ON THE SYNTACTIC CHARACTER OF MIDDLE OBJECTS IN POLYNESIAN
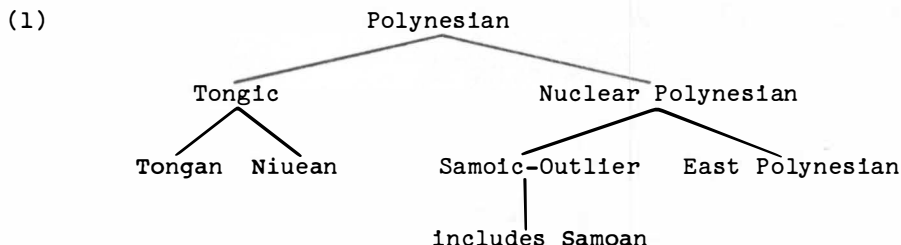
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0. INTRODUCTION

Case marking in each of the Polynesian languages differentiates **canonical transitive verbs**, whose objects are directly affected by the action they describe, from a class which I will refer to as **middle verbs**, following Chung (1976). The latter class typically includes verbs of perception, emotion and other psychological states, and verbs like *'follow'*, *'wait for'* and *'visit'*. The characteristic semantic feature of middle verbs is that their objects are only indirectly affected by the process or action described, if at all.[1] Canonical transitive verbs govern an accusative type of case marking in some of the Polynesian languages, an ergative type in others, and composites of the two basic types in several others. In contrast to this diversity, the case marking governed by middle verbs is relatively uniform throughout the Polynesian family: the subject of a middle verb is always marked in the same fashion as an intransitive subject, while the object is marked with an oblique preposition (a reflex of proto-PN *ki *'to'* or *i *'at'*).

My goal in this paper is to show that in spite of the uniformity of middle case marking, the syntactic character of middle objects is quite variable within the Polynesian family. Limiting the discussion to three of the ergative languages, I will examine the interaction of middle objects in Samoan, Tongan and Niuean with several rules which may be considered diagnostic of direct-objecthood. In Samoan and Tongan, Chung (1976) has argued persuasively that middle objects should be analysed as syntactic direct objects, though the facts for Tongan are somewhat equivocal. On the other hand, it is clear that Niuean middle objects are syntactically oblique. Thus, middle verbs are syntactically transitive in some, but not all Polynesian languages. Taking the Niuean

situation to be innovative, I will propose a historical explanation for
the variation in the syntactic status of middle objects across the
family.

1. AN OVERVIEW OF CASE MARKING IN POLYNESIAN

The Polynesian languages are a closely related family of some thirty
languages, arranged in the following subgrouping by Pawley (1966, 1967):

(1)   Polynesian

          Tongic   Nuclear Polynesian

      Tongan   Niuean   Samoic-Outlier   East Polynesian

                               includes Samoan

There are two basic types of case marking in the family, accusative and
ergative, so called because of the case marking which they assign in
canonical transitive clauses.

In accusative languages, found principally in East Polynesian, tran-
sitive and intransitive subjects are unmarked, while direct objects
bear the accusative marker i.[2]

(2) Accusative Case Marking:

        Verb   Subj   (intrans)
        Verb   Subj   i Obj   (trans)

Languages with accusative case marking also have a passive, which turns
a transitive direct object into the surface subject, removes the original
subject to an oblique case (marked with e), and adds the passive suffix
-Cia to the verb.[3]

(3) Passive:

        Verb-Cia   e Agent   Subj
                    (=underlying Subj)   (=underlying Obj)

In ergative languages, which include the Tongic and most Samoic-Outlier
languages, transitive direct objects and intransitive subjects are un-
marked, while transitive subjects bear the ergative marker e.

(4) Ergative Case Marking:

        Verb   Subj   (intrans)
        Verb   e Subj   Obj   (trans)

Chung (1976) has established for Polynesian languages in general that
clauses which undergo accusative marking (2) or ergative marking (4)
are syntactically transitive, while passives (3) in the accusative
languages are derived intransitives.

The case marking of middle clauses is essentially the same both in
accusative and ergative languages. Subjects of middle verbs are un-
marked, while objects bear an oblique preposition i *'at'* or ki *'to'*.[4]

(5) Middle Case Marking:

>   Verb   Subj   i/ki Obj

Notice that the case marking of middle sentences in all Polynesian lan-
guages resembles that of canonical transitives in the accusative lan-
guages (2), in that the subject is unmarked, while the object bears a
case preposition. Furthermore, middle case marking resembles that of
intransitive clauses containing an i- or ki-marked oblique nominal:

(6) Intransitive Case Marking:

>   Verb   Subj   i   Locative
>   Verb   Subj   ki Goal

The resemblance of middle case marking to the intransitive case patterns
in (6) prompts us to ask whether middle sentences in Polynesian languages
are syntactically transitive at all. In the next three sections, I will
present evidence bearing on this issue for Samoan, Tongan and Niuean.

2. SAMOAN

Chung (1976) includes several arguments that middle sentences in
Samoan are syntactically transitive, two of which I outline in this
section. The Samoan rule of Quantifier Float applies freely to subjects
and direct objects, but not to oblique NPs. Clitic Placement in Samoan
treats subjects of middle verbs like those of canonical transitives, and
unlike intransitive subjects. The fact that middle objects undergo
these two rules suggests, then, that they are direct objects. This
argues that middle sentences are transitive.

The rule of Quantifier Float in Samoan removes the noun modifier
'uma *'all'* from its NP and makes it a post-verbal clitic. For example,
the intransitive subject tagata 'uma *'all the men'* in (7a) has undergone
Quantifier Float in (7b)[5]:

(7)a.   'Ua ō   tagata 'uma i le fale
         Perf *go*,Pl *man   all   to the house*

>   *'All the men went home'*

b.   'Ua ō   'uma tagata i le fale
     Perf *go*,Pl *all man   to the house*
     'The men all went home'   194

Quantifier Float in Samoan applies freely to any subject or direct ob-
ject. Thus, the transitive subject in (8a) and the direct object in
(8b) have launched 'uma:

(8)a. Sā   sasa 'uma lava a'u e   tagata
       Past *hit all* Emp *me* Erg *man*
       'The people all beat me up'

   b. Sā   'ou 'ai-a   'uma-ina fa'i
       Past *I   eat*-Trans *all*-Trans *banana*
       'I ate all the bananas'   196

According to Chung, oblique NPs may undergo Samoan Quantifier Float,
but only if they are the first NP after the verb and are animate. So
the sentences in (9) are acceptable, but (10a) is not because the NP
which has launched 'uma is the second NP after the verb, and (10b) is
ungrammatical because an inanimate NP has launched 'uma:

(9)a. 'Ua galo   'uma i-āte   'i lātou le tusi
       Perf *forgotten all* Caus-Pro Pl *them   the book*
       'The book was forgotten by all of them'

   b. Sā   'ou 'ave-a   'uma i-āte 'i lātou ni   tupe
       Past *I   give*-Trans *all* to-Pro.Pl *them some*=Pl *money*
       'I gave some money to all of them'

(10)a. *'Ua galo   'uma le tusi i-āte   'i lātou
        Perf *forgotten all   the book* Caus-Pro Pl *them*
        (*'The book was forgotten by all of them'*)

   b. *Sā   'ou alu 'uma i nu'u   o Toga
        Past *I   go all to village of Tonga*
        (*'I went to all the villages of Tonga'*)   197

Samoan Quantifier Float, then, distinguishes subjects and direct objects,
which may launch 'uma without restriction, from oblique NPs, which must
be animate and in immediate post-verbal position to do so.

   Significantly, the rule treats objects of middle verbs like direct
objects, and unlike oblique NPs, since they may launch 'uma even if
separated from the verb by another NP, and regardless of animacy:

(11)a. E   mana'o 'uma 'ola i teine o le nu'u
       Unm *want   all he   to girl of the village*
       'He's in love with all the girls of the village'

   b. Sā   asiasl 'uma Ioane i fale-ma'i
       Past *visit all Ioane to house-sick*
       'John visited all the hospitals'
                                                          196

This argues that middle objects are syntactic direct objects, and thus that middle sentences are transitive.

Another argument that middle sentences are transitive in Samoan is provided by a rule of Clitic Placement. This rule optionally moves pronominal subjects to pre-verbal position; the resulting cliticised subject pronouns are morphologically distinct from the post-verbal pronouns. For example, Clitic Placement relates (12a) and (13a) to (12b) and (13b), respectively:

(12)a. 'Ua tigā 'oe?
        Perf *hurt you*

        'Are you hurt?'

    b. 'Ua 'e tigā?
        Perf *you hurt*

        'Are you hurt?'

(13)a. E lē iloa e   a'u
        Unm *not know* Erg *I*

        'I don't know'

        'Ou te lē iloa
        I Unm *not know*

        'I don't know'   268

Interestingly, pronominal subjects which are third person singular may be cliticised only in transitive clauses, not in intransitive ones. Thus, the transitive third singular subject in (14) has undergone Clitic Placement:

(14)   Sā   ia tipi-ina le 'ulu   i   le naifi
        Past *he cut-Trans the breadfruit with the knife*

        'He cut the breadfruit with a knife'   270

But if the intransitive subject in (15a) undergoes Clitic Placement, the result is ungrammatical, as (15b) attests:

(15)a. Na   ala 'oia i le fitu
        Past *wake he at the seven*

        'He woke up at seven'

    b. *Na   ia ala i le fitu
         Past *he wake at the seven*

        (*'He woke up at seven'*)   270

Now, it turns out that subjects of middle verbs, unlike intransitive subjects, may cliticise when they are third person singular pronouns. Thus, (16a) and (17a) are related to (16b) and (17b) by Clitic Placement:

(16)a. E lē māsani   fo'i 'oia i-āte a'u
        Unm *not acquainted too he   at-Pro me*

        'He doesn't know me either'

   b. **Na te lē māsani   fo'i i-āte a'u**
       he Unm *not acquainted too at-Pro me*

       'He doesn't know me either'

(17)a. **Pē   fiafia 'oia i le teine?**
       Q=Unm *happy he   to the girl*

       'Does he like the girl?'

   b. **Pe na te fiafia i le teine?**
       Q *he* Unm *happy to the girl*

       'Does he like the girl?'   271

This fact argues that middle sentences in Samoan are syntactically transitive.

3. TONGAN

Chung (1976) also includes arguments based on Tongan Quantifier Float and Relativisation which suggest that middle sentences in Tongan are transitive. However, it is significant that the Relativisation argument is somewhat equivocal; it suggests that middle sentences are transitive, but in some sense not as transitive as canonical transitive sentences.

The Tongan version of Quantifier Float removes kotoa *'all'* from the NP it modifies and makes it a post-verbal clitic. The intransitive subject e kakai tangata kotoa *'all the men'* in (18a) has undergone Quantifier Float in (18b):

(18)a. **Na'e manavahē 'a e   kakai   tangata kotoa**
       Past *leave   Abs the people man   all*

       'All the men left'   188

   b. **Na'e manavahē kotoa 'a e   kakai   tangata**
       Past *leave   all Abs the people man*

       'The men all left'   189

The rule may apply to any subject or direct object. Thus, the transitive subject in (19a) and the direct object in (19b) have launched kotoa:

(19)a. **Na'e tafulu'i kotoa ia 'e he kakai vaivai**
       Past *scold   all   him* Erg *the people old*

       'The old people all scolded him'   190

   b. **Kuo kai kotoa 'e Mele 'a e   ngaahi fo'i siaine?**
       Perf *eat all* Erg *Mary* Abs *the* Pl   *one banana*

       'Has Mary eaten all of those bananas?'   190

However, other types of NPs cannot undergo Quantifier Float. For instance, it is ungrammatical for kotoa to be removed from an indirect object:

(20)   *'Oku mahino kotoa 'a e   lea   fakapālangi ki he tamaiki
         Prog *clear all*   Abs *the language English*   *to the children*

        ('The children all understand English' (lit. *'English is clear*
            to all the children'))   191

Tongan Quantifier Float treats objects of middle verbs like direct
objects, and unlike oblique NPs, since they are eligible to launch
kotoa:

(21)a. Na'a ku 'a'ahi kotoa ki he fanga ki'i tamaiki 'i fale-mahaki
        Past *I visit all* *to the* Pl *small children in house-sick*

        'I visited all the children in the hospital'

    b. Na'a ku sio kotoa 'i he fanga pato 'i he ahovai
        Past *I see all* *at the* Pl *duck in the lake*

        'I saw all the ducks in the pond'

This argues that middle objects in Tongan are direct objects, and thus
that middle sentences are transitive.

    Relativisation in Tongan also furnishes an argument that middle
sentences are syntactically transitive. Throughout Polynesian, Rel-
ativisation involves two rules: a deletion strategy, which deletes
the relative noun under coreference with the head noun, and a pronom-
inalisation strategy, which reduces it to a clitic or independent pro-
noun. In Tongan, intransitive subjects which have been relativised
must be deleted if they are third person singular:

(22)   'a e   tamasi'i ia   na'e (*ne) mohe 'i hoku fale
        Abs *the child*   *that* (Past *he sleep in my   house*)
        'The child who fell asleep in my house'   276

On the other hand, the pronominalisation strategy may be used for
relativised intransitive subjects which are not third singular:

(23)   Ko e   kakai ia   na'a nau hiki ki Tonga he ta'u kuo 'osi
        Pred *the people that* (Past *they move to Tonga the year* Perf *done*)
        'Here are the people who moved to Tonga last year'   276

And third singular subjects of transitive verbs may relativise either
by deletion or pronominalisation:

(24)   'a e   tangata na'e (ne) kaiha'asi 'a e   telefisi
        Abs *the man*   (Past *he steal*   Abs *the television*)
        'The man who stole my television'

    Third singular subjects of middle sentences are treated like tran-
sitive subjects, and unlike intransitive ones, in that they also may
relativise by either strategy:

(25)a. Ko e   tangata eni na'e (ne) sio ki he afi
        Pred *the man*   *this* (Past *he see to the fire*)
        'Here's the man who saw the fire'

b. ki he ta'ahine 'oku (ne) 'ofa 'i-ate koe
    to the girl   (Prog *she love to*-Pro *you*)
    'to the girl who is in love with you'   280

This suggests that Tongan middle sentences are transitive. But Chung
also mentions that subjects of canonical transitives relativise by pro-
nominalisation far more often than by deletion, while the reverse is
true for subjects of middle sentences. We may say, therefore, that the
interaction of Tongan middle sentences with Relativisation shows them
to be transitive, but not really as transitive as canonical transitive
(ergative) sentences.

4. NIUEAN

I have just established that in Samoan and Tongan, middle objects
ought to be analysed as syntactic direct objects (and, equivalently,
that middle sentences are transitive), though such a conclusion is less
clear-cut for Tongan than for Samoan. I will now show that arguments
analogous to those outlined in Sections 2 and 3 lead to the opposite
conclusion for Niuean. The three arguments I will offer here establish
that the Niuean rules of Quantifier Float, Raising and Reciprocal
Formation each treat middle objects in the same fashion as oblique
NPs, and unlike absolutive direct objects. They argue therefore that
Niuean middle sentences are syntactically intransitive.[6]

Before presenting the three arguments, I should note that although
middle case marking in Niuean is never governed by canonical transitive
verbs, ergative case marking is governed obligatorily or optionally by
a number of verbs of perception and psychological verbs. Thus, compare
kitia *'see'*, lagona *'hear'* and fakavihia *'hate'*, which govern ergative
case marking, to onoono *'look at'*, fanogonogo *'listen'* and ita *'angry
at'*, which govern middle case marking[7]:

(26)a. Ne   kitia he tama e   moa
        Past *see*   Erg *child* Abs *chicken*

        'The child saw the chicken'

   b.   Lagona e au a   koe
        hear   Erg *I* Abs *you*

        'I hear you'

   c.   Kua fakavihia e ia e   taokete haaku
        Perf *hate*   Erg *he* Abs *brother my*

        'He hates my big brother'

(27)a. Onoona e tama ke he tau gata
        look   Abs *child to* Pl *snake*

        'The child is looking at the snakes'

b. To fanogonogo a   au ki a   koe
Fut *listen*   Abs *I* *to* Pers *you*

'*I'll listen to you*'

c. Kua ita   lahi a   ia ke he taokete haaku
Perf *angry very* Abs *he to   brother my*

'*He's really angry at my big brother*'

Many verbs, fakalilifu '*respect*', for example, may govern either middle
or ergative case marking:

(28)a. Fakalilifu a   ia ke he tau momotua
respect   Abs *he to*   Pl *old*,Pl

'*He respects the old people*'

b. Fakalilifu e   ia e   tau momotua
respect   Erg *he* Abs Pl *old*,Pl

'*He respects the old people*'

The arguments given below establish that all clauses with ergative case
marking are transitive, while all those with middle case marking are
intransitive. This means, for instance, that (28a) is an intransitive
sentence, whereas (28b) is transitive, even though they involve the
same main verb.

   Through the Niuean version of Quantifier Float, oti '*all*' is removed
from the NP it modifies and cliticised to the verb. The intransitive
subject e tau tagata oti nā '*all those people*' in (29a) has undergone
Quantifier Float in (29b):

(29)a. Kua fia-momohe   tuai e   tau tagata oti nā
Perf *want-sleep*,Pl Perf Abs Pl *person all that*

'*All those people have gotten sleepy*'

b. Kua fia-momohe   oti tuai e   tau tagata nā
Perf *want-sleep*,Pl *all* Perf Abs Pl *person that*

'*Those people have all gotten sleepy*'

The rule may apply to any subject or direct object. For example, the
transitive subject in (30a) and the direct object in (30b) have launched
oti:

(30)a. Kua iloa oti tuai e   lautolu a   au
Perf *know all* Perf Erg *they*   Abs *me*

'*They've all known me*'

b. Fakalilifu oti e   ia e   tau momotua
respect   all* Erg *he* Abs Pl *old*,Pl

'*He respects all of the old people*'

But other sorts of NPs cannot undergo Quantifier Float. For instance,
oti cannot be removed from an indirect object:

(31)   *Ne   tutala oti a   au ke he tau momotua
        Past *talk   all* Abs *I* to   Pl *old,*Pl
        ('I talked to all of the old people')

In contrast to the analogous rules in Samoan and Tongan, Niuean
Quantifier Float treats middle objects unlike absolutive direct objects,
since they cannot launch oti:

(32)a. *Onoono oti e   tama ke he tau gata
        look   all Abs *child* to   Pl *snake*
        ('The child is looking at all the snakes')

   b.   *Fakalilifu oti a   ia ke he tau momotua
        respect   all Abs *he* to   Pl *old,*Pl
        ('He respects all of the old people')

This argues that middle objects in Niuean are syntactically oblique,
and thus that Niuean middle sentences are intransitive.

    A second argument that Niuean middle objects are not direct objects
is provided by a rule of Raising, governed by a number of higher verbs,
including the aspectual kamata *'begin'*, the epistemic modal maeke *'be
possible'*, and the emphatic negative fakaai *'not'*, which take complement
clauses introduced by the subjunctive marker ke. The rule promotes the
subject or direct object of the complement clause into the higher clause,
where it becomes the subject of the governing verb.[8] For example, (33a)
is related to (33b) by raising of the lower intransitive subject:

(33)a. Kua   kamata tuai ke   fia-momohe   e   tau tagata nā
        Perf *begin* Perf Sbj *want-sleep,*Pl Abs Pl *person that*

        'Those people have begun to get sleepy'

   b.   Kua   kamata tuai e   tau tagata nā   ke   fia-momohe
        Perf *begin* Perf Abs Pl *person that* Sbj *want-sleep,*Pl

        'Those people have begun to get sleepy'

And (34a) is related to (34b) by raising of the lower transitive subject,
and to (34c) by raising of the lower direct object:

(34)a. To   maeke   ke   lagomatai he ekekafo e   tama ē
        Fut *possible* Sbj *help*   Erg *doctor* Abs *child this*

        'The doctor could help this child'

   b.   To   maeke   e   ekekafo ke   lagomatai e   tama ē
        Fut *possible* Abs *doctor* Sbj *help*   Abs *child this*

        'The doctor could help this child'

   c.   To   maeke   e   tama ē   ke   lagomatai he ekekafo
        Fut *possible* Abs *child this* Sbj *lagomatai* he *doctor*

        'This child could be helped by the doctor'

Although Raising applies to complement subjects and direct objects, it
never applies to oblique NPs in complement clauses. For instance, the
result of raising the oblique agent of a stative verb, such as he tagata
ia *'on account of that man'* in (35a), is ungrammatical, with or without
a lower pronoun copy of the raised NP, as (35b) attests:

(35)a.   **Ne   kamata ke matematekelea a   Tale he tagata ia**
         Past *begin* Sbj *be=in=trouble* Abs *Tale* Agt *person that*
         'Tale began getting in trouble on account of that man'

   b. ***Ne   kamata e   tagata ia   ke matematekelea (ai) a   Tale**
         Past *begin* Abs *person that* Sbj *be=in=trouble* Pro Abs *Tale*
         ('That person began getting Tale in trouble')

It turns out that Niuean Raising never applies to middle objects.
Thus, the result of raising ke he tehina haau *'to your brother'* in (36a)
or ki a ia *'to him'* in (36c) is ungrammatical, as (36b) and (36d) attest:

(36)a.   **Maeke   nakai ke falanaki a   mautolu ke he tehina haau?**
         possible Q   Sbj *trust*   Abs *we,Pl,Ex* to   *brother your*
         'Can we trust your little brother?'

   b. ***Maeke   nakai e   tehina haau ke falanaki a   mautolu**
         possible Q   Abs *brother your* Sbj *trust*   Abs *we,Pl,Ex*

       (ki ai)?
       to him
       ('Can your little brother be trusted by us?')

   c. **Kamata ke fanogonogo e   tau tagata ki a   ia**
         begin Sbj *listen*   Abs Pl *person to* Pers *him*
         'The people are beginning to listen to him'

   d. ***Kamata a   ia ke fanogonogo e   tau tagata (ki a   ia)**
         begin Abs *he* Sbj *listen*   Abs Pl *person to* Pers *him*
         ('He's beginning to be listened to by the people')

So the facts about Niuean Raising also argue that middle objects are
syntactically oblique.

A third argument involves the formation of reciprocal clauses in
Niuean. Morphological reciprocal verbs are productively formed with
the prefix fe- and the suffix -aki:

(37)   **Kua fe-kitia-aki e   Lemani mo   Maka a   laua**
        Perf Rcpr-*see*-Rcpr Erg *Lemani with Maka* Abs *them,DU*
        'Lemani and Maka see each other'

What interests us here is that direct objects behave differently from
oblique NPs in reciprocal sentences. A direct object related recipro-
cally to its subject always surfaces as an overt pronoun, as in (37)
and the following example:

(38)   Fe-fakavihia-aki e   laua   a   laua   nī
         Rcpr-*hate*-Rcpr   Erg *they*,DU Abs *them*,DU Rfl
         'They hate each other'

Surprisingly though, any oblique NP related reciprocally to its subject
must not appear overtly. For example, the reciprocal indirect object is
missing in:

(39)   Kua fe-fakafano-aki e   maua   e   tau tohi
         Perf Rcpr-*send*-Rcpr   Erg *we*,DU,Ex Abs Pl *letter*
         'We send letters to each other'

   Significantly, Reciprocal Formation treats middle objects in the
same fashion as oblique NPs, and unlike direct objects, because reci-
procal middle objects may not appear overtly:

(40)a.   Fe-ono-aki   agaia a   Sefa mo   Tomi
         Rcpr-*look*-Rcpr *still* Abs *Sefa with Tomi*
         'Sefa and Tomi were still looking at each other'

   b.   Koe fe-tua-aki   nī   a   maua
         Pres Rcpr-*trust*-Rcpr *just* Abs *we*,Du,Ex
         'We just trust each other'

Therefore, reciprocal sentences also argue that Niuean middle objects
are syntactically oblique, and thus that middle sentences are intran-
sitive in Niuean, even though they are transitive in Samoan and Tongan.

5. A HISTORICAL PROPOSAL

   I have just demonstrated that the syntactic character of middle
objects is variable among the ergative Polynesian languages. It is
not possible here to attempt a serious reconstruction of the syntax of
middle objects in proto-Polynesian, since middle sentences have not
been studied in sufficient detail in most of the languages. I would,
however, like to propose a tentative historical account which I believe
explains the observed syntactic variation.

   Clearly, the case marking pattern (5) reconstructs for a class of
middle verbs in proto-Polynesian, since the pattern is attested in all
daughter languages.

(5) Middle Case Marking:

         Verb   Subj   i/ki   Obj

There is a fair amount of evidence that middle objects should be analysed
as syntactic direct objects in at least some of the East Polynesian lan-
guages, which are accusative.[9] This, combined with the evidence from
Samoan and Tongan, makes it reasonable to hypothesise that proto-
Polynesian middle objects were essentially direct objects. Furthermore,

Chung (1976) has argued that proto-Polynesian has accusative case
marking (2) for canonical transitive verbs, and a productive passive
(3), sketched in Section 1. She claims that ergative case marking
arose in the Tongic and most Samoic-Outlier languages through a re-
analysis of passive clauses as active transitive clauses. Given these
background assumptions, we are in a position to explain the status of
middle objects in Niuean as an innovation.

Following the passive-to-ergative reanalysis, there would have been
two distinct case marking patterns for transitive clauses, (4) for
canonical transitives, and (5) for middles:

(4) Ergative Case Marking:

  Verb e Subj Obj

(5) Middle Case Marking:

  Verb Subj i/ki Obj

This is still the situation attested in Samoan and Tongan. I claim
that the co-existence of (4) and (5) may encourage a reanalysis of
middle objects as oblique NPs for two reasons. First, such a reanalysis
results in a more direct correspondence between grammatical relations
and case marking, since i *'at'* and ki *'to'* then will only mark syntac-
tically oblique NPs, and never direct objects. The change therefore
decreases the opacity of middle sentences, in a sense analogous to that
discussed by Kiparsky (1971) for phonology. The second reason, I sug-
gest, is that there may be a general tendency for languages to consoli-
date transitive case marking, i.e. the preferred situation in a case
language is for all transitive verbs to govern a single type of case
marking. This predicts that, given an opportunity to do so in histori-
cal change, a 'mixed' ergative-accusative language should develop a
purely accusative or ergative system. I propose that middle objects
were reanalysed as syntactically oblique in Niuean, making (5) a case
pattern reserved exclusively for intransitive clauses, and leaving
ergative case marking (4) as the only type borne in Niuean transitive
clauses.

Recall that there were fewer arguments in Tongan than in Samoan
that middle objects were direct objects, and the argument based on
Relativisation was somewhat equivocal, suggesting that middle sentences
in Tongan were, in some sense, not quite as transitive as canonical
transitive sentences. It is attractive to interpret Tongan as a lan-
guage headed for the analysis of middle objects as oblique NPs, a re-
analysis which has been fully implemented in Niuean.[10]

6.   CONCLUSION

The facts presented here establish that although middle case marking throughout Polynesian is relatively uniform, the syntactic character of middle objects is variable within the family. I showed that middle objects ought to be analysed as syntactic direct objects in Samoan and Tongan, but that they are clearly oblique NPs in Niuean. The historical explanation I proposed to account for this variation gives us every reason to expect to find evidence that middle objects in some other ergative Polynesian languages are oblique, or have unclear syntactic status. At the same time, my explanation would lead one to expect that middle objects in the accusative Polynesian languages are invariably direct objects. Needless to say, a fully satisfying explanation can result only from further study of middle sentences in each of the Polynesian languages.

N O T E S

1. The terms **canonical transitive** and **middle** correspond to Clark's
(1973) terms **A-verb** and **B-verb**.

2. The schema in (2) through (5) are borrowed from Chung (1976).
Since word order is quite free in most Polynesian languages, the order
of nominals in patterns (2) through (5) should be taken as at least
partially arbitrary.

3. The -Cia suffix has the phonological shape -(C)(i)a, where C rep-
resents a consonant lexically selected by the verb stem (cf. Hale 1968).

4. For discussion of semantic factors which typically condition the
choice between *i or *ki in middle sentences, the reader is referred
to Mark 1970 and Chung 1973a.

5. All of the examples for Samoan and Tongan are taken from Chung
1976, and are referenced here by page number.

6. For several other arguments that middle sentences are syntactically
intransitive in Niuean, see Seiter (1979).

7. A reanalysis of the articles e and he as case markers in Niuean
has obscured the resemblance of the Niuean system to the proto-Polynesian
one (cf. Hohepa 1969):

proto-PN case:	*∅	*e	*i	*ki
Niuean (for pronouns and proper names):	a	e	i(a)	ki(a)
Niuean (for common nouns):	e	he	he	ke he

8.   Chapter 3 of Seiter (1979) shows that aside from the fact
that it operates on complement direct objects as well as subjects,
Niuean Raising is fundamentally like versions of Subject Raising in
more familiar languages.

     The discussion here is limited to Raising to Subject, but there are
also several verbs in Niuean which govern Raising to Object, discussed
in Seiter (1979).

9.   Interaction of middle objects with Possessive Marking in nominal-
isations, discussed in Chung 1973b, and a rule of Promotion, discussed
in Chung 1976, suggest that Maori middle sentences are transitive. The
ability of middle sentences to passivise in Central Eastern languages
(cf. Clark 1973), suggests that they are transitive.

10. Chapter 6 of Seiter (1979) forwards an explanation for the
fact that middle sentences have been clearly reanalysed as intransitives
in Niuean, but not in Samoan or Tongan. The explanation involves the
history of Raising in Polynesian, discussed in Chung and Seiter 1977.

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