Fiji’s ‘o’ and ‘ko’ in Context

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0. Conclusions on o and ko

0.1 The particles o and ko in Fijian are not allomorphs but particles of differing ancestry.

0.2 Particle ko can be traced all the way back to PAN, where it was ku, and was probably a case marker both for Nominative and for Predicate Noun.

0.3 Particle o also occurred in PAN, where it was u. It was a casemarker for non-clausal nouns, including vocatives, exclamations, and sentence-initial topics.

0.4 As with (perhaps) all monomoraic PCMs in PAN, these two -u particles had alternate forms with vowels i (article for specific nouns including names of persons) and a (article for nonspecific common nouns).

0.5 In POC and PCP, the o particle (and its alternate e form) still mark sentence-initial topics and other non-clausal nouns such as exclamations and vocatives.

0.6 The ko particle marked predicate nouns in PAN, POC and PCP—the common ancestor of Fijian and PN.

0.7 In Fijian, the ko form, as predicate noun, came to be used as an afterthought, for disambiguation, as a separate clause at first, at the end of a sentence.

0.8 Certain classes of NP are more likely than others to be used as predicates. So the European scholars of Fijian have come to think of the ko particle as an article for that class of NP, which is inaccurately called “proper nouns”.
A test shows that Fijian *ko* is in an intermediate stage in which it still functions more as a casemarker than as an article. (It can co-occur with another article but not with another casemarker or preposition.)

The occurrence of vocative particle *e* in Polynesian both before and after the name is a retention of the ancestral state in PAN, 6000 years ago, when it was placed on the right or left or both sides of its sentence-initial non-clausal NP.

The missionaries weren’t so dumb after all.

1. **Introduction**

The following abbreviations are used for language groups: AN Austronesian, MP Malayo-Polynesian, OC Oceanic, EOC Eastern Oceanic, CP Central Pacific, RO Rotuman, FJ Fijian, PN Polynesian, and SO Samoan-Outlier. All these may have P added initially for Proto-. Other abbreviations are PCM preposition or casemarker, ART article, PREP preposition, PN pronoun, TAM tense-aspect marker, NonAc Nominative-Accusative syntax, AbErg Absolutive-Ergative syntax, and the traditional VP, NP, and PP, used instead of the more recent X-bar notation. Also used are 3s third person singular, V vowel, and C consonant (though C is also used for one of the phonemes of PAN, an alveolar affricate). The language usually called Gilbertese (or Kiribati) is here called by its traditional name, Tungaru.

In this paper we shall do four things.

- We describe the controversy over the alleged positional allomorphs *o* and *ko* of a supposed proper article in Fijian.

- Examining Amis and other Formosan languages, we discover *o* and *ko* as different lexical items traceable to PAN casemarkers: *o* for non-clausal NP; and *ko* probably for both predicate nouns and nominative-absolutive subjects. Both particles also come with
other vowels in this system in which the semantic-syntactic role of the preposition or casemaker is given by its initial consonant.

- Returning to examine Oceanic languages related to Fijian, we find examples of both the zero + V and the k + V particles that had not previously been recognized as cognates of the Fiji particles.

- Returning to Fijian, we use the knowledge gained in the previous steps to reanalyze the synchronic status of the casemarkers in question, and to construct a diachronic theory of how they got there.

Standard Fijian (FJ) is a descendant of the first written Fijian language, which was devised for Bible translation and mission work, and was based mainly on Bauan, one of the dialects or languages of Eastern Fiji. The term Proto Fijian (PFJ) refers to the hypothetical common ancestor of Eastern Fijian tongues. The (East) Fijian and Polynesian (PN) groups, as well as Rotuman, have common ancestry in PCP. The West Fijian dialects, though Oceanic, were captured later by (East) Fijian.

The Fijian group is regarded as generally more conservative (closer to PCP and POC) than is the Polynesian, and PCP is generally reconstructed more like PFJ than like PPN.

The major work cited for Fijian will be Schütz (1985). This is a magnificent work, very insightful and very thoroughly done. Geraghty’s great work (1983) is an essential background to the study, though it does not focus on the issues of this project.

The concept evolving now about the PAN monosyllabic PCMs is that the semantic-syntactic function lay in the initial consonants. Initial n was genitive. Other initials were zero, k, and several dental-alveolar obstruents (d, t, C, s), and their functions could be either straight or oblique. Vowels were u (often becoming o) most simply; i (often becoming e) for persons and proper nouns; and a for nonspecific common nouns. In this study, we’ll consider only initials zero and k, and only in their straight functions. Here, “straight” includes nominative, predicate noun,
and non-clausal nouns. Non-clausal nouns (those not within a clause) include vocatives, interjections, and sentence-initial topics.

The overwhelming evidence from all the primary branches of AN in Formosa is that the monosyllabic case markers with initial \textit{k-} and those with initial \textit{zero} had differed in syntactic role in Proto-Austronesian. The variation in vowels, on the other hand, differentiated different classes of NP to which the casemarkers applied. The vowel \textit{-i} anciently (and to some extent today) is used for persons and perhaps specific nouns, while the \textit{-a} vowel applied to nonspecific common nouns. The \textit{-u} forms were older and perhaps undifferentiated. The \textit{-n} initials were genitive-ergative and the other initial consonants could apply to the nominative-like straight class and to oblique classes.

My Figure 1 shows that in one sense the non-clausal NP category stands against all categories of syntactic relations; but in another sense—that is the tendency to use common casemarking —the non-clausal category groups with predicate noun and nominative subject as a general nominative-like set.

2. The \textit{o/ko} Controversy and Its Background

The standard teaching, found in grammars by Churchward (1941) and by Milner (1956, rev. 1973) is that a particle of form \textit{ko}, regarded as a “proper article”, has an alternate form \textit{o}, which is normally used sentence-initially. A view often expressed or implied is that \textit{o} arose by lenition from \textit{ko}. Schütz vigorously attacks the view of positional allophones. He thinks that some dialects had one form and others had the other, and that the missionary translators of the Bible must have ignorantly mixed two dialects. (It’s not clear to me why mixing dialects would give an impression of positional alternates.) He notes that early Methodist missionaries divided the Bible among themselves, and each began to translate his part of it in the dialect where he happened to work. Missionaries in Lau and Vanua Levu, including David Cargill in Lakeba, reported \textit{ko} and little or no \textit{o}, while those in the Bau area reported essentially all \textit{o}. The Bau area became the standard for translating the whole Bible, but \textit{o} was used only initially and \textit{ko} elsewhere. Schütz (1985:41) quotes a 1982