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2

Ownership, part–whole, and other possessive–associative relations in Nêlêmwa (New Caledonia)

ISABELLE BRIL

'Possessive constructions' is a general term referring to an extensive and complex grammatical system of Noun–Noun determination or modification in Nêlêmwa, used in functions and contexts which are not restricted to the expression of possession or ownership *per se*, but are used in broader semantic contexts including kinship, body–parts, part–whole relations, attributes, as well as quantification or partitive relations conceived as a subtype of part–whole relations, also including various associative relations (Dixon 2010: 262ff.).[1] Possessive constructions also correlate with distinct noun categories, bound vs. free nouns, themselves selecting distinct constructions types: direct constructions (for all bound nouns and free nouns 1 and 2) or indirect constructions (for free nouns 3) which express semantic contrasts between close-inherent relations vs. more distant-contingent-transient relations. Two further parameters are at play, the animacy and definiteness of the determiner: definite human determiners correlate with ownership/possession or kinship relations, while non-human determiners, inanimates especially, select other types of relations.

'Possessive' constructions subdivide into core possessive relations and non-core associative or attributive relations (see Chapter 1).

- The core semantics are ownership (x possesses y in some inherent or contingent way), kinship (x is a kin of y), body–parts and part–whole relationship (x is a part of y), including part–whole quantification (§5).

[1] I wish to thank Alexandra Aikhenvald and Bob Dixon for comments on this chapter, which has also greatly benefitted from the discussions and comments from the workshop's participants.

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- The non-core semantics of 'possessive' constructions refer to inherent properties (x is an attribute/property of y), as in *bubuxa ciic* 'the green of this tree' or *ni mobwa mwa* 'in the decayed house' (*lit.* in the decay of the house), to class inclusion or hyponyms such as 'pig's food' (hyponym of 'food') (§§3.2; 3.5), the location or orientation of entities, conceived as the semantic and functional extension of part–whole relations, like *ni hâlû taap* 'under the table' (*lit.* in the shade of the table), time relation as in example (7), and associative relations (x is associated/ pertains to y) as in causal, purposive, comitative, benefactive relations (see §3.6.3).

Section 1 presents some general features of nominal possessive constructions in Nêlêmwa; §2 analyses possession by animates; §3 deals with part–whole relationship; §4 focuses on the possessive determination of deverbal nouns; §5 deals with the determination of quantifiers; §6 centres on predicative possession; and §7 offers some conclusions.

1 General characteristics of Nêlêmwa

1.1 *Argument structure and constituent order*

Nêlêmwa is a verb first language. Nominal arguments are post-verbal [VOA], but subject pronouns stand before the verb in [sVo] order. It has a mixed accusative–ergative system: it is accusative with subject/object pronouns, but post-verbal nominal arguments are marked as absolutive and ergative with [verb ABS.patient ERG. agent] order. Single nominal arguments of intransitive verbs are absolutive (with VS order). Absolutive is marked ∅, ergative markers are *ea-* (+ genitive animate NP) and *ru* (for inanimates) (Bril 2002: 134–42).

1.2 *Structure and characteristic features of possessive determination*

Direct and indirect possessive constructions are a hallmark of Oceanic languages. In Nêlêmwa, as in other Kanak and Oceanic languages, these constructions correlate with distinct noun classes (bound/relational nouns and free nouns). In languages lacking noun classes, direct and indirect constructions express semantic distinctions. In Manam for instance, direct constructions such as *baligo-gu* 'my grass skirt' (that I'm wearing) refer to an active or close relation, while indirect ones express a non-active or abstract relation with the possessed entity as in *baligo ne-gu* 'my grass skirt' (when I'm not wearing it) (Lichtenberk 1985a: 109).

Nêlêmwa has a head-dependent (possessee–possessor) structure. Direct possession is marked either by a postposed possessor NP (as in *mwa agu hleny* 'this person's house' (*lit.* house person this)) or by a possessive pronoun suffixed to the possessee (*mwa-ny* 'my house') (Table 2.1). Indirect possession is marked by a linker, as in *bu i na* 'my hook' (*lit.* hook of me). Pronouns marking indirect possession are formally

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Table 2.1. Direct and indirect possessive pronouns

	1sg	2sg	3sg	1du.incl.	1du.excl.	1plincl.	1plexcl.	2du	2pl	3du	3pl
Possessive suffixes (direct possession	*-ny*	*-m*	*-n*	*-(h)î*	*-man*	*-hâ*	*-va*	*-mon*	*-wa*	*-(h)li*	*-(h)la*
Indirect possession	*i na*	*i yo*	*i ye*	*i (h)î*	*i man*	*i hâ*	*i va*	*i mon*	*i wa*	*i (h)li*	*i(h)la*

similar to the oblique objects pronouns of verbs. Possessive pronouns only refer to animates, inanimates are ø-marked.

1.3 *Morphosyntactic and semantic features of possessive constructions*

1.3.1 *Noun classes and possessive constructions* There are two main noun classes: bound/relational nouns and free nouns (see Table 2.2). A few lexical items belong to both categories with semantic differences (*mwa* 'house', *mwa-t* 'container'), (§3.6.1). Free nouns further subdivide into the following three classes on morphosyntactic grounds: free nouns 1 have direct (juxtaposed or affixed) determination, free nouns 2 have direct determination with some root modification, free nouns 3 have indirect determination (marked by linkers *i*, *o*).

Table 2.2. Noun classes

		Root form with				
Type of determination	Noun Types	animate determ.	non-human determ.	Meaning	Possessed form	
direct	Bound nouns	*kua-n*	*kua-t*	foot	*kua-ny* *kua-t taap*	'my foot' 'the table leg'
	Classifiers	*khoo-n*	*khoo-t*	meat food	*khoo-ny nok* *khoo-t puaka*	'my fish to eat' 'pig's food'
	Free nouns 1	*mwa*		house	*mwa-ny*	'my house'
direct with root modif.	Free nouns 2	*wany*		boat	*waja-ny*	'my boat'
Indirect	Free nouns 3	*bu*		hook	*bu i na*	'my hook'

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The distribution of lexical items within these noun classes is only predictable for broad semantic fields: direct constructions express inherent, close relationships (including most kinship terms, body parts, etc.), while indirect constructions express transient, contingent, or remote relationships. But there are limits to semantic predictability in Nêlêmwa: for instance, *ka* 'year', *hmwaluk* 'moon, month', *taan* 'day', and *bwan* 'night' belong to different noun classes. This relative unpredictability results in part from mechanisms of language change.

(1) BOUND NOUNS Bound nouns have specific features: their citation form has an obligatory relational suffix varying with the category of the possessor: *-n*[2] (for humans), *-t* (for inanimates or non-specific humans), as in *kua-n* 'his/her foot' (+human), *kua-t* 'its foot' (of a table).

The *-t* suffix is the trace of a construct[3]/pertensive morpheme, that is of a relational marker on the possessee (on the term 'pertensive', see Chapter 1 this volume and Dixon 2010). This morpheme cliticizes to the root as suffix *-t*, which marks these nouns as relational. It also allows inherently relational nouns to occur independently (like the de-relational marker in Tolai, Mosel 1984: 40–3); *-t* also occurs on some deverbal nouns (see §4.2). It is 'probably a reflex of a former non-personal possessive relator' (Ozanne-Rivierre 1991: 327–30). It corresponds to *-t/-r* in neighbouring Nyelâyu, and could be related to the non-personal connector (rV) in Paici and to the form *tè-* (from *dè-n* 'his property') in Cèmuhî.

Bound nouns express inherently relational entities including objects in controlled and close relations. They include:

(i) all relational and possessive classifiers;
(ii) kinship reference terms (but address terms are link nouns);
(iii) body parts, some of which also serve as locative markers (§3.6.3);
(iv) nouns expressing causal, consecutive, purposive/benefactive or malefactive, comitative relations (§3.6.3);
(v) notions such as: *boo-t/-n* 'smell', *yaara-t/-n* 'name', *hâlûû-t/-n* 'shadow, image', *uye-t/-n* 'image, portrait', *kagu-t/-n* 'spirit', *faxe- /-n* 'taboo', *maada-t/-n* 'memory', *dera-t/-n* 'fear', *kaxaaxa-t/-n* 'support, certainty, trust';
(vi) abstract notions, *hâmwa-t/-n* 'replacement', *shala-t/-n* 'reserved object', *hâlee-t/-n* 'desired object', *bwaavaxe-t/-n* 'result, value, worth', *bwaga-t/-n* 'appendix, residue, left-over space';

[2] *-n* might also be the trace of a cliticized construct suffix. In Drehu (Loyalty Islands), the obligatory determiner of bound nouns is *-n* (Moyse-Faurie 1983: 168) which might be cognate with the non-personal genitive relator *ni^{ʔ} (Ozanne-Rivierre 1991: 332).

[3] Construct morpheme is the traditional label used to refer to such forms in Oceanic or in African languages (Creissels 2009), it is similar to the label pertensive used in this volume.

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(vii) inherent properties and qualities *hnye-t/-n* 'size', *thala-t/-n* 'width', *ura-t/-n* 'length', *avi-t/-n* 'side, flank', *âda-t/-n* 'slowliness, delay', *wada-t/-n* 'speed', *mobwa-t* 'decay';

(viii) modal nouns, *jaxa-t/-n* 'measure, ability, power, possibility', *awa-t/-n* 'will, heart, desire', *fha-t* 'charge, duty', *hnabwa-t* 'charge, duty';

(ix) time nouns *yeewa-t/-n* 'time'; locative, spatial nouns, *ni wooxa-t/-n* 'in the middle, among', *nanamwa-t* 'in the middle' (of a surface, an item), *na-t* 'interior', *fera-t* 'beneath';

(x) almost all quantifiers expressing partition from mass or count nouns (§5.2);

(xi) interjections: *mee-m!* 'listen!', *pwâ uta-m!* 'serves you well!', *habwaa-hla*! 'how nice they are !'.

Some are mostly used as predicates, with a possessive determiner expressing a core argument: *awa-ny nok* 'I want fish' (*lit.* will-my fish).

(1) kaxaaxa-ny aug hleny
support-POSS: lsg person this
I count on this person. (*lit.* will-my support)

(2) co â me hâmwa-ny
2sg go CONJ replacement-POSS:1sg
You're going to replace me. (*lit.* to be my substitute)

(3) na holaee-n
1sg leave-POSS:3sg
I say good-bye to him. (*lit.* I take his leave)

(II) REE NOUNS Free form nouns have bare citation forms, like *mwa* 'house', *bulaivi* 'club'. Free nouns 1 have direct determination like *mwa-m* 'your house'. Free nouns 2 display some root modification prior to direct determination (like *wany* 'boat' > *waja-m* 'your boat'). Free nouns 3 are link nouns indirectly possessed, like *bulaivi i yo* 'your club'.

(III) OSSESSIVE AND RELATIONAL CLASSIERS A last noun class requires classifiers for possessive constructions. These classifiers are bound nouns themselves. Some of them are relational classifiers specifying a type of relation, function, or use of the possessee (Lichtenberk 1983; Aikhenvald 2003). Most are intermediate between possessive and relational classifiers and specify some inherent property or feature of the possessee, as well as a type of relation to it. The classifier is the head of the construction. It takes a possessive suffix and is followed by an adjunct possessee.

(4) caa-**ny** kuvic
starch.food-POSS:1sg yam
my yam (to eat)

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Classifiers in New Caledonian languages generally pertain to specific domains, such as food, drinks, plants, baskets, animals, and weapons.[4] They express inherent properties of food types (flesh, starch, vegetable or leaves, crabs, etc.), types of ingestion (*kêâ-n nu* 'his coconut' (to drink)), or types of food processing (*maa-* chewed food):

Nêlêmwa classifiers:

khoo-	'meat or fish food'	*caa-*	'starch food' (poc *ka-, *kani 'eat')
kûû-	'vegetable food'	*khora-*	for sugar-cane, coconut flesh
maa-	'chewed food'	*kêâ-*	'drinks'
ââ-	'plant tubers/seedlings'	*thiiva-*	'flower seedlings'
aadaxi-	'weapons'	*pwaxi-*	for pets, or cattle (*lit.* child)

Keet 'basket' is also used as a possessive classifier: *kee-ny keala* 'my fishing basket' (*lit.* basket-my fishing basket) (Bril 2002: 367).

The classifier *aadaxi-* originally referred to stone weapons, like *aadaxi-ny tale* 'my sling-stones' (*lit.* CL-my sling). It now extends to all types of weapons or cutting objects, such as *aadaxi-n jixet* 'his gun', *aadaxi kaava* 'the cutting fin of the nason's tail'.

As expected with relational classifiers, some nouns may occur with various classifiers, depending on the semantics of the relationship:

caa-ny manyoong	'my cassava' (*caa-* classifier for starch food)
ââ-ny manyoong	'my cassava' (*ââ-* classifier for seedlings and plantations)
khoo-ny nok	'my fish' (*khoo-* food classifier for meat or fish)
fha-ny nok	'my fish' (*fha-* classifier for carried objects, brought from fishing)

(5)

xam	aa	kia-a	mwa	fha-n	nok
ASS	ITER	there.is.no-least	ASS	load-POSS:3sg	fish

He has again not brought back anything from fishing.

2 Possessive constructions with animates

The types of constructions (direct, semi-direct, or indirect) are constrained by noun classes.

[4] Xârâcùù and Iaai also have a general classifier for possessed goods. In Iaai (Loyalty Islands), the classifier may be a repeater, as in *nuu-k nu* 'my coconut tree' (CL-my coconut tree) (Ozanne-Rivierre 1976: 191).

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2.1 *Direct construction of bound nouns and free nouns 1*

Bound nouns and free nouns 1 are directly marked by a possessive suffix or a juxtaposed noun, and express an inherent ownership or association.

(I) BOUND NOUNS Bound nouns have an obligatory construct *-t/-n* suffix on their citation form. The suffix *-t* occurs with inanimate or non-specific human determiners. Compare: *kua-t* 'its foot' (+inanimate), *kua-t taap* 'the leg(s) of the table'; *kua-n* 'his/her foot' (animate), *kua Pwayili* 'Pwayili's foot'; the suffix *-n* cannot cooccur with a nominal possessor.

Apart from bound nouns, the *-t* suffix also occurs in constructions expressing part–whole relationships between inanimates, or with the relational forms of free nouns 2 and on nouns suffixed by the construct suffix *-a* (see §§3.3; 3.4.2). It also occurs on some nominalizations (§§4.1.2; 4.2).

(II) FREE NOUNS 1: DIRECT INHERENT DETERMINATION Free nouns 1 have direct inherent possessive marking, like bound nouns. Nouns belonging to this category are for instance: *mwa* 'house', *do* 'assagai', *du* 'bone', *she* 'head-support', *igu* 'duty, work', *awôlô* 'dwelling', *duba* 'percussion instrument', *mwa-ny* 'my house', *mwa Pwayili* 'Pwayili's house'.

2.2 *Root modification of free nouns 2*

The possessive construction of free nouns 2 displays some root modification which is often the trace of an older Proto-Oceanic form (Bril 2002: 35–8, 358).

ka	'year'	*ka**u**-n*	'his age'	POc * taq**u**n
nâxâât	'day'	*nâxââ**li**-n*	'his day'	PAN *daqa**Ni**
hma	'left'	*hma**u**-n*	'his left side'	POc * ma*u*Ri
wany	'boat'	*waj**a**-ny*	'my boat'	POc *waŋ**ka**
pôn	'hair'	*pole-n*	'his/her hair'	POc *pulu
kic	'belly'	*kiya-n*	'his/her belly'	POc * **tia**ni
hâbwan	'clothes'	*hâbwali-ny*	'my clothes'	
dep	'mat'	*dewo-m*	'your mat'	
wadat	'sling'	*wadali-ny*	'my sling'	

(6) ku wa-giik kau-ny hmwiny
PERV CL-one year-POSS:1SG here
I have been here for a year. (*lit.* it is one my year here)

These root modifications only occur with possessive or relational constructions; deictic or anaphoric determiners only trigger intervocalic sandhi on nouns ending with a stop (Table 2.3).

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2.3 *Indirect construction of link nouns (free nouns 3)*

Link nouns require a linker (*i* + for humans, a possible reflex of POc *qi), and *o* + for collective/non-specific human or inanimate determiners (see §3.5). They express more distant, alienable, transient possession, loan words, nominalized stative or intransitive verbs. Cardinal numerals also belong to this type (see §§4.1; 5.1).

Some are used as predicative nouns:

(7) ku hule **i** yo hna-mu hmwiny?
PERV long.time LINK 2sg NMZ-stay here
Have you been staying here long? (*lit.* long time of you staying here?)

(8) kâyaa **i** hla hagi shâlaga
habit LINK 3pl fish crab
They are used to fishing crabs. (*lit.* habit of theirs fishing crab)

While the linker *i* is specific to indirect possessive determination, *o* also occurs in hyponymic relations with inanimate determiners.

Noun classes and their constructions are summarized in Table 2.4.

2.4 *Mixed possessive and qualifying constructions*

When bound or free nouns have both a possessive and a qualifying determiner, the two types may not be stacked, and the noun is repeated:

(9) waja-ny wany hnap (*waja-ny hnap)
boat-POSS:1sg boat sail
my sail-boat

(10) ââdaxi-m ââdaxi naat (from ââdak 'stone')
stone-poss:2sg stone oven
your oven stones

Compare with:

(11) ââdaxi naara-m
stone oven-POSS:2sg
the stones of your oven

TABLE 2.3. Demonstrative vs. possessive determination

Root	Demonstrative determination	Possessive determination
wany	*wany eli* 'that boat'	*waj**a**-m* 'your boat'
ka	*ni ka eli* 'that year'	*pwadu ka**u**-n* 'he is two years old' (*lit.* two year-his)
cet	*cer-eli* 'that cooking-pot'	*ce**la**-ny* 'my cooking-pot'

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Table 2.4. Possessive constructions and noun classes in Nêlêmwa

Nominal categories	Determination	Morphosyntactic devices	Type of possessor or determiner	Semantic correlates	
Bound nouns	Direct	possessive suffix	humans	Inherent **ownership**	
		nominal apposition	specific animates		**inherent relations (part–whole, hyponym)**
	construct suffix	suffix *-t* + nominal apposition	non-specific animates; inanimates		**inherent relations (part–whole, hyponym)**
Free nouns 1	direct	possessive suffix	humans	Inherent **ownership**	
		nominal apposition	animates		
Free nouns 2	semi-direct	phonic change (type (C)V) before possessive determination	humans	Inherent **ownership**	
			animates; inanimates		inherent relations
Free nouns 3	indirectlinker	linker ***i***	specific humans	Alienable, transient **ownership**	
		linker ***o***	non-specific animates; inanimates		contingent, transient relation
All free nouns	**construct** suffix	suffix *-**a***	mostly inanimates		inherent relations (part–whole, hyponym)
All noun types	**construct** marker	nasalization	inanimates		part–whole, associative, hyponym

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2.5 *Kinship*

The main distinction for kinship terms is between address and reference terms, not between kins and in-laws. Address terms are free, indirect nouns, while reference terms are bound nouns with direct possession. There are three main exceptions, *hua* 'grandfather', *gee* 'grandmother', and *âlô* 'father's sister', which are indirectly possessed with *i*. These former address terms have come to be used as reference terms. The reference term *kibuu-n* 'grandfather' is now only used in ceremonial speeches.

(1) DYADIC KINSHIP An interesting aspect of kinship in Nêlêmwa is dyadic kinship terms[5] referring to couples or groups, such as 'grandmother/-father and grandson/-daughter', mother's brother/sister and nephew/niece, step-father and step-son, co-spouses, brother and sister relation, etc. (Bril 2002: 367–8). Dyadic kinship terms are marked by a circumflex *â-* ~ *am-* . . . *-n*.[6] The kin term used is the one that refers to the lower pole of the age and social hierarchy (i.e. children and women; elder people, elder men particularly, are held in high respect). Thus the dyadic term *â-vabuu-n*[7] 'grandfather and grandson/daughter' is based on *pabuu-n* 'grandson/daughter', as in *hliibai â-vabuu-n* 'the(2) grandfather and grandson/-daughter' (*lit.* those2 grandfather and grandson/daughter). Similarly, the dyadic term referring to a married couple, *â-maawa-n* 'the couple', is based on *maawa-* 'spouse'.

3 Part–whole and other relations with inanimate determiners

Part–whole and other associative constructions also subdivide into direct, semi-direct or indirect constructions, with a similar distinction between inherent vs. contingent relationship. However, they are morpho-phonologically more complex than ownership, and involve various construct/pertensive suffixes. Those applying to inanimate determiners display the greatest variety of constructions.

3.1 *Compound nouns vs. part–whole relationship*

In contrast with possessive part–whole constructions, compound nouns are juxtaposed without any morpho-phonological modification, but in a different order.[8] Compare the compound *wany hnap* 'sail boat' (*lit.* boat sail) with the part–whole relationship *hnawu wany* 'the boat's sail' (*lit.* sail of boat).[9]

[5] Also attested in other Oceanic and Kanak languages (La Fontinelle 1976; Ozanne-Rivierre 1991).

[6] *am-* before < *th, kh* > and *â-* before all other consonants. The suffix *-n* is another relic trace of the 'construct' marker.

[7] Intervocalic sandhi: [p] > [v].

[8] In Manam (Lichtenberk 1985b) measure terms 'a string of fish', 'a bag of coprah' are juxtaposed compounds, like qualifying compounds 'sweet potato'.

[9] Other examples of qualifying N–N compounds refer to properties, *âlô thaamwa* 'young girl' (*lit.* child-woman), *daan pânâât* 'stony-path' (*lit.* path stone), species (*duu paan* 'pandanus leaf').

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3.2 *Part–whole constructions with* BOUND NOUNS*: the construct suffix* -t

The construct suffix *-t* occurs with inanimate determiners or with non-specific animate determiners.

3.2.1 *Possession vs. creation of hyponyms* Compare constructions with an animate, specific possessor in (12a–13a), with constructions in (12b–13b) where the suffix *-t-* cooccurs with non-specific animates: *puaka* and *aayo* refer to the whole class, as specifiers of a kind of food, and express class-inclusion—by defining a hyponym of food—rather than ownership:

(12) a. khoo puaka mwexi
food pig there
(It's) the food of the pigs over there.

b. khoo-**t** puaka
food-*t* pig
(It's) pig's food. (reference to kind)

(13) a. khoo aayo-â
food chief-poss:1pl.inc
(It's) our chief's food-share.

b. [khoo-**t** aayo] nok
food-*t* chief fish
Fish is chief's food. (reference to kind)

3.2.2 *Concrete vs. abstract body parts for non-human animates* If the body–part relationship is inalienable with a definite possessor as in (14a), the construction is direct without *-t*. If it refers to a severed body–part as in (14b), *-t* remains and the relation tends towards typing. The scope of the demonstrative is on the whole hyponym *shi-t shâlâga* 'crab claw' in (14b).

(14) a. hâk [shi [shâlâga ena]]
big claw crab that
The claw(s) of that crab is/are big.
(possession, body–part)

b. hâk [[shi-**t** shâlâga] hleny]
big claw-*t* crab this
This crab claw is big.
(relational, severed body–part)

In Tolai, 'the de-relationalised form of the body part is used if it refers to a body–part that has been separated from its body' (Mosel 1984: 43, 214). In Longgu (Solomon Islands, Hill 1994) and in Tigak (New Ireland, Beaumont 1979: 62) determination is indirect with split part–whole relationship.

3.2.3 *Part–whole relationship for inanimates* The construct suffix *-t* also appears in part–whole relationships of inanimate entities as in (15a), while body–part relations with definite human possessors are juxtaposed (15b).

(15) a. kua-**t** taap hleny
foot-*t* table this
the legs of this table

b. kua âlô hleny
foot child this
this child's feet

Part–whole relationships of inanimate entities and human body parts are thus treated differently, as also noted in Tolai by Mosel:

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Nouns denoting body-parts are *only inalienably* possessed if they refer to the *body-parts of human beings or animals*, but not if they denote parts of plants or objects. In that case, they enter N1-*na*-N2 relational constructions. (Mosel 1984: 42)

3.2.4 *Concrete part–whole vs. abstract spatial relationship* The suffix *-t* occurs in part–whole relationships of inanimates when the part is a concrete, distinct entity, as in *kua-t taap* 'the legs of the table'. It does not occur in more abstract, spatial relations such as *boda wany* 'the stern of the boat', *boda ara-xua-ny* (*lit.* hind surface-foot-my) 'my heel', *boda-(f)wamwa* (*lit.* hind country) 'the north of the country', *maa-(f) wamwa i Uvea* 'in the south of Ouvea' (*maa-t/-n* 'face, front'), *bwa ara-maa mwa* 'at the front of the house'.

3.3 *Part–whole and other associative relations with* FREE NOUNS 2

Determination of free nouns 2 is semi-direct with some root modifications, which are often an etymological trace that is retained in the determined form, but is lost in the bare form of the word.

daap	'ashes'	*daawv**u**- fagau-n*	'the ashes from his body'	POc *dapu
daan	'path'	*dâ**â**l**â** malep*	'the path of life'	POc *nsalan
bwan	'night, date'	*bwal**i** perui eli*	'the day of the meeting'	POc *boŋi
nâxâât	'day'	*nâxâ**â**l**i** hôdam*	'a day of fast'	PAN *daqaNi
hnap	'sail'	*hnawu wany*	'the sail of the boat'	
pum	'smoke'	*pubu yaavic*	'the smoke of the fire'	

The semantics include part–whole, body secretions and excretions, container–content relationships, inherent properties, specific uses, etc.

The genitive construction of some of these free nouns 2 is inalienable: *hnawu wany* 'the sail of the boat', *hnawu-t* 'its sail'; *naat* 'earth oven', *naara-ny* 'my oven', *naara wan* 'an oven of (containing) turtles'.

3.4 *Construct markers for part–whole relations with inanimate determiners*

Two other construct/pertensive markers, one involving the nasalization of the possessee's final vowel and the other the suffix *-a*, result from the incorporation of former linkers.

3.4.1 *Nasalization: all noun types with inanimate determiners* The nasalisation of the final vowel of the possessee occurs with all noun classes, but only with inanimate determiners. It marks a part–whole relationship (secretions, product, ingredient, container–contained), as well as the specification of material, destination, etc.

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Nasali\ation results from the clitici\ation, then loss of a former genitive *NV linker or construct suffix *-N, with regressive nasali\ation of the final vowel. This linker or construct suffix may reflect the POc associative linker *ni (Lichtenberk 1985a; Lynch 1996) which is still attested as *-n* in other New Caledonian languages[10] (Ozanne-Rivierre 1991: 332–3). Compare Nêlêmwa *cîî ciic* 'the bark of the tree' (*cii-t* 'skin, bark'), with Nemi *cii-n*[11] *ceec* 'the bark of the tree'. In Iaai, the linker *-en* expresses destination or relation, while qualification is juxtaposed (as in Nêlêmwa).

Iaai (Loyalty Islands, Ozanne-Rivierre 1976: 186-187)

		inanimate determiner	qualification
umwa	'house'	*umw-**en** galu* 'shelter for boats'	*uma weto* 'stone house'
taŋ	'basket'	*taŋ-**en** owic* 'basket for bananas'	*taŋ owic* 'a basket of bananas'

In Manam, two of the three markers of inalienable possession are the general classifier *ne-* which also marks a part–whole relationship, kinship, edible relation, psychological states and the suffix *-ŋa* used for collective meaning ('taro crumbs, pubic hair') (Lichtenberk 1985b: 295).

Nasalisation in Nêlêmwa occurs on all noun types as shown below:

Bound nouns (see Bril 2002: 31–33)

pwa-t	'fruit'	*pwâ nu* 'coconut' (*lit.* fruit.of coconut)	POC *pua(q) 'fruit
		pwâ-xîlûû waja-ny 'the anchor of my boat' fruit.of-anchor boat-my	
cii-t	'skin, bark'	*cîî vagau-ny*[12] 'my skin'	POC *kulit 'skin'
waa-t	'root'	*wââ pat* 'the root of the fern'	POC *wakaR 'root'
kuu-t	'seedling'	*kûû kuk* 'seedling of sugar-cane'	POC *qulu 'head, top'

Free nouns 1

fwa	'hole, opening'	*fwâ-jahoot* 'the mouth of the river'	
keet	'basket'	*kêê-puyiu* 'basket for valuables';	PPN *kete

Compare with *kee-ny* 'my basket' and with the compound: *ke-paan* 'pandanus basket'.

[10] Drehu's non-personal genitive linker *n(e)* (*waaca ne gutu* 'chicken leg'), might be cognate with *ni.

[11] The construct suffix is often homonymous with the 3rd person singular pronominal suffix, but they are morphologically distinct.

[12] Direct possession **cii-ny* is ungrammatical.

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Free nouns 2

kha	'liana, rope'	*khâ-kîlû* 'the chain of the anchor' (*kîlû* 'anchor');	
	compare with:	*kha**u**-ny* 'my rope'	POC* taq**un**
pôn	'hair, feather',	*pôô nua-n* (*lit.* hair mouth-his) 'his beard'	
	compare with:	*pô**le**-n* 'his/her hair'	POC *pulu

Free nouns requiring classifiers:

wi	'water'	*wîî-ciic* 'sap of the tree', *wîî-nu* 'coconut water'	
		wîî thii-n 'mother's milk' (*lit.* liquid breast-her)	POC *waiR

Compare with *kêâ-ny wi* 'my(drinking) water' (CL.drink-my water) and with a compound: *wii naam* 'drinking water' (*naam* 'sweet, tasteless') (Bril 2002: 33).

Free nouns 3

muuc 'flower' *mûû-ciic* 'tree-blossom'; compare: *muuy-i na* 'my flower'

Other concomitant morphological changes include the loss of final -C#:

fot	'sparks'	*fô yaavic*	'fire sparks'	
yhoot	'shoot'	*yhôô-bolaa*	'shoot of banana tree'	
dexet	'rust, sap'	*dexê-ciic*	'sap of tree'	
kiit	'bundle'	*kîî-ciic*	'bundle of firewood'	
ciic	'tree, wood'	*cîî mwa*	'main rafts of the house'	POC *kai

They also include the drop of the last syllable (Bril 2002: 33–4; 366), as in *shâget* 'content', whose reduced form *shâ-* expresses container–contained configuration applying to some body parts like *shâ-idaamaa-ny* 'the pupil of my eye', *shâ-kiya-ny* 'my bowels' and to other part–whole relations like *shâ-wany* 'the crew of the boat'; *shâ-vhaa* 'the meaning of the words'.

3.4.2 *Construct suffix* -a *: inherent relationship with non-human determiners* The suffix *-a* could be the trace of POc *ka, a marker of subordinate, uncontrolled possessive relation. Manam has a reflex *-ʔa* for inalienable constructions in which the determiner is an immediate source of the possessee, or a part of the possessee (as in 'my shadow, fire-smoke, eye-mucus, mango-juice') (Lichtenberk 1985b: 295).

(1) DETERMINATION OF *FREE NOUNS* In Nêlêmwa, relational constructions with *-a* occur with non-human, mostly inanimate determiners and express inherent relationship (part–whole, properties, by-product, excretions) (Bril 2002: 360–1). They occur with all free noun classes, ± directly possessed, including loan words. Once turned into inherently relational forms by *-a*, these nouns may then host the

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suffix *-t* (like bound nouns) if the determiner is inanimate, as in *hiing* 'husk-fibre', *hiig**a** nu* 'coconut husk-fibre', *hiig**a-t*** 'its husk-fibre'.

shôlôk 'marrow'	*shôlôx**a** du* 'bone marrow'	
böök ~ *bööt* 'seed'	*böö**x**a wâric* 'seed of *Semecarpus atra*'	
maagoop 'beam'	*maagoov**a** mwa* 'the main beam of the hut'	
kabaeep 'lintel'	*kabaeev**a** mwa* 'the lintel of the house'	
nigut 'central post'	*nigul**a** mwâ* 'the main post of the hut'	
pot 'noise, din'	*por**a** bira* 'the noise of the waves'	*por**a-t*** 'its noise'
hmwaluk 'moon'	*hmwalux**a** tilu* 'the month of harvesting',	*hmwalux**a-t*** 'month of'
mwêêp 'wake'	*mwêêv**a** nok* 'wake of the fish'	*mwêêv**a-t*** 'its wake'

Free noun 2	relational determination	possession
wat 'link, cord, vein'	*war-**a** bwaa-n* 'his head-band' band-c head-his	*wal**e**-ny* 'my belt'

Loan words	relational determination	possession
baek 'bag'	baex**a** *shuka* 'a bag of sugar'	*baex-**i** na* 'my bag'
miit 'meat'	*miir**a** puaxa* 'pork meat'	***khoo-ny** miit* 'my meat'

(II) DETERMINATION OF PROPERTY NOUNS WITH - ***a*** determination of property or state nominals, nominalizations, and ordinals are also marked by the construct suffix *-a* (§§4.1.2; 4.2; 5.1), as in *khûûk* 'roar' > *khûûx **a** loto* 'the roar of the car'; *dâlâk* 'deep' > *dâlâx **a** fwâ-wi* 'the depth of the water'; *pwaaluk* 'heavy (or) heaviness' > *pwaalux **a** -t* 'its weight'; *hulak* 'old' > *hulax **a** kavebu* 'the aged men of the clan' (bril 2002: 362).

(16) nôôlî bubux-**a** ciic hleny
look:TR green-c tree this
Look at the green of this tree!

(17) pwââdagax-**a**[13] jowo ena
NOMZ-be.beautiful-c door-frame that
the beauty of this door-frame

(III) SUMMARY OF PART–WHOLE AND ASSOCIATIVE RELATIONSHIPS Part–whole and associative relationships are the most diverse in Nêlêmwa and other New Caledonian languages. In Cèmuhî, bound nouns are directly owned, but link nouns are marked by no fewer than five linkers which have different semantics and may all carry possessive suffixes (Rivierre 1980: 152–7): *tè-* (probably from *dè-n* 'property') marks alienable relationship; the other three linkers *ko-*, *hê-*, *nè-* mark a part–whole relationship and inclusion (*ko-* is also a locative, indirect object marker), *hê-* (marks

[13] Compare with *pwââdagax-**i** ak hleny* (*lit.* beautiful-LINK man this) 'the handsomeness of this man'.

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part–whole or body–part relationship), *nè-* only marks relationships between inanimate nouns and occurs in verbo-nominal determination.

3.5 *Determination of free nouns 3 with inanimate or non-specific human determiners*

Indirect determination by inanimate or by non-specific human entities, is marked by *o* (also a locative preposition) and expresses contingent, accessory, or subjective relationship (in contrast with the construct suffix *-a*). It often defines types or hyponyms as in (18a); compared with possessive determination in (18b):

(18) a. hân xe shaya **o** ak
hunting TOP work LINK man
Hunting is men's work. (hyponym of work)

(18) b. shaya **i** thaamwa eli
work LINK woman that:ANAPH
(It's) the work of that woman.

The functions of *o* in Nêlêmwa are reminiscent of *ko-* in Cemuhî or *xo-* in Nemi (which are also locative markers meaning 'on': *wâ xo hiu-ng* 'the vein on my hand'), with one important difference: *ko-* and *xo-* have possessive suffixes (Cemuhî *cinu ko-n* 'his illness'; Nemi *daama xo-ng* 'my chief': Ozanne-Rivierre 1991: 337). They mark nominal determination as well as indirect objects of verbs.

3.6 *Categorial and construction variations*

A few nouns occur both as bound and free nouns with different meanings.

3.6.1 *Variation with animacy and specificity* These variations are conditioned by the two main factors: animacy and specificity of the determiner (Bril 2002: 370–2). The bound form with the suffix *-t*, occurs with inanimate or with non-specific animate determiners and expresses part–whole relationships; while the free form occurs with specific animate possessors (Table 2.5).[14]

Compare *doo-t pa* 'the sting of the stingray' (generic/kind), with body–part relation *doo pa* 'the stingray's sting' with a specific animate determiner. The forms *mwa* 'house' ~ *mwa-t* 'container' show similar variations (Table 2.6).

The two words, *da* and *daa-t* (from POc *daRaq 'blood'), have drifted further apart: *da* 'blood' is a link noun with a human possessor (*da i na* 'my blood'[15]) and a

[14] Ozanne-Rivierre (1991: 324) points out that body parts in Drehu are usually free nouns, while part–whole relationship of inanimates are bound nouns occurring with the non-personal genitive marker *-n(e)*: *im* 'arm' > *ime-n* 'sleeve'.

[15] In other Kanak languages, 'blood' is inalienable; in Nêlêmwa, *daa-ny* 'my blood' is only accepted as meaning 'my kin'. A more common expression is *wîî-agu* 'blood' '*lit.* the liquid of people'.

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Table 2.5. Categorial variation

Bound noun (+ inanimate or non-specific animate Det^{er})	Free noun 1–3 (+ human Det^{er})	Free noun 3 (+human Det^{er})
doo-t 'sting, thorn'	*do* 'spear, assagai'	
daa-t'sap, secretion'		*da* 'blood'
mwa-t'container'	*mwa* 'house'	
	hulak 'ancestor'	*hulak* 'husband'

Table 2.6. Categorial variation of *mwa* ~ *mwa-t*

Bound noun: *mwa-**t*** 'container'Relational determination with *-**t***	Free noun: *mwa* 'house'direct possession
inanimate determiners *mwa-**t** wi* 'water-pot' *mwa-**t** hele* 'knife-sheath'	
non-specific animate determiners *mwa-**t** agu Pum* 'the dwellings of people in Poum' *mwa-**r**-âlô* 'placenta' (container of child) (lenition *t* > *r*)	possession with **specific animates** *mwa agu mahleena* 'these people's houses' *mwa âlô hleny* 'this child's house' *mwa-ny* 'my house'

bound noun *daa-t* 'fluid, sap' with a non-human determiner (*daa-t ciic* 'the sap of the tree'). Compare with the juxtaposed compound *daa ciic* 'tree sap'.

3.6.2 *Contingent or inherent relations: choice of constructions* Very few nouns allow varying constructions correlating with inherent or contingent relations, rather than ownership. One of them is *fwâhuk* 'tale, story':

(19) *fwâhuxa-**ny*** 'my story' (of what I am) (direct contruction)
*fwâhuux-**i** na* 'my story' (that I know) (indirect contruction)
*fwâhuk **nai** na* 'my story' (one about me) (locative contruction)
story LOC 1sg
*fwâhuk **na** **shi-ny*** 'my story' (told from my viewpoint)
story LOC side-POSS:1sg

3.6.3 *Categorial change and grammaticalization* The last type of categorial change correlates with the grammaticalization of bound nouns referring to body–part or part–whole relationships into adpositions.

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(I) LOCATIVE ADPOSITIONS Body parts are common sources of adpositional markers: *shi-t/-n* 'hand, side' is thus used as a locative, beneficiary adposition 'to, at', *ara-maa-t/-n* 'face, front' as a locative adposition 'before', like *duaxi-t/-n* 'back, behind', etc.

Bwaa-t/-n 'head, top' grammaticalizes as *bwa* 'on' with contact, and as *bwaat* without contact: consider the body part *bwaa Kaavo* 'Kaavo's head', the part–whole relation *bwaa hoogo* 'the top of the mountain', the locative preposition *bwa hoogo* 'on the mountain'. Without contact or adjacence, the bound form *bwaa-t* grammaticalizes as a locative adposition with indirect determination under the form *bwaar-o* (+ inanimate), *bwaar-i* 'above'.

(20) je bwaa-r-**i** ye
loc.pred top-*t*-link 3sg
It is above him/her.

In Longgu (Hill 1994: 9, 15), locative nouns mostly express part–whole relationships; disconnected, non-adjacent relations are also marked by indirect constructions, which may vary with other parametres such as visibility.

Other morpho-phonological changes occur in Nêlêmwa; for instance *bwa thala mwa* 'to the side of the house' marks a part–whole relationship (*thala-t* 'side'), while the adposition *thara wi-yaak* 'by the sea-side' marks a spatial boundary, not a part–whole relation.

(II) CAUSAL OR BENEFACTIVE NOMINAL ADPOSITIONS Bound nouns like *puxe-t* 'stump, base' (POC *puqun) or *paxi-t* 'tuber, reason' also function as nominal causal adpositions (Bril 2002: 129–30). *Puxe-t* has two different constructions:

1 One involves the construct device of nasalization and refers to a part–whole or close relationship, as in *puxê/pwê nu* 'coconut (tree) stump', *puxê mwa* 'the wall of the house', *puxê agu* 'the origin of people', and to causal relations such as (21):

(21) puxê u-perui i hla
origin NOMZ-meet LINK 3pl
(It's) the reason of their meeting

2 The bound form also grammaticaliaes as a causal (detrimental or benefactive) adposition as in (22), with indirect determination *puxer-i* if the determiner is human (23); compare with *bwaar-i ye* 'above him' (20).

(22) kio i mago-yo xe puxe-**t** duk
NEG 3sg sleep-good TOP origin-*t* noise
(If) he did not sleep well, it's because of the noise.

(23) kio i kaaluk xe puxe-**r-i** na
NEG 3sg fall TOP origin-*t*-LINK 1sg
(If) he did not fall, it's thanks to me (benefactive).

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(III) COMITATIVE, BENECIARY, MALEFACTIVE NOMINAL ADPOSITIONS Among other adpositional bound nouns are those marking comitative (*mudi-n* 'company, with') and malefactive cause (*âlââ-t* 'ailment'):

(24) a. co â mudi thaamwa ena b. co â mudi-n
2sg go company woman that 2sg go company-POSS:3sg
Go with that woman Go with her/in her company

(25) thân noo-n âlââ khon bai
block throat-POSS:3sg ailment cough ANAPH
His throat is hoarse from coughing. (*lit.* ailing from cough)

4 Possessive determination of nominalizations

Genitive constructions of nominalizations vary with verb types, but follow the mentioned strategies with the linkers *i*, *o,* and the construct suffix *-a* (Bril 2002: 372–8).

4.1 *Nominalized stative and intransitive verbs*

Possession of nominalized stative and intransitive verbs is marked by *i*, *o*, and by *-a* if some inherent relation is involved.

(26) u-haxaxa **i** na
NOMZ-fear LINK 1sg
my fear

An *o*-marked inanimate determiner is marked resumptively by *le* (27) (Bril 2002: 375):

(27) u-taabwa **o** mwa khere > u-taabwa **le** 'its shape'
NOMZ-sit LINK house holy
the shape of the temple

4.1.2 *Contingent* o *vs. inherent* -a The three possessive constructions of nominalized stative verbs appear in (28): *i* (+animate), *o* and *-a* for inanimates; *o* marks contingent, subjective property, while the construct suffix *-a* expresses inherent, objective property.

(28) a. u-pwââdagax-**i** ye
NOMZ-be.handsome-LINK 3sg
his handsomeness (contingent, +animate determiner)

(28) b. u-pwââdagax-**o** jowo ena > *u-pwââdagak* ***le*** 'its beauty'
NOMZ-be.beautiful-LINK door-frame that
the beauty of this door-frame (contingent on the speaker, + inanimate determiner)

(28) c. u-pwââdagax-**a** jowo ena > *u-pwââdagax-**a**-**t*** 'its beauty'
NOMZ-be.beautiful-C door-frame that
the beauty of this door-frame (inherent, objective, +inanimate determiner)

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4.2 *Nominalized transitive verbs with the construct suffix* -a

Nominalised transitive verbs usually have the patient as their prime determiner, marked by *-a*, and indicating an inherent part–whole relationship (29).

(29) shi aa-hobwaxe-**a** mwa eli
at AGT.NOMZ-keep:TR-C house ANAPH
at (the place of) the ward of that house

This inherently relational form may then host the suffix *-t* (as in §3.4.2 above) when the determiner is inanimate. The agent (when mentioned) appears as the indirect possessive determiner of the nominalization as in (30).

(30) u-diya-**a**-**r**-**i** na (intervocalic sandhi : *-t* > *-r*)
NOMZ-do-C-*t*-LINK 1sg
(It's) my way of doing it. (*lit.* the doing of it of me) (**u-diya-**a** i na*)

To sum up, inanimate patient determiners are marked like inherent part–whole relationships, while agent determiners are indirect. To promote the agent as the prime possessive (indirect) determiner, the nominalized verb must be detransitivized (Bril 2002: 376–7).

5 Relational determination of quantifiers

Ordinals, cardinals, and various quantifiers display similar determination by *i*, *o*, *-a*.

5.1 *Ordinal and cardinal numbers*

Ordinals are suffixed by the construct suffix *-a* (which may host the *-t* suffix), indicating an inherent relationship between the entity and its rank (Bril 2002: 385–6).

(31) *wa-du* 'two' (*lit.* CL-2; *wa-* classifier of long objects)
*wa-du-**a** wany* 'the second boat'; *wa-du-**a**-**t*** 'the second'

Cardinal numbers are marked indirectly by *i* (+human), *o* (+inanimate or non-specific animate):

(32) aa-xi-ax-**i** ak
CL-one-man-LINK man
They are/there are twenty men (*aa-xi-ak* 'twenty' is literally 'one man')

5.2 *Measure nouns, part–whole quantification*

The quantification domain of various other nominal quantifiers is expressed by ±direct genitive determiners, varying with the nominal class of the quantifier (Bril 2002: 403–5). Many quantifying expressions (*khooba-t* 'number') and partitioning

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quantifiers are bound, inherently relational nouns with direct genitive determiners referring to part–whole relation, *hmava-t* 'part', *khola-t* 'piece, part, nephew', *hava-t* 'portion' (widthwise), *neya-t* 'part, piece, middle' (lengthwise), *ava-t* 'amount, some', *bale-t* 'pair, companion, the other' (of a pair), (Bril 2002: 393–6):

(33) hli uya aa-ru ava-hla[16]
3du arrive CL-two amount-POSS:3pl
Two of them have arrived (*lit.* 'two of their amount')

(34) i fhe bale-va aa-xiik
3sg take companion-POSS:1pl.exc CL-one
He took one of us.

Others refer to quantifying operations: *mwêêloo-t* 'remnant/remain' (after substraction), *haxaa-t* 'lack' (before completeness), *au-n* 'n-times' (Bril 2002: 383–5, 390–2):

(35) ênа xe ku haxaa-wa
now TOP PERV lack-POSS:2pl
Now there's (only) you missing (also meaning 'now it's your turn')

(36) [KU ***au***-XAN ***au-n***] HNA-OOT
PERV times-three times-POSS:3sg LOC.NMZ-sing
He's sung three times. (*lit.* three times his times of singing)

6 Possession within a clause: possessive predication

By contrast with the complex system of nominal possession, possessive predication is straighforward. There are no copula and no possessive verbs expressing 'have' or 'belong'. Possessive predication is marked either by non-verbal possessive predicates, or by existential predication.

6.1 *Non-verbal possessive predication*

The non-verbal predicate is the possessed entity, as in *pwaxi-ny hoona* (*lit.* child-my that) 'that one is my child'.

(37) yada-ny foliix-ena
goods-POSS:1sg thing-that
This thing belongs to me.

[16] Compare a construction with a numeral: *aaru **i** hla* (two LINK 3pl) 'they are two'.

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6.2 *Existential predication with* fo *or* je

Existential possessive predication is marked by *fo* or *je* 'there is', as in *fo pwaxi-n* 'she has a child/children'; its negative counterpart is *kia* 'there is not': *kia pwaxi-n* 'she is childless / has no child'.

(38) sho o fo awôlô-hli
good if there.is house-POSS:3du
They should have a house (*lit.* it is good if there is home-their)

The locative predicate *je* refers to a permanent property, while *fo* only predicates its existence.

(39) je hnabwa-t bwa kua-ny
be.LOC trace on foot-POSS:1sg
I have a scar on the/my foot.

(40) fo hnawo bwa kua-n
there.is wound on foot-POSS:3sg
He has a wound on his foot.

Fo also occurs in various possessive expressions referring to affects or abstract concepts, such as *fo yeewa-ny* 'I have the time' (*yeewa-t/-n* 'time'), *fo jaxa-m* 'you have the ability' (*jaxa-t/-n* 'measure, size'), *fo dera-n* 'he's afraid' (*dera-t/-n* 'fear, respect') (Bril 2002: 100–2). The possessive determiner is the sentient entity as in *fo awa-hla* 'they're brave' (*lit.* 'there is heart-their'). When mentioned, the cause of the affect ('mother' in (41)) appears as the prime genitive determiner and the sentient entity is peripheral:

(41) fo maada axomoo-hla na shi
there.is nostalgia mother-POSS:3pl LOC side
hlaabai pwaxi-n
those:ANAPH child-POSS:3sg
The children long for their mother. (*lit.* there is nostalgia of their mother on the side of the children)

Compare with *na maax-i maada-**m*** (*lit.* I die-of absence-your) 'I feel nostalgic about you'.

6.3 *Negative and privative possessive predication with* kia *'there is not'*

Both negative and privative possessive predication are expressed by *kia* 'there is not'.

(42) kia khoo-n nok
there.is.no CL.flesh-POSS:3sg fish
He did not have his (share of) fish.

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(43) i oome na kia jitua i ye
3sg come CONTR there.is.no bow LINK 3sg
He came without his bow.

6.4 *Incorporation of body part: grooming*

There are no external possession constructions, such as 'je *me* lave *les* mains' 'I wash my hands' (*lit*. I me wash hands) in French. Incorporation of body parts is restricted to expressions referring to grooming (44). When possible, an intransitive verb is preferred (45):

(44) hla shaxa pôô-nu
3pl shave:INTR hair-face
They shave (they beard shave)

(45) na khet vs. **na** khiri pôô-bwaa-**ny**
1sg comb:INTR 1sg comb:TR hair-head-POSS:1sg
I comb I comb my hair

An affected body part or a disease appears as the verb's argument:

(46) khîlû bwaa-ny
hurt head-POSS:1sg
I have a headache (*lit.* my head hurts)

7 To conclude

Possessive constructions in Nêlêmwa are fundamentally constrained by noun classes, with very few cases of overlap. This is not a general feature of Oceanic languages; in Tolai or Manam, for instance, ± direct possessive constructions express semantic differences (inherent vs. contingent) independently from noun classes. The second pervasive and basic feature is that the system of N–N relational determination, with ± direct constructions, has distinct semantics, contrasting inherent–inclusive relations and contingent–accessory relations. Ownership is a subdomain of the core semantics of possessive constructions which express a broader relational system (see Table 2.4). Ownership correlates with animate and specific possessive determiners; if not, the relations expressed apply to other relational types (part–whole, partitioning, association, or hyponyms). Table 2.4 shows that bound nouns have this whole semantic range: the same grammatical construction expresses ownership (*caa-hla* 'their starch food'), kinship (*kââma-hla* 'their father'), body part (*bwaa-hla* 'their head'), partitioning and quantification (*ava-hla* 'some of them'), and association *mudi-hla* '(in) their company'.

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The greatest morphological complexity in Nêlêmwa occurs with part–whole or other relational types, involving construct/pertensive markers such as suffix *-t*, nasalization, or suffix *-a*, which are traces of various construct morphemes, also found in other Kanak and Oceanic languages. Their distribution also varies with similar distinctive features of determiners (± animate and ± specific) and the same (inherent vs. contingent) relational semantics. The smaller noun class which requires possessive/relational classifiers provides further evidence that possession/ownership is a subpart of a wider relational system. Finally, not all entities are possessible; for instance, stars, deities, elements (wind, rain), and nouns with generic refernce (*ak* 'man', *thaamwa* 'woman', *agu* 'person') are not.

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