wrist, shin, ankle', and a few others.

Finally, there are a few body parts which are possessed by the general active indirect construction; the explanation here seems to be that the primary referents of these nouns (or of the final morpheme in apparent compounds) are non-parts; Table 3 lists these.

TABLE 3: BODY PARTS IN KWAMERA POSSESSED BY THE GENERAL ACTIVE CONSTRUCTION

	Body part meaning	Primary reference
<i>kwanari</i>	'Adam's apple'	<i>nari</i> 'thing'
<i>kanari</i>	'vagina'	<i>nari</i> 'thing'
<i>tinirup</i>	'womb'	'basket'
<i>noua</i>	'vein, artery, sinew, ligament, tendon'	'small cord, line, string'

2.2 *Body products and marks on or left by the body*

A number of nouns referring to body products, marks on the body, or marks left by a human or animal occur in direct constructions; these are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4: DIRECTLY POSSESSED BODY PRODUCTS AND MARKS IN KWAMERA

<i>nakwa-</i> 'voice, sound'	<i>nise-</i> 'body fluid, pus, sap, liquid, essence juice'
<i>nisakwá-</i> 'saliva, spittle'	<i>nami-</i> 'urine'
<i>nihí-nípasegi-</i> 'snot'	<i>napriige-</i> '(octopus) ink'
<i>nipik-nihí-</i> 'semen'	<i>nihí-</i> 'excrement'
<i>nité-</i> 'blood'	<i>timwheki-</i> 'tracks, footprints, scar, blister, bruise'
<i>timkimi-</i> 'shade, shadow of'	

Three nouns in this semantic category, however, may also occur in constructions without a possessor, but when they do so their phonological forms are slightly different:

(17) Kwamera	<i>nité-</i>	<i>neta</i>	'blood'
	<i>nise-</i>	<i>nas</i>	'breast, milk'
	<i>nihí-</i>	<i>nihí</i>	'faeces'

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For example:

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------------|
| (18) Kwamera | <i>nité-k</i> | <i>neta r-eraha</i> |
| | blood-1SG | blood 3SG-bad |
| | 'my blood' | 'bad blood' |

A number of other body products and marks are possessed in passive constructions:

- (19) Kwamera *nisivur* 'body fluids, polluting objects'
nikwesa 'pus'
tisi '(cat, truck+) purr'
n-akweiai-ien '(fish) roe'
kwa-nakwier 'blister, callus, corn, wart'
purigákw 'small tumour; growth of secondary fruit
within mature fruit'

while the following are possessed by the general active construction:

- (20) Kwamera *n-sese* 'sweat'
n-eua-ien 'vomit'
kwa-n-affri-ien 'face-paint'
kuvivo 'boil, sore'
k-ifiafia 'scabies'
nimwápw 'sore, wound, injury'

A number of the forms in (20) are nominalised verbs – *n-akweiai-ien*, *n-sese*, *n-eua-ien*, *k-ifiafia* – and so are morphologically incapable of taking possessive suffixes. In at least some other cases, while body products which are seen as permanent parts of the human condition (e.g. *nami* 'urine') are possessed directly, those which may be thought of as more temporary manifestations (e.g. *nikwesa* 'pus') are not. As to why, say, *kwa-nakwier* 'blister, callus, corn, wart' is possessed passively but *kuvivo* 'boil, sore' is possessed actively, it may be that boils and sores are more "temporary" than warts and corns, since they exude pus or other fluids and eventually heal.

2.3. Personal characteristics and associations

There are a number of nouns referring to personal characteristics and associations which are possessed in direct constructions; these are listed in Table 5.

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TABLE 5: DIRECTLY POSSESSED NOUNS REFERRING TO PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND ASSOCIATIONS IN KWAMERA

<i>naghu-</i> 'name'	<i>nigse-</i> 'strength, power'
<i>totouenhi-</i> 'tallness, slimness'	<i>nimwa-</i> 'house of'
<i>nánumu-</i> 'soul, spirit, shadow, image, reflection, likeness'	<i>nukwe-</i> '(thing, person) stone with magical power over'
<i>kwatapige-</i> '(small bird) nest'	<i>kwatmaghe-</i> '(small bird) nest'
<i>tai-</i> 'something received in exchange'	

Note that the unpossessable noun *nahag* corresponds (unsystematically) to the formally related *naghu-*, as in:

(21) Kwamera	<i>si nahag?</i>	<i>si naghu-m?</i>
	who name	who name-2SG
	'what's the name?'	'what's your name?'

A few nouns in this semantic category, however, are passively possessed; these are:

(22) Kwamera	<i>tapu</i> '(person buried) grave; hole'
	<i>kwanfaga</i> 'helper, crew'
	<i>kivus, sueru</i> 'spouse'
	<i>(n)imahán</i> 'bed, exchange-partner'

while *kwivur* '(thing, person) stone which has magical power over' is possessed in the general active construction.

While once again there seems to be a closer association between possessor and possessed in the case of the directly possessed nouns as opposed to the others, there are also cases which are difficult to explain: for example, of the two words referring to a stone which is believed to have magical power over a person or thing, *nukwe-* is possessed directly but *kwivur* actively.

2.4 Orientations and collections

Quite a number of nouns referring to spatial orientation, location, or collections are possessed by direct constructions. These are listed in Table 6. There in fact appears to be only one noun in this semantic area which is not possessed in this way: *kwaris* '(group) largest member', which is possessed passively.

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TABLE 6: DIRECTLY POSSESSED ORIENTATION AND COLLECTIVE
NOUNS IN KWAMERA

<p><i>numrenhi</i>- 'space between' <i>nikare</i>-, <i>nipakare</i>- 'side' <i>kwankunhi</i>- 'end, tip, point, edge' <i>iankune</i>- 'bottom, base; cause' <i>nipigi</i>- 'aperture, hole' <i>nani</i>- 'inside, middle, internal part; meat' <i>kwamwopwi</i>-, <i>kwopwi</i>- 'half, part, piece' <i>nimani</i>- 'plurality, lots of' <i>timwe</i>- '(people) group; (water, canoe) body' <i>nipaha</i>- '(night) middle' <i>nikarkare</i>- 'edge'</p>	<p><i>nore</i>- 'piece, section' <i>(kwa-)rue</i>- 'aperture, hole' <i>kwanape</i>- 'subject, topic' <i>nakurakweri</i>- 'end' <i>nasunhi</i>, <i>nasuvenhi</i>- 'end' <i>nipere</i>- 'half, part, piece' <i>toue</i>- 'group, herd, flock' <i>tarhe</i>- 'row, line' <i>nimisi</i>- 'last of a series' <i>kusé</i>- 'bundle'</p>
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2.5 *Manufactured parts, emissions and leftovers*

The nouns in this category refer either to parts of things which have been made by human agency, or to residues or other emissions of manufactured or naturally occurring items. Those which are possessed in direct constructions are listed in Table 7.

TABLE 7: DIRECTLY POSSESSED MANUFACTURED PARTS
AND EMISSIONS IN KWAMERA

<p><i>(kwa-)ruenhi</i>- 'handle' <i>(kwa-)tegi</i>- '(liquid) container' <i>nukupwé</i>- 'knot' <i>nimikmiki</i>- 'bits and pieces, remnant, leftovers' <i>nisakwa</i>- 'froth, bubbles' <i>nirigre</i>- '(sea) salt deposits left on the body after diving'</p>	<p><i>nimigi</i>- 'handle, stem' <i>nimuti</i>- 'scrap' <i>nipeki</i>- 'smell, odour' <i>nipware</i>- 'waste, chaff, scraps, dross' <i>nipukpuki</i>-, <i>nipwakpwakwé</i>- 'bits, waste, effluvium'</p>
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A few nouns in this semantic category are possessed passively:

- (23) Kwamera *tinfia* '(house) eaves'
 tipuk '(house) side wall'
 tira 'mast'

while the directly possessed *nipware*- has a related form *nipwar* 'remains of', which is possessed passively.

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There are, however, quite a number of nouns referring to manufactured parts or emissions which are possessed by a general active construction; these are listed in Table 8.

TABLE 8: MANUFACTURED PARTS AND EMISSIONS IN KWAMERA
POSSESSED BY THE GENERAL ACTIVE CONSTRUCTION

<i>tegra</i> 'layer, stack; generation'	<i>tapinha</i> '(house) door'
<i>karukwáu</i> '(house) ridge-pole'	<i>napwir</i> '(house) wall'
<i>nivín</i> '(canoe) [main]sail'	<i>nikiatu</i> '(canoe) outrigger-boom'
<i>kwankurkur</i> 'outrigger stanchion'	<i>temín</i> 'outrigger-float'
<i>kasisig</i> 'gate'	<i>kwarua</i> 'gate'
<i>nimrákw</i> '(fire) ashes'	<i>nenís</i> 'steam'

A possible explanation for why at least some of these nouns are actively rather than directly possessed may be that they are not **inherently** parts of things, but **become** parts only after they have been made. Thus a sail or a ridge-pole is manufactured as a separate entity; only later is it attached to a canoe or a house. This does not explain why *tira* 'mast' and *tipuk* '(house) side wall' are possessed passively while *nikiatu* 'outrigger boom' and *napwir* '(house) wall' are possessed actively; but it does provide a partial explanation.

2.6 *Parts of plants*

A large number of nouns referring to parts of plants, listed in Table 9, are possessed in direct constructions; but there is also a smaller but significant number of nouns referring to plant parts, shown in Table 10, which are passively possessed.

TABLE 9: DIRECTLY POSSESSED PLANT PARTS IN KWAMERA

<i>(kwa-)nuá-</i> 'root'	<i>kwatpi-</i> 'extremity'
<i>nukfwé-</i> '(tuber root+) offshoot'	<i>nimusukwe-</i> 'decayed stump'
<i>nipopú-</i> '(tree) stump'	<i>(kwa-)npatiki-</i> '(tree) stump'
<i>(ni)kwa-</i> 'fruit, product of'	<i>(kwa-)tihí-</i> '(plant) flower'
<i>nikaki-</i> '(fruit, vegetable) stem'	<i>tupwe-</i> '(plant) fruit-stalk'
<i>nákumwhe-</i> '(coconut) fruit-stalk'	<i>nipavi-</i> '(taro) leaf-stalk'
<i>tarevi-</i> 'core'	<i>(kwa-)nuni-</i> 'seed, inside'
<i>tiki-</i> '(coconut) shell'	<i>(kwa-)tuku-</i> 'shoot, sapling'
<i>riki-</i> '(banana) sprout, sucker'	<i>nape-</i> 'section, length'
<i>tisi-</i> 'thorn, (banyan) aerial root'	<i>tímkimi-</i> '(tree) shade'

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kwankase- '(taro) old tuber at base of harvested root'
kwankinhi- '(taro) remnant of planted tuber'
kwankupwé-, níkisi- '(taro) small side tuber'
(kwa-)nimreki- 'small root fibre, fringe'
núkune- 'stump, trunk, base; foundation'
nuvivi- '(banana, cane) stem plus leaf'
nisesé- 'sprout, outgrowth, (vine) runner'
ruenhi- '(yam) runner; (rope) loop; scrotum, bag'
tímé- 'cutting set aside for replanting'

TABLE 10: PASSIVELY POSSESSED PLANT PARTS IN KWAMERA

<i>tapirisi</i> 'small surface root'	<i>titefafáu</i> 'heartwood'
<i>nipokpokas</i> '(banana+) fruit-stalk'	<i>nikakisir</i> '(coconut) stalk'
<i>tour</i> '(pandanus, banyan) aerial root'	<i>nipwéi</i> '(vegetable) oil'
<i>sapág, (ni)pisagi</i> '(tree) fork'	<i>tapakova</i> '(tree) fork'
<i>(kwa-)nitara</i> '(coconut) frond'	<i>niviani</i> 'runner, outgrowth'
<i>nakapáu, napakáu</i> '(coconut+) leaf-stalk'	<i>nipopóu</i> '(banyan) buttress root; ridge of land'

A few nouns referring to plant parts are possessed by the general active construction:

- (24) Kwamera *nosu* '(kava) root'
kwarigerig '(tree) small dead branches'
nipeka '(coconut) fibre'
nenha '(coconut) fibrous leaf sheath'

These actively possessed nouns refer to items which might be thought of primarily as something to be used – kava roots for drinking, dead branches for fires, coconut fibre as a strainer – rather than as a part of some plant. Similar comments could be made about at least some of the passively possessed nouns in Table 10. On the other hand, it is difficult to explain why, of the two nouns referring to aerial roots of banyans, *tisi-* is possessed directly but *tour* is possessed passively.

2.8 Discussion

This brief discussion of the grammar and semantics of Kwamera part terms has arrived at similar conclusions to those which Crowley (in press) arrived at for Paamese. Nouns referring to "permanent" parts of human or animal bodies or of plants, body products exuded as part of the normal human condition, aspects of individuality, and nouns expressing orientation, relative position or collection are viewed as inalienable, and are possessed in a direct

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construction. Nouns referring to intrinsic parts of bodies or things which are nevertheless removable under normal circumstances (as in butchering), or which are temporary manifestations (as pus), are generally seen as being somewhat less inalienable, and are possessed passively. Nouns referring to parts which can also be viewed as separate entities in their own right (as sails or ridge-poles) are generally possessed actively. Finally, nominalised verbs and certain kinds of compound nouns are not able to take possessive suffixes for morphological reasons, and occur in passive (or sometimes active) constructions.

There are a number of exceptions to these general statements; but I will leave these for the moment, pending a comparison with other Tanna languages.

3. OTHER TANNA LANGUAGES

Essentially, the other Tanna languages behave in roughly the same way as Kwamera when it comes to the possession of part nouns, and this is very briefly expanded on in section 3.1 below. However, there are some interesting areas of difference, which will be examined in sections 3.2 and 3.3.

3.1 *Confirmatory Lenakel evidence*

Although Lindstrom's (1986) dictionary of Kwamera contains probably more part terms than does Lynch's (1977) Lenakel dictionary, there are a few items in the latter for which there are no corresponding entries in the former. I will briefly refer to these here, as evidence confirming the hypotheses proposed above.

Table 11 lists a number of directly possessed nouns in Lenakel for which equivalents do not occur in the Kwamera dictionary. These refer to body parts, personal characteristics, orientations, manufactured parts and emissions, and plant parts.

TABLE 11: SOME ADDITIONAL LENAKEL DIRECTLY POSSESSED NOUNS

<i>tulhag-</i> 'bridge of the nose'	<i>nimulkenua-</i> 'neck'
<i>nikiv-</i> 'hair under arms'	<i>noua-rihi-</i> 'tentacle'
<i>nifu-</i> 'breastbone'	<i>nounii-</i> 'pubic hair'
<i>nouier-</i> 'male genitals'	<i>nukuer-</i> '(fowl) gizzard'
<i>navi-</i> 'power, current; (passing vehicle+) wind'	<i>netk-</i> '(person affected) 'poison due to sorcery'
<i>louk-</i> '(tree+) base, bottom'	<i>nuia-</i> '(yam) vine'
<i>nhag-</i> '[outside of] roof'	<i>nikavhe-</i> '[opposite] side'
<i>nivtai-</i> '[other] side'	

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Table 12, on the other hand, lists nouns in similar semantic areas which are possessed passively.

TABLE 12: SOME ADDITIONAL LENAKEL PASSIVELY POSSESSED NOUNS

<i>uus</i> 'dew-claw'	<i>noua-keapin</i> '(animal) gut'
<i>noua-nelpwa</i> 'phlegm'	<i>kual</i> '(house) window'
<i>nilmikil</i> '(boat) foresail'	<i>nulis</i> '(pudding) wrapping'
<i>nimik</i> '(fire) heat'	<i>n-aruoan-aan</i> 'beginning'
<i>niklhii-nar</i> '(river) bank'	<i>nalu</i> 'memorial'
<i>nianmira</i> '(crop) magic stone which has power over'	

It will be seen from a comparison of these two tables that similar patterns emerge. Nouns like *n-aruoan-aan* 'beginning' and *niklhii-nar* '(river) bank' cannot occur directly possessed, the former because it is a nominalisation, the latter because the second element of the compound is the noun *nar* 'thing', which cannot take possessive suffixes; *kual* '(house) window' and *nilmikil* '(boat) foresail' fit the pattern of parts manufactured separately from the whole to which they are later attached; and other nouns follow other familiar patterns, suggesting that the general hypotheses proposed in the last section for Kwamera are basically correct for other Tanna languages.

3.2 *The prefixed construction*

I move now to discuss areas of difference between Kwamera and other Tanna languages. As was seen above, only three Kwamera part nouns in Kwamera are possessed by the prefixed construction: *-kapwa* 'head', *-kúa* 'anus' and *-mwanipitare* 'dorsal fin'. In fact, only one other noun in Kwamera is possessed by this construction: *-ieri* '(man) wife's brother, sister's husband, friend, exchange-partner'. This is itself somewhat unusual grammatical behaviour: kinship terms in Kwamera (as in other Tanna languages) are possessed either directly (e.g. *remu-k* 'my father') or in a general active construction (e.g. *tata saiou* 'my dad'), the latter category being primarily address terms which have taken on a referential function.

In other Tanna languages, rather more nouns, though still a small number, occur in the prefixed construction. Cognates of the three Kwamera prefixed body parts given above as well as the kin term *-ieri* occur in some of these languages as prefixed nouns:⁷

⁷ Abbreviations used are N – North Tanna, W – Whitesands, L – Lenakel, S – Southwest Tanna, K – Kwamera.

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-*ieri*, or Lenakel *niel* 'friendship, exchange relationship' alongside *-iel*, suggests that a process like this might have taken place.

A number of other nouns occur in prefixed constructions with these same markers in some or all of the other Tanna languages, but not in Kwamera. Table 13 illustrates these:

TABLE 13: NOUNS PREFIXED WITH A FORM OF THE GENERAL ACTIVE MARKER IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN KWAMERA

	Cognate forms in other languages
L - <i>enar</i> 'vagina'	K <i>kanari</i> (General Active)
L - <i>kip</i> 'vagina'	K <i>kofe-</i> (Direct)
L - <i>uua</i> , S - <i>ua</i> 'vagina'	K (<i>kwa-</i>) <i>rue-</i> (Direct)
L - <i>pelaua</i> 'penis'	
L - <i>mwanatim</i> 'gills'	
L - <i>nimwa-nar</i> 'lid'	
N - <i>iiaoiao</i> 'lungs'	
W - <i>ulpis</i> 'heel'	L <i>uulpis</i> , K <i>kurpas</i> (Passive)

There is a further complication. There is a second set of nouns which occur in prefixed constructions in all Tanna languages except Kwamera, but in these constructions the possessive marker is phonologically related to the one used in **plant** possession. The prefixes used with these nouns are N W L *ne-*, S *ni-* (cf. the plant possessive-markers N W S *nai-*, L *ne-*). Kwamera generally uses passive indirect possessive constructions with cognate nouns. The nouns which occur with this prefix are listed in Table 14.

TABLE 14: NOUNS PREFIXED WITH A FORM OF THE PLANT POSSESSIVE MARKER IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN KWAMERA

	Cognate forms in other languages
N L S - <i>kauga</i> 'chin/cheek/jaw'	K <i>kauga</i> (Passive)
N W - <i>tou</i> , L - <i>rou</i> , S - <i>lakw</i> 'neck'	K <i>rukwi-nau</i> (Passive)
L - <i>tiva</i> 'larynx'	
S - <i>hau</i> 'penis'	
S - <i>kula</i> 'brain'	K <i>kwera</i> (Passive)

The last form in Table 14 is interesting. Lenakel has *nenourik* 'brain', which is possessed by a passive construction. I suggest, however, that this was originally possessed by a prefixed construction, and that the prefix (*ne-*) plus

3SG pronoun suffix (-*n*) has fused with the original Lenakel noun *ourik*, which is cognate with Southwest Tanna *kula* and Kwamera *kwera*, all of which probably derive from Proto Oceanic **qutok*.

While the suggestion that the nouns in (25) and Table 13 derive from a valued version of the general active construction seems reasonable, it is difficult to imagine any reason why a valued form of the **plant** possessive construction should be used with nouns like those in Table 14. This area has to remain one of the question-marks in this discussion.

3.3 *Other differences between Kwamera and Lenakel*

As was illustrated in examples (12) – (15) above, there are a number of other cases (which do not involve prefixed possession) in which cognate nouns are possessed in different constructions in different languages. In this discussion, I will restrict myself to comparing the differences which occur between Kwamera and Lenakel.

In order to make this comparison, it will be useful to introduce the idea of a **hierarchy of inalienability**. As has been shown in the hypotheses put forward so far, direct possession encodes the highest degree of inalienability, passive possession the next highest, and active possession the lowest. In this section, I will look at cases where Kwamera shows a different degree of inalienability for the “same” noun than does Lenakel.⁹

Table 15 lists nouns where Kwamera shows higher inalienability than does Lenakel. It appears from an examination of this table that Lenakel possibly assigns lower inalienability than Kwamera to parts which are easily removable: the first five or six nouns in the list tend to suggest this. The Lenakel form *tila* ‘mast’ is a borrowing from Futuna (a neighbouring Polynesian Outlier language), and although the Kwamera form *tira* is also a loan, it may be that some loanwords have not been fully assimilated into the inalienability hierarchy. (Lenakel forms in this and the next table are glossed only if they differ semantically from their Kwamera cognates).

⁹ There are also differences in the treatment of non-cognate nouns with identical or similar meanings: thus Lenakel *uikar* ‘seed’ is possessed passively, while Kwamera (*kwa-*)*nuni-* ‘seed, inside’ is possessed in a direct construction. Since these forms are not cognate, however, there may well be a number of possible explanations for this difference; and for this reason I will not concern myself with non-cognate forms here.

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TABLE 15: KWAMERA NOUNS SHOWING HIGHER INALIENABILITY

Kwamera: direct possession	Lenakel
<i>(ka)nipati-</i> 'horn, tusk'	<i>tinapaat</i> (Passive)
<i>nákumwhe-</i> '(coconut) fruit-stalk'	<i>nikouehem</i> (Passive)
<i>nipavi-</i> '(taro) leaf-stalk'	<i>nouanpaav</i> (Passive)
<i>tímkimi-</i> 'shade, shadow'	<i>tikomkom</i> (Passive) '(tree) shade-giving branches'
<i>nímuti-</i> 'scrap'	<i>nímtímit</i> (Active)
<i>nukupwé-</i> 'knot'	<i>kuiapuk</i> (Active)
Kwamera: passive possession	Lenakel: active possession
<i>tira</i> 'mast'	<i>tila</i> (General)
<i>(n)ímahán</i> 'bed, exchange-partner'	<i>nímhaua</i> (General) 'bed'

Table 16 shows nouns which have higher inalienability in Lenakel, and there are rather more of these. One clear difference here is in the treatment of manufactured parts, and also of parts of plants used as implements (e.g. Lenakel *nepwka*, Kwamera *nipeka* 'coconut fibre'): Lenakel appears to focus more on their 'part-ness', and thus possesses them passively, whereas Kwamera appears to look on them as discrete entities, and possesses them actively.

TABLE 16: LENAKEL NOUNS SHOWING HIGHER INALIENABILITY

Lenakel: direct possession	Kwamera
<i>típage-</i> 'palm of hand, sole of foot'	<i>tapwag</i> (Passive)
<i>nimwa-</i> 'placenta, afterbirth'	<i>nímahan</i> (Passive)
<i>nísgaa-</i> 'guts, intestines'	<i>naninha</i> (Passive)
<i>negra-</i> 'layer, stack; generation'	<i>tegra</i> (General Active)
Lenakel: passive possession	Kwamera: general active possession
<i>nouaníkinaar</i> 'Adam's apple'	<i>kwanari</i>
<i>nouanul</i> 'vein, artery, sinew etc.'	<i>noua</i>
<i>nousu</i> '(kava) root'	<i>nosu</i>
<i>neluiagiag</i> 'twig'	<i>kwarigerig</i> '(tree) small dead branches'

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Lenakel: passive possession

nepwka 'coconut fibre'

nigis '(coconut) fibrous leaf sheath'

luau '(house) ridge-pole'

napwir '(house) wall'

nivin '(canoe) [main]sail'

nikiatu '(canoe) outrigger-boom'

rimin '(canoe) outrigger-float'

nouanulul '(canoe) outrigger-stanchion'

nukulu 'gate'

tapin '(house) door'

nimraau '(fire) ashes'

nouah 'steam, smoke'

Kwamera: general active possession

nipeka

nenha

karukwau

napwir

nivin

nikiatu

temin

kwankurkur

kwarua

tapinha

nimrákw

nenis

4. CONCLUSION

In many descriptions of Oceanic languages, a simple distinction is drawn between direct or inalienable possessive constructions, in which body parts and parts of wholes are said to be possessed, and indirect or alienable constructions, which are used for "other" nouns. My own description of Lenakel fell into this category:

Kinship terms and most parts of the body or of a whole are normally inalienably [i.e. directly] possessed, although certain other nouns representing things intimately involved with the possessor are also possessed inalienably. (Lynch 1978:78).

Lenakel has a third type of possessive phrase which I have termed semi-alienable [i.e. passive]. In these constructions, the nouns possessed often represent parts of wholes which are in some way removable...Other nouns possessed semi-alienably do not, however, seem to involve the idea of removability, and some, in fact, are body parts...Thus no satisfactory basis for deciding the semantic range of semi-alienable possession has as yet been discovered. (Lynch 1978:84-85).

It is clear from what I have said in this paper that there is a satisfactory basis for deciding the semantic range of direct, passive and active possession when it comes to part nouns, at least in general terms. The inalienability hierarchy makes predictions as to the degree of inalienability of a particular noun, and morphological factors also play a part; and although there are some differences between languages, and some exceptions, the complex situation is reasonably explicable.

Crowley has pointed to a similar situation in Paamese:

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Inalienability in Paamese can be defined roughly as the relationship that holds between the referents of two nouns in which one normally has animate reference and the other is an aspect of this animate being which cannot exist independently of the being. Thus, body parts which would be life-threatening (or at least unbearably painful) if removed (under non-medical conditions) are possessed inalienably in Paamese, as well as a variety of body products that are exuded as part of normal rather than transient body functions (even though these all eventually become separated from our bodies). Internal body parts are generally treated as inalienable when they are perceived to be central to our emotions and our sense of individuality and to the maintenance of life itself. However, when an internal organ is one that is typically removed separately when butchering or cooking an animal for eating, it is considered to be alienable. (Crowley, in press).

In discussing similar problems in Paamese to those which I have looked at here with respect to the Tanna languages, Crowley concludes that

We are forced to look much more closely at the relationship between semantic inalienability and the structural category of directly suffixed nouns. Many semantic explanations for facts have become obvious to me which before had previously appeared exceptional. (Crowley, in press)

In a somewhat different vein, Pawley and Sayaba (1990) also show that the simple "part noun = direct possession" view does not work for some Fijian languages either. In Wayan Fijian, natural parts, personal qualities and similar nouns are possessed by the same construction as are some (but not all) kinship nouns; manufactured parts, however, are possessed in a different construction, the possessive marker of which is homophonous with that used in food and passive constructions.

It may very well be, therefore, that the statement I made at the beginning of this paper – that the Tanna languages are very different from other Oceanic languages in the way that parts are possessed – may turn out to be incorrect. That is, further investigation of other Oceanic languages may well show a situation as complex as that of Wayan, Paamese or the Tanna languages. We may be forced to abandon our simplistic view that "kinship terms and parts of the body and of a whole are directly possessed"; but in doing so we will be better describing both the grammatical and semantic systems of Oceanic languages.

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