Backward Control in Samoan

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Samoan, a nuclear Polynesian prepositional VSO language with Ergative-Absolutive Case marking, allows coreference between a Possessor-DP in an Absolutive object and an unpronounced Ergative Agent-DP or Oblique Goal-DP. So sentence (1) can mean either ‘Sefulu rode his own bike’ (with a silent coreferential Ergative) or ‘Sefulu’s bike was ridden.’

(1) Na vili le uila a Sefulu.
    Past ride Abs Det bike Poss Sefulu

We propose that (1) involves Backward Control (Polinsky & Postdam 2002), the chain being formed through Possessor Raising.