An unusual passive in Western Oceanic:

the case of Vitu

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1. Introduction

As is well-known, the complex voice system which is so characteristic of the Austronesian languages of Taiwan and the Philippines undergoes considerable reduction as one travels south and east. The islands of Borneo and Sulawesi are major transition zones, where a gradual reduction of this voice system is found, as indexed by the loss or simplification of the various pronoun sets, nominal markers and verbal affixation (see Clayre 1996 on Borneo; van den Berg 1996 and Mead 2002 on Sulawesi). Many languages in Western Indonesia have ended up with a simple dual voice contrast of active versus passive. By the time one reaches the Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian languages in eastern Indonesia and, further east, the huge Oceanic subgroup in the Pacific, voice systems have completely disappeared. Whereas Proto Austronesian is reconstructed with an elaborate voice marking system (Wolff 1973, Ross 2002a). Proto Oceanic, parent to some 450 languages, apparently did not have any voice marking morphology at all. It is surprising therefore, to rediscover voice at the eastern extreme of the Austronesian family with passive constructions occurring in Fijian and the Polynesian languages.

Melanesia is mainly seen as an area where voice systems are rare or non-existent, as summed up by Lynch, Ross and Crowley (2002: 45): 'Passive constructions are only very rarely encountered in the languages of Melanesia.' One of the few Western Oceanic languages known to me to have a real passive is Hoava in the Western Solomons, where the Proto Oceanic detransitivizing prefix *ta- has become a fully productive passive prefix (Davies 2003; Evans 2003: 279-300).

In this paper I want to report on a case of a clear passive in another Western Oceanic language, one that is not only geographically unusual, both also morphologically and syntactically. The language is Vitu, spoken on the French islands north of West New Britain in Papua New Guinea. Ross (2002b) gives a brief sketch of Bali-Vitu, but as most of his data is from the Bali variety (which is best considered a separate language), the Vitu passive is not mentioned in his article. Data for this paper were collected from two native speakers, Werner Ereliu and Tobias Uva, during visits to Ukarumpa in 2004 and 2005. The analysis was further corroborated on the basis of texts collected by my SIL colleagues Peter and Wiljo Bachet.

After a brief treatment of the nature of passives (§2) and a discussion of transitive verbs in Vitu (§3), I present the various features of the passive construction (§4). I end with a detailed look at the history of this construction (§5).

2. What is a passive?

The prototypical passive is characterised in two ways (Shibatani 1985, Keenan 1985, Givón 1990, Payne 1997): morphosyntactically and in terms of its pragmatic function.

Morphosyntactically a prototypical passive clause is defined as a semantically transitive clause containing an agent, a patient and a telic verb (= a verb which has a specific end point), further specified for the following features:

- The **patient** is placed and case-marked as the **subject** of a basic active clause (and hence available to subject-oriented processes such as equi-deletion).
- The **agent** is either omitted or demoted to an **oblique** role (e.g. instrumental, locative or genitive).
- The **verb** (or verb phrase) shows special marking (often an affix or an auxiliary verb) and is intransitive.

In terms of its pragmatic function, the prototypical passive is used primarily for agent suppression or de-topicalisation. The agent is linguistically suppressed because it is unknown, irrelevant, superfluous or predictable (Givón 1990: 568).

3.1 The passive in Vitu: preliminaries

The Vitu language (sometimes referred to as Muduapa) is spoken by some 7,000 people on islands northwest off the coast of West New Britain in Papua New Guinea. It is a primary subgroup of the Meso-Melanesian cluster, itself a subgroup of Western Oceanic (Ross 1988; Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002). Vitu is closely related to the neighbouring Bali language and the two are listed as 'possibly [a] single language' in Lynch, Ross and Crowley (2002: 883). According to native speakers, the speech varieties are sufficiently different to be considered separate languages. An unpublished sociolinguistic survey report on Bali also reaches this conclusion (O'Rear 1989).

Vitu examples follow the standard Vitu orthography, outlined in Bachet and Bachet (1992). Most symbols have their expected values, with *v* representing the voiced bilabial fricative /β/, *z* the voiced dental fricative /ð/, and *h* the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/. The voiced plosives *b, d* and *g* are normally prenasalized and *t* is pronounced as [tΣ] before /i/. There are no final surface consonants in Vitu and stress is penultimate.

Typologically, Vitu is a fairly typical Oceanic language with the following characteristics:
- SVO word order;
- prepositions;
- singular, dual and plural pronouns;
- a proper and a common noun article (*a* and *na* respectively);
- direct possession on inalienable nouns;
- indirect possession with possessive classifiers on alienable nouns (*ha-* for food items and *ka-* for everything else)
- little verbal morphology: object suffixes, causative *va-*, reciprocal *vai-* and reduplication;
- preverbal markers for aspect, mood and sequentiality, fused with subject pronouns;
- verbal compounding;
- serial verb constructions.

By way of introduction I present an illustrative active-passive pair. Notice that all clauses have an obligatory preverbal AMS-marker, indicating aspect-mood-sequentiality (R is the realis marker: *ta* for 1sg and all plurals; *e* for 3s; see §3.2 below for further details).

(1) a.   *Hau   ta   kati-a   vaga   kua   ni   vazalea.*
         I   R   make-3s canoe this loc   beach
         'I made this canoe on the beach'

    b.   *Vaga   kua   e   katua   ni   vazalea.*
         canoe this R:3 make:PASS loc   beach
         'This canoe was made on the beach.'

Specific features of the passive in Vitu, to be further discussed below, are as follows:
- the passive morpheme has several allomorphs: vowel umlaut (as in the example above), *-nga ~ -anga*, and *-Ca*;
- the agent is obligatorily absent;
- the subject may either precede or follow the verb;
- if a non-3rd person subject occurs after the verb, the preverbal AMS marker will still be a 3rd singular form.

3.2 Transitive verb forms in Vitu

Before examining the various passive forms in detail, it is necessary to briefly describe the verbal system in Vitu, since this will be relevant for the remainder of the paper, especially §5 on the origin of the passive. I will first discuss the various verb classes, followed by the verb complex.

Apart from a set of intransitive verbs (including adjectives or stative verbs) and experiencer verbs, which I will ignore in this paper, Vitu has three morphological classes of transitive verbs.

1. Class 1 transitive verb roots can directly receive object suffixes (or possibly 'object enclitics'). These suffixes are *-au* '1sg', *-ho* '2sg' and *-a* '3s'. In citation forms such transitive verbs are usually given with the 3s object suffix *-a*, which is also the form found when there is a full nominal object. I will follow this practice throughout this paper. Notice that there are no cases of root final *a*, *o* and *u* in this verb class, root final vowels in this class being limited to *i* or *e*. Examples:

bazi-a	'cut'
dae-a	'pull'
gore-a	'fill'
hani-a	'eat'
hubi-a	'hit'
kuvi-a	'sweep'
maki-a	'choose'
pade-a	'spear'
pele-a	'get, take'
tani-a	'say'
vati-a	'leave, loose'
zuhi-a	'detach, remove'
zungi-a	'smell'

Examples of these verbs are presented in the following clauses:

(2) *Ia   e   hubi-au.*
     3s   R:3   hit-1sg
     'He hit me.'

(3) *Ia   e   hubi-ho.*
     3s   R:3   hit-2sg
     'He hit you.'

(4) *Ia   e   hubi-a.*
     3s   R:3   hit-3s
     'He hit him/her/it.'

(5) *Ia   e   hubi-a   kaka   taza.*
     3s   R:3   hit-3s   person some
     'He hit some people'

(6) *Hau   ta   pele-a   kedo   kapou.*
     1sg   R   take-3s   stone   big
     'I took a big stone / big stones'

All non-singular pronouns appear to be treated as separate words, but they do not occur in combination with the 3s object suffix *-a*:

(7) *Mai   papane   hani   miro   ri!*   (*hani-a* 'eat')
     come   climb   eat   1du.ex here
     'Climb up and eat us here!'

(8) *Beta ni   dange   miro.*   (*dange-a* 'fit')
     NEG I:3   fit   1du.ex
     'He is not a match for us' (lit: he does not fit us)

The root form of the verb (i.e. without object suffixes) occurs not only in the environment of full personal pronouns, but also in the following two cases:

a. When the verb is reduplicated, either as a valency-reducing mechanism or to indicate continuous action, or plural action (or both):

(9) *Dia   ta   hani-hani.*
     3p   R   RED-eat
     'They are eating.'

(10) *Dia   ta   pele-pele   ka-na   goloa-loa.*
     3p   R   RED-take   POSS.CL-3s   thing-RED
     'They took his things.'

b. As the first element in a verbal compound:

(11) *Manumanu   dia   ta   lala   dia   kata   hani-mata-hi-a   hani-nga.*
     people   3p   R   HAB   3p   PURP   eat-raw-TR-3s   eat-NOM
     'People (habitually) ate raw food.'

(12)   *… da miro ta   hubi-mate-hi-a.*
       ... FUT 1du.ex R   hit-die-TR-3s
       '…we will kill him.'

2. The second class of transitive verbs consists of verbs ending in the vowel *a*. This is actually best described as a phonologically conditioned subclass of class 1. Instead of the suffixes *-au*, *-ho* and *-a*, this class uses *-u*, *-ho* and Ø, since sequences of like vowels are not permitted in the language.[1]

luga	'carry'
paga	'peck at, bite'
vala	'give'
varaga	'throw'

Some examples in clauses:

(13)   *Dia ta luga-u*
       3p   R   carry-1s
       'They carried me'

(14)   *Ia luga-Ø   ha-na   haine.*
       3s carry-3s   POSS.CL-3s   spear
       'He carried his spear.'

3. The third class of transitive verbs is marked by the transitive suffix *-Ci*. A number of allomorphs occur, showing thematic consonants: *-hi, -li, -mi, -ni, -ri, -ti, -vi* and *-zi*. Again, verbs are presented here in their citation form with the 3sg object suffix *-a*.

bai-hi-a	'hold under the arm'
havi-li-a	'catch, pull up'
hinu-mi-a	'drink'
hule-ni-a	'ask'
longo-ri-a	'hear, listen'
hara-ti-a	'bite'
hada-vi-a	'see'
tangi-zi-a	'weep for'

Examples in clauses:

(15)   *A   Tiro e   longo-ri-a   pole-a   kua.*
       ART Tiro R:3   hear-TR-3s   speak-NOM   this
       'Tiro heard this talk.'

(16)   *Ia   tangi-zi-a   tu-na,   kini   vano   tavu-ni-a.*
       3s   weep-TR-3s   child-3s   SEQ:3   go   bury-TR-3s
       'She wept for her child, and then went and buried it.'

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[1] There is one important exception to this rule. The second person singular possessive suffix is an echo vowel of the last vowel of the noun (or classifier), resulting in a sequence of like vowels, e.g. *limagu* 'my hand' and *limaa* 'your hand', phonetically [li'ma:]. In the current Vitu orthography such sequences are written as single vowels, but this paper writes them as double vowels.

Certain verb roots of class 3 can also be used in transitive clauses without -*Ci*; usually (but not always) the object has indefinite reference, as in (17) where the verb root *hada* occurs, not the transitive form *hada-vi-a*.

(17) *Palaka, e   hada na   hai-na   bua   katiu e   ma-madii.*
      but   R:3 see   ART tree-3s   betelnut one   R:3 RED-stand
      'But he saw a betelnut tree which stood there.'

With other verbs of class 3, the form without -*Ci* is only used intransitively (e.g. *tangi* 'cry, weep') and with others the root does not exist separately. The relationship between root and transitive form for class 3 transitive verbs appears to be fairly complex and more research is needed.

From a historical perspective, this division between the three transitive verb classes is phonologically based. The verb roots in class 1 and 2 originally ended in in vowel, to which the object suffixes were directly attached. The verb roots in class 3, on the other hand, ended in a consonant, to which the Proto Oceanic transitivizing suffix *-i was attached, followed by object suffixes. When final consonants were lost, the 'protected' final consonants in these verb forms were retained as thematic consonants in present-day Vitu. Although there are a number of exceptions, this seems to offer a plausible analysis. Interestingly, most loanwords from Tok Pisin take the allomorph -*nia*, e.g. *peni-nia* 'to paint' (TP *penim*) and *kiki-nia* 'to kick (a ball), the transitive form of *kiki* 'to play soccer' (TP *kik*).

This distribution is reminiscent of other Oceanic languages which have two classes of transitive verbs; see Evans (2002: 95-98) for similar phenomena in Motu, Roviana and Ganoqa where there is phonological conditioning. In fact, exactly the same kind of situation is reconstructed for Proto Oceanic. 'Verbs that had a final consonant appear to have taken the transitive suffix, whereas verbs that had a final vowel appear to have taken the object enclitic directly.' (Evans 2002: 105-106).

The only puzzle is the absence of final back vowels *o* and *u* among verbal roots in class 1. This is no doubt related to the vowel umlaut allomorph of the passive, and we will take up this topic in §5.

Verbal morphology in Vitu is fairly limited. The only valency-increasing morphology in Vitu is the causative prefix *va-*, which often (but not always), occurs in combination with -*Ci*:

va-dua	'drop'	*dua*	'fall'
va-hoho-ri-a	'put inside'	*hoho*	'go inside'
va-hozo-vi-a	'finish'	*hozo*	'finished'
va-zahe-ni-a	'lift, raise'	*zahe*	'go up'
va-ziho-ni-a	'lower'	*ziho*	'go down'

Finally, the verbal complex in Vitu is characterized by a preverbal slot which is obligatorily filled by one of the aspect-mood-sequentiality (AMS) markers. These markers are portmanteau morphemes in that many of them index both person and aspect-mood-sequentiality, as shown in Table 1. The semantics of these AMS-markers is beyond the scope of this paper, but some of them have already been illustrated in preceding examples.

TABLE 1: ASPECT-MOOD-SEQUENTIALITY (AMS) MARKERS

	gloss	**1s + all plurals**	**2s**	**3s**
Realis	R	*ta*	*tu*	*e, Ø*
Irrealis	IR	*na*	*nu*	*ni*
Perfect	PF	*te*	*tu*	*ti*
Continuity	CONT	*ka*	*ku*	*ki*
Sequentiality	SEQ	*1sg: kene* *pl: kene ~ kini*	*kunu*	*kini*
Purpose	PURP	*kata*	*koto ~ kutu*	*kete ~ kiti*
Indefinite future	FUT	*data* [only 1sg]	*datu*	*dati*
Imminent future	IMM	*1sg: katane* *pl: katane ~ keteni*	*kotonu*	*keteni*

4.1 Passive verb forms

Having discussed the major form classes of transitive verbs, we can now move on to the core of this paper, a discussion of passive constructions. There are essentially three ways of making a passive verb in Vitu.

1. Through vowel mutation (umlaut). Class 1 verbs ending in the vowel *i* form their passive by changing -*i* (or -*i-a*) to -*ua*, as illustrated below. Notice that -*ua* is analysed as a single morpheme.

active	passive	
hani-a	*hanua*	'eat'
hubi-a	*hubua*	'hit'
kati-a	*katua*	'make'
maki-a	*makua*	'choose'
pahi-a	*pahua*	'take out, remove'
tuni-a	*tunua*	'cook, bake'
vati-a	*vatua*	'leave'

In one case metathesis has occurred: *geria - geura* (via *gerua*, now rarely used) 'send, tell'.

A subtype of this class is found with verbs which end in *e*. In that case the passive is formed in -*oa*, with one known case of metathesis:

hare-a	*haroa*	'peel'
kade-a	*kadoa*	'buy'
pade-a	*padoa*	'spear'
pele-a	*peloa ~ peola*	'take, get'

Causative verbs (marked by *va-*) also follows this umlaut pattern:

va-ngore-a	*va-ngoroa*	'put to sleep'	(*ngoro* 'sleep, lie')
va-pole-a	*va-poloa*	'take on board; load'	(*polo* 'go on board')
va-zuzi-a	*va-zuzua*	'breastfeed'	(*zuzu* 'suckle')

2. Most class 3 verbs ending in *-Ci* form their passive by replacing *-Ci* with *-Ca*:

active	passive		
haba-ti-a	*haba-ta*	'build'	
havi-li-a	*havi-la*	'pull up, catch'	
papane-hi-a	*papane-ha*	'climb'	
taru-hi-a	*taru-ha*	'put'	
vota-hi-a	*vota-ha*	'cut open'	

Exceptions to this rule are verbs ending in *-nia* (see below).

3. Finally, a number of verbs form their passive by means of the suffix *-nga* or *-anga*.

a. Verb roots ending in *a* (class 2) take *-nga*:

active	passive	
dabadaba	*dabadaba-nga*	'wall in (a house)'
laka	*laka-nga*	'dry over a fire'
luga	*luga-nga*	'carry'
paga	*paga-nga*	'peck at, bite'

b. Class 3 verbs ending in *-ni* (including causative verbs) replace this suffix with *-nga* (after *-a*) or *-anga* (after other vowels):

active	passive	
koha-ni-a	*koha-nga*	'call'
tani-a	*ta-nga*	'speak'
tapu-ni-a	*tapu-anga*	'throw'
vanga-ni-a	*vanga-nga*	'feed'
va-ziho-ni-a	*va-ziho-anga*	'lower, put down'

Notice that the pair *tania - tanga* 'speak' is exceptional, as other verbs with one syllable before *-nia* form their passives by means of *-nua* (*hania - hanua* 'eat'; *tunia - tunua* 'burn'). In terms of its prosody, *tani-a* is a class 1 verb, but in terms of its passive formation, it belongs to class 3.

4.2 Passive clauses

Having dealt with passive morphology, we can now look at the syntax of passives. The following examples illustrate passive verb forms in actual clauses, taken from conversations or from texts. These display various parameters of passive clauses, such as word order, occurrence in relative clauses and occurrence in compound verbs. For the sake of clarity I also provide the active verb form in each case. Notice that agents are specified in none of the clauses, as these are obligatorily absent in passive constructions.

The most regular order in passive clauses is subject-verb:

(18) *Goloa kua e   koha-nga   na   desk.*   (active: *koha-ni-a*)
     thing   this   R:3   call-PASS   ART   desk
     'This thing is called a desk.'

(19) *Ruma kua e   ba   ka-katua.*   (active: *kati-a*)
     house   this R:3   still   RED-make:PASS
     'This house is still being built.'

(20) *Na   hai   kua e   vitiha   kete   papane-ha.*   (active: *papane-hi-a*)
     ART   tree   this   R:3 difficult   PURP:3   climb-PASS
     'This tree is difficult to climb.' (lit: to be climbed)

(21) *Ka-gu   vaga   e   liu-ra   ni   ve?*   (active: *liu-ri-a*)
     POSS.CL-1sg   canoe   R:3 beach:PASS   loc.PN   where
     'Where has my canoe been beached?'

Verb-subject order also occurs, but this is less common:

(22) *Kava   ti   haroa   kamo.*   (active: *hare-a*)
     already PF:3   peel:PASS   taro
     'The taro has already been peeled.'

(23) *Kava   ti   va-poloa   ka-na   goloa-loa?* (active: *va-pole-a*)
     already PF:3   CAUS-load:PASS   POSS.CL-3s   thing-RED
     'Have his things been loaded yet?'

Very rarely, even double subjects are found with passives, as in (24), where the postverbal dual pronoun *hiro* is co-referential with the preverbal subject noun phrase. It is not clear whether such double subjects are restricted to post-verbal pronouns.

(24) *Boro kamana kaua kua e   makua   hiro.*   (active: *maki-a*)
     pig   with   dog   this   R:3 choose:PASS   3du
     'The pig and the dog were chosen.'

In the following elicited set, the same postverbal subject can be observed in (26c):

(25) *Dia   ta   maki-au.*   'They chose me.'
     3p   R   choose-1s

(26)   a. *Hau ta makua.*   'I was chosen.'
         I   R   choose:PASS

       b. *E   makua   hau.*   'I was chosen.'
         R:3 choose:PASS   I

       c. *Hau e   makua   hau.*   'I was chosen.'
         I   R:3   choose:PASS   I

Notice that with a preverbal subject, the passive subject has to agree with the AMS marker (*ta* is used for 1sg and all plurals), whereas with a postverbal subject, the AMS marker is the 3s form *e*, as in (26b). In the case of the double subject construction (26c), this is still the case. A preverbal 1sg subject with a 3sg AMS marker is ungrammatical, and so is a postverbal 1sg subject with the 1sg AMS marker.

(26)   d.   *Hau   e   makua.
              I   R:3   choose:PASS

        e.   *Ta makua   hau
            R   choose:PASS   I

Passive constructions are quite common in relative clauses (marked by brackets):

(27)   *Vazira   matoto, na malala* [*koha-nga ni   Apungi*]*, manumanu….*
        long.ago very   loc village call-PASS loc.PN Apungi   people
        'Long ago, in a village called Apungi, people….'
        (active: *koha-ni-a*)

(28)   *Dia ta zahe hutu-vala-hi-a barita*   [*kena   e   nihabu-anga*].
        they R go.up hit-break-TR-3s old.coconut that   R:3   pile.up-PASS
        'They went up and broke open the coconuts which had been piled up.'
        (active: *nihabu-nia*)

(29)   *Beta goloa   kamahi*   [*kena e   ta-tanga*]….   (active: *tani-a*)
        NEG thing   many   that R:3 RED-say:PASS
        'Nothing of the kind that was said…

Passives are also found in verbal compounds.

(30)   *Marabeta ni   kati-vutu-ha goloa katiu ni   niho*
        NEG   IR:3 do-tie-PASS thing   one loc.PN you
        'Nothing can be done properly because of you'
        (active: *kati-vutu-hi-a*)

(31)   *E   rotu-tadu-ra.*
        R:3 tie:PASS-down-PASS
        'It was tied down.'
        (active: *roti-tadu-ri-a*)

(32)   *Pusi ha-hani   kava   ti   pado-matoa.*
        cat   RED-eat   already PF:3 spear:PASS-die:PASS
        'The man-eating cat has been speared to death.'
        (active: *pade-mate-hi-a*)

(33)   *Kaka horaha ti   hubu-matoa.*
        person tall   PF:3 hit:PASS-die:PASS
        'The tall man has been killed.'
        (active: *hubi-mate-hi-a*)

Notice that in most cases both verbs in the compound construction take the passive form. Only in (30) does *kati* retain an active form, though on further questioning the double passive form *katu-vutu-ha* turned out to fine too. There appears to be some free variation in these forms. In addition to hubu-matoa in (33), other acceptable forms are *hubi-matoa* and *hubi-mate-ha.*

Finally, I present some examples of passive constructions in complex sentences. Examples (34) and (35) show a passive followed by an intransitive clause which has the same (non-overt) subject. The 3rd person continuous marker *ki* 'and, then' links the clauses:

(34)   *A   Peter e   geura   ki   vano.*   (active: *geria*)
         ART Peter R:3   send:PASS CONT:3 go
         'Peter was told to go.' (lit: 'Peter was sent and he went')

(35)   *Kilaka kena e   va-ziho-anga   ki   ziho,   hau ta ngo-ngoro.*
         time   that R:3 CAUS-go.down-PASS CONT:3 go.down I   R   RED-sleep
         'at the time he was lowered (and went down), I was asleep.'
         (active *va-ziho-nia*)

The last example is of a passive with a postverbal subject, followed by another passive, but with a different non-overt subject:

(36)   *Ka-na   lingabo e   lima za, ki   vota-ha   hau,*
         POSS.CL-3s   moon   R:3 five   only CONT:3 cut.open-PASS I

         ki   peola.
         CONT:3   take:PASS
         'when he was only five months old, I was operated on and he (= the baby) was taken out'
         (active *vota-hi-a, pele-a*)

Notice that in (36) the patient subject *hau* 'I' follows the passive verb *vota-ha* in the second clause, but that the preverbal particle *ki* is marked for 3rd person, just as we noticed above in example (26b). The full pronoun makes it clear that the subject is first person, and not 3rd person. The next clause (*ki peola*) contains no overt subject, and so the reference is indeed to a 3rd person, in this case a baby.

4.3 A true passive?

Following this discussion of passive morpho-syntax, there is one important question which remains. Given some of the unusual features of the passive in Vitu, can we be sure this is truly a passive? Could it not be another pragmatic strategy which promotes patients, such as topicalisation or left-dislocation? There are several indications that this is indeed a regular passive. The first one is the obligatory absence of an agent, the typological end point of agent suppression. The second clear indicator is the specific verb morphology associated with the passive. Although the tripartite allomorphy complicates matters, there is a unique correlation between the use of these verb forms and this particular clause type. Thirdly, object topicalisation is indeed possible in the language, as shown in the second sentence of example (37):

(37)   *Ia kago-vi-a   ka-dia   boro kapo-pou   ia varaga kara dazi.*
         3s collect-TR-3s   POSS.CL-3p pig   big-RED   3s throw   to   sea

         Kote-kote   e   hani dia.
         small-RED R:3 eat   3p
         'He collected their big pigs and threw them into the sea. The small ones he ate (them).'

Notice that the object (*kote-kote*) is fronted, but that the verb retains active morphology (*hani* instead of the passive *hanua*), and the object is repeated as a pronoun. Also, the plural object does not agree with the singular realis marker *e*. Clearly this is a different construction from the passive.

A final indicator is the relative paucity of this construction in natural texts. I have not yet done any frequency counts, but impressionistically it appears that the passive is used in less than 10% of all transitive constructions, possibly even lower. All of this points towards a 'true' passive.

The main complicating issue is the status of the patient argument in passive constructions. Is this a subject or is it not? In favour of a subject analysis we can point to the following facts.
a. The patient can occur pre-verbally. Patients in active clauses normally do not occur preverbally (except in the case of object topicalisation).

b. A single preverbal patient agrees with the AMS-marker, as in (26a). Since the AMS-marker is unequivocally linked to the subject, this agreement is strong evidence in favour of a subject role for the patient.

However, the fact that the patient can still occur post-verbally (in its usual position as a patient in an active clause) seems to contradict this analysis. Furthermore, in such cases the AMS marker does not agree with the patient, but is rather a dummy agreement marker *e*, as in (26b). The possibility of having two patient subjects, preverbally and postverbally, as in (26c), further obscures the syntactic role of the patient. It is possible that a number of syntactic tests can be used to throw more light on the grammatical role of the patient in these clauses, such as reflexivization, equi-deletion and relativization, but such tests have not yet suggested themselves. It appears that the subject of a passive clause does not share all the subject properties of an active clause.

At this point we probably have to conclude that the Vitu passive is a case of what might be called a 'semi-promotional passive', following Givón's use of the terms promotional and non-promotional passive (Givón 1990: 575-576). Agent deletion and clear passive morphology point to a promotional passive, but since the patient is only half-way promoted to a full subject, the construction does not have the status of a full promotional passive.

5. What is the origin of the Vitu passive?

In this section I want to address the question of how this unusual structure arose. Since Proto Oceanic had no passive, what did it grow out of? Essentially this is an exercise in morpho-syntactic reconstruction and therefore somewhat speculative, but it could be of importance to comparative Oceanic studies, as well as to typological linguistics, especially the theory of grammaticalisation (see e.g. Haspelmath (1990) on the origin of passive morphology).

This section draws quite heavily on Ross's (2002b) sketch of Bali-Vitu, which contains several clues about the origin of the Vitu passive. My basic hypothesis is that the Vitu passive is a local innovation which grew out of a reanalysed active clause. This seems to follow logically from the fact that the patient subject of a passive clause can still occur post-verbally, whereas active clauses have predominant SVO order. This unusual position of the subject in passive clauses is best explained as a residual feature, showing the original object role of the patient.

As for the passive allomorphs, I assume that *-(a)nga* was originally a pluralizing suffix on verbs, that vowel mutation arose out of a generalised echo vowel *u* for intransitive verbs and that *-Ca* goes back to earlier *-Cua*. I will discuss these claims in some detail below.

The first question is the origin of the passive allomorph *-(a)nga*, as found for instance in the pairs *luga* vs *luga-nga* 'carry' and *tapu-ni-a* vs *tapu-anga* 'throw'. A solid piece of the puzzle

comes from the closely related language Bali, which has a plural subject marker *-(a)nga* on verbs, replacing the transitivizing suffix *-ni* used for singulars (all Bali data from Ross 2002b). The allomorph *-anga* occurs after vowels other than *a*:

BALI

	intransitive		transitive	
			SG subject	PL subject
kuahi	'be frightened'		*kuahi-ni-*	*kuahi-anga*	'be frightened of'
vatahu	'speak'		*vatahu-ni-*	*vatahu-anga*	'tell'
ule	'ask'		*ule-ni-*	*ule-anga*	'ask (someone)'

Examples in clauses:

BALI (Ross 2002b: 375)
(38)   *Hizi   te   hani-anga a   beti.*
         3p   R:3   eat-PL   ART   banana
         'They ate banana(s).'

BALI (Ross 2002b: 381)
(39)   *…. a   hai beini ki   heza-nga.*
         …. ART tree that   SEQ:3 chop-PL
         '…this tree is chopped down.'

Notice that (38) is a regular transitive SVO clause in Bali, with full agent and patient NPs, a situation which is ungrammatical in Vitu when using *-(a)nga*. On the other hand, (39) has a preverbal patient and no agent, a situation which is much closer to the passive in Vitu. In fact, Ross (2002b: 380-381) raises the question whether O(S)V clauses such as (39) are best analysed as topicalisations or as passives. Based on the fact that such clauses do not leave object traces and that they also occur as subordinate clauses, he suggests 'that they are on their way to becoming passives'.

I believe this process has proceeded much further in Vitu, where *-(a)nga* was originally also a suffix on verbs indicating a plural agent, including intransitive verbs. The agent was often not explicitly coded in a subject noun phrase, especially in connected discourse, the suffix making it clear that the subject was the 3rd person plural human agent 'they'. This meant that the preverbal slot was available for the topicalised patient, which in this position was open to reinterpretation as a subject. The 'double' subject constructions of (24) and (26c) are indications of the ambiguous grammatical role of the patient: subject or object. Also, the 3rd person agreement marker with post-verbal subjects continues to show the original agreement with the deleted agent. In summary, this is a case of a general plural agent marker which has been reinterpreted as a passive marker. This situation is parallelled in other languages, e.g. Modern Greek and Kimbundu (see Haspelmath 1990:49-50).

Although this scenario is likely correct, it leaves a number of questions unanswered. In the first place, in Bali *-(a)nga* appears with all transitive verbs. How can we account for the phonological conditioning for *-(a)nga* in Vitu, where only verbs ending in *a* and in *-ni-a* take this allomorph? Secondly, why is it that the AMS particle is the 3rd person *singular* form when the subject is post-verbal? We would expect a 3rd person *plural* form if the suffix originally marked a plural subject. These questions remain unresolved at this point, although it is possible that passive marking with *-(a)nga* was originally more widespread in Vitu and that it has lost ground to the other allomorphs.

Let's now turn to the second allomorph, the vowel mutation found in pairs like *katia - katua* 'make'. This is the most difficult to account for and my attempt here must be considered as very provisional. Again, Bali provides the first piece of the puzzle in that it has a transitivising suffix *-i* which replaces final *u* (either as echo-vowel or as a genuine root vowel):

BALI

intransitive		transitive	
hinumu	[echo vowel]	*hinum-i*	'drink'
rogu	[root vowel]	*rog-i*	'break'

Possible steps in the development are as follows:

a. At some point in its shared history with Bali, Vitu also had echo vowels. Some evidence for this is also available from inalienably possessed roots such as *lohor-o-gu* 'my neck' (from POC *lihor*), where the echo vowel has been retained with possessive suffixes; see van den Berg and Bachet (to appear) for details. It seems likely that at this stage (or possibly somewhat later) there were two sets of intransitive verb forms: those with echo vowels and those that had lost the 'echo syllable' (the original final consonant plus the echo vowel). The fact that modern Vitu intransitive verbs do not have final consonants makes positing two forms a necessary part of the reconstruction. The two intransitive forms may have been in free variation or may have had subtle differences in usage. A sample of intransitive-transitive pairs could have been as follows (the asterisk indicates these forms are not attested in modern Vitu):

intransitive-1	intransitive-2	transitive	
hinu	**hinum-u*	*hinum-i-a*	'drink'
taru	**taruh-u*	*taruh-i-a*	'put'
hara	**harat-a*	*harat-i-a*	'bite'
tere	**tereh-a*	*tereh-i-a*	'tear, rip'
havi	**havil-i*	*havil-i-a*	'pull up, catch'

b. Due to pressure from the 'one form one meaning' principle, the final *u* of the intransitive-2 forms replaced the other vowels as indicators of intransitivity. The choice of *u* was presumably due to the fact that this presented a straightforward opposition with transitive *-i* in terms of vowel fronting. This then led to the following situation:

intransitive-1	intransitive-2	transitive	
hinu	**hinum-u*	*hinum-i-a*	'drink'
taru	**taruh-u*	*taruh-i-a*	'put'
hara	**harat-u*	*harat-i-a*	'bite'
tere	**tereh-u*	*tereh-i-a*	'tear, rip'
havi	**havil-u*	*havil-i-a*	'pull up, catch'

By this stage the road had been opened for meaning differentiation. While intransitive-1 forms retained their use as basic intransitive verbs, intransitive-2 came to be used as a passive verb form, presumably replacing verb forms marked by *-(a)nga*. It is not clear to me why the language chose to do this, since creating multiple forms to code one function obviously goes against the 'one form one meaning' principle. However, it is reasonably clear that somehow these changes took place.

With these changes in place, the foundation had been laid for the current passive, but several remaining steps are necessary to arrive at the present-day forms and functions:

c. To the intransitive-2 forms (now reanalysed as passives), a final *a* was added, on the analogy of the active forms ending in *a*; hence passive form like **taru-hua* 'was put' and **havi-lua* 'was caught' (notice that these forms are unattested in current Vitu, as they underwent a further reduction, see below). This *a* is actually occasionally missing on modern passives, as in *pahia* 'remove', with passive *pahu ~ pahua* 'was removed'. This strengthens the current hypothesis.

d. Once the passive ending was firmly established as *-Cua,* it spread by analogy to verbs which had never had an echo vowel (since they ended in a vowel) like *hania* 'eat', and created passive forms such as *hanua* 'was eaten'.

e. Also, once the active-passive opposition was firmly established in terms of a backness contrast between *i* and *u* in verb roots, this pattern was generalised to verbs ending in *e*, creating passive forms in *o*, such as *pele-a* 'get, take' and its passive counterpart *peloa*. Metathesis to *peola* is the latest development in this chain.

f. Once the active-passive opposition was firmly established in terms of a backness contrast for transitive verbs, this led to a number of back-formations whereby original back vowels in transitive verbs were fronted for active meanings, with the back vowel obtaining a passive meaning. Notice the following examples of transitive verbs (some causative), where the intransitive verb and the passive have retained the original back vowel (as shown in the Proto Oceanic reconstructions), but the active form has a front vowel:

active	passive		intransitive		
tuni-a	*tunua*	'cook, roast'	*tunu*	'cook, roast'	(POc *tunu)
vai-a	*vaua*	'weave, plait'	-		(POc *paus)
va-zuzi-a	*va-zuzua*	'breastfeed'	*zuzu*	'suckle'	(POc *susu)
va-ngore-a	*va-ngoroa*	'put to bed'	*ngoro*	'sleep, lie down'	(POc *ŋoRo)
va-pole-a	*va-poloa*	'take on board'	*polo*	'step, go aboard'	

g. Another point to be accounted for is the allomorph *-Ca*, found in pairs such as *havi-lia* vs *havi-la* 'catch' (see §3.2 for more examples). If the above scenario is essentially correct, *-Ca* is a reduction of *-Cua*. An older passive form must have been **havi-lua*. Presumably this change from *-Cua* to *-Ca* occurred under the influence of *-(a)nga* in an effort to redress the allomorphy balance. The *-nga* allomorph was maybe felt to be part of the set of *-Ca* suffixes, which led to the analogical levelling of *-Cua* as *-Ca*, as outlined in the chart below, where A represents the older stage before the reduction.

A			B		
luga	*luga-nga*	>	*luga*	*luga-nga*	'carry'
hara	**hara-tua*		*hara*	*hara-ta*	'bite'
havi	**havi-lua*		*havi*	*havi-la*	'pull up, catch'

A second possibility is that intransitive forms like **harat-a* (with echo vowel, see above), never changed into **harat-u* (and subsequently **haratua* and *harata*), but retained their original form all the way. This scenario would work well for transitive verbs with *a* in the final syllable, but leaves forms with other vowels unexplained. The first alternative is therefore to be preferred.

h. A final point concerns the exceptional status of verbs ending in *-nia*, where instead of the expected *-nua* we find the allomorph *-(a)nga*, as in *koha-ni-a* vs *koha-nga* 'call'. I do not yet see a plausible explanation for their exceptional behaviour. Somehow they have retained the earlier passive form *-(a)nga,* if the above account is correct.

6. Conclusion and remaining questions

The outline I have sketched above is tentative and a number of gaps still exist. However, it does make sense (I hope) of the complex allomorphy, and it is in line with what is known about the grammaticalisation of passive morphology. The allomorph *-(a)nga* originates from a generalised plural agent, while the other two allomorphs (vowel mutation and *-Ca*), go back to a single form *-Cua,* originating as a generalised echo vowel to mark intransitives. The major mechanisms that have been at work in this process are reanalysis, extension and analogy (cf. Campbell 1998).

I want to end this paper by drawing out a number of residual research questions which can hopefully be addressed in the future.

1. What is the frequency of the passive compared to the active?
2. What is the exact discourse function of the passive? For what reason is the agent suppressed?
3. Is there any relationship between the suffix *-(a)nga* (passive in Vitu, pluralising subject in Bali) and the identical nominalising suffix *-(a)nga* which occurs in both languages? In the light of the discussion about the role of nominalisations in the formation of the Austronesian voice system, this question is intriguing (see Ross 2002a, Starosta 2002).
4. To what extent are the developments in Vitu parallel to what we find in Fijian and the Polynesian languages where a number of languages mark passive by *-Cia* or *-Ca*? Also, some Micronesian languages have passives, which could provide interesting parallels.
5. Is there any evidence that other languages in the Meso-Melanesian cluster (the subgroup of Western Oceanic to which Bali and Vitu belong) have passive forms? Bola, spoken not far from Vitu on the West New Britain mainland, has a form *ni* which at least in some contexts appears to function as a passive (Bosco 1979, Brent Wiebe pers.comm.).

Abbreviations

AMS	aspect-mood-sequentiality	PASS	passive
ART	article	PF	perfect
CAUS	causative	p	plural
CONT	continuous	POc	Proto Oceanic
du	dual	POSS.CL	possessive classifier
ex	exclusive	PR	proper noun
FUT	future	PURP	purpose
HAB	habitual	R	realis
IR	irrealis	RED	reduplication
loc	locative	SEQ	sequential
NEG	negative	s, sg	singular
NOM	nominalisation	TR	transitive

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