

# XXII. Agarabi Narratives and Commentary

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The narratives presented here have been selected from material gathered in the Agarabi village of Punano in the Kainantu subdistrict of the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea.<sup>1</sup> The materials were recorded during the period from July, 1960, to November, 1965. The choice of subject matter was generally left to the informants and includes folklore, tribal history, customs, everyday events, and village 'news.'

The texts chosen for presentation here represent a cross section of the types given. Sections 2, 3, and 4 relate trips made by a young man to and from his work on an island plantation (two deal with the same trip to show the differences in the two versions of the same story). Sections 5 and 6 describe some of the changes in tribal life due to the coming of Europeans. Sections 7 and 8 relate local events; Section 9 is a related conversation between a woman and her mother. Sections 10 and 11 both deal with the effects of the very prevalent fear of sorcery. Section 12 relates a tribal custom, and Section 13 is a myth common in this part of New Guinea.

### 1.1. Orthography

/p/, /t/, /k/ represent voiceless stops initially and following consonants, and voiceless fricatives [p̥], [s], [x] between vowels.

/w/ initially and following consonants varies from a voiced bilabial stop [b] to either the labialized stop [b<sup>w</sup>] or the semivowel [w]. Between vowels it is either the semivowel or a voiced bilabial fricative [β].

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/y/ initially and following consonants varies from a voiced alveolar stop [d] to either the palatalised stop [dʲ] or the semivowel [y]. Between vowels it is the semivowel and may occur with or without friction.

/q/ represents a glottal stop; /r/ represents an alveolar flap; /m, n/ are bilabial and alveolar nasals, respectively; /a/ represents [ɔ]; /aa/ represents [a.]; /e/ represents [ɛ.]; /i/ represents [i]; /o/ represents [o.]; /u/ represents [u].

Periods are used where a sentence terminal is marked by final markers on the verb or where there is repetition of the verb which indicates a dependent sentence. Commas set off parenthetical expressions and afterthoughts as well as series of nouns or clauses.

## 1.2. *Commentary on Syntax*

In general the grammar description arising out of these texts is centered on the relationships between dependent and independent constructions and on the affixation of nouns and verbs. The following abbreviations will be used in examples which are taken, as much as possible, from the texts to follow.

con = continuative aspect

de = desiderative

dir = directional

ds = subject of dependent verb

emp = emphatic mood

fm = final marker

fu = future tense

ge = gerundive

imp = imperative

int = interrogative

na = narrative aspect

nt = neutral tense

pt = past tense

pf = perfect tense

pr = personal referent

pvs = preview subject marker (indicates subject of succeeding verb)

vbl = verbaliser

1p, 2p, 3p = 1st, 2nd, 3rd person subject suffix

1f, 2f, 3f = 1st, 2nd, 3rd person final suffix

Texts will be referred to by Arabic numerals indicating the section number, with the number of the sentence or major clause in parentheses.

In this section clause structure will be mentioned briefly. Sentences will be dealt with in more detail under two headings: simple sentences and multiclausal sentences.

1.2.1. *Clause structure.* In their minimal form Agarabi clauses consist of an obligatory predicate tagmeme; they may be expanded by the occurrence of several optional tagmemes. They divide into two major classes, independent and dependent. Independent clauses are potentially complete sentences; dependent clauses normally occur as part of a larger unit. The major clause types and some of the subtypes will be illustrated in the section on sentences.

There are several optional items which can occur with the predicate in a clause. The normal order, if all occurred, would be: time, location, subject, indirect object/instrument,<sup>2</sup> object/reason/purpose, directional,<sup>3</sup> and predicate. To date there are no examples in which all of these occur. Examples of one to four, always including the predicate, have been noted. There is some freedom of position; for example, the location may follow the subject. Some items have a relatively fixed position, such as the predicate which closes the construction except when there is an afterthought or an item especially emphasized.

1.2.2. *Sentence structure.* Agarabi sentences may also be divided into two classes as independent or dependent. Independent sentences consist of one or more clauses occurring as complete utterances. Dependent sentences may consist of dependent clauses or nonclause constructions as in some responses or exclamations.

1.2.2.1. *Simple sentences.* Simple sentences are those which consist of one clause or short nonclause utterance. Such an utterance may consist of a single word or may be expanded. The following examples illustrate sentences composed of imperative, interrogative, response, and conclusion clause subtypes. The one nonclause sentence which occurs in these texts is illustrated under 'Responses.'

A. *Indicative*

Minimal: *ór-e-m-íq* (go-nt-3p-3f) 'He went.'

Expanded: *aapeiq-pâq anaati paqk-e-m-íq* (Afei-at woman hold-nt-3p-3f) 'They caught a woman at Afeipa' 8(1).

B. *Imperative*

Minimal: *óro* 'Go.'

Expanded: *kauqte anam-pín káao* (lime holder-in put) 'Put it in the lime-holder.'

C. *Interrogative*

Minimal: *waa-p-o* (stay-int-2f) 'Are you there?'

Expanded: *áá úwít-iyaa-p-o* (road spread-con-int-2f) 'Are you working on the road?'

D. *Response*

<sup>2</sup> The slash here indicates that these clause level slots are mutually exclusive.

<sup>3</sup> The directional often occurs as a part of the predicate.

a. *Clause type*

Minimal: *waa-q-u* (stay-lp-lf) 'I am here.'

Expanded: *áá úwít-iyaa-q-ú* (road spread-con-lp-lf) 'I am working on the road.'

b. *Nonclause type*

*éeyo* 'Yes.'

E. *Conclusion*

Minimal: *ínka-íq<sup>4</sup>* (finish-vbl) 'That is all' 5(9).

Expanded: *mái áarintá anaati anaatiq-ma i-n aaná-íq* (this girl woman woman-when be-3p story-vbl) 'This is the story of girls and women when they marry' 10(21).

1.2.2.2. *Multiclausal sentences.* Multiclausal sentences are much more common in narratives than are simple sentences. The most common are composed of one or more dependent clauses followed by an independent clause: *puqkaa-pín kááúq y-e-n war-e-n mó am-iyaa-m-íq* (cigarette-in put do-nt-3p take-nt-3p there give-con-3p-3f) 'Having put it in a cigarette he takes it and gives it to her' 12(5).

It is possible to have only one independent clause in an entire text. For example, Section 2, the short text on the trip to the island, has but one, the last.

A number of minimal clauses (i.e., single verbs) with varying affixes may succeed each other without any intervening words: . . . *karuqya-re-n purí-ka-n awir-e-n éqy-e-ín múq y-a-n* (throw-out-na-nt-3pvs die-pt. 3ds-3pvs pr-take along-nt-3pvs come up-nt-ge put do-3ds-3pvs) 'She spat it out and died. They took her and, coming, put her . . .' 7(2-3).

In some instances identical clauses are repeated, especially those whose predicates are filled by verbs in the continuative aspect. These indicate a longer duration of time than would be expressed by one. See 2(1): *ór-iyaa-q ór-iyaa-q* (go-con-1pvs go-con-1 pvs) 'I went and went. . .'

A less common multiverb sentence is the dependent sentence composed only of dependent clauses. Such a sentence anticipates the one which follows. The final clause of the dependent sentence and the initial clause of the succeeding one each occur with the same verb stem but each is affixed differently: *war-e-n mó a-míq-ke-n puqtí-ra-n puqtí-a-ma- . . .* (take-nt-3pvs there pr-give-pt-3pvs puff-na-3ds-3pvs puff-na-3ds-when) 'Having taken it and given it to her, he puffs on it. When she has puffed on it, then . . .' 12(6-7).

A sentence may also occur with included clauses. One quite common occurrence of this is the direct quote. The actual quoted words may form independent clauses which, however, are not sentences in the narrative, but

<sup>4</sup> This may be considered a type of equational which also occurs with the verb 'be' following: *ínka-íq e-m-íq* (finish-vbl be-nt-3p-3f) 'That is all.' The analysis of equational sentences is not yet complete.

the objects of the verb *te* 'say'. Thus we have a clause within a clause, with the possibility of more clauses following before the sentence is completed: (A) *áarintá wa-ram-úno t-e-m-íq* (girl stay-de-1f-emp say-nt-3p-3f) '“I want to remain single,” she said' 8(7). (B) *téqi márâq waá-nte-q-ú-no miqa tí-re-n wé a-paq . . . pon-íq ó e-m-íq* (I here-on stay-fu-1p-1f-emp thus say-na-nt-3pvs his pr-younger-brother pig-vbl dir be-nt-3p-3f) '“I will stay here,” thus he said and the younger brother . . . became a pig' 13(7).

This is, however, not always the case, as the following example illustrates: . . . *a-wiráq-ka-n; ti-pón k-a-q* (pr-take-along-pt-3ds-3pvs pr-body-part burn-3ds-1pvs) ' . . . and took her; “I don't want . . .” ' 8(3).

1.2.2.3. *Idioms*. There are several examples of idioms in these texts. The translation is not the literal equivalent of the Agarabi words, but of the underlying meaning. The last example of the previous section is one illustration: . . . *ti-pón k-a-q* . . . (pr-body-part burn-3ds-3pvs) ' . . . “I don't want (to do something)” . . . ' 8(3). *a-râq óri-kán* (pr-intestines go-pt-3ds-3 pvs) 'She had diarrhoea . . . ' 7(1). *íneine anáá e-n ór-iyaa-m-íq* (thought only was-3pvs go-con-3p-3f) 'They went on having thoughts only of . . . ' 5(2). The verb 'go' normally refers to motion, but following the verb 'be' in this case it indicates extensive or repeated action. *pára waá-re-n* . . . (just stay-na-nt-3pvs) 'She was well . . . ' 7(1).

The meaning of the foregoing must be derived from context. If it had followed the mention of sickness it would have indicated that the person was still sick. In other contexts the phrase frequently means that the person is just staying around doing nothing, as in Section 5(3).

Another commonly used idiom is illustrated in Section 8. Bampeya is reported to say: . . . *wáántá waráá-nte-q-ú-no* . . . (man get-fu-1p-1f-emp) '“ . . . I will get a (young) man” . . . ' 8(3). This saying is equivalent to 'I will get married.' It can be said in jest when there are no immediate plans for marriage or in earnest when it is definite. It is just a statement and does not refer to any particular ceremony.

When reference is made to the actual wedding day, it is called her 'skirt-putting-on-day'. The single girl's divided skirt is exchanged for a married woman's full skirt. The bridegroom is referred to as the "putting-on-man" or the 'putting-on-giving-man', though it is his relatives who actually tie the skirts on the bride and he need not be present.

There is also in this same story what might be termed a 'cultural idiom'. At the beginning we are told that the people of Afeipa took hold of a woman. Actually it is an unmarried girl that is so caught. Prior to this a suitable man has offered for her and her family has agreed to the match. This grabbing of the girl is a kind of public announcement of the impending marriage and she is measured for her skirts which will be made by some of the women. This takes place very close to the day planned for the marriage and usually means that there is now no time for the girl to refuse.

1.3. *Commentary on Morphology*

1.3.1. *Verbal affixes.* There are many verb constructions in these texts. Agarabi verbs not only express action, but, by means of suffixes they indicate the subject and something about the kind and/or time of the action. In addition all verb stems may be affixed to function as either independent or dependent verbs. These functions are determined by distinctive sets of subject suffixes that occur with them and by the possible presence of relational suffixes on dependent forms.

Independent verbs occur as predicate fillers in independent clauses. Dependent verbs occur in the predicates of dependent clauses.

The aspect suffixes illustrated in these texts are *-iyaa* continuative and *-ra* narrative. The tense suffixes are *-e* neutral which replaces the vowel of the preceding morpheme; *-nte* simple future; *-ke* simple past (which alters to *-ka* in dependent forms which have a different subject from the following clause); and *-kaa* perfect. The mood suffixes are *-ram* desiderative; *-nowan* immediate desiderative;  $\{-p\}$ <sup>5</sup> interrogative; *-no* emphatic; and *-po* assertive. Indicative mood is unmarked; the simple imperative mood occurs as the minimal form of the verb.

A. *Continuative.* *ór-(iyaa)-q* 'I (was) going' 2(1) (the context supplies the tense).

B. *Narrative (plus neutral).* *waá-(re)-n* 'She stayed and' 7(1).

C. *Future.* *waraá-(nte)-q-ú-no* 'I will get!' 8(3).

D. *Past.* *n-iyáá-(ke)-n* 'They were eating' 5(3).

E. *Perfect.* *u-(káá)-m-íq* 'He became' 13(1).

F. *Desiderative.* *wa-(ram)-ú-no* 'I want to stay!' 8(7).

G. *Immediate desiderative.* *waraá-(nowan)* 'I want to get now' 8(3).

H. *Interrogative.* *inte-(p)-oó-no* '. . . will you go?' 13(5).

I. *Emphatic.* *ér-e-q-ú-(no)* 'I came!' 8(3).

J. *Assertive.* *ínte-m-i-(pó)* 'It is surely finished!' 4(2).

Independent verbs are always marked for person-subject and, occasionally, for number. The plural affix, however, does not occur at all in these texts—the context is expected to supply this information. Independent verbs occur with final markers following the person-subject suffixes: *ér-e-q-ú* (come-nt-I-fm) 'I came' 3(1). *e-ø-ó-no* (be-nt-you-fm-emp) 'You are!' 9(3). *t-e-m-íq* (say-nt-she-fm) '. . . she said' 9(7).

Dependent verbs are not marked for person-subject in the same way as independent verbs and do not occur with final markers. They always occur with a preview subject marker, the same set of suffixes that occur with independent verbs; but, in this case, they indicate the subject of the following

<sup>5</sup> The symbol  $\{ \}$  indicates that this suffix stands for all the forms of the suffix, which has several morphophonemic variants.

verb. If both the dependent and succeeding verb have the same subject only the preview subject is marked. However, when the subject of the first clause is different from that of the succeeding clause, there is some indication in the verb of the first clause to show both its subject and that of the following clause: *tí-ka-n wé a-noqé . . .* (say-pt-3ds-3pvs her pr-mother) 'She said (this) and her mother . . .' 7(2). *-ke*, past tense, becomes *-ka* to show that the third person subject of 'say' is a different person from the subject of the next verb. *waá-req e-kén . . . tiqpi* 'stay-na-nt be-nt-1ds-3pvs ship-a) 'I waited and . . . the ship . . .' 4(3). *-ké* is the first person subject marker of the first verb with a third person subject of the succeeding verb.

There are several different sets of suffixes to indicate the subject of the first verb. These vary according to the type of temporal or logical relationship between the clauses.

One set of affixes both indicates that the subjects of two verbs are different and also identifies the subject of the verbs, as follows. (This is the neutral tense of *te* 'say'.)

- 1p of dependent verb predicting 2p of next *t-e-ké-ø*
- 1p of dependent verb predicting 3p of next *t-e-ké-n*
- 2p of dependent verb predicting 1p of next *t-e-tí-q*
- 2p of dependent verb predicting 3p of next *t-e-tí-n*
- 3p of dependent verb predicting 1p of next *t-í-q*
- 3p of dependent verb predicting 2p of next *t-í-ø*
- 3p of dependent verb predicting other 3p of next *t-ín*

In the foregoing paradigm, the third person subject of the dependent verb is indicated by the change of vowel of neutral tense suffix, *-e* to *í*. In the same circumstances, past tense suffix *-ke* is changed to *-ka* as mentioned above.

1.3.2. *Nonverbal affixes.* Agarabi nouns, pronouns, and adjectives may occur unaffixed. When affixed, they may all occur with the same sets of affixes. Those that are illustrated by the accompanying texts include the locatives (of time and space); *-pín* 'in'; *|-táq* 'on'; *-naún* 'inside'; *-páq* 'place at'; and *|-kéq* 'from'. Others are likeness: *|-ten* 'like'; verbalizer: *iq* 'it is', and number: *-kanan* 'two'.

A. *Locatives*

in: *toru waraa-(pín)* 'in the salt water' 2(1). *téqtim-(pín)* 'in our time' 5(4).

on: *tááraréq-(táq)* 'on Saturday' 5(4). *mutóq-(káq)* 'on the island' 2(1).

inside: *maa-q-(naún)* 'inside the house' 6(4).

place-at: *aapeiq-(páq)* 'at Afeipa' 8(1).

from: *kóróqkaa-q-(kéq)* 'from Goroka' 4(8).

B. *Likeness.* *máqan-(ten)* 'like this' 6(5).

C. *Number. mai-(kánán)* 'these two' 6(3).

D. *Combinations. mínóq-(pím-páq-kéq)* 'from everywhere' 7(4). *mai-(páq-kéq)* 'from this place' 2(2).

1.3.3. *Affixes common to both verbs and nouns.* The only prefixes in Agarabi occur with both nouns and verbs. These are the personal referent prefixes: *ti-* first person singular or plural; and *a-*, nonfirst person singular or plural. The context must supply the distinctions for number and second or third persons. These prefixes occur obligatorily with some nouns and verbs and optionally with others.

When they occur with verbs they function as object, direct or indirect, depending on the meaning of the verb: (*a*)-*mí-ka-n* 'gave to her' 7(2). (*a*)-*wir-e-n* 'took her' 7(2). (*ti*)-*wir-e-n* 'took me' 3(1).

When the personal referents occur with nouns they indicate possession. They are obligatory to all body parts, kinship terms, and a few others such as sickness, fear, yawn, and shadow. They occur optionally with a few others (morphemes in parentheses are optional): (*ti*)-*naaqu* 'my/our grandfather' 6(1); (*a*)-*noqé* 'her mother' 7(2); (*a*)-*wiq* 'her name' 8(1); (*a*)-*rún* 'her diaphragm' 7(2); (used as an idiom which means 'to be sorry'); (*a*)-*maaq* 'his house' 7(3).

There is also one suffix which may occur with both nouns and verbs. This is the conditional: *-ma*, 'if/when', which occurs with dependent forms of the verb, with nouns in dependent clauses and with other classes of words as well. Verbal: *puqtí-ra-má e-n* (blow-na-when be-nt-3pvs) 'when she puffs on it . . .' 12(7). Nonverbal: *wé a-yopi-má wa-ín ano* (her pr-brothers-if stay-ge the) 'if her brothers are there . . .' 12(17); *námuró ano-má wákúq y-a-n* (enemy the-when pursue do-3ds-3pvs) 'when an enemy pursued them . . .' 6(3).



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