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THE NOUN PHRASE OF ATCHIN,
A LANGUAGE OF MALAKULA, VANUATU

Marie Duhamel

Abstract

This thesis presents a description of the Noun Phrase in the language spoken on Atchin Island in Central Vanuatu. The indigenous language of Atchin islanders belongs to the Oceanic subgroup of the Austronesian language family. Atchin is thought to be a dialect of the Northeast Malakula language which is estimated to have a population of 9,000 speakers. The study is based on narratives and elicitation notes collected in 2010 during two fieldtrips on Atchin. This corpus of data provides linguistic evidence to support the phonological, morphological and syntactic analysis throughout the thesis.

Atchin has an SVO word order, distinct noun, verb and adjective classes. Nouns can inflect for possession, and verbs are preceded by a particle marking modality, person and number. Noun modifiers are postposed to the noun. Atchin presents definite and indefinite articles, demonstratives and a small class of adjectives. Adjectives, adjectival verbs and relative clauses are common noun postmodifiers. In the adjectival verb construction, the preverb agrees in person and number with the noun modified. All members of the class of adjectives can appear in an adjectival verb construction. The language shows a formal distinction between inalienable and alienable possession. Syntactically, the distinction is expressed by two types of possessive constructions: the possessive suffix (marking the person and number of the possessor) is attached to the possessum for inalienable possession or to the classifier postposed to the possessum for alienable possession. Distinct classifiers encode relations of distinct natures: a classifier establishes a relation of possession with food, another relation of possession with drink and two classifiers express a relation of general possession. One of the general purpose classifiers is restricted to non-human possessors.

The phonological survey of the under-described language reveals a series of labiovelar consonants and free variation in speakers between fricatives and affricates. Tense mid-vowels become lax in an unstressed close syllable and vowel harmony is a common occurrence.
Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge the people who helped me with this research.

First, all participants who assisted me with the language:


I also wish to acknowledge the role of Dr Trelly in bringing his native language to my attention.

My thanks go to the Vanuatu Cultural Council and to the Council of Chiefs of Atchin for allowing me to conduct fieldwork in Atchin, and to the Vanuatu National Statistics Office for the 2009 census data.

At the University of Auckland, my thanks go to my supervisor Frank Lichtenberk for his continuous support and guidance. I also thank Ross Clark and Jason Brown for their detailed review of the phonology chapter of this thesis.

The fieldtrips for this research were made possible thanks to the research scholarship I was awarded by the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics of the University of Auckland.
Photograph 1 - Gaston Atuary (left) and Gustave Romone – Atchin, August 2010


(The legend that gave its name to this rock features in Capell & Layard 1980: 192-202).
Photograph 3 - ceremony ground in Senar – Atchin, August 2010

Photograph 4 - alignment of stones along the main path in Ruar - Atchin, March 2010
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Map 1 – Vanuatu languages with over 5,000 speakers
(Lynch & Crowley 2001: 7, reproduced by permission of Pacific Linguistics.)
Map 2 - Vernacular languages of Malakula

(Lynch & Crowley 2001: 71, reproduced by permission of Pacific Linguistics.) Atchin island is shown at the northernmost point of the area where the Northeast Malakula language is spoken.
1. Introduction

1.1 Languages of Vanuatu

Atchin is one of over one hundred native languages spoken on the eighty islands that make up this country of the South-Pacific (Map 1). In July 2010, the Republic of Vanuatu celebrated the 30th anniversary of its independence from the Anglo-French condominium. The languages spoken in Vanuatu reflect the history of the country. Bislama, an English-based pidgin/creole, is the national language and the lingua franca spoken throughout the country. The second language of rural people, Bislama is increasingly the first language of the young urban dwellers of Port-Vila and Luganville, the two main towns of Vanuatu. French and English are the two languages of education. Bislama and the two European languages are the country’s official languages.

1.2 The island

Atchin is a small island off the northeast coast of Malakula in central Vanuatu (Map 2). It is about 1km away from the coast and the trip from the mainland opposite the island is made by canoe or on a small speedboat. Atchin residents commute to their gardens on the mainland. The primary school children attend the island primary schools, or the nearby French secondary schools in Orap on the mainland or, further north, on the island of Vao.

The island itself (Map 3) is divided into five areas where the members of the five different clans (*potvanu*) live: Ruar, Melep, Melmarur, Melparav and Senar. The island is in the shape of an elongated oval, with the longer axis about 1km long, oriented northeast - southwest and the shorter axis about half a kilometre oriented northwest – southeast. The most densely populated area is on the southwest coast of the island, where the village of Melep is located, facing the mainland. Melparav, another village-type setting, is situated at the northeastern point of the island. The eastern area is the least populated, even though it is cooler, being more exposed to trade winds. Aside from a strip of land bordering the west and north coasts, the island is lush with vegetation separating sub-clanic groups of habitations. A network of paths, many of them running along former ceremony grounds, connects the diverse dwellings and villages.
Several missions represent the diverse Christian religions of the islanders: Catholic in Ruar, Adventist in Melep, Assembly of God in Melmarur, and Presbyterian in Senar. Antioch, a local religion derived from the Presbyterian faith, also has followers in Melmarur. Its church was moved from Melmarur to the mainland.

Map 3 shows the approximate location by potvanu of the religious churches on the island. I am aware of at least three churches that offer their own primary school system, in French for the Catholics¹ and Presbyterians, and in English for the Adventists. The speakers of each of the European languages tend to follow this map. However it is not unusual for individuals to

¹ The Catholic service is delivered in local language and Bislama and the readings are from French religious texts.
change religion and, since brides also leave their clan to live at their husband’s, speakers of both European languages can be found everywhere on the island. The result of the 2009 census (discussed in §1.3.2) confirmed my impression that, on Atchin island, the French speakers outnumber the English speakers.

![Map of Northeast coast of Malakula](image)

**Map 4 - Northeast coast of Malakula**

In spite of the importance of the Christian faith, the islanders have kept their traditional customs (*kastom*). The dancing grounds of the island are kept alive with regular practice of traditional dances. The alignments of ancestral stones face the Christian churches. Weddings may or may not be celebrated religiously. Depending on their religion, the islanders observe a religious day on Saturday or Sunday. The rest of the week is busy with working in the gardens on the mainland, maintaining or erecting diverse buildings, looking after small children, fishing and preparing food. With no electricity or tap water, everyday chores take time and energy.
1.3 Languages of Atchin

1.3.1 Languages of home and education

On the island the language spoken by all, children included, is the indigenous language: *nale totsan* ‘language of Atchin’. In the present-day language of Atchin, there are loanwords from Bislama, but Bislama itself is rarely used. For examples of Bislama loanword, refer to the interlinear transcription of the narrative Le Wortamat (*ale* ‘ok, alright’ line 4 and *tseneresin* ‘generation’ line 33). Many islanders can also speak French or English. The language of Atchin is also spoken on the mainland at Lavalsal (Map 4), near the landing place just opposite Atchin island, and in Orap (Map 4), the next village in the south. The language is reported (Tryon 1972: 56) to be a dialect of the Northeast Malakula language, whose population of speakers nears 9,000 (Lynch & Crowley 2001: 68). On the mainland, in particular in Orap, Bislama seems to be more frequently used, and so does French. It is therefore best for linguists to be based on the island of Atchin to study the local language.

1.3.2 Census data

According to the census carried out on the 16th November 2009, there are 634 people living on the island, in 154 households. Two of the census questions addressed language issues. The Household Interview Schedule (Population and Housing Census 2009) asked what main language was spoken by each household. Individuals were also asked what their main language of instruction was. The census shows that 88% of Atchin households mainly speak the local language at home. The two other home languages are Bislama, for 11% of households, and French, for the remaining 1%. 59% of Atchin islanders answered French was their main language of education, for 39% it was English and the remaining 2% answered it was the local language.

---

2 The Census data mentioned in this study are the provisional results that were communicated to me by the Vanuatu National Statistics Office in September 2010.


Compared with the national figures (Graph 1 - Home language in Atchin and Vanuatu-wide), in Atchin the local language is spoken significantly more at home than in most Vanuatu households (88% for Atchin households and 66% for all Vanuatu households), to the detriment of Bislama (11% for Atchin households, 33% for all Vanuatu households).

Graph 1 - Home language in Atchin and Vanuatu-wide

1.4 Previous work on Atchin language

1.4.1 Tryon (1976)

Drawing from wordlists collected from 178 speech communities Vanuatu-wide, Darrell Tryon’s comparative study of the languages of the New Hebrides had the purpose of enumerating and classifying the languages of the archipelago. The wordlists were collected over 7 years, from 1969 to 1976. Atchin was one of the communities that Tryon visited and from which he collected words. The list of core vocabulary consisted of 258 words and it incorporated Swadesh 100 and 200 wordlists that were modified in order to reflect the area under study. For example, words such as ‘snow’ were removed, while others like ‘singsing’, a Bislama ‘word denoting ceremonial singing and dancing’ (Tryon 1976: 73) were included. Cognates between the languages under study were determined on the basis of these wordlists. Tryon’s study established that Atchin shares the highest cognate percentage - 81.8% (Tryon 1976: 146) - with only one speech community of Northeast Malakula: Rano Island (Map 4). And thus, according to the rules of lexicostatistics, the two communities are considered to be speaking two dialects of the same language. Tryon’s study challenges the idea that the language spoken in Atchin is a dialect of the Northeast Malakula variety, as reported in a more recent survey of the languages of Vanuatu (Lynch & Crowley 2001: 80). But the
present study focuses strictly on the description of the language spoken in Atchin and does not address dialectal issues.

1.4.2 Capell and Layard (1980)

The only previous work on Atchin language was published in 1980 but it is based on material collected over a period of six months in 1914. The data was collected by the ethnologist Layard and later analysed by the linguist Capell in the 1930s, in consultation with Layard. Capell wanted to check the material collected prior to publishing the grammar of the language and the collection of the texts initially gathered by Layard, but he never got around to visiting the Atchin community (Capell & Layard 1980: iv-v) and finally released ‘Materials in Atchin, Malekula: Grammar, Vocabulary and Texts’ for publication in 1980, without further work on the material.

There are many shortcomings to the grammar based on the 29 texts and to the transcription of the texts. In his review of the material, Ross Clark (1985: 233) concludes ‘there is little in the grammar that the reader could not discover almost as quickly by studying the texts themselves’. As for the texts, there is no interlinear transcription and not all words are referenced in the list of vocabulary. The grammar leaves everything to be done but, despite their deficiencies, the texts present an important collection of data. I did not end up using the stories collected by Layard. However I went over the short tale ‘Shooting the banana’ (Capell & Layard: 258) with a participant and, aside from a couple of lexical terms that were not recognised, the text was found to be in the language as it would be spoken nowadays by the Atchin community.

1.5 Material in the language of Atchin

‘Nubo toptap, nale tojan’ (Reverend Steward 1932) is a hymnal in Atchin language for the Seven Days Adventists. According to Lynch & Crowley (2001: 81) the hymns were written by Reverend Steward. The copy I consulted belonged to one of the participants on Atchin, Gustave Romone, and it did not mention the name of the author. The orthography does not reflect the phonology of the language truthfully at times: for instance, if ‘h’ appears, as expected, in loan words such as Jehova, it also appears in Atchin words (jihim, ‘to you’), whereas the glottal fricative is not a phoneme of the language.
1.6 Why Vanuatu and why Atchin

At the onset I decided to do research that involved the description of a lesser-known language and I wanted my research to be based on data I would collect myself. I realised this last point would be an added challenge for a thesis that had to be completed in nine months, but this was an opportunity to learn linguistic fieldwork methodology - hands on. I wanted to work on a language of New Caledonia or Vanuatu: both countries are close to New Zealand and present languages for which there is little or no description. An added consideration was that, being a French native speaker, I can work in English and French. My intention was to start working in Auckland with a native speaker then complete my data in the field. In May 2009, I contacted the centre for foreign students at the University of Auckland and was soon in contact with a student in medicine (Dr Trelly, as he is known in Malakula) whose homeland is Atchin and who was willing to help me with his native language while in Auckland. I started researching Atchin and its neighbouring languages and found that, as explained above (§1.4.2), if there was some material on the language spoken in Atchin (Capell & Layard 1980) it was incomplete, based on old data and in need of reviewing.

I obtained the university ethics authorisation for the research in October 2009. Meanwhile, Dr Trelly had been given the responsibility of Norsup hospital, in Malakula, and had left Auckland. This meant my research would have to be based entirely on fieldwork. Bowern’s (2008) and Crowley’s (2007) guides on field linguistics proved very useful. In November 2009, I made a first trip to Vanuatu. I stayed in Port-Vila, in order to get the authorisation from the Vanuatu Cultural Council to carry out fieldwork in the country. Then I flew on to Malakula where I made first contact with a chief of Atchin to let the community know of my project. The chief, Gaston Atuary, welcomed my project and immediately assured me of his support.

I obtained the authorisation from the Vanuatu Cultural Council mid-February 2010 and in late March 2010 I started my field work on Atchin. I returned there late August for my second field trip. For further detail on the field trips refer to the document in the appendix.

1.7 The present study

This study is based on the data I collected during the work I carried out for a total period of five weeks over two stays on the island of Atchin (March, then August 2010) and with
speakers of Atchin in Port-Vila (March 2010). In Auckland I also received the help of a speaker of Atchin. Occasional reference is made to Capell & Layard’s study, but the present study is not based on Layard’s data.

In Atchin, I stayed in Ruar both times, near the French-speaking Catholic mission, at a relative of Chief Gaston Atuary’s. The interviews were conducted in French on Atchin and in Port Vila, and in English in Auckland.

1.7.1 Methodology

The material collected on Atchin consists of vocabulary, elicitation and two texts. The elicitation focuses on the Noun Phrase (NP) and on Possessive Constructions since I had made the choice to detail these two aspects of Atchin for this thesis at the onset of my research.

Work with the two participants based in Port Vila and in Auckland consisted mostly in going over the data previously collected on site on Atchin and in transcribing the texts recorded from the participants living on Atchin.

Given my poor knowledge of Bislama and the fluency in French of most participants, the interviews were mostly conducted in French. When participants were English speakers, I interviewed them in English to minimise translation work. My original notebooks are written in a mix of French and English, but all the material was translated back into English for this thesis and the transcribed stories in Chapter 5 give only English glosses.

On its completion I will forward the outcome of my research as well as the recorded material, transcribed stories and notes to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. As an important part of what I am giving back to the community of Atchin, I have also arranged to prepare and forward some material to them in early 2011: a small Atchin/Bislama dictionary and two stories in Atchin language. And as agreed with The Vanuatu Cultural Centre, I also submitted a spelling system for writing Atchin to the community during my second stay on the island (more on this in the section about spelling system – §2.6).

1.7.2 Structure of this thesis

The focus of my study is on the Noun Phrase. It also includes a brief sociolinguistic background of the language, a chapter on its phonology and another on its morphology.
After the sociolinguistics presentation of the island of Atchin and the previous work on the language (this chapter), the chapter on phonology (Chapter 2) describes the phonemes of the language, its stress system and phonotactics. Based on the phonemes I have established, I also propose the spelling system for Atchin that I use throughout this study. The morphology chapter (Chapter 3) addresses the grammatical and derivational methods used for the diverse word categories of the language – this is the only chapter where I discuss Atchin verbs.

Chapter 4, on the noun phrase, first looks at the order of constituents in the phrase before describing each category of NP heads and constituents. A detailed discussion on the possession construction concludes the chapter on the noun phrase. Chapter 5 presents an interlinear transcription of the two narratives I have collected.
2. Phonology

This chapter consists of six sections. The first two sections describe Atchin phonemic consonants and vowels, the third section briefly looks at the language stress system, the fourth section considers some aspects of the language phonotactics while section five discusses three occurrences of morphophonemic vowel harmony. Finally section six describes the writing system I will be using for Atchin throughout my study.

2.1 Phonemic consonants

All phonemic consonants are listed in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>bilabial</th>
<th>labio-velar</th>
<th>alveolar</th>
<th>velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>plosive</td>
<td>p, b</td>
<td>p&lt;sup&gt;w&lt;/sup&gt;, b&lt;sup&gt;w&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m&lt;sup&gt;w&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>η</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trill</td>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fricative</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affricate</td>
<td></td>
<td>ts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approximant</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Atchin has a separate series of labio-velar consonants, a common feature in the languages of Malakula, but none of the linguo-labial consonants that have been described in the languages of North Malakula (Clark 2009: 35). Atchin does not have the bilabial trill /ʙ/ that was described for the neighbouring language Uripiv (McKerras 1988).

2.1.1 Plosives

The majority of plosive phonemes are unvoiced and can occur anywhere in the word, initially, medially or finally:
Table 2.2 - Positions of plosives in word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[pataβ]</td>
<td>‘breadfruit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[tikei]</td>
<td>‘to marry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[meljonɔk]</td>
<td>‘today’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[nalɛp]</td>
<td>‘lake’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[temetmet]</td>
<td>‘prepare’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[kokoni]</td>
<td>‘narrow’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The position of a plosive in a word can affect its rendition, thus root-final prenasalised /b/ is devoiced:

[naⁿmb] ‘fire’, [tsuⁿm'b] ‘person’

The bilabial and labio-velar are the only phonemic voiced plosives and they are always prenasalised.

Table 2.3 - Prenasalised voiced plosives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/eⁿmbut/</td>
<td>‘seven’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/naⁿmbe/</td>
<td>‘where’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/nœⁿm'b/</td>
<td>‘lizard’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/naⁿm'bʷe/</td>
<td>‘slitgong’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As already mentioned (§1.4.1), it is argued that Atchin and Uripiv are dialects of the Northeast Malakula language. Historical evidence sheds some light on an interesting difference between Atchin and Uripiv. For Uripiv, Clark proposes p/b/bb (where ‘bb’ is the bilabial trill /ɬ/) as reflexes for *b (2009: 33), with p the default case. For Atchin, I propose p and b are also the reflexes of PNCV *b (there is no bilabial trill in Atchin), with p the default case. There is much evidence of the unvoiced plosive being a reflex of *b in initial or medial position, as shown in Table 2.4:
A possible explanation for the rare occurrence of b, reflex of *b, may be an ongoing devoicing of plosives in Atchin. Many lexical items collected by Layard in the early 20th century (Capell & Layard 1980) and listed in a recent dictionary of Uripiv (McKerras 2001) are listed under a word-initial /b/ but, according to my field notes, these lexemes start with the unvoiced bilabial in present-day Atchin. Table 2.5 demonstrates this divergence with a small set of data taken from the three sources:

**Table 2.5 - Uripiv and Atchin reflexes of PNCV *b**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atchin, (my data), 2010</th>
<th>Atchin, (Layard), 1915</th>
<th>Uripiv, (McKerras), 2001</th>
<th>PNCV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pae</td>
<td>bahi</td>
<td>bae</td>
<td>‘shark’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patav</td>
<td>batav</td>
<td>betiv</td>
<td>‘breadfruit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piok</td>
<td>biok</td>
<td>bbuak</td>
<td>‘taro’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poun</td>
<td>biun</td>
<td>baun</td>
<td>‘his knee’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poron</td>
<td>boron</td>
<td>boron</td>
<td>‘his ear’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patun</td>
<td>batun</td>
<td>batun</td>
<td>‘his head’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pala-</td>
<td>bala-</td>
<td>belan</td>
<td>‘foot’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite what was just said about an ongoing devoicing of Atchin plosives, voiced plosives are a common feature of Atchin speech since unvoiced plosives are regularly voiced across word boundaries, when preceded by a homorganic nasal consonant.

5 All proto forms in this document are taken from Ross Clark's comparative lexical study on North and Central Vanuatu languages (Clark 2009).
Voicing of plosives

Word initial plosives are regularly voiced when preceded by a word with a word final homorganic nasal. Along with the bilabial voiced plosive, the alveolar and velar voiced plosives \[d\] and \[g\] are regular allophones of their unvoiced phonemic equivalents.

Table 2.6 - Voicing of plosives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Voicing of plosives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ni) ‘ART’ + teng ‘basket’</td>
<td>[ndeŋ] ‘basket’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ni) ‘ART’ +tas ‘sea’</td>
<td>[ndas] ‘sea’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mu ‘REAL.3SG’ +po ‘rot’</td>
<td>[mbo] ‘rotten’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For \(niteng\) ‘basket’ and \(nitas\) ‘sea’, the vowel of the unstressed petrified noun prefix \(ni\)- is dropped and the initial /t/ of the morpheme teng ‘basket’, or tas ‘sea’, is voiced following the article nasal consonant. For the adjectival form \(mu\) po it is the verb po ‘ripen, rot’ whose initial plosive is voiced after the loss of vowel of preverb mu ‘REAL.3SG’:

In example 2.1 taken from the narrative *Le Wenper*, the initial plosive of verb \(tikei\) ‘marry’ is voiced after the final nasal of preverb \(kon\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Voicing of plosives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ni) ‘ART’ + teng ‘basket’</td>
<td>[ndeŋ] ‘basket’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ni) ‘ART’ +tas ‘sea’</td>
<td>[ndas] ‘sea’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mu ‘REAL.3SG’ +po ‘rot’</td>
<td>[mbo] ‘rotten’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1  
\(Se\ kon\) \(tikei\)-a  [se kon dikeia]  
NEG  PV.2SG  marry-1SG.OBJ  
‘You can’t marry me’

2.1.2 Liquids

I found no evidence of the retroflex flap \([ɾ]\) that has been reported in Northeast Malakula (Crowley 2006). The difference between the two phonemic liquids for this language is clearly audible. This pair demonstrates the phonemic contrast between the trill /ɾ/ and the lateral approximant /l/:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/wele/ ‘good’</td>
<td>/were/ ‘towards’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The quality of the word-medial or word-final trill may be slightly different to its word-initial rendition. In particular the rendition of the word-medial or word-final trill can be shorter than the word-initial trill, but not to the extent that it becomes a flap.
As for the lateral approximant, it is velarised when in root-final position:

mitel [mitel] ‘thick’

### 2.1.3 Fricatives and affricates

The phonemic contrast between s and ts is illustrated by the minimal pair:

s

/ˌsani/ ‘climb’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>s</th>
<th>ts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ˌsani/</td>
<td>/ˌtsani/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative pronunciation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[tsuɔm] or [tfuɔm]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[tsɔtsi] or [tfɔtʃi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[muʦika] or [mutʃika]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same free variation between individuals’ speech has been observed in Bislama (Crowley 1995: 11) and is acknowledged by speakers. For the sake of consistency with the previously described languages of that region, I will consider the phonemes for the fricative and affricate are the ones at the alveolar place of articulation: /s/ and /ts/.

### Labialisation of the bilabial plosives and nasal

The labialisation of the bilabial plosives, and of the bilabial nasal, seems to be occurring before unrounded vowels. However, since the three plain bilabial consonants also happen in that same environment, their labialisation is not a regular change. These three phonemes /pʷ/, /bʷ/ and /mʷ/ are reflexes of PNCV labiovelars *bw (/pʷ/ and /bʷ/) and *mw (/mʷ/).
Table 2.8 - Conservative reflexes of *mʷ, *pʷ and *bʷ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PNCV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mweir ‘left’</td>
<td>*mawiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nimwet ‘snake’</td>
<td>*mwata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lapwen ‘root’</td>
<td>*labwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nabwe ‘drum’</td>
<td>*bwea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, there are at least two lexical items whose initial consonant lost their proto labialisation:

Table 2.9 - Loss of proto labialisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PNCV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>malakel ‘young man’</td>
<td>*mwalaqelo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poro- ‘ear’</td>
<td>*bweru</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I noticed some individual variation in consonant labialisation, particularly for pʷ. It is possible that labialisation is being lost for the unvoiced plosive. There was for example loss of labialisation in the younger speaker’s rendition of ‘child’, [tipis], and ‘liver’ [peper]:

Table 2.10 - Ongoing loss of labialisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PNCV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>norm(w)an ‘man’</td>
<td>*ata-mwaʔane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tip(w)is ‘child’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p(w)ep(w)er ‘liver’</td>
<td>*mwabwe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Phonemic vowels

The Atchin language has seven phonemic vowels, listed in Table 2.11:

Table 2.11 - Vowels of Atchin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid-high</td>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid-low</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the phonemic contrasts for the seven phonemic vowels are illustrated in the minimal pairs below. Table 2.12 concentrates on the suspicious pairs:

**Table 2.12 - Vowels phonemic contrast**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/sala/ ‘neck’</td>
<td>/sale/ ‘beach’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>œ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/namus/ ‘grass’</td>
<td>/namœs/ ‘sea-pool’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ise/ ‘who’</td>
<td>/isi/ ‘squeeze’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/wusi/ ‘call’</td>
<td>/wosi/ ‘carry’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tense mid-vowels, e, o and œ, become lax when in an unstressed closed syllable. In this environment, e is lowered to ɛ, o is lowered to ɔ and œ is centred to ə, as illustrated below:

**Table 2.13 - Allophone of phoneme /e/**

| [ˈpʷɛpʷɛr] | ‘his liver’ |
| [ˈnarɛt]   | ‘heart’     |
| [´lapwɛn]  | ‘root’      |
| [´nambwe]  | ‘drum’      |

**Table 2.14 - Allophone of phoneme /o/**

| [ˈmʷawɔs] | ‘straight’ |
| [ˈporɔn]  | ‘his ear’  |
| [mɛlˈŋɔnɔk] | ‘today’ |

**Table 2.15 - Allophone of phoneme /œ/**

| [´meæmtɔt] | ‘black’ |
2.3 **Stress**

The stress system discussed in this section is based on the analysis of the narrative ‘Le Wortamat’, unless stated otherwise in the example. I took into account the pitch, intensity and length factors as they were reported by Praat software.

Stress generally falls on the penultimate syllable of verbs or nouns. When the word ends with a sequence of two vowels, on the pattern V.V(C)#, the stress falls on the penultimate vowel.

2.2  ‘Vina nivat mwi `wala roni
    Vina nivat mwi wala roni
    girl stone REAL.3SG run with
    ‘The girl, the stone ran away with her’

2.3  Po `ma, ro `veim
    Po ma ro veim
    IRR.2SG go IRR.1DU.INCL go.home
    ‘Come, let’s go home’

Verbs strictly follow the stress rule, but there are some irregularities for nouns. The nouns below are all regularly stressed on the penultimate syllable:


But these nouns below are stressed on the last syllable:

\textit{ni’mwet} ‘snake’, \textit{ni’tan} ‘ground’

The reason for this irregularity cannot be a heavy word-final syllable, since the nouns in the first set were regularly stressed, despite their word-final consonants.

\footnote{\text{6 Literally: ‘its belly’, from \textit{renge-n} ‘belly-3SG.POSS’}}
Noun stress is not affected by the possessive suffix:

2.4 'natun
natu-n
offspring-3SG.POSS
‘her child’

Verb stress is not affected by the bound pronoun object:

2.5 Mwi ti'kei wi'sewin
mwi tikei wisewin
REAL.3SG marry young woman
‘He marries the woman’

2.6 Me 're pe ti'keim (Le Wenper)
Me re pe tikei-m
REAL.1SG want IRR.1SG marry-2SG.OBJ
‘I want to marry you’

Some grammatical words are stressed, but stress does not fall regularly. Below, sopon ‘some’ is stressed differently by the same speaker in the same narrative.

2.7 'tamau sa mwi 'lelep so'pon
tamau sa mwi lelep sopon
castrated.pig INDEF REAL.3SG big.DUP some
‘a rather big castrated pig’

2.8 Mor 'lek vatsin mi 'parav 'sopon mi pe 'ango
Mor lek vatsin mi parav sopon mi pe
REAL.3DU stay then REAL.3SG long some REAL.3SG COP
ango
DEM
‘They stay this way for some time’
2.4 Phonotactics

Syllables follow the pattern (C) V (C). Of all the possible combinations, the most common are CV (56% of the syllables of about 700 words) and CVC (31%). The frequency of the remaining two patterns is: V (8%) and VC (5%).

It follows from above that either consonant or vowel can be word-initial or word-final but that Atchin roots are more likely to start with a consonant. Words can start with any of the phonemic consonant but they never end with a labio-velar.

The boundaries of the grouping of sounds that make a syllable are defined by the onset and coda on either side of a vowel. Since CVC is a common syllable pattern for Atchin, consecutive consonants in a word are common. However consecutive consonants are not consonant clusters since they cannot happen in the same syllable. Below are some examples of words with consecutive consonants:

riβ.tsi  ‘hit’
roŋ.su.ni  ‘know’
sil.βin  ‘his body hair’
ū.tun.βa.nu  ‘animal’
meλno.nok  ‘today’

Among the examples of syllables that consist of a sole vowel, we find the monosyllabic morphemes:

Table 2.16 - Mono-vowel morphemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>definite article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>3SG preverb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have not encountered morphemes that present three consecutive vowels, but there are many that present two consecutive vowels (Table 2.17). This structure in a multisyllabic morpheme can reflect the loss of an intervocalic proto-consonant, as is the case for pae, and metua, or the loss of an initial consonant, combined with the prefixation of the proto article *na, as is the case for nout, nous and nial:
Another observation to be made is the absence of the sequence of vowels featuring central round vowels\(^7\) whereas any of the five peripheral vowels may appear next to one another.

### 2.5 Vowel harmony

I observed regressive vowel harmonising on three types of unstressed morphemes:

- On the preposed verbal particle \(mwi\)
- On the noun prefix \(nV-\)
- On the single digit prefix \(e-\)

These examples of phonotactics are discussed below.

#### 2.5.1 Vowel harmonising in the realis 3SG preverb.

The realis 3SG preverb appears in the verb phrase. In the noun phrase, it appears in the noun modifier construction that involves verbs (this will be discussed under ‘semantic adjectives’ in NP section §4.2.4.1). The particle is preposed to the predicate of the verbal phrase and, in

\(^7\) perhaps this says something about the change to \(ʉ\) and \(œ\): fusion of peripheral proto-vowels?
the adjectival construction, to the lexical item that modifies the noun. The underlying form of the verbal particle is $m^{(w)}i$ and its surface forms are $m$ or $mu$ or $m^{(w)}i$.

$m^{(w)}i > m.$

The vowel of this particle is dropped before a lexeme that starts with a vowel, and also often before a lexeme with an initial bilabial nasal or plosive:

2.9 $M$-urenì (rather than $^*mwi$ urenì)

\begin{verbatim}
M       ureni
REAL.3SG say
\end{verbatim}

‘(s)he says’

Before a monosyllabic lexeme with an initial p, the vowel of the preverb (§3.4.1.1) is dropped. Directly following the bilabial nasal, the unvoiced plosive is voiced:

2.10 $m$-po [mbo]

\begin{verbatim}
m       po
REAL.3SG rot
\end{verbatim}

‘rotten’

Before a lexeme with an initial bilabial nasal, the preverb may be omitted:

2.11 $Ma$ [ma]

\begin{verbatim}
Ø       ma
REAL.3SG go
\end{verbatim}

‘(S)he goes’

$m^{(w)}i > mu.$

The particle vowel harmonises with the first vowel of the root of the predicate. $/i/$ becomes the back round $/u/$ when the initial syllable of the following lexeme features a back round vowel:

2.12 $mu$ row

\begin{verbatim}
REAL.3SG heavy
\end{verbatim}

‘heavy’
2.13  *mu*  *so*

REAL.3SG  sharp
‘sharp’

2.14  *Mu  *susui*

REAL.3SG  go.down
‘(S)he/it goes down’

$m^{(w)i} > m^{(w)i}$

Elsewhere the particle vowel remains /i/. As discussed in §2.1, there does not seem to be any regularity in the labialisation – or lack of labialisation - of the nasal.

2.15  *mi*  *mir*

REAL.3SG  ripe
‘ripe’

2.16  *mwi*  *mitil*

REAL.3SG  thick
‘thick’

2.17  *Mi*  *ma*

REAL.3SG  go
‘(S)he/it goes’

2.18  *mi*  *venalew*

REAL.3SG  mud
‘muddy’

2.19  *mwi*  *veven*

REAL.3SG  red
‘red’

2.20  *mwi*  *mōtmōt*

REAL.3SG  black
‘black’
2.5.2 Vowel harmonising in the noun prefix article $nV$.

The fusion of the particle $nV$ (PNCV *na) is complete for many nouns. The noun prefix is productively used, and in particular in nominalising verbs (this is discussed further in §3.2.2.1):

$liw$ ‘to shoot’, $neliw$ ‘an arrow’
$suli$ ‘to burn’, $nesul$ ‘a torch’.

The most common form of the noun prefix is $na$-, as was also observed for Uripiv (Clark 2009: 35), and since it is also the proto form of the article, I suggest $na$- is the underlying form of the suffixed article.

There are examples of the prefix vowel assimilating with the first vowel of the noun it precedes, and, when this happens, the assimilation follows these rules:

- before a front non-low vowel, the article vowel is changed to a front non-low vowel

| Table 2.18 - Noun particle $ni$- before /i/ and /e/ |
|---|---|
| PNCV |  |
| nisel | ‘path’ | *na+*sala |
| nimwet | ‘snake’ | *na+*mwata |
| nisip | ‘knife’ | *na+*siba |
| niteng | ‘basket’ | *na+*taga |
| nevü | ‘turtle’ | *na+*ʔavua |

- before a back non low round, the article vowel is /o/:

| Table 2.19 - Noun particle $no$- before /u/ and /o/ |
|---|---|
| PNCV |  |
| nous | ‘rain’ | *na+*ʔusa |
| nobo | ‘song’ |  |
However, there are prefixes that do not follow the tentative rules above, as in these examples of *ni*- prefix that precedes a noun whose first vowel is /a/:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nial</th>
<th>‘sun’</th>
<th>*na+yalo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>niman</td>
<td>‘bird’</td>
<td>*na+manu-ku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niram</td>
<td>‘yam’</td>
<td>*na+damu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nitran</td>
<td>‘earth’</td>
<td>*na+tano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.20 below summarises the forms the article can take and in which environments. The results are based on a selection of 86 nouns for which I was sure the first syllable was a fossilised article.

The prefix *na-* is found in all environments and is predominant. This confirms the position that it is the underlying form. The overall picture confirms that the article vowel harmonises in frontness or backness with the initial vowel of the noun stem it is fused with (dark shaded area). The articles with a central vowel (light-shaded area, and ignoring *na-*) can precede stems with a front, central or back vowel. The only anomaly (jagged border) is the front vowel of *ne-* found before back vowel *u*, in the words *nesul* ‘torch’ and *nevu* ‘sidebar on canoe’.

**Table 2.20 - Vowel harmony in *nV*- article**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(C)i</th>
<th>(C)e</th>
<th>(C)ö</th>
<th>(C)ü</th>
<th>(C)a</th>
<th>(C)o</th>
<th>(C)u</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ni-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nu-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5.3 Vowel harmonising of the numeral prefix *e-*

The single digit numerals offer a third example of vowel assimilation (Table 2.21). These lexemes all start with the prefixed vowel *e-* except for two numerals, *owan* ‘six’ and *owal* ‘eight’. Their initial vowel changes to *o-* after adopting the round and back features of the labio-velar semi-vowel it precedes:

Table 2.21 - Single digit numerals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>etes</th>
<th>‘one’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eru</td>
<td>‘two’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etul</td>
<td>‘three’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evats</td>
<td>‘four’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elim</td>
<td>‘five’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owon</td>
<td>‘six’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embüt</td>
<td>‘seven’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owal</td>
<td>‘eight’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esiuw</td>
<td>‘nine’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6 Spelling system

Based on the phonology I observed, below is the spelling system I intend to use for my study on the language of Atchin. This system was submitted to the language participants in Atchin. As mentioned in the first section of this study (§1.5), there are two sources of published texts in Atchin language: Layard & Capell (1980) and Nubo TopTap (Reverend Steward 1932). Both have their own set of problems. The orthography in Layard & Capell uses phonetic symbols and the one used in Nobo Toptap is not based on a phonemic analysis. On the few occasions when the speakers of Atchin write their native language (names of persons or places, lyrics of songs) they tend to apply the orthographic conventions of the European language in which they were educated. Some Adventists are also familiar with the spelling of Nubo Toptap. Thus the village where I was staying could be written *Rouwar* or *Ruwar* and the next village *Chenard ou Senar*.

---

8 Perhaps a reflex of the 3sg subject *e-?
McKerras (2001) compiled a dictionary for the language of Uripiv, a language close to Atchin. Whenever possible I used the Uripiv spelling system, however some Uripiv sounds do not exist in Atchin (the flap, the bilabial trill) and the high central vowel u in Atchin is not phonemic in Uripiv.

In summary, the orthography for this study is first based on the system used by Layard and Capell for Atchin, then on the system used for Uripiv. I avoided the phonetic symbols that appeared in Capell and Layard and replaced them with roman characters. Table 2.22 lists the written forms of the established phonemes.

Table 2.22 - Atchin spelling system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written form:</th>
<th>p b v w t m n r s ts l k ng pw bw mw</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding phoneme:</td>
<td>p b b w t m n r s ts l k ŋ p w b w m w</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written form:</th>
<th>a e i o u ö ü</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corresponding phoneme:</td>
<td>a e i o u æ u</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b: the voiced plosive is always prenasalised, and therefore /na^b/ ‘fire’, will be written nab. Capell & Layard would write the m (namb), but that is unnecessary.

r: in Uripiv, the trill is represented by rr to differentiate it from the flap, written r. Atchin has only one rhotic phoneme, the trill. Layard & Capell write the trill r, and this is the representation I adopted.

s/ts: these cover the variation for the fricative and affricate. s represents both [s] and [ʃ] and ts represents [ts] and [tʃ].

bw: the labialised voiced plosive is also prenasalised, as is the plain voiced plosive, and therefore the written form of /na^bw/ ‘slitgong’ is nabwe.

v and w : represent β and w, respectively, whereas w covers both phonemes in Layard & Capell.
Table 2.23 - Illustration of Atchin spelling system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>phoneme</th>
<th>word</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>piok</td>
<td>‘taro’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>ebüt</td>
<td>‘seven’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>viel</td>
<td>‘walk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>wowon</td>
<td>‘hill’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>tang</td>
<td>‘cry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>malakel</td>
<td>‘young man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>nirak</td>
<td>‘my blood’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>roromi</td>
<td>‘think’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>so</td>
<td>‘thanks’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts</td>
<td>tsats</td>
<td>‘bad’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>lalo</td>
<td>‘dirty’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>koro</td>
<td>‘only’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng</td>
<td>ngaut</td>
<td>‘seaside’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pw</td>
<td>pwepwen</td>
<td>‘his/her liver’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bw</td>
<td>nabwe</td>
<td>‘slit-gong’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mw</td>
<td>nimwet</td>
<td>‘snake’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>mata</td>
<td>‘be scared’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>lelep</td>
<td>‘big’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>lesi</td>
<td>‘see’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>ko</td>
<td>‘and’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>nevu</td>
<td>‘side bar on canoe’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öë</td>
<td>menöv</td>
<td>‘yesterday’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ü</td>
<td>nevü</td>
<td>‘turtle’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Morphology

After a brief presentation of the open word classes of Atchin, this section covers the grammatical words and, in particular, the inflectional and derivational morphology of nouns, pronouns and possessive classifiers. It also touches on the morphology of verbs and preverbs.

3.1 Word classes

The nouns of this language can be distinguished from its verbs using the following criteria: **Nouns** can refer to concrete entities, they can be modified by determiners, they can be inflected for possession and they cannot take the object suffix.

**Verbs** refer to action or state, they are directly preceded by a particle that marks modality, person and number, they cannot take the possession suffix and transitive verbs can take an object suffix.

There exists a small class of **adjectives**. These words modify a noun and are directly postposed to the noun. But nouns are predominantly modified by words that fill the criteria of the verb class and denote state and property. These stative verbs can also modify verbs. Adjectives and stative verbs are discussed in more detail in the Noun Phrase chapter under section 4.2.4.1.

3.2 Noun morphology

This section first discusses the possession inflection that affects some of Atchin words, then it looks at the derivational methods used in noun formation: affixation and compounding. Finally it covers the reduplication of full or part of the noun root.

3.2.1 Possession

The discussion on possessive construction is presented in chapter 4. This section only outlines the morphology of the possession relationship.

Possession is the only relation between constituents of the noun phrase that may be marked by an inflection. The relation of possession can be direct, when the possessor has an inherent connection with the possesseeum (body parts, relatives), or indirect when this connection is not inherent. As many Oceanic languages, Atchin makes grammatical differentiation between
direct and indirect possession. For direct possession, the possessive suffix is appended to the possessum. For indirect possession the inflection is suffixed to a possessive classifier postposed to the possessum.

The paradigm of the possessive suffixes is the same for direct and indirect possession. Only the host changes. The suffix marks the person and number of the possessor. The paradigm is displayed in Table 3.24

**Table 3.24 - Possessive suffix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td></td>
<td>-mam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td>-k</td>
<td>-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-m</td>
<td>-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-n / φ</td>
<td>-r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For direct possession, the suffix is hosted by the possessum:

3.1 *patu-k*

head-1SG.POSS

‘my head’

For indirect possession, the suffix is hosted by a possessive classifier postposed to the possessum:

3.2 *neim se-r*

house POSS-3PL

‘their house’

Directly possessed nouns and the general possessive classifier *se-* (§4.3.2.4) can both be marked with the –n suffix or zero inflection for the 3SG person. Items in a possessive relationship with non human possessors can only take the –n suffix.

3.3 *lolo-n neim*

inside-3SG.POSS house

‘house interior’
3.4  *lolo-φ.  tsünob
   inside-3SG.POSS  person
   ‘a person’s feelings’

For human possessors, zero inflection and –n suffix are complementary and their occurrence depends on two criteria: the presence of a noun possessor and, when there is an overt possessor, the order of the possessum and possessor constituents in the phrase.

When there is no overt possessor, -n is used and zero inflection cannot be used.

3.5  metue-n
   uncle-3SG.POSS
   ‘his/her uncle’

3.6  *metue-φ
   uncle-3SG.POSS
   ‘his/her uncle’

3.7  niteng  se-n
   basket  POSS-3SG
   ‘his/her basket’

3.8  *niteng  se-φ
   basket  POSS-3SG
   ‘his/her basket’

When the directly possessed noun, or general classifier se-, precedes the noun possessor, it is zero inflected and –n suffix cannot be used.

3.9  metue-φ  tipis  ok
   uncle-3SG.POSS  child  DEM
   ‘the child’s uncle’

3.10  *metue-n  tipis  ok
   uncle-3SG.POSS  child  DEM
   ‘the child’s uncle’
3.11 niteng se-ø letter ok
basket POSS-3SG woman DEM
‘the woman’s basket’

3.12 *niteng se-n letter ok
basket POSS-3SG woman DEM
‘the woman’s basket’

When the directly possessed noun, or general classifier se-, follows the noun possessor it is -n suffixed and not zero inflected.

3.13 tipis ok metue-n
child DEM uncle-3SG.POSS
‘the child’s uncle’

3.14 *tipis ok metue-ø
child DEM uncle-3SG.POSS
‘the child’s uncle’

3.15 letter ok niteng se-n
woman DEM basket POSS-3SG
‘the woman’s basket’

3.16 *letter ok niteng se-ø
woman DEM basket POSS-3SG
‘the woman’s basket’

3.2.2 Noun derivation

Derivational affixation and compounding are two methods used in this language to create nouns.

3.2.2.1 Derivational affixation

Affixes can be appended to verbs or nouns to create new nouns.
Morphology

Noun = Verb + -en

Some nouns are derived from action or stative verbs by suffixing –en to the verb stem. The derived nouns all refer to abstract entities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mara ‘to wake up’</td>
<td>mara-en ‘rising’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masa ‘to be sick’</td>
<td>masa-en ‘disease’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matsing ‘to work’</td>
<td>matsing-en ‘work’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>romi ‘to think’</td>
<td>romi-en ‘idea’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tara ‘be old’</td>
<td>tara-en ‘ageing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rits ‘to talk’</td>
<td>rits-en ‘argument’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palpal ‘to fight’</td>
<td>palpal-en ‘fight’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wel ‘to dance’</td>
<td>wel-en ‘dance’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tang ‘to cry’</td>
<td>tang-en ‘crying’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noun = nV- + Verb

Fewer nouns are derived from verbs by prefixing the former article nV- to the verb stem. The resulting nouns refer to concrete entities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>liw ‘to shoot’</td>
<td>ne-liw ‘an arrow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suli ‘to burn’</td>
<td>ne-sul ‘a torch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>us ‘to rain’</td>
<td>no-us ‘the rain’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noun = nV- + Noun

Nouns are also derived from a noun by prefixing the former article nV- to the noun stem. The resulting prefixed noun replaces the former unprefixed noun. Nira ‘blood’ is the only example in my corpus of a noun that co-exists in the language with the unprefixed noun ra- ‘blood’. There is a semantic and syntactic difference between the two nouns. Nira refers to the body product when its possessor is unknown, whereas ra- is the inalienable noun used in the direct possessive construction:
3.17 *Nira ango*
blood here
‘There is blood here’

3.18 *ra-n* *nato*
blood-3SG.POSS chicken
‘chicken’s blood’

The nouns *lok* ‘pudding’ and *vits* ‘banana’ combine to form the compound *lokvits* ‘banana pudding’. However, the nouns before their fusion with the noun article *nV*- only appear in this compound, and elsewhere we find the prefixed nouns *nalok* ‘pudding’ and *navits* ‘banana’ (as in compounds 3.22 and 3.24 below).

### 3.2.2.2 Compounds

A common type of compound is a structure made of a noun modified by a postposed noun. The meaning of the resulting head noun is narrowed down by the noun modifier:

3.19 *natuk norman*

natu-k norman
offspring-1SG.POSS young.man
‘my son’

3.20 *natuk wisewin*

natu-k wisewin
offspring-1SG.POSS girl
‘my daughter’

3.21 *roun patuk*

rou-n patu-k
leaf-3SG.POSS head-1SG.POSS
‘my hair’ (lit: the leaf of my head)

3.22 *niteng navits*

niteng navits
basket banana
‘basketful of banana’
3.23  *taron nial*

`taron nial`

time  sun

‘summer’

3.24  *nalok masal*

`nalok masal`

pudding  fish

‘fish pudding’

Compounding is also used for referring to people or entities belonging to a particular physical place:

3.25  *nale Totsan*

`nale Totsan`

language  Atchin

‘the language of Atchin’

3.26  *wisewin Laon*

`wisewin Laon`

young.woman  Laon

‘a young woman from Laon’

3.2.3  Reduplication

I have only two examples of noun reduplication in my whole data:

*nus* ‘rain’  

*nusnus* ‘heavy rain’

*namus* ‘grass’  

*namusmus* ‘many grass’

One is a full reduplication, *nusnus* ‘heavy rain’, the other is a partial reduplication and only the original stem, prior to its fusion with the earlier article *na-*, is reduplicated: *namusmus* ‘many grasses’. For *nusnus*, the reduplication marks intensity, and for *namusmus* it marks plural. Noun reduplication is less common than verb reduplication.

3.27  *Taron ok ango rok nusnus mwi lep*

`Time  DEF  here  PROG rain.DUP  REAL.3SG  big`

‘Nowadays, in heavy rain,…’
3.3 Pronoun morphology

3.3.1 Personal pronouns

Atchin has independent pronouns and bound pronouns. Both sets mark person and number. The independent pronoun can function as the head of a noun phrase. The bound pronoun is suffixed to the transitive verb and marks the object of the verb.

3.3.1.1 Free pronouns

Independent pronouns mark the person - speaker, addressee or a third person - and can function as the head of an NP. Atchin independent pronouns mark the number of the person they refer to, but not their gender. The first person plural marks the distinction between including and excluding the addressee. Table 3.25 shows the paradigm of the personal independent pronoun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td>ina</td>
<td>kiam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td></td>
<td>ikir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>inik</td>
<td>kami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ini</td>
<td>inir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent pronouns are optional in the verbal phrase. Aside from modality, the preverb marks person and number and fills the subject argument of the verb:

3.28  *Ina pe mini nua*

1SG  IRR.1SG  drink  water

‘Me I drink water’

3.29  *Pe mini nua*

IRR.1SG  drink  water

‘I drink water’

The 1PL and 2PL independent pronouns may fill the object argument of the verbal predicate. All other forms of the pronouns are bound to the verb.
3.3.1.2 Bound pronouns

The paradigm of the object bound pronoun is given in table 3.26. The bound pronoun marks person, number and case.

Table 3.26 - Bound pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td>-a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.30 Mo lesi-a
REAL.2SG see-1SG.OBJ
‘You see me’

3.31 Me lesi-r
REAL.1SG see-3PL.OBJ
‘I see them’

3.32 Me re pe tikei-m
REAL.1SG want IRR.1SG marry-2SG.OBJ
‘I want to marry you’

3.33 Pe tarav-i-m nael
IRR.1SG wait-TR-2SG.OBJ here
‘I’ll wait for you here’

3.34 Kami pi etul par tsire-a
2PL IRR.3SG three IRR.2PL follow-1SG.OBJ
‘You three, follow me’

3.35 Natun tamai mwi tsire-Ø
small dog REAL.3SG follow-3SG.OBJ
‘A small dog follows her’

The bound form for the 3SG person object is Ø. I have encountered the 3SG free pronoun ini as an indirect object:
3.36 Merok mu ure-ni ini
young.man REAL.3SG tell-TR 3SG
‘The young man says to her: ’ (what he says follows)

3.3.2 Possessive pronouns

Atchin four possessive classifiers and possessive pronouns all use the possession paradigm listed in table 3.24. The classifiers, pronouns and their paradigms are discussed in the section on possessive construction (§4.3).

3.4 Verb morphology

This section covers some aspect of verb inflection and verb derivation. 9

3.4.1 Inflection

Atchin verb stems can take an object suffix and are preceded by a particle that marks a combination of modality (realis/irrealis), person and number. In interrogative clauses, a particle that does not make modality refers to 2SG and 3SG, and an alternative set of preverbs is used in some negative clauses to express an event that is impossible. These preverbs are listed and discussed in the section below.

3.4.1.1 Realis/irrealis preverbs

Realis refers to events that have happened or are happening and irrealis refers to wishes, orders and all events ‘that didn’t happen in the past (but could have) and to all or most of the post-present domain’ (Dixon 2010a: 153). Where English would use imperative or future, Atchin uses irrealis. However the distinction between realis and irrealis pertains to modality and not to mood - and even less to tense. In this example, taken from the narrative Le Wortamat, the desire of the girl to step away from the stone is an indisputable fact and the verb re ‘want’ is preceded with a realis preverb, whereas the stepping away action is a wish and the verb viel ‘walk’ is marked with irrealis:

---

9 Since this study focuses on the noun phrase, elicitation and research on the verbal phrase was reduced to the features necessary to describing the categories of noun modifiers that involve verbs.
There is an overlapping of the two preverbs for the 1PL forms and these will be glossed as 1PL with no mention of modality. For the other forms, it is only the initial consonant that changes from realis to irrealis particle. The realis forms take an initial bilabial nasal, whereas the irrealis forms take an initial plosive, velar (2DU and 2PL) or bilabial:

\[
\begin{align*}
me & \quad \text{REAL.1SG} & pe & \quad \text{IRR.1SG} \\
mo & \quad \text{REAL.2SG} & po & \quad \text{IRR.2SG}
\end{align*}
\]

The dual form is similar to the same person plural form except for the alternation of back low vowel for the dual preverb and central low vowel for the plural:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mor} & \quad \text{REAL.3DU} & \text{mar} & \quad \text{REAL.3PL} \\
\text{kop} & \quad \text{IRR.2DU} & \text{kap} & \quad \text{IRR.2PL}
\end{align*}
\]

My corpus shows no dual forms for the 1st and 2nd persons of the realis preverb.

### Table 3.27 - Realis preverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td>me</td>
<td></td>
<td>nom/na(m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ra(m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>mo</td>
<td></td>
<td>mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>m(w)i/mu/mo</td>
<td>mor</td>
<td>mar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.28 - Irrealis preverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td>pe</td>
<td></td>
<td>no(m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td></td>
<td>ro</td>
<td>ra(m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>po</td>
<td>kop</td>
<td>kap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>p(w)i</td>
<td>por</td>
<td>par</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The verbal phrase in **realis** indicates the action has taken place or is taking place.

3.38 *Mar tur mar miteni*

REAL.3PL stand REAL.3PL watch

‘They are standing and watching’

Adverb such as *pin* ‘already’ set the event in the past:

3.39 *Me an pin*

REAL.1SG eat already

‘I have eaten’

Realis 2PL and 3PL are identical and to disambiguate them the free pronoun marking 2PL or 3PL may precede the preverb, as illustrated in 3.40 with the 3PL pronoun *inir*.

3.40 *inir mar sesui*

3PL REAL.2/3PL find

‘they found’

In the following examples, the **irrealis** preverb is used to express orders or wishes:

3.41 *Kap se tarav-i-a te!*

IRR.2PL NEG₁ wait-TR-1SG.OBJ NEG₂

‘Don’t wait for me!’

3.42 *Po tori wenen nei¹⁰ nen*

IRR.2SG catch fruit DEM

‘Pick that fruit’

3.43 *Ro veim*

IRR.1DU go.home

‘Let’s go home’

3.44 *Mor re por van por vavarong*

REAL.3DU want IRR.3DU go IRR.3DU fish.by.turning.rocks.over

‘The two of them want to go fishing by turning the rocks over’

¹⁰ *Wenen nei* is a compound: *wenen* ‘fruit’, *nei* ‘tree’.
The irrealis preverb is also used to indicate that an action is about to happen:

3.45  Tipis  pi  van  pi  matur  
  child  IRR.3SG  go  IRR.3SG  sleep  
  ‘The child is going to sleep’

To set the event in the future, the future tense marker ar is slotted in between the irrealis preverb and the verb:

3.46  Pe  ar  ma  mewi  
  IRR.1SG  FUT  come  tomorrow  
  ‘I’ll come tomorrow’

3.4.1.2  Preverbs ko and e

In interrogative clauses, preverbs ko and e are used for 2SG and 3SG respectively (instead of the realis or irrealis preverbs), and there is no realis/irrealis distinction in these cases. In the interrogative clause 3.48, corresponding to the affirmative 3.47, it is preverb ko and not realis mo that is used:

3.47  Mo  lesi  kiam  
  REAL.2SG  see  1PL  
  ‘You see us’

3.48  Ko  lesi  kiam?  
  PV.2SG  see  1PL  
  ‘Did/do you see us?’

For the 3SG, the preverb e is used instead of irrealis pwi or realis mwi:

3.49  Sere  e  ma  roni  kiam?  
  NEG  PV.3SG  come  with  1PL  
  ‘She doesn’t come with us?’

11  I label preverbs that do not mark realis/irrealis with the general preverb abbreviation PV, since some of these preverbs, like e, fill diverse functions.

12  Further south on the mainland, the preverb e is used where Atchin speakers use the realis preverb: the common expression ‘it’s good’ is said mwi res in Atchin and e res in Lakatoro (Map 2).
3.50  *Nana  sa  e  tivei-m?*
thing  INDEF  PV.3SG  hurt-2SG
‘Has something hurt you?’

3.51  *E  viel?*
PV.3SG  walk
‘Does she walk?’

The preverb *e* may also be used in negative clauses and before copula *ve*:

3.52  *Wenen nei  se  e  po*
fruit  NEG  PV.3SG  rot
‘This fruit is not rotten’

3.53  *pwire  miro-m  e  ve  narriv,  e*
if  mother-2SG.POSS  PV.3SG  COP  rat  PV.3SG

  ve  *nimwet,…*  
  COP  snake
‘If your mother is a rat, a snake,…’ (LeWenper)

### 3.4.1.3 Preverbs in negative clauses

Table 3.29 lists the forms of the preverb that is only found in some negative clauses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td><em>non</em></td>
<td><em>nan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td><em>ran</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>kon</em></td>
<td><em>kar</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>kin</em></td>
<td><em>ar</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Atchin has two negative constructions:
- with the negation particle *sere* on the pattern *sere* + Preverb + Verb
- with the discontinuous negation particle *se..(te)* on the pattern *se* + Preverb + Verb + *(te).*
The negation-specific preverb may be used with any of the two constructions:

3.54  *Sere  nan mini melo*

   NEG  PV.NEG.1PL.EXCL  drink  kava

   ‘We don’t drink kava’

3.55  *Se  kon tikei-a*

   NEG  PV.NEG.2SG marry-1SG.OBJ

   ‘You cannot marry me’

However we have seen an example - repeated in 3.56 - of negative clauses that use an irrealis marking preverb instead of the negative-specific preverb:

3.56  *Kap  se  tarav-i-a te!*

   IRR.2PL  NEG1  wait-TR-1SG  NEG2

   ‘Don’t wait for me!’

The examples below illustrate a semantic difference between the two negative forms. In 3.58, the negation-specific preverb signifies impossibility:

3.57  *Wenen nei  se  e po*

   fruit  NEG  PV.3SG  rot

   ‘This fruit is not rotten’

3.58  *Wenen nei  sere  kin po*

   fruit  NEG  PV.NEG.3SG  rot

   ‘The fruit does not rot’ (it is a fruit that cannot rot)

Examples 3.54 and 3.55 are also open to dynamic or deontic interpretation: ‘you can’t marry me’ because ‘my mother is bad’ (Le Wenper), and ‘we don’t drink kava’ may suggest a physical or moral impediment. There is no such possible interpretation for 3.57 and only marginally for 3.56, as they do not use the negation-specific preverb. This difference in modality may explain the restricted use of the preverb listed in Table 3.29.
3.4.2 Verb derivation.

The suffix -(n)i is added to verb stems to add an argument to the verb:

3.59 Pe tarav nael
IRR.1SG wait here
‘I’ll wait here’

3.60 Pe tarav-i-m nael
IRR.1SG wait-TR-2SG.OBJ here
‘I’ll wait for you here’

My corpus includes many transitive verbs ending in -(C)i, but most have no corresponding intransitive verbs.

3.4.3 Reduplication

Reduplication is very common for verbs, and in particular for stative verbs used in adjectival constructions. Verbal full or partial stem reduplication conveys intensity or plural:

row ‘heavy’          rorow ‘very.heavy’
oploni ‘try’          opoploni ‘try.repeatedly’
lep ‘big’             leplep ‘very.big’

3.61 nabwe mar rorow
slitdrum REAL.3PL heavy.DUP
‘very heavy drums’

3.62 Mi opoploni nga pi lai- φ
REAL.3SG try.DUP COMP IRR.3SG catch-3SG.OBJ
‘She tries again and again to catch (it)’
4. Noun Phrase

This section covers the Noun Phrase. It first describes the order of its constituents, then reviews the phrase head, whether noun or pronoun, and the head modifiers. A detailed discussion on the possession construction concludes the chapter.

4.1 Order of NP constituents

Modifiers within the Noun Phrase follow the head of the phrase. Determiners are directly postposed to the noun:

4.1 tsënoh sa
man INDEF.SG
‘a man’

4.2 nivat sopon
stone INDEF.PL
‘stones’

4.3 nimwet a
snake DEF
‘the snake’

4.4 nobo nen
song DEM
‘that song’

4.5 nimwet ok
snake DEM
‘this/the snake’

Modifiers that belong to the small class of adjectives follow the determiner:

4.6 neim a welwele
house DEF small
‘the small house’
Possessive classifiers are directly postposed to the possessum and cardinal numbers come after the determiner or possessive classifier that follows the noun:

4.7 _nimal sa-k _ eru
    child    POSS-1SG  two
‘my two children’

There are two exceptions to the postposition of the modifiers of noun. The determiner reserved for proper noun designating humans, or animals and objects considered as humans, is positioned before the proper noun, as is the case below for _Le_, reserved for females, with the male equivalent being _Melte_ (now often found prefixed to names):

4.8 _Le_     _Wenper_
    DET.FEM  Wenper
‘Wenper’

The second type of preposed modifiers of noun comes from possessive constructions on the model possessum + possessor:

4.9 _natun neim_
    small  house
‘small house’

4.10 _miren nivat nen_
    big    stone    that
‘the big stone’

As a possessive construction, the model head + modifier is respected:

4.11 _natu-n   neim_
    offspring-3SG.POSS  house
‘a house’s child’

4.12 _mire-n   nivat nen_
    mother-3SG.POSS  stone  this
‘the stone’s mother’

But with the shift from a possessive construction to an adjectival construction, the head is no longer the noun that occupied the possessum slot (_natu- or _mire-_) but the one that occupied
the possessor slot \((neim, nivat)\). The noun that was the possessum in the possession construction is now the modifier of the head noun but the position it occupied in the possession construction does not change and it remains preposed.

This construction is discussed in more detail in the section on the types of lexemes that can function as noun modifiers (§4.2.4.3).

### 4.2 NP constituents

#### 4.2.1 Nouns

The syntactic class of nouns and their morphology was described in the morphology chapter (§3.2). Nouns, as head of the noun phrase and obligatory element of the noun phrase.

Atchin distinguishes between alienable and inalienable nouns. The small class of inalienable nouns refers to entities that are inalienably possessed. These nouns take the direct possession suffix (§3.2.1). Most animal and human body parts and many kin terms belong to this category. The predominant class of alienable nouns refer to entities that are alienable from their possessor and the relation of possession is expressed via other means than a suffix of the possessum (§4.3.2).

Proper nouns belong to the class of nouns. They can be replaced by a free pronoun and as we see in the next section, they can be modified by a determiner.

#### 4.2.2 Determiners

Articles, demonstratives and possessive determiners all exist in Atchin. Determiners do not co-occur and, with the exception of the two proper noun articles, they are postposed to the noun they determine. The language has two articles that occur with proper nouns and several definite and indefinite articles for common nouns. Several demonstratives position the noun in the physical or abstract space shared by speaker and listener. Some demonstratives are so frequent that they can be regarded as articles. Only the proper noun articles mark the gender of the noun they modify. Number is marked by some articles, but not by demonstratives.
4.2.2.1 Proper Nouns determiners

Proper noun determiner - feminine \textit{Le, Lelek}
Proper noun determiner - masculine \textit{Melte}

\textit{Le} (or \textit{Lelek}) and \textit{Melte} are determiners preposed to the names of humans, or to the names of objects or animals that are regarded as humans. The determiners indicate the gender of the person, or personified object or animal. \textit{Le} (or \textit{Lelek}) is preposed to names of females and \textit{Melte} is preposed to names of males. Both determiners fill the role of titles since they are used not only to indicate the gender of a person but also as a sign of respect for people well into their forties. The determiners are never used for children and youths.

In present day however, the titles are only used for ancestors and some aged persons. The nouns \textit{nasup} ‘man, husband’ and \textit{leret} ‘woman, wife’ are now used to indicate the gender of a person, and also to convey respect. Semantically, the two nouns have replaced the determiners.

4.13 \textit{nasup} \textit{sa-k}
\hspace{1cm} man \hspace{1cm} POSS-1SG
\hspace{1cm} ‘my husband’ (respectful)

4.14 \textit{tewen} \textit{sa-k}
\hspace{1cm} husband \hspace{1cm} POSS-1SG
\hspace{1cm} ‘my husband’

Nowadays the superseded determiners help indicate whether a person or personified animal or object was male or female. There is for example a tomb stone dated 2006 engraved with a name preceded by \textit{Lelek}, which is the only indication that the person buried there was a woman. And in the case of two stories I collected, \textit{Le Wenper} and \textit{Le Wortomat}, the determiner tells us the stories each named after a female character:

4.15 \textit{Le} \hspace{1cm} \textit{Wenper}
\hspace{1cm} DET.FEM \hspace{1cm} Wenper
\hspace{1cm} ‘Wenper’
4.2.2.2 Articles

Table 4.30 gives the list of indefinite and definite articles.

Table 4.30 - Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indefinite singular</th>
<th>sa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite plural</td>
<td>sopon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite with no mark of number</td>
<td>a, ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite plural</td>
<td>ok rik</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sa* is postposed to singular nouns and is used to introduce new entities:

4.16 *Vesa miren nivat sa*

once big stone INDEF.SG

‘There was a big stone’

4.17 *ko wisewin Laon sa*

FOCUS girl Laon INDEF.SG

‘a girl from Laon’

The indefinite determiner *sa* is also the cardinal number ‘one’ used in two-digits numbers:

4.18 *(e)sangavül romon sa*

ten LNK one

‘eleven’

The plural form is *sopon*, which means ‘some’.

4.19 *mirer nivat sopon*

big.PL stone INDEF.PL

‘big stones’

The indefinite article is optional, whether the noun is singular or plural. In section 3.2.3, we saw that reduplication could mark plural for nouns:

4.20 *mirmiren nivat*

big.DUP stone

‘big stones’
A is a definite determiner and is postposed to a noun that refers to a known entity.

4.21  \textit{malakel a romien se-n}

\begin{center}
young\text{man}  \text{DEF}  \text{idea}  \text{POSS-3SG}
\end{center}

‘the young man’s idea’

\textit{ok} and plural \textit{ok rik} function as both anaphoric and deictic markers. They are more commonly used to refer to already mentioned entities than to indicate the actual location of a referent. The two determiners can fill an anaphoric (or inferable) function as well as locate a referent in the intermediate (neither proximal nor distal) environment of the speaker and addressee. The two determiners are discussed in the section on demonstratives.

4.2.2.3 Demonstratives

Demonstratives mark the noun in relation to space and time, from the speaker’s perspective. Atchin speakers dispose of 4 demonstratives: the proximal \textit{ango}, the intermediate \textit{ok} (plural \textit{ok rik}) and \textit{ak} and the intermediate-distal \textit{nen}. To mark a noun in a far away location, a locative adverb (\textit{naok ‘there’}) is postposed to the determiner. The demonstrative adjectives and pronouns are listed in Table 4.31.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{adjective/ pronoun} & \textbf{number} & \textbf{deictic} & \\
\hline
‘this’ ‘this one’ & ADJ or PN & SG or PL & proximal & \textit{ango} \\
‘this’ ‘these’ ‘the’ & ADJ & SG or PL & intermediate & \textit{ok} \\
‘this’ & ADJ & SG & intermediate & \textit{ak} \\
‘These’ & ADJ & PL & intermediate & \textit{ok rik} \\
‘this, that’ & ADJ or PN & & & \\
‘this one, that one’ & ADJ or PN & SG & intermediate-distal & \textit{nen} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Demonstratives}
\end{table}

In the demonstrative paradigm, \textit{ango} denotes the proximity of a referent. \textit{Ango} can be used as a demonstrative adjective or pronoun:

4.22  \textit{Nimet ango nimwet a Tepsen Nual.}

\begin{center}
snake DEM snake from Tepsen Nual
\end{center}

‘This snake comes from Tepsen Nual’ (the snake was just introduced in the story)
When *ango* occurs in a noun phrase where the noun is modified by a determiner, the function of *ango* is more akin to that of a locative adverb:

4.24 *nivat a ango*
stone DEF here
‘this stone right here’

In the following example, the function of *ango* as a locative adverb is more evident:

4.25 *Mira-k mi ma ango*
mother-1SG.POSS REAL.3SG come here
‘Here is my mother (lit: My mother arrives here)’

*Ango* is not used as frequently as the other demonstratives. It is however commonly used as a demonstrative pronoun in the expressions *ango koro* and *mi pe ango*:

4.26 *Ango koro*
DEM only
‘This is it’

4.27 *mi pe ango*
REAL.3SG COP DEM
‘this way’

The intermediate demonstrative *ok* does not mark number, whereas *ok rik* is only used with plural nouns. The plural marker *rik* is also found following the possessive classifier when the possessum is a plural term (§4.3.2). The two demonstratives are used to reference information that was already mentioned or that can be inferred, and thus function as definite markers. Beside their common anaphoric or inferable usage, *ok* and *ok rik* also function as locators of a referent set in a visible and not too distant position.

4.28 *Mu susui wisewin ok*
REAL.3SG find girl DEM
‘He finds the girl’ (she was already mentioned - anaphoric)
4.29 *Ise mu ruwi sibul ok?*

who REAL.3SG plant leek DEM

‘Who has planted the leeks? (that both speaker and addressee can see)’

When used as a demonstrative, *ok* and *ok rik* refer to a location that is imprecise. They can however co-occur with a locative adverb to specify a location. The utterance below is likely to be accompanied with a gesture towards the stones:

4.30 *nivat a niak ok rik*

stone DEF here DEM PL

‘these stones here’

4.31 *nivat a niak ak*

Stone DEF here DEM

‘this stone here’

Since it is often found after *niak*, it is tempting to see in *ak* an allomorph of *ok* after vowel assimilation with the central low vowel of *niak*. However *ak* is more restricted in its use than *ok*. *Ak* is only used with singular NPs and by selecting it over *ok*, the speaker insists on the single occurrence of the noun referent. 4.30 above offers counter-evidence for the allomorph hypothesis since in this example *niak* is followed by *ok*.

*Nen* can be used as noun modifier or as a pronoun. Of the three demonstratives, *nen* denotes the bigger distance in space and time. *Nen* is the most likely demonstrative to modify nouns that refer to abstract entities. It is also the only demonstrative I found to be used for cataphora:

4.32 *Ko mwi sei nobo nen*

and REAL.3SG sing song DEM

‘And she starts singing this song (that I’m going to sing to you)’
In narratives, *nen* is the demonstrative used to position the referent in the timeframe, provided the event referred to is not proximal (in which case, *ango* is used):

4.33  *vatsin, rorpong nen,* ..
then morning DEM
‘then, that morning, …’

When *nen* and *ok* (*rik*) are used to oppose two nouns, the one followed by *nen* is understood to be further away than the one modified by *ok*:

4.34  *nivat a niak ok?*
stone DEF here DEM
‘this stone?’

4.35  *mwitsa, nivat a niak nen.*
no stone DEF here DEM
‘no, that stone’ (showing the stone)

The speaker will opt for *nen* over *ok* to single out one item from a group of similar items, for example a fruit, among other fruits in a tree:

4.36  *Po tori wen en nei nen*
IRR.2SG pick fruit DEM
‘Pick that fruit’ (from the tree)

4.37  *Po tori wen en nei ok*
IRR.2SG pick fruit DEM
‘Take the fruit’ (a single fruit on a table)

Finally, in 4.38 below, *nen* is not the demonstrative but the 3SG form of the possessive classifier used for non-human possessors (this classifier is discussed in more detail in §4.3.2.5, in the section on possessive construction):

4.38  *Mwi sei nobo ne-n maki ok*
IRR.3SG sing song NHUM-3 grade-taking.ceremony DEM
‘(S)he sings a song of the grade-taking ceremony’
There is enough evidence to suggest the demonstrative derives from the possessive classifier. The two grammatical words show semantic, phonological and syntactical similarities, whose combined presence supports the hypothesis of grammaticalisation (Frajzyngier 1996: 199). Demonstrative and possessive nen share the ‘non-human’ semantic criterion. They are identical phonological words. Their syntactic construction positions them directly after the word they modify. The possessive classifier is followed by the possessor (4.39), but if the possessor is already known in the discourse it may be dropped in the utterance (4.40).

4.39  Po   tori  wennen nei  ne-n  nei  ok   
      IRR.2SG  pick  fruit  POSS-3SG  tree  DEM   
      ‘Pick that fruit from the tree’

4.40  Po   tori  wennen nei  ne-n   
      IRR.2SG  pick  fruit  POSS-3SG   
      ‘Pick its fruit’ (from the tree)

In examples 4.41, nen is the demonstrative. In example 4.40, nen is the possessive classifier. The two clauses show semantic, phonological and syntactical similarities.

4.41  Po   tori  wennen nei  nen   
      IRR.2SG  pick  fruit  DEM   
      ‘Pick that fruit’ (from the tree that we can both see)

On the other hand, since the possessive classifier is inflected for person and number (§4.3.2.5), I would not argue for a derivation from the demonstrative to the possessive classifier.

4.2.3  Numerals and quantifiers

4.2.3.1  Numerals

The numeral system of Atchin is decimal. As most noun modifiers, numerals and cardinals follow the noun they modify.

4.42  nimal  sa-k   eru  
      child  POSS-1SG  two   
      ‘my two children’
4.43  

Tsünob  

eru  

mor  

palpal  

man  

two  

REAL.3PL  

fight

‘These two men are fighting’

As is made evident by the proto forms listed in table 4.32, the cardinal numbers from one to nine are prefixed with e-, which becomes o- before a stem starting with w (this was discussed in phonology section 2.5.3).

**Table 4.32 - Cardinal numbers from 1 to 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeral</th>
<th>*PNCV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  etes, sa</td>
<td>*zikai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  eru</td>
<td>*rua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  etul</td>
<td>*tolu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  evats</td>
<td>*vati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  elim</td>
<td>*lima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  owon</td>
<td>*ono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  ebüt</td>
<td>*bitu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  owal</td>
<td>*walu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  esiuw</td>
<td>*sivwa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numeral etes ‘one’ is only used to represent the first single digit numeral when counting without a noun. For two decimal digits, and when used as a noun modifier, sa is used to represent ‘one’.

4.44  

Tipis  

ok  

rom  

se-n  

sa  

child  

DEM year  

POSS-3SG  

one

‘This child is one year old’
For numerals above nine (Table 4.33), the e- prefix is most often dropped.

**Table 4.33 - Cardinal numbers from 10 to 99**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PNCV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(e)sangavül</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>(e)sangavül romon sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>(e)sangavül romon eru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>mov(i)l eru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>movil eru romon sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>mov(i)l etul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>mov(i)l evats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Romon* is a linking word between the numeral for tens and the numeral for units:

4.45  
(e)sangavül  romon sa  
ten    LNK    one  
‘eleven’

*Mov(i)l* before a single digit numeral indicates a multiple of ten:

4.46  
mov(i)l  etul  
MULT.ten  three  
‘thirty’

Prefix *va-* expresses a multiple:

4.47  
va-ru  
MULT-two  
‘twice’
### Table 4.34 - Cardinal numbers, 100 and over

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td><em>mo(ve)sangavul</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td><em>ivin varu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td><em>ivin vatul</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td><em>ivin vavats</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td><em>ivin valim</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600</td>
<td><em>ivin vawon</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700</td>
<td><em>ivin vambüt</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td><em>ivin vawal</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900</td>
<td><em>ivin vasiuv</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td><em>ivin vasngavül</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ivin* preceding a single digit numeral prefixed with *va-* indicates a multiple of one hundred:

4.48  *ivin va-vats*

MULT. hundred   MULT-four
‘four hundred’

Cardinal numerals can fill the intransitive predicate slot. However, unlike intransitive verbs that function as adjectives (as discussed in §4.2.4.1), the preverb preposed to the cardinal number does not agree in person and number with the nominal head it modifies:

4.49  *Kami pi etul par tsire-a?*

2PL  IRR.3SG  three  IRR.2PL  follow-1SG.OBJ

‘Can you three follow me?’ (lit: ’you, will be three, follow me’ )
Ordinal numbers are nouns that can modify other nouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordinal</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>na wo munen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>eruen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>etulin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>evatsin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>elimen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>owonin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>ebütin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>owalin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>esiuwen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>(e)sangavülin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>(e)sangavüöl romon sa ni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>(e)sangavüöl romon eruen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th</td>
<td>mov(i)l eruen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They can be formed by adding the suffix –en or –in to the cardinal number. The following example illustrates the use of the suffix –en:

4.50 malakel etulin mwi ketket wuso mwi seser

young.man third REAL.3SG do.DUP well REAL.3SG fast

‘the third clever and fast young man’

The ordinal numbers from 2nd to 10th are formed by adding the suffix –en or –in to the cardinal number. Since cardinal numbers can be used as stative verbs, I suggest that this nominalisation suffix derivates ordinal numbers from cardinal numbers which can fill the verb slot.

The ordinal number na wo munen ‘the first’ is preceded by the noun derivational affix na- (§3.2.2.1) but is not based on the ordinal number for one: sa or etes.

The word for ‘yesterday’ is menöv and the word for ‘tomorrow’ mewi, but to refer to the days before yesterday or after tomorrow, Atchin speakers use nouns derived from the cardinal numbers by prefixation.
For the days before yesterday, the prefix is *ponV-*:

4.51 \( Me \quad ma \quad pono-tol \)

REAL.1SG  come  day.before-three

‘I arrived three days ago’

**Table 4.36 - Complex nouns to refer to the days before yesterday**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pon eru</th>
<th>ponV- <em>day.before</em> + -ru ‘two’</th>
<th>‘day before yesterday’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ponotol</td>
<td>‘’ + -tul ‘three’</td>
<td>‘3 days ago’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ponevats</td>
<td>‘’ + -vats ‘four’</td>
<td>‘4 days ago’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ponelim,</td>
<td>‘’ + -lim ‘five’</td>
<td>‘5 days ago’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the days after tomorrow, the prefix is *ta-*:

4.52 \( ta-ru \)

day.after-two

‘day after tomorrow’

4.53 \( ta-tol \)

day.after-three

‘3 days later, in three days’

**Table 4.37 - Complex nouns to refer to the days in the future**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>taru</th>
<th>ta- ‘day.after’ + -ru ‘two’</th>
<th>‘day after tomorrow’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tatol</td>
<td>‘’ + -tul ‘three’</td>
<td>‘in 3 days’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tavats</td>
<td>‘’ + -vats ‘four’</td>
<td>‘in 4 days’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talim,</td>
<td>‘’ + -lim ‘five’</td>
<td>‘in 5 days’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3.2 Quantifiers *same-*, *kise*, *koro* ‘alone, only’

*Same-*, ‘one alone’, is a complex form of *sa* ‘one’ and *me* ‘alone’, to which is affixed the possessive singular suffix (paradigm in Table 3.24):

*same-k*  ‘alone-1SG’

*same-m*  ‘alone-2SG’

*same-n*  ‘alone-3SG’
4.54  *Me viel same-k*
    REAL.1SG  go  alone-1SG
    ‘I go alone’

Same- is only used with singular nominals. For all plural forms it is the uninflected *kise*, ‘alone’, that is used:

4.55  *Inir mar viel kise*
    3PL  REAL.3PL  go  alone
    ‘They go on their own’

*Koro* ‘only, merely’ can also be used in place of *same-* and *kise* and with the same meaning. *Koro* is placed straight after the lexical item it modifies:

4.56  *Pe vök ngein koro.*
    IRR.1SG  go  there  only
    ‘I go just there.’

*Koro* can function as an adverb whereas *same-* and *kise* only modify nominals.
In the example below, *koro* modifies the verb *ralral* ‘walk about’:

4.57  *Pe ralral koro*
    IRR.1SG  walk.about  only
    ‘I’m just having a walk’

Whereas in the same position in the sentence, *same-k* modifies the subject of the verb *ralral*:

4.58  *Pe ralral same-k*
    IRR.1SG  walk.about  only-1SG
    ‘I’m having a walk on my own’

*Koro* has semantic connotations that are not covered by *same-* and *kise-*... Below, *koro* modifies the verb and is used in the sense of ‘exactly’:

4.59  *Nasup mu rongsoni koro*
    man  REAL.3SG  know  only
    ‘The man knew exactly (what to do)’
4.2.4 Semantic adjectives and relative clauses

To assign quality to a noun, speakers of Atchin commonly use four types of modifiers:

- a verbal construction postposed to the noun
- an adjective postposed to the noun
- an adjective derived from a possessive construction and directly preposed to the noun
- a relative clause directly postposed to the noun and introduced by the relative marker (ng)a

The expression ‘semantic adjectives’ is taken from Dryer’s typological description of the Noun Phrase, and denotes ‘a set of words on the basis of their meaning, regardless of their grammatical properties in a particular language’ (Dryer 2007: 168). Since Atchin uses words with diverse grammatical properties to ascribe qualities to noun, it is relevant to regroup these noun modifiers under a semantic criterion.

Atchin relative clauses cannot be reduced to ‘a set of words’, as per Dryer’s definition quoted above, and they do not fall into the semantic adjective category.

4.2.4.1 Verbal construction postposed to the noun

The verbal construction consists of a verbal particle that marks realis/irrealis status and the person and number of the noun, followed by the descriptive term which is an intransitive verb. Most examples of noun modifying verbal constructions in my corpus are elicited and they all use the realis preverb:

4.60 nasup ok mi tara
    man   DEF   REAL.3SG old
    ‘the old man’

4.61 nabwe mar rorow
    slitdrum   REAL.3PL heavy.DUP
    ‘heavy drums’

4.62 nei ok rik terwesi-r mar lelep
    tree   DEM PL size-3PL.POSS REAL.3PL big.DUP
    ‘wide logs’ (lit: these logs, their size is big)
The few adjectival terms found in the narratives use the verbal construction as well:

4.63 tamau sa mwi lelep sopon (Le Wortamat)
   castrated.pig INDEF REAL.3SG big.DUP INDEF
   ‘a rather big castrated pig’

4.64 ina mira-k mwi tsats (Le Wenper)
   1SG mother-1SG.POSS REAL.3SG bad
   ‘my bad mother’

Compare this construction with the verbal phrases:

4.65 Nar m uror
   shell REAL.3SG turn
   ‘The shell turns’

4.66 Mira-k mi ma ango
   mother-1SG.POSS REAL.3PL come here
   ‘My mother has come here’

Several adjectival terms are joined with the connective ko (4.67) in the same manner as two verbal phrases (4.68):

4.67 nabwe ok mwi tara ko mu row
   drum DEF REAL.3SG old and REAL.3SG heavy
   ‘the heavy old drum’

4.68 Mwi urenı nar ko mwi sei nobo nen
   REAL.3SG throw shell and REAL.3SG sing song this
   ‘She throws the shells and sings this song’

4.2.4.2 Adjective postposed to the noun

Some lexical terms can modify a noun without the verbal particle. They are directly postposed to the noun they modify, or directly postposed to the determiner modifying the noun.
4.69 tamai mötmöt
dog black
‘a black dog’

4.70 tamai ok mötmöt
dog DEM black
‘the black dog’

These lexemes form the class of adjectives in Atchin. Table 4.38 lists the adjectives I encountered in my data and this list may not be exhaustive.

**Table 4.38 - Class of adjectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>‘short’</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>‘short path’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>murol</td>
<td>‘short’</td>
<td>nisel murol</td>
<td>‘short path’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>merets</td>
<td>‘thin’</td>
<td>leter merets</td>
<td>‘thin woman’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mamlasor</td>
<td>‘cold’</td>
<td>nua mamlasor</td>
<td>‘cold water’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuwun</td>
<td>‘full’</td>
<td>niteng wuwun</td>
<td>‘full basket’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsats</td>
<td>‘bad’</td>
<td>tsinum tsats</td>
<td>‘bad man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mawos</td>
<td>‘straight’</td>
<td>nisel mawos</td>
<td>‘straight path’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mulmuli</td>
<td>‘round’</td>
<td>nivat mulmuli</td>
<td>‘round stone’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nemuri</td>
<td>‘nearby’</td>
<td>neim nemuri</td>
<td>‘house nearby’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nesuvi</td>
<td>‘far’</td>
<td>neim nesuvi</td>
<td>‘house faraway’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matu</td>
<td>‘right (side)’</td>
<td>verer matu</td>
<td>‘right arm’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mweir</td>
<td>‘left’</td>
<td>verer mweir</td>
<td>‘left arm’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mötmöt</td>
<td>‘black’</td>
<td>tamai mötmöt</td>
<td>‘black dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokoni</td>
<td>‘narrow’</td>
<td>nisel kokoni</td>
<td>‘narrow path’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tara</td>
<td>‘old’</td>
<td>leter tara</td>
<td>‘old woman’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the adjectives above are fairly common noun modifiers that mostly address the dimension (‘short’, ‘thin’, ‘straight’, ‘round’, ‘narrow’), position (‘nearby’, ‘far’, ‘right’, ‘left’) or physical properties (‘cold’, ‘full’, ‘old’) of the noun they modify. All these adjectives can also modify the noun in a verbal construction postposed to the noun. But not all lexemes that modify a noun in a postposed verbal construction can directly modify a noun.
Other adjectival terms that modify a noun without the verbal particle come from a possessive construction. In the possessive construction the head modifier, the possessor, is postposed to the noun. However, in its adjectival function, the former possessee modifies the noun that formerly was the possessor. The function changes but the word order in the phrase does not change and these adjectival terms are therefore preposed to the noun they modify. My corpus lists two nouns that can modify nouns in this construction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From possessive construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>natun ‘small’ (from natu-n ‘offspring-3SG.POSS’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miren ‘big’ (from mire-n ‘mother-3SG.POSS’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This ‘dependency reversal’ or ‘head shift’ has been discussed before for Oceanic languages (Lichtenberk 2005; Ross 1998). In particular the type of construction that corresponds to the direct possession has been associated to the noun-modifying function of a small number of nouns. That function relates to the size of the referent of the modified noun (Lichtenberk 2005: 135, referencing Ross). Thus for Toqabaqita, a language of the Solomon Islands, Lichtenberk lists two nouns (meaning ‘father’ and ‘mother’) that can modify nouns in a direct possession construction and convey a notion of ‘big’ applied to the head noun. Similarly, in Atchin the nouns meaning ‘mother’ and ‘offspring’ can modify a head noun and convey a notion of, respectively, ‘big’ and ‘small’ to the noun they modify. And similarly to what Lichtenberk observed for Toqabaqita, the noun-modifying function of the two Atchin lexemes involves ‘dependency reversal, whereby the original modifier position became the head position and vice versa’ (Lichtenberk 2005: 142).

This construction is not specific to Oceanic languages. Without being universal (it is not found in French, for example), it is also used in other families of languages. In English we
use the construction in the expression ‘the mother of all’ $+ N$, as in ‘the mother of all budgets’, ‘the mother of all battles’, to convey the importance of the noun modified.

Aside from being preposed, noun modifiers that derive from a possessive construction are also inflected for plural. The only occurrence of inflection on a noun is in a direct possession construction, where a suffix that marks the person and number of the possessor is appended to the possessum. The plural marking is preserved in what has become an adjectival construction:

4.73 $mirer$ $nivat$ $sopon$
    big.PL stone INDEF.PL
    ‘big stones’

can also be analysed as:

4.74 $mire-r$ $nivat$ $sopon$
    mother-3PL.POSS stone INDEF.PL
    ‘the mother of stones’

The plural can also be marked on the noun modifier derived from a possessive construction by partial reduplication (refer to §3.2.3 for discussion on noun reduplication):

4.75 $mirmiren$ $nivat$
    big.DUP stone
    ‘big stones’

4.2.4.4 Relative clause directly postposed to the noun

The relative clause is introduced by relative marker $nga$, sometimes reduced to $a$.

4.76 $Me$ $lesi$ $tsünob$ $nga$ $mi$ $ma$ $menöv$
    REAL.1SG see man REL REAL.3SG come yesterday
    ‘I saw the man who came yesterday’

The reduction of $nga$ to $a$ is not regular and both forms can happen in the same environment:

4.77 $nivat$ $nga$ $mar$ $lelep$
    stone REL REAL.3PL big.DUP
    ‘big stones’ (lit: ‘stones that are big’)

In the two narratives, *Le Wenper* and *Le Wortamat*, * nga* is predominantly used after verbs to introduce complement or purpose clauses:

4.79  *Mor lesi nga nivat mu tsovi Vao* (Le Wortamat)
REAL.3DU see COMP stone REAL.3SG go.past Vao
‘They see that the stone has gone past Vao’

4.80  *Mi opoploni nga pi lai-Ø* (Le Wortamat)
REAL.3SG try.DUP COMP IRR.3SG take-3SG
‘She repeatedly tries to take it’

4.81  *Me ma nga pe lai ndas* (Le Wenper)
REAL.1SG come PURP IRR.1SG take sea.water
‘I have come to take sea water’

However, in my elicited data, the relative clause was often the pattern proposed to assign quality to a noun:

4.82  *Po lai niteng a mu wuwun ok*
IRR.1SG take basket REL REAL.3SG full DEM
‘I take the full basket’ (lit: ‘I take the basket that is full’)

4.83  *Me ore tamai nga mu wis*
REAL.1SG hunt dog REL REAL.3SG white
‘I hunted the white dog’ (lit: I hunted the dog that is white)
4.3 Possessive Constructions

Grammatical possession codes a relation that may be of true ownership, but is not confined to this type of relation. Ownership, whole-part relationship and kinship are ‘typically covered by an NP-internal grammatical construction of possession’ (Dixon 2010b: 263). However the relation of true ownership needs to be formally established, whereas the relation of whole-part relationship and kinship is embedded in the possessum. As its name indicates, a whole-part (e.g. ‘flesh’, ‘feather’, ‘door’) is inherently related to a whole, animate or not, and a kinship term entails a reciprocal relationship (‘father’ entails a relation with ‘child’ and vice versa), but the notion of ownership is not embedded for most nouns that do not fall in the whole-part or kin category. As is common for Oceanic languages, Atchin marks the semantic distinction of these relationships. In particular, alienable relations of ownership are coded differently from inalienable relations of whole-part and kinship.

Possession in Atchin language can be marked by two different NP-internal constructions that reflect the alienability/inalienability of the relation between possessum and possessor. Possession can be marked

- with a possessive suffix on the possessum
- with a possessive suffix on a classifier postposed to the possessum

Emulating the directness of the relation between possessum and possessor, the first type of construction is used for inalienable possession and thus for body parts and most kin terms. The second type of constructions is mostly used for alienable possession.

Atchin formally distinguishes several kinds of alienable possession and different sets of classifiers are used to express food possession, drink possession and other possessive relationships.

The animacy of the possessor also plays a role in the possessive construction:

- 3SG zero inflection is exclusive to marking relations involving a human possessor
- The general possession classifier se- marks relationships involving a human possessor and classifier ne- those involving a non-human possessor.

Direct and indirect possessive constructions are discussed in more detail below.
4.3.1 Direct possession – possessive suffix on possessum

The paradigm for the possessive suffix was given in the morphology chapter (Table 3.24). For direct possession, the possessive suffix is appended to the possessum. Most body parts and many kinship terms are directly marked for possession:

4.84 \textit{patu-k}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
head-1SG.POSS \\
‘my head’
\end{tabular}

4.85 \textit{mira-mam}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
mother-1PL.EXCL.POSS \\
‘our mother’
\end{tabular}

Some nouns that express location also use direct possession morphology:

4.86 \textit{puto-n neim}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
back-3SG.POSS \\
house \\
‘back of the house’
\end{tabular}

4.87 \textit{lolo-n vera-k}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
inside-3SG.POSS \\
hand-1SG.POSS \\
‘palm of my hand’ (lit: ‘inside of my hand’) 
\end{tabular}

The possessive suffix is appended to the locative preposition \textit{tsi} ‘to, at, on’ to refer to the person that is the locative argument:

4.88 \textit{Naven nab\textsuperscript{13} mu suruni tsi-n}  
\begin{tabular}{l}
ash \\
REAL.3SG \\
land \\
LOC-3SG
\end{tabular} \\
‘The ash lands on her’

For many directly possessed nouns, the root-final vowel follows the pattern listed in Table 4.39: root final \textit{a} occurs for the 1SG and 2PL and root final \textit{e} occurs for all other persons - though \textit{o} also occurs in some roots for 2SG and 1PL.EXCL.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Naven nab} is a compound: \textit{naven} ‘ash’ \textit{nab} ‘fire’
Table 4.39 - Changing root-final vowel before possession suffix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>root-final vowel</th>
<th>‘eye’</th>
<th>‘tongue’</th>
<th>‘brother’</th>
<th>‘belly’</th>
<th>‘hand’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>meta-k</td>
<td>mema-k</td>
<td>tua-k</td>
<td>renga-k</td>
<td>vera-k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>e/o</td>
<td>meto-m</td>
<td>meme-m</td>
<td>tuo-m</td>
<td>renga-m</td>
<td>vero-m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>mete-(n)</td>
<td>meme-(n)</td>
<td>tue-(n)</td>
<td>renga-(n)</td>
<td>vero-(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL.EXCL</td>
<td>e/o</td>
<td>mete-mam</td>
<td>meme-mam</td>
<td>tuo-mam</td>
<td>renga-mam</td>
<td>vero-mam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL.INCL</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>mete-r</td>
<td>meme-r</td>
<td>tue-r</td>
<td>renga-r</td>
<td>vero-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>meta-mi</td>
<td>meme-mi</td>
<td>tuo-mi</td>
<td>renga-mi</td>
<td>vera-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>mete-r</td>
<td>meme-r</td>
<td>tue-r</td>
<td>renga-r</td>
<td>vero-r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For other nouns the same root-final vowels occurs for all persons. This is the case for the terms listed in Table 4.40.

Table 4.40 - Unchanged root-final vowel before possession suffix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘head’</th>
<th>‘blood’</th>
<th>‘other.sex.sibling’</th>
<th>‘wing’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>patu-k</td>
<td>ra-k</td>
<td>tsotsi-k</td>
<td>nabe-k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>patu-m</td>
<td>ra-m</td>
<td>tsotsi-m</td>
<td>nabe-m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>patu-(n)</td>
<td>ra-(n)</td>
<td>tsotsi-(n)</td>
<td>nabe-(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL.EXCL</td>
<td>patu-mam</td>
<td>ra-mam</td>
<td>tsotsi-mam</td>
<td>nabe-mam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL.INCL</td>
<td>patu-r</td>
<td>ra-r</td>
<td>tsotsi-r</td>
<td>nabe-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>patu-mi</td>
<td>ra-mi</td>
<td>tsotsi-mi</td>
<td>nabe-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>patu-r</td>
<td>ra-r</td>
<td>tsotsi-r</td>
<td>nabe-r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The independent pronoun referring to the possessor may precede the inflected possessum. In 4.89, the free pronoun is preposed to the suffixed noun to disambiguate the 1PL.INCL and 3PL identical suffixed forms:

4.89  

\[ \text{inir} \quad \text{vere-r} \]

3PL  hand-1PL.INCL/3PL.POSS

‘their brother’
In 4.90 the 1SG free pronoun is added for emphasis:

4.90  
inā mira-ŋ
1SG mother-1SG.POSS
‘(it’s) my mother’

The inflected possessum may be followed by the noun possessor. The 3SG zero inflection was discussed in the morphology chapter (§3.2.1).

4.91  
patu-ø leter
head-3SG.POSS woman
‘woman’s head’

4.92  
ra-n nato
blood-3SG.POSS chicken
‘chicken’s blood’

Nouns referring to human body parts (and many animal body parts) are directly inflected for possession. But not all kinship nouns are directly inflected for possession and some use the general possession classifier se- (Table 4.45). Some kinship terms using the indirect construction refer to older siblings and relatives with whom one has no blood relation:

4.93  
tutu se-ŋ
same.sex.older.sibling POSS-3SG
‘his older brother/her older sister’

4.94  
twen sa-k
husband POSS-1SG
‘my husband’

The indirect possession construction may also reflect the distance two relatives must keep with one another.¹⁴ Women avoid all dealings with their husband’s older brother whose name they also avoid using. To refer to this relative they use the construction twen sak tutu sen (4.95). The same rule applies to men for their wife’s older sister whom they call leter sak tutu sen (4.96).

¹⁴ These rules are respected in present day Atchin and are referred to as metanani.
Some kin relationships can be referred to with two terms, one term using the direct possessive construction and the other the indirect possessive construction. There is no semantic distinction between the two terms in 4.97 and 4.98, not even one of respect. The only difference is the noun in 4.98, *te* ‘father’, is also used as a term of address,\(^{15}\) without the classifier.

4.97  *tima-k*

father-1SG.POSS

‘my father’

4.98  *te  sa-k*

father  POSS-1SG

‘my father’

Table 4.41 gives the terms for some kin terms in the 1SG person. When a 3SG-inflected possessum is part of the kinship term (4.99) there is an alternative zero-inflected construction (4.100). The corresponding zero-inflected construction is not shown in Table 4.41.

4.99  *te  sak  tasi-n*

father  POSS-1SG  younger.same.sex.sibling-3SG.POSS

‘my father’s younger brother’

4.100  *tasi-ø  te  sa-k*

younger.same.sex.sibling-3SG.POSS  father  POSS-1SG

‘my father’s younger brother’

\(^{15}\) A participant commented that *pe sak* ‘my mother’, *pe* ‘mother’, *sak* ‘POSS-1SG’, was more commonly used by younger generations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Phrase</th>
<th>Direct construction</th>
<th>Indirect construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>my father</td>
<td>tima-k</td>
<td>te sa-k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my mother</td>
<td>mira-k</td>
<td>pe sa-k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my older sibling - same sex</td>
<td></td>
<td>tutu sa-k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my younger sibling - same sex</td>
<td>tasi-k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my opposite sex sibling</td>
<td>tsotsi-k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my father's sister</td>
<td>te sa-k tsotsi-n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my father's younger brother</td>
<td>te sa-k tasi-n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my father's older brother</td>
<td></td>
<td>te sa-k tutu se-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my mother's younger sister</td>
<td>pe sa-k tasi-n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my mother's brother</td>
<td>metua-k</td>
<td>pe sa-k tsotsi-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my father's brother's child</td>
<td>tasi-k / tsotsi-k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my mother's brother's child</td>
<td>tasi-k / tsotsi-k</td>
<td>metua-k natu-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my husband</td>
<td></td>
<td>tewen sa-k nasup sa-k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my wife</td>
<td>leter sa-k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my husband's sister</td>
<td>reva-k</td>
<td>tewen sa-k tsiotsi-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my husband's younger brother</td>
<td></td>
<td>tewen sa-k tasi-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my husband's older brother</td>
<td></td>
<td>tewen sa-k tutu se-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my husband's father</td>
<td>puela-k nasup</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my husband's mother</td>
<td>puela-k leter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my daughter</td>
<td>natu-k wisewin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my son</td>
<td>natu-k norman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my daughter-in-law</td>
<td>vünga-k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my son-in-law</td>
<td>puela-k</td>
<td>natu-k tewen se-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child of my opposite sex sibling</td>
<td>oloa-k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my grandchild</td>
<td>natu-k</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

16 *Tasik a mwi welwele* ‘the youngest same sex sibling, a ‘REL’, *mwi* ‘REAL.3SG’, *welwele* ‘small’.

17 *Tasik a re liven* ‘younger same sex sibling’, a ‘REL’, *re* ‘LOC’, *liven* ‘middle’.

18 For couples with children. Also a term of respect.

19 Parents use this term instead of the name of their children’s spouses.
4.3.2 Indirect possession - possessive suffix on classifier

I have identified five classifiers that take part in the indirect possessive construction. Four of the classifiers concern animate possessors and one is reserved for non-human possessors.

The roots of the four classifiers I have identified for animate possessors are *nome* for drink possessions, *nore* for edible possessions, *se* for broad possession and *na*-. The classifier *na*- is used with only one item in my corpus, *naret* ‘heart’, and the type of relation it establishes is unclear. The paradigm of the three first classifiers shows the same variation in the root final vowel as the one observed for directly possessed nouns (Table 4.39).

The classifier *ne*- is restricted to non-human possessors. It establishes relations of alienable or inalienable possession. This classifier is discussed last, in §4.3.2.5.

Possessive classifiers establish a relation of possession at the time of the utterance. The classifier depends on the nature of the relationship and not exclusively on the nature of the possessed items. Drink and food classifiers add semantic information and express what the possessor is intending to do with their alimentary possession. But a noun can appear in constructions with different classifiers (as illustrated further by examples 4.116, 4.117 and 4.118).

The overt noun possessor may precede or follow the suffixed classifier:

4.101 *wuso nore-n tamai*  
meat FOOD-3SG dog  
‘meat for the dog’

4.102 *leter ok niteng se-n*  
woman DEM basket POSS-3SG  
‘the woman’s basket’

If the possessor’s identity is known, the suffixed classifier is sufficient to establish the relation of possession:

---

19 *Mini* is the verb for ‘drink’

20 I have two verbs for ‘eat’ in my corpus: *uroi and an*
4.103 *niteng se-n*
basket POSS-3SG
‘her basket’

The possessive suffix marks the number and person of the possessor. To mark the plural of the possessum, the suffixed classifier is followed by *rik* ‘PL’:

4.104 *letter ok niteng se-n rik*

woman DEM basket POSS-3SG PL
‘the woman’s baskets’

### 4.3.2.1 Classifier *nome-* for drink possession

The classifier used to establish the relation between the drink possession and its beneficiary is set out in Table 4.42. The classifier displays the same root-final vowel alternation as was observed in directly possessed nouns (Table 4.39).

**Table 4.42 - Classifier for possession of drinkable items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td><em>noma-k</em></td>
<td><em>nome-mam</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>nome-r</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>nomo-m</em></td>
<td><em>noma-mi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>nome-n</em></td>
<td><em>nome-r</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The classifier *nome-* appears in possessive constructions with nouns that refer to liquids but also plants and fruits from which a liquid can be extracted: *melo* ‘kava’, *tipang* ‘green coconut’:

4.105 *nu a nome-n*

water DRINK-3SG
‘his water’

4.106 *melo nome-k*

kava DRINK-1SG
‘my kava’
4.3.2.2 Classifier *nore-* for edible possession

The classifier used to establish the relation between the edible possession and its beneficiary is set out in Table 4.43.

Table 4.43 - Classifier for possession of edible items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td>nora-(k)</td>
<td>nore-mam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INCL</td>
<td>nore-r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>noro-(m)</td>
<td>nora-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>nore-n</td>
<td>nore-r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.107 *piok* nora-\(k\)

\(\text{taro} \quad \text{FOOD-1SG}\)

‘my taro (that I intend to eat)’

Contrary to the general classifier for human possessors (Table 4.45), drink and food classifiers do not take a zero inflection for the 3SG person when followed by the noun possessor:

4.108 *nembi* nore-\(n\) nasup

\(\text{meat} \quad \text{FOOD-3SG} \quad \text{chief}\)

‘chief’s meat’

4.3.2.3 Classifier *na-*

In my corpus, classifier *na-* is used with only one noun, *naret* ‘heart’, and the lexical item refers to the animals’ organ:

4.109 *naret* na-\(n\) tamai

\(\text{heart} \quad \text{POSS-3SG} \quad \text{dog}\)

‘dog’s heart’

4.110 *naret* na-\(n\) puluk

\(\text{heart} \quad \text{POSS-3SG} \quad \text{cow}\)

‘cow’s heart’
4.111 Meuren sa-k mwi mamavis
heart POSS-1SG REAL.3SG hurt
‘My heart is sore’

Historically, the classifier may not have been so restrictive since its paradigm covers all the persons, in the singular and plural, as shown in Table 4.44.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td>na-k</td>
<td>na-mam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td></td>
<td>na-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>na-m</td>
<td>na-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>na-n</td>
<td>na-r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.4 Classifier se- for general possession

The classifier used to establish all other types of alienable possessions for animate possessors is set out in Table 4.45. When followed by the noun possessor, the classifier takes a zero inflection for the 3SG person, as was discussed in §3.2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.EXCL</td>
<td>sa-k</td>
<td>se-mam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.INCL</td>
<td></td>
<td>se-r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>so-m</td>
<td>sa-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>se-n/se-φ</td>
<td>se-r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.112 neim se-r nasup ko leter
house POSS-3PL chief and woman
‘the house of the chief and his wife’

The indirect possessive construction with classifier se- is also used with the abstract nouns discussed in the section on nominalisation (§3.2.2.1):

---

21 Capell & Layard (1980: 122) list na- as a 'possessive cooked food'
Relation between objects and possessors but also, as we saw above in Table 4.41, between some relatives, is expressed by means of the general classifier:

4.115  *leter*  *se-∅*  *nasup*

wife  POSS-3SG  chief

‘chief’s wife’

When used in a construction with a lexical item that refers to edible or drinkable items, the general classifier implies the possessor is not intending to use the item for alimentary purpose:

4.116  *tipang*  *sa-k*

green.coconut  POSS-1SG

‘my coconut (that I do not intend to drink or eat)’

The relationship between the possessor and possessum is established at the moment of the utterance and a different classifier is used depending on the nature of the relation the speaker wants to convey:

4.117  *tipang*  *noma-k*

green.coconut  FOOD-1SG

‘my coconut (that I intend to eat)’

4.118  *tipang*  *nora-k*

green.coconut  DRINK-1SG

‘my coconut (that I intend to drink)’
4.3.2.5 Classifier *ne-* for non-human possessors

The criterion for using classifier *ne-* is the nature of the possessor. This construction is used with non-human possessors and it can express inalienable possession such as whole-part relations:

4.119  nonom  *ne-n*  neim
doors  NHUM-3  house
‘the house door’

4.120  Mwi  sei  nobo  *ne-n*  maki
IRR.3SG  sing  song  NHUM-3  grade-taking.ceremony  DEM
‘(S)he sings a song of the grade-taking ceremony’

In 4.101 the classifier *noren* linked the possessor *tamai* ‘dog’ to its intended food *wuso* ‘meat’. In 4.121, the classifier *ne-n* conveys an entirely different relation between the two nouns and in this example *wuso* is understood as a body part of the possessor *tamai*:

4.121  wuso  *ne-n*  tamai
meat  NHUM-3  dog
‘the flesh of the dog’

*Ne-n* is the only form for the classifier. Since it is restricted to non-human possessors, the classifier is only used in the third person. Zero inflection is reserved for human possessors (§3.2.1) and classifier *ne-* does not take a zero inflection for the 3SG person when followed by the noun possessor:

4.122  *nua  ne-Ø  nurur
water  NHUM-3  island
‘the water of the island’
5. Narratives

5.1 Le Wortamat


This is the story of a stone that caught a girl by magic and whisked her away to the island of Tutuba, near Santo. There, the girl is rescued from the stone by a man who sacrifices a pig to break the spell. There are still descendants of the girl nowadays in Tutuba Island.

1  Le Wortamat.
   DET.FEM Wortamat
   ‘Le Wortamat.’

2  Le Wortamat mi lek mi matur nere
   DET.FEM Wortamat REAL.3SG stay REAL.3SG sleep at
   sale mawos sa mar ure nesel Wortamat.
   beach landing INDEF REAL.3PL say name Wortamat
   ‘(The rock called) Le Wortamat lies by a landing place that we call Wortamat.’

3  Nivat ok mi matur ne renge-n.
   stone DEM REAL.3SG sleep at belly-3SG.POSS
   ‘The stone lies there.’ (lit: ‘the rock sleeps at its belly’)

4  Ale mar usi vatsin mar ure le Wortamat.
   alright REAL.3PL name then REAL.3PL say DET.FEM Wortamat
   ‘This is why it is called Le Wortamat.’

5  Vatsin ko…[ pe sope tatatser ni vatsin ?]
   then and IRR.1SG tell non.stop.DUP 3SG then
   ‘Then…[do I tell it (the story) without stopping then?]’
A man has two children, two girls, and they are on the shore waiting for the low tide to come in, the daytime low tide, as at present.

They want to go fishing by turning the rocks over.

And older same sex sibling and younger same sex sibling are standing on the shore.
‘They fish, then they see a trochus and the older girl stays on the shore (while) her little sister goes to take it.’

9  Mi  van  mi  pe  ango  ko  mi  opoploni
   REAL.3SG  go  REAL.3SG  COP  DEM  and  REAL.3SG  try.DUP
   nga  pi  lai- φ  ko  mi  tsamon.
   COMP  IRR.3SG  take-3SG.OBJ  and  REAL.3SG  fail
‘She tries several times to take it this way but she can’t.’

10 Mi  opoploni  nga  pi  lai- φ
    REAL.3SG  try.DUP  COMP  IRR.3SG  take-3SG.OBJ
    mi  tsamon  ko  tutu  se-n
    REAL.3SG  fail  and  older.same.sex.sibling  POSS-3SG
    mi  ure-ni  wa:
    REAL.3SG  say-TR  say
‘She keeps on trying but she can't take it, then her older sister says :’

11 “Po  ma  ro  lua  ko  veral  notpong.
   IRR.2SG  come  IRR.1DU.INCL  return  and  later  evening
   ko  ro  kete  nab  ko  ro  ma
   and  IRR.1DU.INCL  do  fire  and  IRR.1DU.INCL  come
   ro  rumsi  ko  ro  lai- φ. ”
   IRR.1DU.INCL  fish.at.night  and  IRR.1DU.INCL  take-3SG.OBJ
   “Come, we will return later this evening, we will make a fire and fish at night and catch it”.

12 Notpong  ma,  ko  mor  oploni  nga  por
   evening  come  and  REAL.3DU  try  COMP  IRR.3DU
laï-ø, ko mi ara ma tsalil
take-3SG.OBJ and REAL.3SG crawl come outside

ko tasi-n mi rowosi
and younger.sibling.same.sex-3SG.POSS REAL.3SG skip

van nga pi laï-ø.
go PURP IRR.3SG take-3SG.OBJ
‘The evening comes, they try to take it this way and it crawls outside. The youngest
skips to catch it.’

13 Tutu se-n mi tur tser
older.same.sex.sibling POSS-3SG REAL.3SG standing stay

ngaut, mi van mi pe ango
shore REAL.3SG go REAL.3SG COP DEM

ko mi ronge mi pe nga nivat mi
and REAL.3SG feel REAL.3SG COP COMP stone REAL.3SG

rosros.
move
‘The eldest is standing on the shore and she feels that the stone is moving.’

14 Vatsin mi rieni nab ve tepsen ko mi lesi
then REAL.3SG lean fire to side and REAL.3SG see

mi nobü, mi lesi ve tepsen ko mi lesi
REAL.3SG deep REAL.3SG see COP side and REAL.3SG see

mi nobü.
REAL.3SG deep
‘She leans with the fire on one side and sees it is deep, and on the (other) side and sees it is deep (too).’

15  

\[Mu\mu rowon vatsin.\]

REAL.3SG finish REAL.3SG be.confused then

‘It’s over. She does not know what to do.’

16  

\[Nivat mwi tata vesuvi\]

stone REAL.3SG leave far

\[mi pe ango mwi tata mwi van\]

REAL.3SG COP DEM REAL.3SG leave REAL.3SG go

\[mwi wala roni.\]

REAL.3SG run with

‘The stone has gone far, it has run away with (the girl).’

17  

\[Tutu se-n mu lua veim,\]

older.same.sex.sibling POSS-3SG REAL.3SG return go home

\[mwi van mwi lesi te se-n\]

REAL.3SG go REAL.3SG see father POSS-3SG

\[pe se-n wa.\]

mother POSS-3SG EMPH

‘The eldest returns home to her parents.’

18  

"\[Vina, nivat mwi wala roni!\]

girl stone REAL.3SG run with

‘“The girl, the stone ran away with her!”’

19  

\[Mor wala mor tsupul ngala ko\]

REAL.3DU run REAL.3DU go.down seaside and
‘They run down to the shore and see that the stone has gone past Vao Island.’

‘It’s over. The light diminishes in the distance and disappears.’

‘They stand and stare until the light disappears, then they return home.’

‘Some time goes by.’ (lit: ‘they stay this way for some time’)

‘They run down to the shore and see that the stone has gone past Vao Island.’
mi veut Tutu.
REAL.3SG lie Tutuba.island

‘Not long after they hear that the stone lies by Tutuba Island.’

24 Ale rorpong nen nasup sa mu tsupul
alright morning DEM man INDEF REAL.3SG go.down
ma ngala mwi lesi nivat mi matur.
come seaside REAL.3SG see stone REAL.3SG sleep

‘That morning, a man went down to the seaside and saw the stone there.’

25 Nivat mi matur ko wisewin mu tur
stone REAL.3SG sleep and girl REAL.3SG standing
belly 3SG

renge-n.
belly-3SG.POSS

‘The stone was lying there with the girl standing in it.’

26 Mwi lek renge-n vatsin.
REAL.3SG stay belly-3SG.POSS then

‘She was staying in it.’

27 Vatsin ko mu ure-i:
then and REAL.3SG say-TR

‘So he said:’

28 "Po ma ro veim!"
IRR.2SG come IRR.1DU.INCL go.home

“Come, let’s go home!”
29 Wisewin mwi kete nga mwi re pi viel
girl REAL.3SG do COMP REAL.3SG want IRR.3SG go

re nivat ko se e rongsoni pi viel.
LOC stone and NEG PV.3SG know IRR.3SG go
‘The girl wants to leave the stone but she cannot go.’

30 Sere kastom mu toto-ni-∅ vatsin.
because kastom REAL.3SG reach.for-TR-3SG.OBJ then
‘Because she is caught by kastom magic.’ (lit: ‘because kastom reached for her then’)

31 Nasup mu rongsoni koro ko mi viel
man REAL.3SG know only and REAL.3SG go

mu lua veim mwi lai tamau sa
REAL.3SG return go.home REAL.3SG take castrated.pig INDEF

mwi leplep sopon, mwi tori mi ma
REAL.3SG big.DUP some REAL.3SG hold REAL.3SG come

roni, mwi ma mi te nitan,
with REAL.3SG come REAL.3SG place earth

mwi revitsipini-∅ ko mwi tikei wisevin.
REAL.3SG kill-3SG.OBJ and REAL.3SG take.s.o.home girl
‘The man just knows what to do and he returns home to take a rather big castrated pig,
he brings it back, places it on the ground, kills it, then takes the girl home.’

32 Mi viel tua re nivat ko mor veim.
REAL.3SG go get.out LOC stone and REAL.3DU go.home
‘She steps out of the stone and they go home.’
‘They stayed and she settled there until today and started a breed that is still there in Tutuba. This ends (the story).’
5.2 Le Wenper

Told by Gustave Romone in Atchin on 23 March 2010. Transcription by Gina Mayeu. Transcription checked with Gaston Atuary

This is the story of a woman who is a snake. Her daughter marries a boy from another village. When the snake visits her daughter at her son in law’s village, he burns her to death.

1 Le Wenper.
   DET.FEM Wenper
   ‘Le Wenper.’

2 Le Wenper ve nimwet ko sa.
   DET.FEM Wenper COP snake FOCUS INDEF
   ‘Wenper is a snake.’

3 Nimet ango nimwet a Tepsen Nual.
   snake DEM snake LOC Tepsen Nual
   ‘This snake is from (a place called) Tepsen Nual.’

4 Tepsen wa a Tondor.
   Tepsen EMPH LOC Tondor
   ‘Tepsen is nearby Tondor.’

5 Vatsin ko wisewin Laon sa.
   then and girl Laon INDEF
   ‘Then there's a girl from Laon.’

6 Mu tsupul mwi ma ngala.
   REAL.3SG go.down REAL.3SG come seaside
   ‘She goes down to the seaside.’

7 Ko nimwet ok natu-n.
   and snake DEM offspring-3SG.POSS
   ‘She is the child of the snake.’
8  *Nimwet*  *ok  natu-n,  van  m  utui*  
  snake  DEM  offspring-3SG.POSS  go  REAL.3SG  draw.water

*nitas.*

sea

‘The child of the snake has gone to fetch sea water.’

9  *Natu-n  nimwet  ok  wisewin  a  Tondor.*  
  offspring-3SG.POSS  snake  DEM  girl  LOC  Tondor

‘The daughter of the snake is from Tondor.’

10  *Ko nasup  a  Laon natu-n  norman  ok*  
  and  man  LOC  Laon  offspring-3SG.POSS  boy  DEM

  *mi  ma  ngala,  mu  tsupul  ma  ngala.*  
  REAL.3SG  come  seaside  REAL.3SG  go.down  come  seaside

‘And there's a man of Laon whose boy goes to the seaside.’

11  *Mu susui  wisewin  ok.*  
  REAL.3SG  find  girl  DEM

‘He finds the girl.’

12  *Natu-n  nimwet  ok  mu  susui  a*  
  offspring-3SG.POSS  snake  DEM  REAL.3SG  find  REL

  *mu  tungavi  nitas.*  
  REAL.3SG  draw.water  sea

‘He finds the child of the snake who is drawing sea water.’

13  *Ale  ko  mu  ure-ni  ni  vatsin  ok*  
  alright  and  REAL.3SG  say-TR  3SG  then  DEM
"Ko ma epense ?"
PV.2SG come how
‘He tells her: "How come you're here? "’

14 "Ina me viel mare koro me ma nga
1SG REAL.1SG go from.above only REAL.1SG come PURP
pe lai ndas".
IRR.1SG take sea
‘ “Me I come from just up there, I have come to fetch sea water”.’

15 Vatsin ko merok mu ure-ni ni wa:
then and young.man REAL.3SG say-TR3SG say

"Me re pe tikei-m ".
REAL.1SG want IRR.1SG marry-2SG.OBJ
‘Then the young man says to her: "I want to marry you"’.’

16 Vatsin ko ure-ni ni wa :" O sere kon tikei-a
then and say-TR3SG say O NEG PV.2SG marry-1SG.OBJ

sere ina mira-k mwi tsats,
because 1SG mother-1SG.POSS REAL.3SG bad

mwi tsats res”.
REAL.3SG bad well
‘Then she says: "O you can't marry me because my mother is bad, very bad".’

17 Vatsin ko:" Miro-m nise ?"
then and mother-2SG.POSS what
‘Then (he says): "What about your mother?"’
18 "Mwi tsats wa se nen ure-ni".
REAL.3SG bad say NEG DEM say.TR
“She is bad, I can't tell how much”.

19 Ini vatsin mu ure-i mi pok wa:
3SG then REAL.3SG say REAL.3SG this.way say

"Pwire miro-m e ve nariv, e ve
if mother-2SG.POSS PV.3SG COP. rat 3SG COP

nimwet, e ve nariv perngensis, e ve
snake PV.3SG COP rodent PV.3SG COP

nuob wa, e ve nise ko pe
lizard EMPH PV.3SG COP what and IRR.1SG

tikei-m”.
marry-2SG.OBJ
‘Then he says: "(Even) if your mother is a rat, a snake, a rodent, a lizard, whatever she
is, I marry you”.’

20 Mi wa : " Ale, mwi res. Mak
REAL.3SG say alright REAL.3SG well come

ro veim”.
IRR.1DU.INCL go.home
‘She says: "That's good then. Let's go home”.’

21 Mor viel mor van mor lek neim
REAL.3DU go REAL.3DU go REAL.3DU stay house
They go and they stay home, but her mother, the snake, she looks for her daughter and she can't see her come back.'

The girl is from Tondor.'

And the young man is from Laon.'

'She (the mother) takes a shell, she throws it and she sings this song:'
"Le Wenper, Le Wenper"

“Wenper, Wenper”

sete no res le, sete no tsats le


“not good, not bad”

natu-k nebe, natu-k nebe?”

offspring-1SG.POSS where offspring-1SG.POSS where

“where is my child, where is my child?”

Mi vreni nar mi pe nga ango ko

REAL.3SG throw shell REAL.3SG COP COMP here and

nar m uror ko mi mawos ni Laon.

shell REAL.3SG turn and REAL.3SG straight LOC Laon

‘She throws a shell this way and it turns in direction of Laon.’

Ko uwa: "natu-k niok mwi lek ne Laon".

and say offspring-1SG.POSS there REAL.3SG stay LOC Laon

‘She says: "My child is staying there, in Laon".’

Taem a mwi sei nobo malakel a malakel

when DEF REAL.3SG sing song young.man DEF young.man

roni wisewin nimwet natu-n ok a Tondor

with girl snake offspring-3SG.POSS DEM LOC Tondor

ok, mor lek ko mor salepor.

DEM REAL.3DU stay and REAL.3DU listen

---

I am told this sentence is in ‘snake language’ and that I should ignore it.
‘When she sings the song, the young man and the girl, the child of the snake from Tondor, sit and listen.’

31  (sings)

32  *Ale, nobo nen vatsin ango.*  
    alright song DEM then here  
    ‘Yes, that is this song.’

33  *Ale mwi vreni nar, nar mu uror mi*  
    alright REAL.3SG throw shell shell REAL.3SG turn REAL.3SG  
    *mawos ni vesa ni Laon.*  
    straight LOC once LOC Laon  
    ‘She throws the shell, and the shell turns immediately in direction of Laon.’

34  *Mor lelek se e parav mor sipni*  
    REAL.3DU stay.DUP NEG PV.3SG long REAL.3DU jump  
    *nga nobo nga mi ma ma ma ma ma mori*  
    COMP song REL REAL.3SG come come come come close  
    *re to² vatsin bok merok mi kila*  
    LOC door then entrance young.man REAL.3SG look.for  
    *mwi lesi: "Pe sa-k mi mas*  
    REAL.3SG see mother POSS-1SG REAL.3SG turn.up  
    *ango, mira-k mi ma ango !"*  
    here mother-1SG.POSS REAL.3SG come here

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² To is a Bislama loanword. Gustave commented he should have used the local language term *nonom* ‘door’. 
‘They are staying there and not long after they are startled when (they hear) the song that comes closer and closer to the door. Then the young man\textsuperscript{24} looks and says:"My mother has arrived here, my mother has come here!'”

\begin{verbatim}
35 " Po ure-ni pe som pi asi ve loloum".  
IRR.2SG say-TR mother POSS-2SG IRR.3SG enter COP inside

“Tell your mother to come inside'."

36 Vatsin ko: "Me ure pe sa-k mi tsats
then and REAL.1SG say mother POSS-1SG REAL.3SG bad

ko m ure e res ko pi ma
and REAL.2SG say PV.3SG good and IRR.3SG come

vatsin mi ma bok ko mi ve re
then REAL.3SG come entrance and REAL.3SG COP LOC

kitchen

I said my mother is bad and you said it's alright, she will come, so she came and now she is by the kitchen'."

37 "Po lek ve re neim a mar tapu
IRR.2SG stay COP LOC house REL REAL.3PL cook

renge-n ok".
belly-3SG.POSS DEM

‘ "Come and stay in the kitchen". ’ (lit: ‘stay inside the house where they cook’)"

38 Mi asi mi van mi van mi van
REAL.3SG enter REAL.3SG go REAL.3SG go REAL.3SG go
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{24} Gustave had meant to say ‘the young woman'.
She enters, crawling, crawling, in the small interior of the tiny house and she rests her head in the door.'

‘The young man is embarrassed. Now what? Then he has an idea and says to her (the girl):’

‘“Come, let's go to the garden and fetch some food for the woman to take home.”’
41 Mor viel mor van mor ve lamös.  
REAL.3DU go REAL.3DU go REAL.3DU COP field  
‘They go to the field.’

42 Malakel a romien se-n pwi kete miren nana  
young.man DEF idea POSS-3SG IRR.3SG do big thing  
veral.  
later  
‘The young man will put his big plan in practice soon.’ (lit: ‘the young man’s idea will do a big thing soon’) 

43 Mi van ure-ni ni:” Po tur naok  
REAL.3SG go say-TR 3SG IRR.2SG stand here  
pe vök ngein koro”.

IRR.1SG go there only  
‘He tells her (the girl): "You stay here. I will go just there".’

44 Mi van ko mi vei roser.  
REAL.3SG go and REAL.3SG collect dry.leaf.of.coconut.tree  
‘He goes and collects the dry leaves of coconut trees.’

45 Mi vei roser ma ma ma ma ma  
REAL.3SG collect dry.leaf.of.coconut.tree come come come come come  
van ko mwi sisngi lep a, kitsin lep a.  
LOC and REAL.3SG surround.with several DEF kitchen several DEF  
‘He goes and collects the dry leaves of coconut trees. He collects the leaves while coming closer and closer. He puts a lot of them around the kitchen.’

46 Mwi sisngi mi sisngi van se e  
REAL.3SG surround.with REAL.3SG surround.with LOC NEG PV.3SG
Narratives

parav mi pok ko mu tsupli van nab
long REL.3SG this.way and REAL.3SG start go fire

‘He puts them around and around and shortly after he starts a fire.’

47 Ko se e parav ko mwi lesi sere e
And NEG PV.3SG long but REAL.3SG see NEG PV.3SG

mas lua ma.
turn.up come.back come

‘It does not take long but the girl doesn't see him come back.’

48 Naven nab ok sa mu row naok mi ma
ash DEM one REAL.3SG fly there REAL.3SG come

ma ma ma mwi tawos tsi wisewin ok, nab
come come come REAL.3SG rest LOC girl DEM fire

mu suruni tsi-n.
REAL.3SG land.on LOC-3SG

‘A speck of ash flies there and falls to rest on the girl. It lands on her.’

49 "O mira-k! Mu su, mi mats".
O mother-1SG.POSS REAL.3SG finish REAL.3SG die

“O my mother! It's over, she is dead’.

50 Wala wala wala mwi tatser mi ma
run run run REAL.3SG non.stop REAL.3SG come

mi lesi-ø ko mi row tsupul
REAL.3SG see-3SG.OBJ and REAL.3SG jump go.down

roni van mu tsöv roni mire-n ko
with LOC REAL.3SG fall with mother-3SG.POSS and
mi an vesa.

REAL.3SG burn once

‘She runs and runs without stopping, sees her mother and jumps right in the fire with her and burns at once.’

51 Taron ango melngen mu to ne Laon
time DEM location REAL.3SG located.at LOC Laon

ne mare re Amal.

LOC from.above LOC Amal

‘Nowadays this place is located at Laon, above Amal.’
REFERENCES


A fieldwork report sent to Ralph Regenvanu, Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Council, on the 13th September 2010.

Linguistic fieldwork in Atchin.

From the 23 August to the 3rd September 2010, I carried out linguistic fieldwork on the island of Atchin, northeast of Malakula. My research consists in describing some aspects of the indigenous language spoken on the island. This is a one-year research that I have to complete by December 2010.

This was my second fieldwork there: in March I spent one week on the island.

Both times I stayed in Ruar, near the Catholic mission, with a relative of Chief Gaston Atuary. I had a private room in a brick house and another room with table and chairs to work with participants. The house had water and gas facilities. I had my own food: there are shops on the island and a weekly market at Lavalsal, on the mainland just opposite the island. Sometimes I would also share the family meals. I paid VT1000 a night. There was no electricity but I didn’t need it: I had my own solar-powered lamp, I didn’t have a computer with me and the rest of my equipment runs on batteries. But, if needed, I could ask for a generator to be started for me.

I worked with two participants: Gaston Atuary and Gustave Romone. Back in March I had also worked with Martino Metsen and Nelson Nembrwen. They were not on the island for my second trip. With Gaston and Gustave I addressed all the questions I had after working on the data I had collected during my first fieldwork. We also checked the transcription of texts that I had recorded in March. I had made these transcriptions with speakers of the language based in Port-Vila but wanted them checked. We worked every morning (except Sunday) for about 2 hours. Then I would go over the material in the afternoon.
Aside from the actual sessions with the participants there were many occasions to mix with the community and I didn’t hesitate to go everywhere on the island – as I had been authorised by the Council of Chiefs, back in March. Soon I started using greetings and short sentences with the people I bumped into on the island and everyone seemed to want to help me with the language. On the island everybody speaks the indigenous language, children included, and Bislama is rarely used (though many words are borrowed from Bislama in the present day language of Atchin). On the mainland, in particular in Orap where I went with the Atuary family to visit their relatives, Bislama seems to be more frequently used, and so does French. It is therefore best to be based on the island to study the local language.

For the time being this is my last trip in Atchin. As I mentioned, this research ends in December. On completion I will forward the outcome of the research and the recorded material and notes to the Cultural Center. I have also arranged with the community of Atchin to prepare and forward some material to them in early 2011: a small Atchin/Bislama dictionary and two stories in Atchin.

I left Gaston Atuary my copy of Anita Herle & Haidy Geismar’s “Moving Images” that has just been published (July 2010). There was of course a lot of interest in the photos taken by Layard in Atchin a century ago. I also left my solar-powered lamp, inexpensive in New Zealand, and very useful on Atchin Island.