

RELATIONAL MORPHEMES AND A TRANSITIVISING SUFFIX IN XÂRÂCÙÙ (NEW CALEDONIA)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Present day Xârâcùù¹ has only one transitivity verb suffix (-*ri*), which can be applied to only a few verbs. The loss of Proto Oceanic transitive suffixes has been compensated for by the development of several relational morphemes or case markers. This paper discusses the origin and use of the latter in relation to verb serialisation.

Xârâcùù is a serialising language in which verb series tend to give rise:

- either to grammatical morphemes (relational morphemes or modal auxiliaries) or postverbs resulting from specialisation of one of the two verbs in the series ;
- or to transitive compound verbs, generally obtained by shortening the syllable structure of the first verb in the series.

The argument markers which introduce the objects of otherwise intransitive verbs can (with the exception of *wā* 'for, about', cf. 6.2) be placed fairly at will within the verb phrase or before the object they introduce.

Diachronically speaking, some markers of participant relationships derive:

- from former postverbs which become object markers (*ce* 'towards, for', cf. 3.)
- from verbs which become grammaticalised in series (*xi* 'give', *taa* < *witaa* 'take away', *tara* 'see', cf. 2.4).
- from prepositions which tend to become verb-enclitic when they introduce an object (*tii* 'at, on', *ŋē* 'with', cf. 5. and 6.1).

This paper will deal with three main points. The first will be the facts of verb serialisation and how it can develop into verb + adverb, auxiliary + verb, or verb + marker sequences. The behaviour of the relational markers introducing the objects of verbs will be described in terms of their choice of positions, their origin, and the classes of verbs they associate with.

¹Xârâcùù has about 4000 speakers in the Thio-Canala region of New Caledonia.

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This will be followed by a brief discussion of verb compounding. This process, which is richly productive in the southern Caledonian languages, is likely to result in part from serialisation, and affects verb valency.

Finally, the range of diversity in these markers will be brought out by way of short comparisons with neighbouring languages. This diversity is a severe hindrance to syntactic comparison and reconstruction in the southern Caledonian languages. The difficulties are comparable to those encountered by G.W. Grace in his attempted phonological reconstructions.

2. VERB SERIALISATION

The verb phrase in Xârâcùù is generally composed of a verb or verb series with following or preceding adverbs, bounded by various tense-aspect markers. The lexical or pronominal subject is, like the object, outside the limits of the verb phrase, which need contain no mark of grammatical person.

Verb serialisation consists of a sequence of two verbs, each of which could appear independently. Serialisation, unlike compounding, involves no formal changes. Verb series make up an indivisible whole and contain no relational morphemes. They share a common case frame, common modifiers, and common tense-aspect markers. As a whole, they have a special falling accent pattern: the main accent falls on the first syllable of the first verb, with an accent on a lower register on the first syllable of the second verb.² One of the two verbs in the series often tends to specialise in a modal, adverbial or relational role.

2.1 SEQUENCE OF TWO VERBS

The semantics of a verb series will generally combine a position and a movement, two positions, or an action and the way of carrying it out or its intended purpose. Here are a few examples:

<i>kwe pwāārī</i>	<i>Ĵga</i>	<i>cue</i>
dance turn	warm in the sun	sit
dance spinning about	get warm sitting in the sun	
<i>kē façaa</i>	<i>pūxūrū tēī</i>	
eat spoil	run cry	
waste food in the process of eating	run crying	
<i>Ĵe çāā</i>	<i>nou</i>	<i>xwīī</i>
pull stretch	cut (sugar cane)	chew
pull for the purpose of stretching	cut sugar cane to chew on it	

2.2 SEQUENCE OF TWO VERBS (THE FIRST SPECIALISES)

One of the two verbs tends to appear more frequently in serialisation than independently, and becomes specialised in a modal or adverbial role.³

²For a description of accent in Xârâcùù, see Rivierre (1978).

³Abbreviations used are as follows: ANA – anaphora, COLL – collective, DU – dual, DUR – durative, E – exclusive, I – inclusive, ING – ingressive, NEG – negative, NOM – nominalising prefix, PL – plural, POSS – possessive, PROHIB –

modal specialisation:

nããbu 'begin', as in:

xiti wã nããbu
celebration ING begin
The celebration begins.

becomes a modal auxiliary when followed by another verb:

ε nããbu ĩnũ kεε-fãrã
3SG begin learn NOM-read
He begins to learn to read.

Likewise, *nãã* 'ask for':

nã nãã taa rɔ ʒãã-pwĩ
1SG ask for REL 2SG sucker-banana tree
I ask you for banana-tree suckers.

nãã acts as a modal auxiliary meaning 'want' when it precedes another verb:

a xũũfĩ a nãã metiçe
this child this ask for sleep
This child wants to sleep.

adverbial specialisation:

tete 'wander about' rarely appears separately:

deeri nã tete
people DUR wander
The people walk about.

It is usually proposed to verbs of movement with the meaning 'to no purpose, for no reason':

ĩrĩ nã tete lee
1PL.I DUR wander go down
We go down for no particular reason.

2.3 SEQUENCE OF TWO VERBS (THE SECOND SPECIALISES)

Some second verbs in a series tend to specialise not only in modal or adverbial senses but also as relational morphemes, and then break off from the verb phrase; *verb + verb + object sequence* then becomes *verb + relational morpheme + object*.

modal specialisation

wĩnã 'pursue (something)':

ε wĩnã wake rεε
3SG pursue work POSS.REL.3SG
He continues his work.

The verb *wĩnĩ* is more often used modally with the meaning 'keep on':

ε da wĩnĩ
3SG eat pursue
He keeps on eating.

adverbial specialisation

xoru 'good, beautiful', a stative verb as in:

a kāmūrū a xoru
this man this handsome
This man is handsome.

means 'well, nicely' after another verb:

ε kwe xoru
3SG dance well
He dances well, is a good dancer.

adverbial or relational specialisation:

jati 'work especially for someone':

ŋēē jati laake xĩja ēē xi-tia
1PL.E work for many bracelets RES scratch-split
We work intentionally to make pre-cut bracelets.

After another verb, *jati* marks the recipient of the action:

xũ jati 'plough for someone'

pa kwara xũ jati aaxa re ri
COLL subject plough for chief POSS.REL 3PL
The subjects plough for their chief.

jai 'pass beyond, transgress'

ε jai dɔu mwiri wei mwiri aaxa je na
3SG pass thing there this one there chief say PAST
He does not respect what the chief said.

As the second verb in a series, *jai* will express the comparative:

ε kaxē jai nā
3SG big pass 1SG
He is taller than I.

jati and *jai*, are transitive verbs which seem about to become relational morphemes, but can never be separated from the preceding verb. On the other hand, *fadi* 'measure, reckon, make equitable distribution' can be removed from the verb phrase and used to introduce circumstantial modifiers.

As a separate verb:

ri nĩ fadi re kē-mwaa re dɔu mwiri ti xwānəə-re jēēde
3PL DUR reckon DUR NOM-long POSS.REL thing there to end-3SG evening
They reckon that it will last until evening.

In a verb series:

pa xũũfĩ fɛdɛ fadi ɕere-ri
 COLL child walk share way-3PL
 The children have the same way of walking.

As a relational morpheme meaning 'according to', introducing a circumstantial modifier:

ĩrĩ xɛrĩ pa xũũfĩ fadi do tepə re xũã
 1PL.I raise COLL child according to true custom POSS.REL tribe
 We raise our children according to the ancient custom of the tribe.

2.4 RELATIONAL MORPHEMES DERIVED FROM SERIALISATION AND USED TO INTRODUCE OBJECTS OF VERBS

Some of the relational morphemes introducing indirect objects have no other function. Others are also postverbs or are still verbs in their own right, and can form compounds. They have varying degrees of autonomy with respect to the verb they transitive and the object they introduce.

Each of these relational morphemes is compatible with a small set of verbs, usually taken from a common semantic field (verbs of communication, verbs of feeling, pejorative verbs, verbs describing exchanges etc.)

2.4.1 RELATIONAL MORPHEMES DERIVED FROM STILL AUTONOMOUS VERBS

2.4.1.1 *tara* 'know, see'

tara is now rarely used independently:

kə tara, kwie ɕa-xuru rū kɛ xũ kwãã a
 2SG see rain hit-flee 1DU.I from on tree this
 You see, the rain drives us out of the tree.

After another verb, *tara* may have an adverbial function and mean 'to see, for curiosity's sake'. In this role, *tara* immediately follows the verb it modifies:

kə ðã tara nɛnuu nɔ
 2SG undo see package this
 You undo this package for the sake of curiosity.

ɛ kɛ tara mɔrɔ na ku
 3SG eat see already PAST yam
 He has already tasted the dish of yams.

Finally, *tara* seems to have acquired the role of a relational morpheme introducing the objects of certain verbs which describe attempts at communicating with another being: *jumĩ* 'make a sound of kissing'; *piaxɔ* 'whistle'; *piɕinɔ* 'glance at'; *ɕĩĩ* 'make a noise to attract attention'. In this use, it can be separated from the first verb by aspect markers or postverbs and preposed to the object. Its meaning is then 'towards, at, for':

nā piaxō mwāmwaa na tara deeri
 1SG whistle long PAST REL people
 I whistled at the people (to attract their attention) for a long time.

2.4.1.2 *xi* 'give'

xi 'give' is a trivalent verb and is compatible with the relational morpheme meaning 'to (attributive)', to which it has itself given rise. This marker can be placed either within the verb phrase immediately after the verb, or immediately before the attributive object it introduces:

kə xi xi na nū /aa mwanoo (=kə xi na /aa mwanoo xi nā)
 2SG give REL PAST 1SG a cloth
 You gave me a piece of cloth.

The verbs which take the relational morpheme *xi* are verbs of communication or exchange. They invariably assume something being given away, an outward movement. The recipient is always an animate being. *xi* may introduce objects of otherwise intransitive verbs: *baa* 'show oneself, appear'; *nīmō* 'tell a story'; *ḡāā* 'cry out'; *xoru* 'please'; *yaaru* 'set riddles'; *xa* 'speak'; *le* 'say'; or attributive objects of transitive verbs: *nūmārā* 'give away'; *çu* 'write'; *çue* 'entrust'; *xipwei* 'announce'; *nēge* 'request respectfully'; *xacie* 'show'; *nū* 'send'; *xādii* 'pay'.

aḡāā xa xi xūūfī a
 mummy speak REL child this
 Mummy speaks to this child.

nā xādii pwī xi aḡāā
 1SG pay bananas REL mummy
 I pay Mummy for the bananas.

2.4.2 A RELATIONAL MORPHEME DERIVED FROM A BOUND VERB: *taa*

taa (< *witaa* 'throw away, take off') invariably retains a meaning of withdrawing or taking away. As a postverb, it means 'once and for all', 'to get rid of (something)'; in composition, it means 'leave', and as a relational morpheme, it means 'away from (DIS(associative))'.

taa as postverb with a modal meaning

As a postverb, *taa* immediately follows the first (generally transitive) verb and precedes the aspect markers, thus behaving like the second verb in a verb series, although it never appears as a verb in its own right.

Compare utterances (a) and (b) below. The presence of *taa* gives the (b) utterances a terminative sense:

- (a) *wījō /aa kwe mīā*
 drink a water red
 Drink the wine.
- (b) *wījō taa /aa kwe mīā*
 drink a water red
 Drink all the wine, finish the bottle!

- (a) ϵ $f\epsilon$ $t\tilde{\epsilon}$ $r\epsilon$ $d\phi\text{-}\acute{c}aa$
 3SG go throw POSS.REL thing-bad
 He is going to throw the trash away.
- (b) ϵ $f\epsilon$ $t\tilde{\epsilon}$ taa $r\epsilon$ $d\phi\text{-}\acute{c}aa$
 3SG go throw POSS.REL thing-bad
 He is going to throw the trash far away (to be rid of it once and for all).
- (a) $p\tilde{a}\tilde{a}d\phi$ ba na $\acute{c}\tilde{h}$ $r\epsilon$ ri
 men plough PAST hole POSS.REL 3PL
 The men made holes for their yams.
- (b) $p\tilde{a}\tilde{a}d\phi$ ba taa na $\acute{c}\tilde{h}$ $r\epsilon$ ri
 men plough PAST hole POSS.REL 3PL
 The men finished making their yam holes.

Likewise, $j\phi\phi$ 'wipe'; $j\phi\phi + taa$ 'erase':

ϵ $j\phi\phi$ taa na $/aa$ $k\epsilon\epsilon\text{-}/e$ $k\epsilon$ $x\bar{u}$ $b\Lambda\Lambda\text{-}p\epsilon ci$
 3SG wipe take away PAST a NOM-say from on piece-book
 He erased a word from the paper.

taa as relational morpheme⁴

A few verbs require a following object introduced by *taa*: $k\phi ni$ 'avoid something'; $maw\tilde{a}$ 'avoid a blow'; $m\tilde{\lambda}$ 'be discouraged with'; $\acute{c}\phi\epsilon$ 'pass'; $t\phi\tilde{c}\tilde{a}$ 'leave someone'. Others are optionally followed by an object introduced by *taa*, and otherwise behave like intransitive verbs: $bata$ 'be afraid'; $f\phi\phi$ 'refuse'; $p\phi ni$ 'separate'; $xuru$ 'flee'; $m\tilde{a}\tilde{a}\tilde{t}$ 'precede'. The choice of position for *taa* is fairly free.

$n\tilde{a}$ $k\phi ni$ $/aapu$ na taa $lotoo$
 1SG avoid suddenly PAST REL car
 I got right out of the way of the car.

ri $p\phi ni$ $kete$ taa na $r\tilde{i}$
 3PL separate quickly REL PAST 1PL.E
 They quickly separated from us.

⁴*taa* also introduces verbs (as objects) which do not have the nominalising prefix usually found in this context, but can nevertheless be modified by a possessive marker:

ϵ $f\phi$ taa $xwata$ $r\phi\phi$
 3SG refuse REL listen POSS.REL.2SG
 He refuses to listen to you.

ϵ $bata$ taa $f\epsilon\text{-}taa$ $r\epsilon$ $m\tilde{w}\tilde{a}\tilde{c}iri$ $r\epsilon\epsilon$
 3SG fear REL go-leave POSS.REL country POSS.REL.3SG
 He is afraid to leave his country.

taa can also introduce circumstantial modifiers which are not verb arguments:

are , $k\phi$ $n\tilde{\lambda}$ $kace$ taa $r\epsilon$ $k\tilde{w}\tilde{e}\tilde{r}\tilde{e}\tilde{t}\tilde{i}$ taa $p\epsilon$ $n\tilde{\lambda}$
 tomorrow 2SG DUR gather take away DUR blanket REL bed this
 Tomorrow, you will take the blanket off this bed.

$k\phi$ $n\tilde{\lambda}$ $f\epsilon$ $witaa$ $r\epsilon$ $m\tilde{i}d\phi$ taa $xw\tilde{a}\tilde{t}$
 2SG DUR go throw DUR trash REL road
 You will go and throw the trash off the road.

Finally, *taa* can be used after stative verbs to express a comparative comparable to the one obtained by the use of *jai* 'pass beyond' (cf. 2.3):

ϵ $b\tilde{e}\tilde{e}\tilde{r}\tilde{t}$ taa $n\tilde{a}$ $= \epsilon$ $b\tilde{e}\tilde{e}\tilde{r}\tilde{t}$ $j\phi in\tilde{a}$
 3SG old REL 1SG
 He is older than I.

nā nāl tēcā rē taa rō tō ijānō
 1SG DUR leave DUR REL 2SG at fork
 I will leave you at the fork.

Trivalent transitive verbs requiring two objects, one of which denotes the 'dispossessed' participant, will use 'disassociative' *taa* to introduce the latter; these verbs are: *faari* 'ask someone for something'; *pēde* 'steal'; *xanœ* 'ask permission'; *kōpœ* 'seize'; *pē* 'take'; *fatərō* 'demand'; *nāā* 'ask for'; *xādii* 'buy'.

nā nāā çāl-pwī taa rō
 1SG ask for sucker-banana tree REL 2SG
 I demand banana-tree suckers from you.

nā xādii laa lotoo taa dape
 1SG buy a car REL Dapé
 I buy a car from Dapé.⁵

3. A RELATIONAL MORPHEME OF ADVERBIAL ORIGIN: *ce* 'towards, for'

The relational morpheme *ce* 'towards, for' still behaves like a postverb. It is not possible to say whether it was once a verb, and became a postverb through serialisation, or whether postverbs are a separate source of relational morphemes, distinct from the results of serialisation.

ce tends either to form compound verbs⁶ by combining with the verb, or contrariwise, to distance itself from the verb and become a relational morpheme.

As a postverb compatible with numerous transitive verbs, *ce* signifies that the action is carried out with a specific purpose:

nā nārā xiti
 1SG think of celebration
 I think of the celebration.

nā nārā ce xiti
 1SG think of SPECIFIC GOAL celebration
 I think the celebration over.

nā taa ce kura
 1SG catch SPECIFIC GOAL shrimp
 I try to catch shrimps.

ce allows some intransitive verbs to take an object, and behaves in such cases like a transitivity relational morpheme meaning 'towards, with respect to'. These verbs then express either a movement towards someone or something, or a feeling towards someone: *cēmīā* 'suffer'; *kwāyaa* 'be nostalgic'; *na* 'move towards'; *nārā* 'have pity'; *piçi* 'search'; *tāā* 'stand'; *tālāl* 'be ignorant, fail'.

⁵The same utterance with *xi* 'to' instead of *taa* means: 'I buy a car for Dapé'.

⁶*ce* tends to form compounds with verbs, but can still exceptionally be separated from some by an aspect marker:

xa 'speak' xa-ce 'call'
nā xace na rō (= nā xa na ce rō)
 1SG call PAST 2SG
 I called you.

In the compound *xwī-ce* /do-specific goal/ 'try', however, *ce* cannot be separated from the verb.

ce may or may not be included in the verb phrase.

nã *ɬɬɬ* *ce* *nĩ-rɔ*
1SG be ignorant REL name-2SG
I don't know your name.

apãã *tãã* *ce* *rɔ*
mummy stand REL 2SG
Mummy goes forward to meet you.

ɛ *cəmĩã* *mwãmwaa* *na* *ce* *dĩ* *rɛ* *kwãã-rɛ*
3SG suffer long PAST REL price POSS.REL boat-3SG
He suffered long (to get) the price of his boat.

4. THE TRANSITIVISING SUFFIX *-ri*

This is the only real verb suffix in Xârâcùù, and is inseparable from the verb it transitivises. It can only be used with a few verbs: *fio* 'refuse', *mãã* 'worry', *murɔ* 'live', *kweti* 'be tired', *cara* 'be ashamed', *ɲɲɔɔ* 'be complicated'. The object introduced by *-ri* generally denotes the means or the cause:

nã *murɔ-ri* *na* *nũ*
1SG live-SUF PAST coconut
I had my fill of coconut.

nã *kweti-ri* *mõõ* *rɔ*
1SG be tired-SUF already 2SG
I am already tired of you.

In all probability, a variant form of this transitive suffix has been incorporated into the verbs *cĩĩ* (in free variation with *cĩ*) 'distribute, share', and *faari* 'ask for', equivalent to *faa* + the relational morpheme *wã*.

The suffix *-ri* is cognate with several transitive suffixes found in other Caledonian languages (Ajië *-i*, Cèmuhî *-hĩ*), but is no longer productive.

5. THE RELATIONAL MORPHEME *tĩ* 'concerning, about'

tĩ transitivises a few intransitive verbs expressing feelings or acts of communication: *bərə* 'be angry'; *tɛpɔ* 'make a speech'; *xati* 'quarrel'; *mãã* 'fight'; *tẽ* 'cry'.

Its position is variable except after *tẽ*: it may be placed immediately after the verb, in which case, if the verb ends in a nasal vowel, the prenasalised form *dĩ* will appear; or it may be placed immediately before the object.

nã *mãã* *dĩ* *na* *doo* = *nã* *mãã* *na* *tĩ* *doo*
1SG fight REL PAST earth
I fought to get land.

ɛ *bərə* *tĩ* *kwẽẽ-rɛ*
3SG be angry REL wife-3SG
He is angry about his wife.

The only possibility with *tē* is to have *dī* immediately after. This suggests compounding has occurred:

mārādī a tē-dī kāl-rē mwiri
 snake this cry-REL? skin-3SG ANA
 Snake cries over his famous skin.

6. RELATIONAL MORPHEMES WITH MORE THAN ONE FUNCTION

Relational morphemes can be semantically associated either with arguments or with circumstantial modifiers. In Xârâcùù, some relational morphemes associate with both and have a wide range of functions.

6.1 THE RELATIONAL MORPHEME *ŋē*

The relational morpheme *ŋē*⁷ can introduce:

- temporal modifiers, in which case it cannot be separated from the object it governs, even when the latter is topicalised; it then means ‘while’:

ŋē /ēēde, ε wā toa = ε wā toa ŋē /ēēde
 REL evening 3SG ING arrive
 In the evening, he arrived.

- instrumentals, in which case it is inseparable from its object, and is copied after the verb when the object is topicalised:

ŋē kwāde, ε wā ɕa ŋē ri
 REL wind 3SG ING hit REL 3PL
 Using the wind, he starts to beat them.

ŋē mī kēe/ε a, xwi ŋē bwere ŋī-tepə
 REL these NOM-say this make REL some bone-speech
 Using these words, make a few sentences.

- indirect objects of otherwise intransitive verbs: *jana* ‘trade’; *xwiri* ‘sell’; *ɕōbō* ‘fool with’.

ε xwiri ŋē /aa nō
 3SG sell REL a fish
 He sells a fish.

In this use, *ŋē* may be placed within the verb phrase or immediately before the object:

aŋāā jana ŋē na mwe = aŋāā jana na ŋē mwe
 mummy trade REL PAST taro
 Mummy trades her taros.

⁷The range of functions of the relational morpheme *ŋē* is partly comparable to that of the Tongan relational morpheme/postverb/suffix *ʻaki* which, according to Churchward (1953), may derive from an earlier verb meaning ‘to use, to wield’. The transitivity suffix *ʻaki* can be separated from intransitive verbs by a postverb; after transitive verbs, *ʻaki* is an instrumental marker and can be freely placed. See also the various functions of the Paamese case marker *eni*, which has the clitic form *-ni* (Crowley 1983).

When the object is topicalised, the relational morpheme no longer precedes it, but remains in postverbal position; the object is copied by a pronoun after the relational morpheme:

mĩĩ nō a, deeri nĩ xwiri ŋē re ri
 these fish this people DUR sell REL DUR 3PL
 These fish, people sell them.

– subjects topicalised by postposition: there is thus a confusion in Xârâcùù between the instrumental/object marker and the postposed subject marker, although these functions are usually distinguished in neighbouring languages,⁸ where a lexical subject is generally postposed to the verb. In this use, *ŋē* is inseparable from the postposed subject it introduces and is preceded by a slight pause, while the intonation becomes markedly falling.

a kāmūrū a wā toa
 this man this ING arrive
 This man has arrived.
ε wā toa ŋē a kāmūrū a
 3SG ING arrive S.MKR this man this
 He has arrived, this man.

The postposed subject may be an independent pronoun:⁹

nā wā da mōō ŋē gu
 1SG ING eat already S.MKR me
 I have already eaten, myself.

6.2 THE RELATIONAL MORPHEME *wā*

Of all the relational morphemes discussed thus far, this one is the most exterior to the verb phrase. It can thus never be separated from the object it introduces. Nevertheless, its close links with the case frame requires that it be dealt with here.

– for some verbs, it introduces the sole argument (usually unmarked): this argument is, as it were ‘peripheralised’, but nevertheless remains in the position usually assigned to the subject. The verbs taking an argument introduced by *wā* express an entirely passive physical state over which the participant has no control:

taiki çaa
 The dog is ill-tempered.
wā taiki çaa
 REL dog bad
 The dog does not feel well.

The verb *mara* ‘be dizzy, be afraid’ takes a single argument, introduced by *wā*:

⁸Confusion of the two functions is, however, fairly frequent: compare Drehu (Lifou, Loyalty Islands) *hne-*, which marks both the instrumental and the ‘subject’ (agentive) in past constructions.

⁹But the object/possessive form of the pronoun is always used after *ŋē* when it marks an object.

wā pa xūūfī mara
REL COLL child be dizzy
The children are dizzy.

– for other verbs, *wā* introduces the obligatory object but, unlike other relational morphemes, can never be separated from it:

nā kwāke wā rō
1SG take care of REL 2SG
I take care of you.

deeri vire na wā ru (**deeri vire wā na ru*)
people wrong PAST REL 3DU
The people wronged them.

– finally, *wā* may introduce locative or temporal verb modifiers:

wita nō wā kāmīā
PROHIB stay REL sun
One should not stay out in the sun.

7. VERB COMPOUNDING

Unlike the process of creative relational morphemes, verb compounding in Xârâcùù is centripetal, with verb serialisation giving rise to more or less invariant compounds. There are different degrees of compounding ranging from a construction very close to serialisation to a status close to derivation.

The compound verbs discussed below are all transitive. The first component may be intransitive, in which case the second confers a transitive valency on the whole.

Whatever its original syllable structure, the first component is shortened to CV form. The second is never shortened, but its initial consonant is prenasalised by progressive assimilation whenever the first component has a nasal vowel.

7.1 SEMISERIALISATION OR WEAK COMPOUNDING

The compounding process may be weak, insofar as both components may be able to appear separately (in its full, unshortened form, in the case of the first component).

bʌ 'move' (*intrans.*); */ã* 'undo'
bʌ-/ã 'break off'

/ɛ- < /ɛɛ 'pull'
/ɛ-/ã 'unroll (a mat)'

kɔ- < kɔu 'scratch'; *pɔru* 'peel'
kɔ-pɔru 'peel by scratching'

cu- < curu 'tie (a knot)'
cu-/ã 'untie (a knot)'

Cases of progressive assimilation are:

mĩ 'fold'; *-dia* < *tia* 'tear'
mĩ-dia 'tear when folding'

7.2 COMPOUNDING FROM A FREE OR SHORTENED FIRST COMPONENT AND A BOUND SECOND COMPONENT

The first component behaves as in 7.1 above, but the second (which is surely of verbal origin) is bound and appears only in compounds. These bound components give rise to a large number of transitive verbs.¹⁰

bʌ 'move' (*intrans.*); *-wi* 'free'
bʌ-wi 'move about to get free'
kɛ- < *kɛɛ* 'wind' (*intrans.*); *-mwẽẽ* 'close'
kɛ-mwẽẽ 'cover (said of vines)'
mĩ- < *mĩã* 'urinate' (*intrans.*); *-wi* 'free'
mĩ-wi 'expel in urine'
gwe- < *gwere* 'throw'; *-kɔɔ* 'break into pieces'
gwe-kɔɔ 'break by throwing'

Progressive assimilation occurs in:

ʃʌ 'beat down (sun)' (*intrans.*); *-buru* < *-puru* 'break in two'
ʃʌ-buru 'burn something to break it in two'

7.3 COMPOUNDING FROM A BOUND FIRST COMPONENT AND A FREE OR BOUND SECOND COMPONENT

The first component refers to movements made with a part of the body or an instrument. The second is a free or bound transitive verb, and undergoes progressive assimilation.

mɔ- 'with the foot'; *cĩĩ* 'jump'
mɔ-cĩĩ 'spatter with the foot'
kẽ- 'with the fingertips'; *-bɔru* < *pɔru* 'peel'
kẽ-bɔru 'scratch a root with the fingernail to identify it'
ʒɔ- 'circular movement of the hand'
-puru/-buru 'break in two'
ʒɔ-puru 'break in two by striking with a circular motion of the hand'

¹⁰The *-wi* suffix meaning 'free' thus transitivises the following verbs: *gɔɔ* 'feel nauseous'; *bʌ* 'move'; *pee* 'defecate'; *mĩã* 'urinate':

bʌ-wi 'get away from something by squirming'

bwe bʌ-wi kwɪfai rɛɛ

crab move-free bond POSS.REL.3SG

The crab squirms to break its bonds.

-puru 'break in two'; *-kɔɔ* 'break into pieces'; *-mwẽẽ* 'close', etc., behave in the same way.

kwā- 'press, pry with a sharp object'; *koro/-goro* 'break into pieces'

kwā-goro 'break with a sharp instrument'

Verb compounding in Xârâcùù is an extremely productive process. Few verbs are unaffected by it, and its flexibility allows an almost unlimited number of new associations to be created. Since all compound verbs are transitive, compounding is not just a means of lexical creation, but also a transitivity process controlled by the second component.

8. CONCLUSION

The strength of the bond between the verb phrase and relational morphemes introducing object arguments is variable. The suffix *-ri*, which is inseparable from the verb, and the relational morpheme *wā*, which is inseparable from its object, represent the two extremes, while the remaining relational morphemes have a choice of being included in the verb phrase or preceding their object. In some cases, their verbal origin may explain a preference for inclusion in the verb phrase.

Such inclusion, whether or not it results in transitivity, is a familiar phenomenon in the Oceanic languages. Two hypotheses may be advanced: either these are former suffixes which are reinterpreted as relational morphemes, or on the contrary, relational morphemes have evolved into case markers suffixed to verbs. In Xârâcùù, the two hypotheses are not contradictory. Some relational morphemes clearly originate from verb series (*taa*, *xi*, *fadi*). At the same time, however, the opposite development can be observed with the inclusion of a preposition in the verb phrase when it introduces objects.

There is thus, on the one hand, a bound verb *taa* 'throw, take away', which tends to break off from the verb phrase and turn into a relational morpheme introducing objects (cf. 2.4.2) or even circumstantial modifiers (cf. footnote 4), and on the other, a relational morpheme *pē* with a variety of functions, which tends to become enclitic to the verb phrase when it introduces objects.

The case of the relational morpheme *tā* is less clear: is it a former relational morpheme which is becoming a verb enclitic or rather a former transitive suffix that is becoming a preposition? Comparison of Xârâcùù with the neighbouring languages, Tîrî and Ajië, suggests that the ability to move former transitive suffixes and the creation of an autonomous relational morpheme + object construction outside the verb phrase are innovations in Xârâcùù.

According to Osumi,¹¹ there are several verb suffixes in Tîrî, which are inseparable from both transitive and intransitive verbs. They have a transitivity effect on intransitive verbs. Semantically speaking, Tîrî verb suffixes correspond more or less to Xârâcùù relational morphemes:

vai (dative) 'to, for' corresponds to either *ce* or *tara* in Xârâcùù

bērē 'at, to' corresponds to *xi* or *wā* in Xârâcùù

raa 'off' and *koa* 'apart, away', correspond to *taa* in Xârâcùù.

Tîrî, like Xârâcùù, has several small classes of verbs which are only compatible with one or two suffixes.

In Ajië,¹² there are relatively few relational morphemes or transitivity verb suffixes. The relational morpheme *ye* (goal) corresponds to Xârâcùù *xi* 'to (attributive)':

¹¹See Osumi (1990) and Grace (1976).

¹²See La Fontinelle (1976).

cere daa nãã yε wi' a' nevã ka ə
 3PL NEG give REL man this earth QUAL good
 They did not give good land to this man.

The relational morpheme *ki*, which marks the beneficiary, and the suffix *-i*, which is both a transitivity suffix and an instrumental marker, are part of the verb phrase and appear immediately after the verb. The *-i* suffix corresponds in Xârâcùù to either *-ri* or *taa*, and to *ɲɛ* in its instrumental function:

Ajië:

na viə-i-ə
 3SG refuse-SUF-3SG
 He rejects him, he has had enough of him.

thus corresponds to Xârâcùù:

ε fiə-ri ε
 3SG refuse-SUF 3SG

Ajië:

cere rhau bara-i wi' a'
 3PL all be afraid-SUF man this
 They are all afraid of this man.

go ɔɔ-i rhai
 1SG flee-SUF lizard
 I flee the lizard.

are rendered in Xârâcùù by:

ri xɛɛdi bata taa kāmūrū a
 3PL all be afraid REL man this
nã xuru taa lawa
 1SG flee REL lizard

Finally, the Ajië transitivity suffix *-ru* corresponds in Xârâcùù to either *tɛ* or the bound element *-wi* in compound verbs (cf. 7.2):

Ajië		Xârâcùù
<i>tãã</i>	'cry' (<i>intrans.</i>)	<i>tɛ</i>
<i>tãã-ru</i>	'cry over'	<i>tɛ-di</i>
<i>gɔ</i>	'vomit' (<i>intrans.</i>)	<i>gɔ</i>
<i>gɔ-ru</i>	'vomit (something) up'	<i>gɔ-wi</i>

These examples show how hard it can be to find morphosyntactic cognates, even among such closely related languages as Xârâcùù, Ajië and Tîrî. These languages have sets of object-introducing relational morphemes and transitivity suffixes which show many semantic and functional similarities, yet are diachronically unrelated, since each language has innovated from its own lexical stock.

Xârâcùù furthermore shows not only the two contrasting tendencies involved in verb serialisation (a centrifugal development creating relational morphemes which separate from the verb phrase, and a centripetal development resulting in the formation of compound verbs), but also another frequent phenomenon in the Oceanic languages, the development of directional verb markers from relational morphemes. While in Tîrî transitivity processes are localised within the verb phrase by inseparable verb suffixes, Xârâcùù seems to be characterised by a cross movement of verbs becoming relational morphemes and relational morphemes yielding verb enclitics.

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