

(O) Possessed in Vanuatu (1/3)

In 1-3 we notice that the possessor relationship is expressed by a word beginning with *ra-* and that the distinctive features of the possessor are expressed by what is suffixed to *ra-*, e.g., *-lah* 'their', *-han* 'his' and *-ham* 'your'. We can check this further by comparing 1-3 with other forms beginning with *ra*: 11, 12, 25 and 35 which have *ra-hak* 'my', 9 *ra-tah* 'our' and also in 24 *ratlaw* 'their both' and 33 *ra-tamlaw* 'your two'.

By comparing 3, 5 & 18, which are all translated as 'your X' we see that Tanna has different ways of expressing 'your' and that this depends on the nature of the relationship between the possessor and possessed, e.g., in 3 the thing possessed is not part of the possessor, nor is it a kin relation of the possessor. (Linguists refer to this type of possession as 'alienable possession'.) In 5 there is a relation between a person and something that they may drink, while in 18 there is a kin relationship between one person and another (referred to by the whole phrase).

your (alienable) = *raha-m* (3)

your (drink) = *nəm-əm* (5) (compare 32)

your (kin) = *-m* (18) (compare 6)

By comparing 11 and 12 (and also 25 and 35), we can see that *rahak* corresponds to 'my'. By comparing these with 14 and 16, we see that 'my' is expressed differently depending on the nature of the possession relationship: 11 and 12 involves 'inalienable' possession, 14 is a kin relationship, 16 is a relationship between eater and food. By comparing these with 17 we see that the 'possessor of bodypart' is expressed in the same way as the kin possessor. This gives us:

my (alienable) = *rahak*

my (food) = *niŋək* (16 & 34)

my (kin) = *KIN-k* (14)

my (bodypart) = *BODYPART-k* (17).

By comparing forms that are minimally different, we are able to see that there are *four* types of possessor relation that are formally distinguished or expressed in different ways in Tanna: alienable, food, drink and kin/bodypart.

By comparing forms that translate English 'their', 'our' and 'your' we also see that Tanna distinguishes not just between singular and plural, but between singular (=1), dual (=2) and plural (>2). A comparison between 6 and 18 shows us the singular vs dual contrast for kin possessor translated as 'your'.



2010 Solutions

(O) Possessed in Vanuatu (2/3)

We can analyse the various examples with 'their' in the translation as follows:

	alienable	kin	bodypart	food	drink
dual	<i>ra-talaw</i> 24			<i>nij-law</i> 7	
plural	<i>ra-lah</i> 1			<i>nij-lah</i> 21	

We can do likewise for other pronouns, e.g., *your*.

When the translation lacks a pronoun - where the possessor is expressed by a noun as in 4 'rat's tail' we find *nepikə kahaw*. To work out which part is which we need to compare with 23 *nepikən* 'his tail' which shows that *nepikə* = 'tail' and *-n* = 'his'. By comparing with 29, we can verify that bodypart possession involving a possessor referred to by a noun is expressed by putting the word for the bodypart first and then the word for the possessor: *nepikə kahaw* (lit. tail rat) or *nelka pukah* (lit. leg pig) [we can compare with 15 'big pig' which is *pukah asoli* (lit. pig big). 13 and 27 are also of this type.

This contrasts with alienable possession involving nouns as in 8, 20, 28. Each of these involves use of *raha*. The order is POSSESSED - RAHA -POSSESSOR.

8. *nenien raha Enteni* 'speech *raha* Tanna'

20. *narunien raha Tjotam* 'knowledge *raha* Tjotam'

28. *nerow raha jow* 'spear *raha* turtle'

O1. In 1-5 below we can see that the same English construction (possessor word + possessed word) is used even though the types of possession differ. In 1 and 3 it is a whole-part of body relation, in 2. it is a possession relation between the speaker owner and something that is not a part of of the speaker. In 4, the relationship is between two men and a person who is in the named kin relation (*brother of*) to them, and similarly in 5.

To work out the correct Tanna translation we need to see how these different types of possession relationships are expressed. In looking through the Tanna data we will have already noticed that there are different ways of expressing possession depending on the nature of the relationship.

Our answer for 5 would come from comparing 6 (has 'child') and 9 (has 'our' referring to just speaker and addressee).

1.	rat's ear	<i>məteliŋ(ə) kahaw</i>
2.	my two dogs (that I own)	<i>raha-k kuri mil</i>
3.	their bellies (speaking of several people)	<i>narfu-lah</i>
4.	their brother (= of those two men)	<i>pia-law</i>
5.	our child (= child's mother speaking to child's father)	<i>nete-tah</i>



(O) Possessed in Vanuatu (3/3)

O2. 1 and 2 involve alienable possession with possessor expressed by noun. We know this must involve *raha* and the order: possessed + *raha* + possessor.

3 is complex because we need to form 'your picture' which is treated like a whole-part relationship (= *narme* [from 10]) and then combine with 'my' expressing an alienable possession involving *raha-k*. This comes before the possessed. The 'your' singular 'whole' possessor is marked by *-m* (as in 18 and 19).

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| 1. Tjawkelpi's house | nima raha Tjawkelpi |
| 2. the pig's canoe | neŋow raha pukah |
| 3. My picture of you (=the one that I own that is an image of you) | raha-k narme-m |
| 4. The house belonging to you two is big | ra-tamlaw nima asoli |
| 5. Where is my lobster (that I am going to eat)? | niŋək jerehi ije? |

The models for 4: X is 'big' are 15 and 35.

The models for 5 are 16, 25 & 33

O3.

'Their' in Tanna

Used when....

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| -law | two possessors of a kin relation or a body part (-law is suffixed/added to kin term or bodypart term) |
| -lah | more than two possessors of a kin relation or a body part (-lah is suffixed/added to kin term or bodypart term) |
| ra-lah | more than two possessors of something that is not their food or drink, or part of them or a kin relation (= alienable) |
| ra-talaw | two possessors of something that is not their food or drink, or part of them or a kin relation (=alienable) |
| niŋ-lah | more than two possessors of something to eat |
| niŋ-law | two possessors of something to eat |

