

VERBS OF EXCRETION IN TABA

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Abstract

This paper describes an unusual pattern of argument marking found in a small number of Taba verbs, all of which have meanings relating to excretion. The verbs concerned are sio 'to shit', mio 'to piss', sito 'to fart', and hantolo 'to lay eggs'. In normal usage these occur with the excretor argument obligatorily encoded twice, once as a proclitic in the same way that Actor argument are encoded on other verbs, but also as an enclitic, similar to an Undergoer argument with other verbs. While no clear rationale for why these four verbs should be treated differently from all the other verbs in the Taba lexicon, they do all express activities that the performers are only in partial control of, and these verbs may in fact constitute something like a 'middle voice' in Taba.

Keywords: *argument marking, excretion, proclitic, enclitic, middle voice*

Abstrak

Makalah ini mendeskripsikan sebuah pola pemarkahan argumen yang ditemukan dalam empat verba bahasa Taba. Semua verba yang dimaksud mempunyai arti yang berhubungan dengan ekskresi, yaitu sio 'buang air besar', mio 'buang air kecil', sito 'kentut', dan hantolo 'bertelur'. Dalam penggunaan normal verba tersebut harus diberi dua pemarkah argumen, yaitu proklitik yang berfungsi sebagai argumen pelaku (Actor) dan enklitik sebagai argumen objek langsung (Undergoer). Meskipun tidak ada alasan yang jelas bagaimana keempat verba tersebut mempunyai pola yang berbeda dengan verba lain dalam leksikon bahasa Taba, semua verba ini menunjukkan bahwa para pelaku hanya mengendalikan sebagian dari kegiatan yang dilakukan dan keempat tersebut dapat dikategorikan sebagai middle voice dalam bahasa Taba.

Kata kunci: *pemarkah argumen, ekskresi, proklitik, enklitik, middle voice*

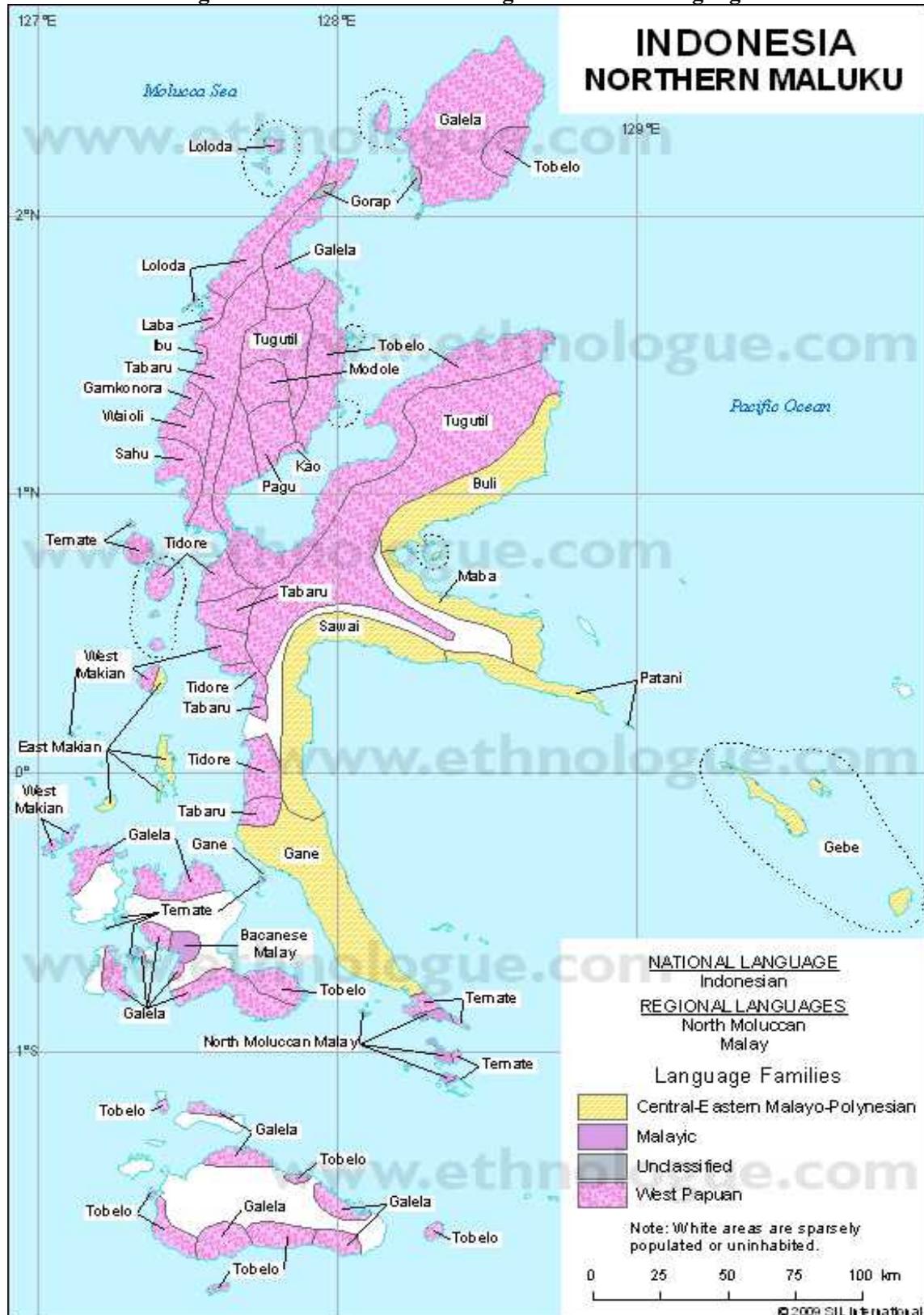
INTRODUCTIONⁱ

In this paper I want to discuss a small topic in Taba verbal morphosyntax (and argument structure) that remains something of a puzzle to me years after I first encountered it. There is a very small class of verbs, the meanings of which all relate to excretion, that share an unusual pattern of morphosyntactic marking, distinct from all other Taba verbs. The verbs involved are the roots *sio* 'to shit', *mio* 'to piss', *sito* 'to fart', and *hantolo* 'to lay eggs'. In normal usage these occur with the excretor argument obligatorily encoded twice, once as a proclitic in the same way that Actor argument are encoded on other verbs, but also as an enclitic, similar to, but not exactly the same in all details, as an Undergoer argument. I have made exhaustive attempts to find other verbs that might be members of this class without any success: things such as bleeding, sweating, ejaculating, menstruating, etc. etc. are all expressed in a variety of different ways, but not like the class of excretion verbs discussed in this paper. I am afraid I am not able to share any startling revelations about why these four verbs should behave differently from all other verbs, but I will canvas a few ideas about possible explanations at the end of the paper.

I shall approach this topic by first sketching out some basic patterns of morphosyntax found with verbs other than those referring to excretion, and then by contrasting these to the patterns found with the excretion verbs themselves. After we have examined the 'basic' cases, I will examine some valence-affecting affixes and what these do with different kinds of verbs in an

attempt to understand the excretion verbs themselves a little better. I will begin first of all by giving a brief introduction to the Taba language and its place in the world.

Figure 1. Maluku Utara Showing Locations of Languages



Taba was traditionally known in the literature as ‘East Makian’, ‘Makian Dalam’ or ‘Makian Timur’. It is classified by Blust (1978) as a South-Halmahera – West New Guinea language, along with about 40 or so other languages spoken in the North Maluku and West Papuan regions. According to Blust, these languages are the closest relations of the Oceanic subgroup of the Austronesian language family, and together they form a group known as ‘Eastern Malayo-Polynesian’. The location of the Taba language is shown in the map in Figure one. In the map, taken from Lewis, ed. (2009), Taba is referred to as ‘East Makian’.

Taba speakers are Muslims and they have had a relatively long period of contact with the rest of the world. Makian (and a few other small islands off the west coast of Halmahera) were once the only source of cloves in the entire world. After Magellan’s first round the world voyage (when his ships visited Makian), Maluku Utara and its spices became a huge center of interest for would-be colonial powers out to exploit the potential spoils. Islands in this area were at the middle of a number of conflicts between various colonial powers throughout the seventeenth century and quite a few loan words from Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch are found in Taba and other nearby languages. Traditional power in North Maluku was shared between four sultanates, but after the colonial struggles had been played out, the sultanate of Ternate (with the support of the Dutch) became the dominant force, and the Ternatan language was for some time used as a local lingua franca alongside Malay. Ternatan and all of the languages spoken in the northern half of Halmahera as well as on the western side of Makian island are non-Austronesian languages. A number of typological features not common in Austronesian languages are found in Taba and presumably some of these have entered the language as a result of contact with the neighboring non-Austronesian languages. All language of the region (including these days North Maluku Malay) participate in a sprachbund with many shared features. The major reference on the Taba language is Bowden (2001).

OVERVIEW OF TABA VERBAL MORPHOSYNTAX

Taba is a mixed ‘split-S’ and accusative language. It has basic AVO word-order in transitive clauses, as illustrated in (1).

- (1) *Mado npe ubang*
 Mado n-pe ubang
 Mado 3sg-make fence
 ‘Mado is making a fence.’

Other orders are also possible. Any argument (core or otherwise) can be shifted to preverbal focus position so long as it is represented by a full NP and not just a pronoun.

- (2) *Ubang ya Mado npe*
 ubang ya Mado n-pe
 fence REC Mado 3sg-make
 ‘That fence, Mado is making it.’

Ellipsis of readily retrievable participants is common.

- (3) *Npe*
 n-pe
 3sg-make
 ‘He’s making it.’

Taba has a split-S system for marking the non-human core arguments of verbs. Core arguments can be divided into either ‘Actors’ or ‘Undergoers’. Actors are cross-referenced by verbal proclitics agreeing in number and person with the actor they index.

Table 1. Taba Pronominal Forms

	Free form	Bound form		Free form	Bound form
1 sg.	yak ⁱⁱ	k-	1pl. (incl.)	tit	t-
			1pl. (excl.)	am	a-
2sg.	au	m-	2pl.	meu	h-
3sg.	i	n-	3pl.	si	l-

(4) **Actor = 1sg**

Yak kunak do
 yak k-unak do
 I 1sg-know REAL
 'I know.'

(5) **Actor = 2sg**

Au mhan appo Tarnate
 au m-han ap-po Tarnate
 you (sg) 2sg-go ALL-down Ternate
 'You're (singular) going to Ternate.'

(6) **Actor = 1pl.excl**

Am atala motor lawe
 am a-tala motor la-we
 we.excl 1pl.excl-meet boat sea-ESS
 'We (exclusive) met the boat by the sea.'

Verbs may be subcategorised according to how many core arguments of each kind (either Actor or Undergoer) they take.

Table 2.**Sub-Classification of Taba Verbs According to Number and Type of Core Arguments**

Number of Actor arguments		
	0	1
Number of	0 -	Active intransitives
Undergoer	1 Stative intransitives	Transitives
Arguments	2 Bivalent intransitives	Ditransitives

Active Intransitive Clauses

Active intransitive clauses are distinguished by the fact that they have one core argument and that the sole argument is an Actor.

- (7) *Wangsi lmul do.*
 wang=si 1-mul do
 child-pl 3pl-return REAL
 'The children have returned.'

Stative Intransitive Clauses

Stative intransitive clauses are distinguished by the fact that they take a single Undergoer core argument.

- (8) *Kutukutu nener da*
 kutu-kutu nener da
 small-REDUP sp. fish MED
 'These *nener* (fish) are small.'

Fronting of the Undergoer is quite common with these verbs. However, the Undergoer is never cross-referenced on the verb.

- (9) *Nener da kutukutu*
 nener da kutu-kutu
 sp.fish DIST small-REDUP
 ‘These *nener* are small.’

Basic Transitive Clauses

Basic transitive clauses have verbs which take both an Actor argument and an Undergoer argument.

- (10) *Banda not yan bakan*
 Banda n-ot yan bakan
 Banda 3sg-catch fish be.big
 ‘Banda caught a fish that’s big.’

Note the stative intransitive relative clause (*yan bakan* ‘big fish’) which is not marked in any way.

Bivalent Intransitive Clauses

Double object intransitive clauses take two Undergoer arguments and no Actor arguments. The verbs involved in these constructions are always derived applicatives, and one of the two arguments is invariably fronted.

- (11) *Hamasik posak niwi*
 hamasik posa-Vk niwi
 rice be.boiled-APPL coconut
 ‘The rice is cooked with coconut.’

Ditransitive Clauses

Ditransitive verbs have three core arguments: an Actor argument and two Undergoers. All ditransitive verbs are derived by applicativization.

- (12) *Bib npunak kolai peda*
 Bib n-pun-ak kolai peda
 Bib 3sg-kill-APPL snake machete
 ‘Bib killed the snake with a machete.’
- (13) *Banda notik yak yan*
 Banda n-ot-ik yak yan
 Banda 3sg-catch-APPL me fish
 ‘Banda gave me some fish.’

VERBS OF EXCRETION

As indicated in the introduction, excretion verbs normally occur with both proclitics and enclitics cross-referencing the excretor, unlike most active verbs which occur only with proclitics. The forms used to cross-reference the arguments of excretion verbs are listed in table 3.

Table 3. Cross-referencing of Intransitive Excretion Verbs

1sg	k—k / k—yak	1pl.incl	t—tit
		1pl.excl	a—m
2sg	m—u	2pl	h—meu
3sg	n—i	3pl	l—si

Illustrative examples are given below.

- (14) *Buang nciwi*
 Buang n-sio-i
 Buang 3sg-shit-3sg
 ‘Buang did a shit.’
- (15) *Yak kmiok do / Yak kmioyak do*
 yak k-mio-k do yak k-mio-yak do
 1sg 1sg-piss-1sg REAL 1sg 1sg-piss-1sg REAL
 ‘I had a piss.’
- (16) *Si lцитosi*
 si l-sito-si
 3pl- 3pl-fart-3pl
 ‘They farted.’

Note the formal similarity with pronominal forms and also note that object pronouns can be (but need not be) encliticised. Note that the forms are not exactly the same as the cliticised object forms in all person and number combinations, but that they seem to be pretty obviously derived from such forms historically.

VALENCE-AFFECTING MORPHOLOGY

A variety of affixes are available for deriving verbs of various kinds. These affixes are listed below. We will not examine all of these in detail, but simply look at the behavior of a few, contrasting what happens with the excretion verbs and the other verbs, and seeing if there are any clues here that might help explain the aberrant nature of the excretion verbs themselves.

Let us first note that although all of the affixes listed can have valence-affecting functions, they can also perform some other functions, such as marking ‘intensity’.

Table 4. Valence Affecting Affixes

<i>ha-</i> valence increasing prefix - ‘causative’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • derives transitive verbs from active intransitives • derives active intransitive verbs from stative verbs • derives active verbs from a variety of other word classes • ‘intensive’ marker
<i>-Vk</i> valence increasing suffix - ‘applicative’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • derives ‘bivalent intransitive’ verbs from stative verbs • derives transitive verbs from active intransitives • derives ditransitive verbs from transitive verbs • ‘intensive’ marker
<i>-o</i> valence increasing suffix - ‘applicative’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • derives ‘bivalent intransitive’ verbs from stative verbs • derives ‘process oriented’ stative verbs from unmarked statives • derives transitive verbs from active intransitives • derives ditransitive verbs from transitive verbs
<i>ta-</i> valence decreasing prefix - ‘passivizing/detransitivizing’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • derives stative verbs from transitive verbs • derives stative verbs from active intransitive verbs

‘Causative’ Prefix *ha-*

The most common functions of *ha-* are deriving transitive verbs from active intransitives, and deriving active intransitives from other kinds of roots.

- (17) a. *Paramalam nmot.*
 paramalam n-mot
 lamp 3sg-die
 ‘The lamp has gone out.’ (lit. ‘the lamp has died’).

- b. *I namot paramalam.*
 i n-ha-mot paramalam
 3sg 3sg-CAUS-die lamp
 ‘He turned the lamp off’ (lit. ‘he made the lamp die’).
- (18) a. *Ni calana kuda*
 POSS trousers black
 ‘Her trousers are black.’
- b. *John nakuda sama lo Jul*
 John n-ha-kuda sama lo Jul
 John 3sg-CAUS-black same as Jul
 ‘John is black like Jul.’

Example (18) illustrates the most common non-causative use of *ha-* which is to derive an Actor oriented verb from an Undergoer oriented root to enable the verb to be used with a human argument. Since excretion verbs are cross-referenced by a proclitic, the Actor oriented derivation illustrated in (18) is not possible with excretion verbs, but we might imagine a truly causative derivation in which we might derive verbs which could describe situations such as a mother telling her child to go to the toilet. Causative derivations of excretion verbs are not found with this kind of meaning, as illustrated in (19). Example (20) without any cross-referencing cannot be used with a causative meaning either.

- (19) * *Ni mamasi nasiwi Buang*
 ni mama-si n-ha-sio-i Buang
 3sg.POSS mother-PL 3sg-CAUS-shit-3sg Buang
 ‘His mother made Buang shit.’
- (20) ? *Ni mamasi nasio Buang*
 ni mama-si n-ha-sio Buang
 3sg.POSS mother-PL 3sg-CAUS-shit Buang
 * ‘His mother made Buang shit.’

Another function of *ha-* prefixation with active verbal roots is to indicate that an activity was performed with some degree of intensity.

- (21) a. *Tit twonga maliling ya*
 tit t-wonga maliling ya
 1pl.incl 1pl.incl-stay.awake.all.night night up
 ‘We stayed awake all last night.’
- b. *Tit tawonga maliling ya*
 tit t-ha-wonga maliling ya
 1pl.incl 1pl.incl-CAUS-stay.awake.all.night night up
 ‘We stayed awake all last night.’

The prefix can also be used with this reading with excretion verbs.

- (22) *Ismi nasitoi*
 Ismit n-ha-sito-i
 Ismit 3sg-CAUS-fart-3sg
 ‘Ismi did a big fart.’

The Applicative -*Vk*

With ‘normal’ verbs, this suffix is used to add applied objects of various kinds, most commonly instruments, but also themes and recipients. It can derive bivalent intransitives from stative verbs, transitives from active intransitives, and ditransitives from transitive stems. Example (23)

shows the derivation of a bivalent intransitive verb from an Undergoer oriented intransitive verb.

- (23) a. *Ubang bulang*
 ubang bulang
 fence be.white
 'The fence is white.'
- b. *Ubang bulngak cet*
 ubang bulang-k cet
 fence be.white-APPL paint
 'The fence was whitened with paint.'

Example (24) illustrates the derivation of an instrumental ditransitive verb from a transitive stem.

- (24) a. *Ahmad npun kolai*
 Ahmad n-pun kolai
 Ahmad 3sg-kill snake
 'Ahmad killed a snake.'
- b. *Ahmad npunak kolai peda*
 Ahmad n-pun-ak kolai peda
 Ahmad 3sg-kill-APPL snake machete
 'Ahmad killed the snake with a machete'

In example (25) we can see the derivation of a simple transitive verb from an Actor oriented intransitive stem.

- (25) a. *i nggaleit*
 i n-galeit
 3sg 3sg-burp
 'He burped.'
- b. *i nggaleitik susu*
 i n-galeit-ik susu
 3sg 3sg-burp-APPL milk
 'He burped up milk.'

Note that the applicative suffix also occasionally has an intensive reading, similar to that found with some 'causatives'.

- (26) a. *Kaidis*
 k-ha-idis
 1sg-CAUS-spit
 'I spit (making no noise).'
- b. *Kaidcik*
 k-ha-idis-k
 1sg-CAUS-spit-APPL
 'I spit (making a lot of noise).'

Spitting publically is quite common practice amongst Taba speakers, but polite spitting is always done silently. To make a large noise while spitting is seen as insulting, and the applicative form is used here to signal that spitting is performed with such an insulting noise. Of course the example in (26) can be read literally as 'spit with noise as theme or companion'. The way the applicative suffix works with excretion verbs parallels the last couple of examples: they allow us to express whatever was excreted as an object of the verb, parallel to (25) above where *-ak* allows a theme to be introduced:

- (27) *Ksiak halua*
 k-sio-ak halua
 1sg-shit-APPL halua
 'I'm shitting *halua*.' [*halua* = 'toffee made from palm sugar']

The Detransitivizing Prefix *ta-*

The 'passive' prefix *ta-* most commonly derives agentless stative verbs from transitive verbs. The sole derived argument in these constructions is the root Undergoer. In this kind of derivation it could perhaps also be called a 'resultative' prefix, because the effect of its application is to focus semantically on the resulting state of the patient after a process of some kind has reached its end.

- (28) a. **underived**
i nbes niwi
 i n-bhes niwi
 3sg 3sg-husk coconut
 'She husked the coconut.'
- b. **derived**
niwi tabhes do
 niwi ta-bhes do
 coconut DETR-crack REAL
 'The coconut has been husked.'
- (29) a. **underived**
Male tcakal boa
 male t-sakal boa
 must 1pl.incl-smash door
 'We had to smash down the door.'
- b. **derived**
Boa tasakal
 boa ta-sakal
 door DETR-smash
 'The door was smashed down.' (either intentionally or not)

The *ta-* detransitivizing prefix can also be used with the verbs of excretion, but whenever it occurs, it must co-occur with the *-Vk* applicative. These constructions are used to indicate that the person excreting is totally incapable of not excreting, as when for instance they might have diarrhea.

- (30) *Tasiak yak*
 ta-sio-ak yak
 DETR-shit-APPL 1sg
 'I've got the shits.'

I have never actually heard anyone mention the theme supposedly licensed by the *-Vk* applicative when this construction has been used spontaneously, but it is possible to do so, and people tell me that they understand the theme as the cause of the uncontrollable excretion as in (31).

- (31) *Tasiak yak niwi*
 ta-sio-ak yak niwi
 PASS-shit-APPL 1sg coconut
 'The coconut has given me the shits.' [lit. 'I'm uncontrollably shitting coconut']ⁱⁱⁱ

This sentence is formally a bivalent intransitive, analogous to sentence (23) above which is repeated as (32).

- (32) a. *Ubang bulang*
 ubang bulang
 fence be.white
 ‘The fence is white.’
- b. *Ubang bulngak cet*
 ubang bulang-k cet
 fence be.white-APPL paint
 ‘The fence was whitened with paint.’

Although (31) is formally a bivalent intransitive verb, as already mentioned such sentences with excretion verbs are rarely offered with the instrumental argument overtly coded.

The Applicative –o

In addition to the –*Vk* applicative discussed above, Taba also has an applicative suffix –*o* which usually introduces a locative argument to the frame of the derived verb. It is illustrated in its normal use in (33).

- (33) a. *I nyog*
 i n-yog
 3sg 3sg-jump
 ‘She jumps.’
- b. *I nyogo mesel*
 i n-yog-o mesel
 3sg 3sg-jump-APPL wall
 ‘She jumped on the wall.’

It appears that the excretion verbs can also be used with the –*o* applicative to derive transitive verbs where the object of the verb is a locative goal (or where the excretia ended up). The fact that the –*o* applicative is attached to excretion verbs is somewhat obscured in Taba because all of the excretion verb roots end in the segment *o* and thus there is no overt sign of the applicative suffix having been added part from the disappearance of the cross-referencing suffix and the possible appearance of a locative goal. In example (34) the locative goal is overt, but in (35) it is ellipsed.

- (34) *Buang ncio ni calana*
 Buang n-sio-o ni calana
 Buang 3sg-shit-APPL POSS trousers
 ‘Buang shitted his trousers.’

- (35) Q: *Mesel tasakal hapwe* A: *Iswan ncito*
 mesel ta-sakal ha-pu-e Iswan n-sito-o
 wall DETR-collapse CAUS-what-FOC(how) Iswan 3sg-fart-APPL
 ‘How come the wall collapsed?’ ‘Iswan farted on it.’

One further example of the locative applicative being used with an excretion verb is supplied below. In (36), the verb *hantolo* ‘to lay eggs’ is shown with double cross-referencing, and in (37) it is shown with the locative applicative suffix.

- (36) *Nantoli*
 n-han-tolo-i
 3sg-INCH-egg-APPL
 ‘It lays / they lay an egg / eggs.’

nuyak, poyo mhonas, ulo nmau nhan... mtumo e loe?
 n-uyak, poyo mhonas, ulo n-mau n-han, m-tumo e lo-e?
 3sg-tired head sick heart 3sg-want 3sg-go 2sg-follow FOC where-FOC?

‘John, your leg is sore. Your leg says ‘I’m sick’. Your knee says it’s sick. Your stomach is hungry. Your heart wants to go somewhere. Your anus down there wants to go for a shit. Your mouth says ‘I’m going (I’m hungry)’. Your eyes are tired, your head is sick, your heart wants to go somewhere, which one do you follow (first)? Your anus down there is about to shit itself. Which one do you follow (first)?’

(b) *Poto pope me tasiaki. John ni suka nhantuli*
 Poto po-pe me ta-sio-ak-i. John ni suka n-han-tuli
 Anus down-ESS but PASS-shit-APPL-3sg John POSS desire 3sg-go.sleep
sedangkan ni klolo nparenta nhan... Han akno ni
 sedangkan ni klolo n-parenta n-han... han ak-no ni
 while POSS NOM-inside 3sg-stop 3sg-go go ALL-there POSS
dalawaci de ncio ni calana de namliak
 dawatlat-si de n-sio-o ni calana de n-amliak
 girlfriend-PL PURP 3sg-shit-APPL POSS trousers PURP 3sg-laugh-APPL 1pl.incl.
tit Ncuka te. Male sio malai han. Idia. Sio okik, malai
 tit N-suka te. Male sio malai han. I-dia. Sio okik, malai
 1pl(incl.) 3sg-like NEG must shit then go DEM-DIST shit finish then
nhantuli malai nhan ronda. Tasiak nit calana?
 n-han.tuli malai n-han ronda. Ta-sio-ak nit calana?
 3sg-go.sleep then 3sg-go walkabout PASS-shit-APPL 1pl.incl.POSS trousers
Tatés! Polo tese, cio calana, cio
 Tatés! Polo te-se t-sio-o calana t-sio-o
 crazy if NEG-POT 1pl.incl-shit-APPL trousers 1pl.incl-shit-APPL mattress
jok berarti measure te.
 jok berarti measure te.
 mattress means good NEG

‘But your anus down there is shitting itself! And John you want to go to sleep while your insides have stopped working? If you go to your girlfriend’s place you’ll shit your trousers and she’ll laugh at you!!! She won’t like it! You have to shit first and then you go do other things. That’s how. Once you’ve finished shitting then you go to sleep then you go for a walk. Shit our trousers? Crazy!!! If we don’t shit our trousers, we’ll shit on the mattress. It’s no good!’

NOTE

*I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for very helpful comments on the earlier draft.

ⁱ The following abbreviations are used in this paper: 1 first person; 2 second person; 3 third person; ALL allative; APPL applicative; CAUS casuative; DETR detransitivizing; DIST distal; ESS essive; excl exclusive; FOC focus; INCH inchoative; incl. inclusive; MED medial; NEG negative; pl plural; PL plural; POSS possessive; POT potential; PURP purposive; REAL realis; REC reciprocal; REDUP reduplication; sg singular.

ⁱⁱ Note that in some dialects (Mailoa, Kayoa, Peleri) the 1sg. independent pronoun is *lak*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Coconut is viewed locally as a cure for constipation.

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