A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE VERBAL PIECE

IN EBIRA

(A Language of Kwara State ᴼᶠ Nigeria)

by

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims at presenting an adequate description of the verbal piece which forms the core of the grammar of Ebira language. Ebira is one of the lesser known languages of Nigeria in which little scholarly work has yet been done. Ebira is my mother tongue.

Chapter One gives the general introduction and describes the location (with sketch maps), the linguistic and cultural background of the language, and summarises the linguistic framework of the study.

Chapter Two gives a description of the phonology, including the vowel harmony system, essential to an understanding of the grammar of the language.

Chapter Three describes syntactic juncture features which include the vowel elision patterns and morpho-phonemic tone changes which affect the verbal piece.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six form the major part of the thesis and describe the verbal piece in its various structures, functions and its distribution in the phrase, the clause, and sentence including the serial verb constructions.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis with an analysed narrative text demonstrating, in typical connected speech, the various units described.

Appendix 1 is a chart of monosyllabic verbs in the language, Appendix 2 shows the list of monosyllabic verbs, and Appendix 3 presents some sample spectrograms showing words of contrastive vowel harmony sets.

There is a Bibliography at the end.

To

The Nigeria Bible Translation Trust

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Some technical help came from Mr. John Picton of the Africa Department of S.O.A.S., who shared with me many of his Ebira tape recordings and materials on Ebira Anthropology. I am very grateful to him.

I owe tremendous gratitude to many friends in Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America who supported me and my family during the period of this study programme.

I am deeply grateful to my dear wife, Martha, and my children, Gloria, John (Jr.), Ruth, and James for their patience, understanding, and support over a long period.

Thanks to Miss Jo Kent who typed the work so well.

S Y M B O L I S A T I O N

Except where indicated all examples are written pho-
nemically in Ebira practical orthography. The phonetic
manifestations of phoneme units are described in 2.2.1
and 2.5.1.

Symbols are used as in International Phonetic Alpha-
bet (IPA) with the following exceptions adapted for prac-
tical purposes:

Adapted Symbols	I P A
i̠	ɪ
u̠	ɷ
e̠	ɛ
o̠	ɔ
c	t∫
j	dʒ
y	j

Tone symbols are discussed in 2.6.1.

C O N T E N T S

Chapter Three   Syntactic Junctures

Appendices

C H A P T E R   O N E

INTRODUCTION

1.1   The Ebira People and the Ebira Language

The Ebira language is spoken by approximately
1,000,000 people.* The entire Ebira territory lies south
west of the confluence of the Niger and the Benue, the
two main rivers of Nigeria (see map on page 21), and
comprises what used to be called the Igbirra Division of
Kabba Province. The main dialect of Ebira is spoken in
the same land area but it is now referred to as the six
local government areas (LGAs)** of Adavi, Okehi, Ageva,
Ihima, Okene, and Ajaokuta out of the fourteen LGAs of
Kwara State. The six LGAs are shaded in the map on page
22. Other dialects of Ebira are spoken locally in the

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* The 1963 census lists a population of 500,000 for the
then Igbirra Division of Kabba Province. There has
not been any accurate national census since then.
But the population has since been doubled. The
estimate normally quoted in current publications for
Ebira people is between 800,500 and 1,000,000.

** The number of local government areas (LGAs) within
Ebira territory at the time of research for this the-
sis was six. But after a military coup took over the
government in January 1984, it was announced that the
number of local government areas in the country was
to be reduced. The Ebira LGAs were reduced to two –
Okene and Okehi, the two created by an earlier mili-
tary government before the civilian rule of 1979-
1983.

following towns, whose names are written in the map on page 22.

    a)   Koton-Karfe, a town in Kogi LGA of Kwara State

    b)   Toto and Umaisha, two towns in Lafia LGA of Plateau State

    c)   Igara, a town in Auchi LGA of Bendel State.

It is interesting to note that these towns are, in fact, linguistic islands where Ebira is spoken, surrounded by other languages in their immediate neighbourhoods.

This study is of the main dialect which is my mother tongue. I come from the town of Ovehira in Ageva LGA. The major towns of Ebira are shown in the map on page 23.

The degree of mutual intelligibility among the various dialects of Ebira has not been established, but I have difficulty in understanding speakers of other dialects.

In recent years a number of political changes have taken place and are still taking place in the country as a whole. In 1967 the country, which formerly consisted of four regions and a number of provinces was reconstituted into a twelve-state structure by the then Federal

Military Government headed by General Yakubu Gowon. In 1976 the total number of states of the Federation was brought up to nineteen, and in the same year another important political reform created Local Government Areas within each of those nineteen states. Thus the old Divisions within Provinces came to be replaced by local government areas and it was in the same way that the old Igbirra Division in Kabba Province, which was the home of the Ebira people, came to be divided into its six LGAs between 1976 and 1981. It is not yet clear what further structural changes may occur in the country with the new military government headed by General Muhammadu Buhari.

A map of Nigeria showing Ebira land and Nigeria's major languages.

HAUSA

R. Niger

R. Benue

YORUBA

IGBO

N
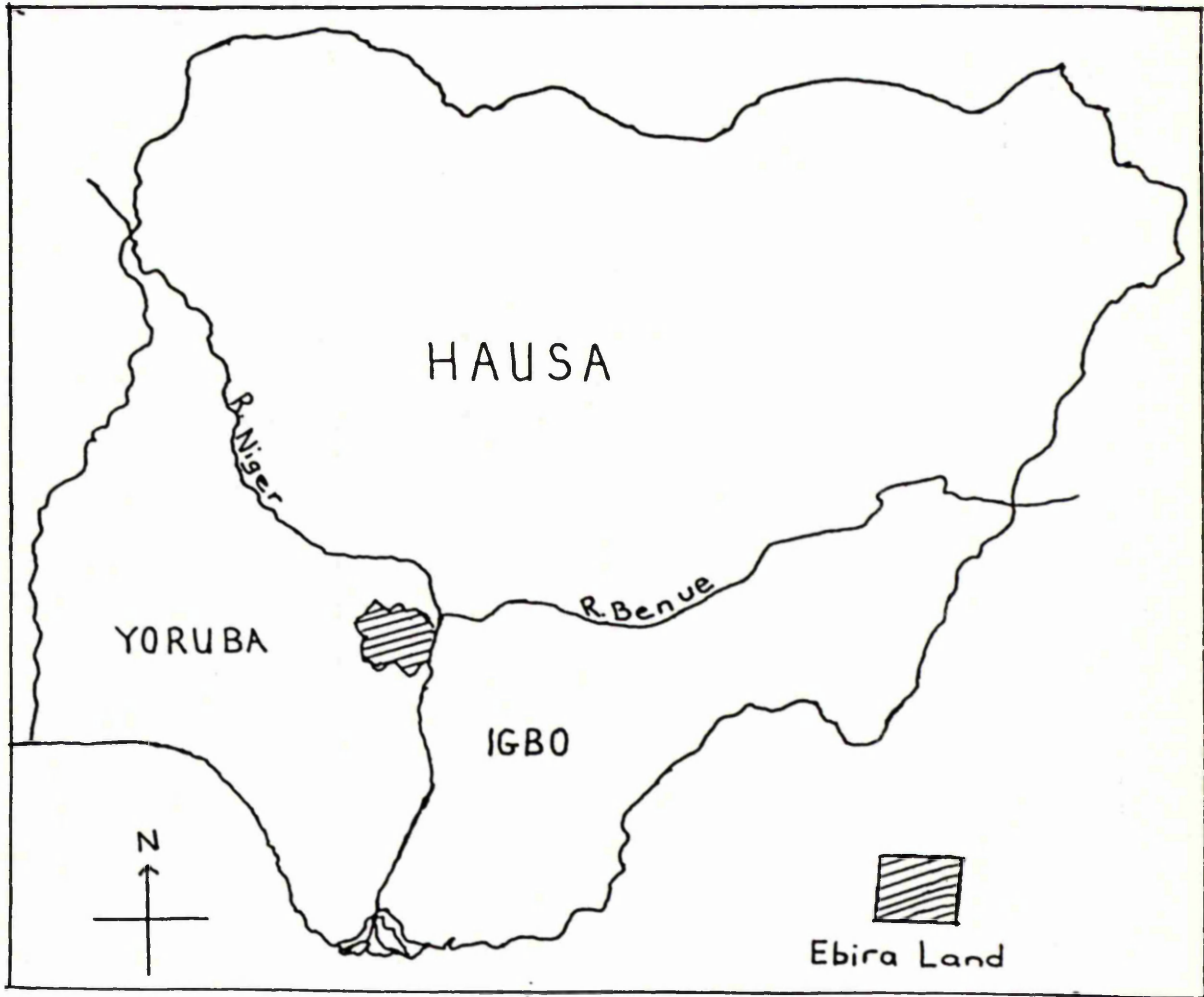
Ebira Land

Scale :   0   60   120 ML

Source : Studies in Nigerian Languages   No. 5

S. I. L., Ghana,   1976

A Map of KWARA State showing the six LGA's (shaded) of Ebira Land, the Neighbouring States (underlined), and other local dialect towns of Ebira language.

F.C.T = Federal Capital Territory

14 = Numbers of Local Government Areas in a State.

Scale: 0   20   40 ML
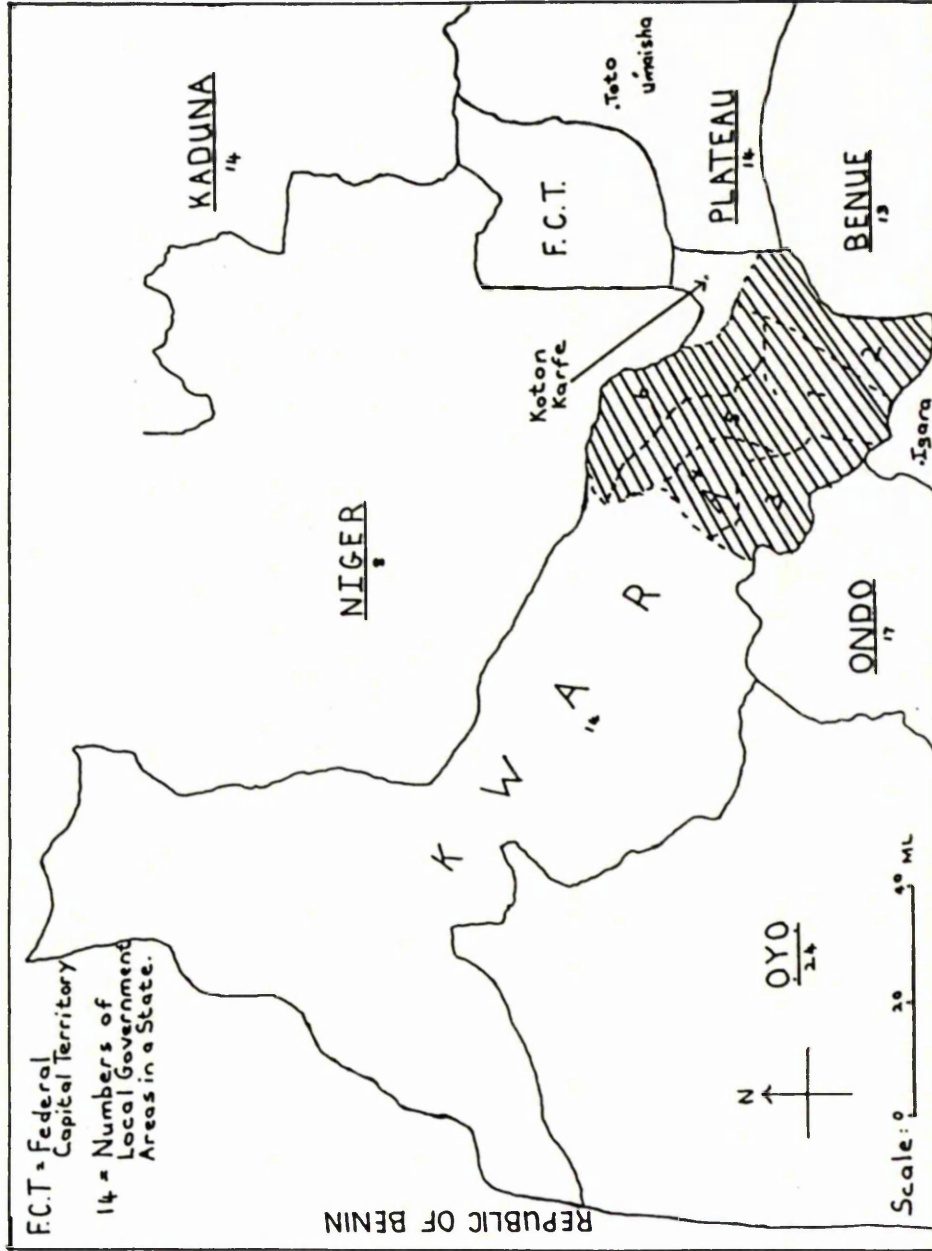
Source: Nigeria in Maps; Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1982.

A Map of Ebira Land showing the six LGA's,
the Main Towns and the Major Neighbouring Languages.
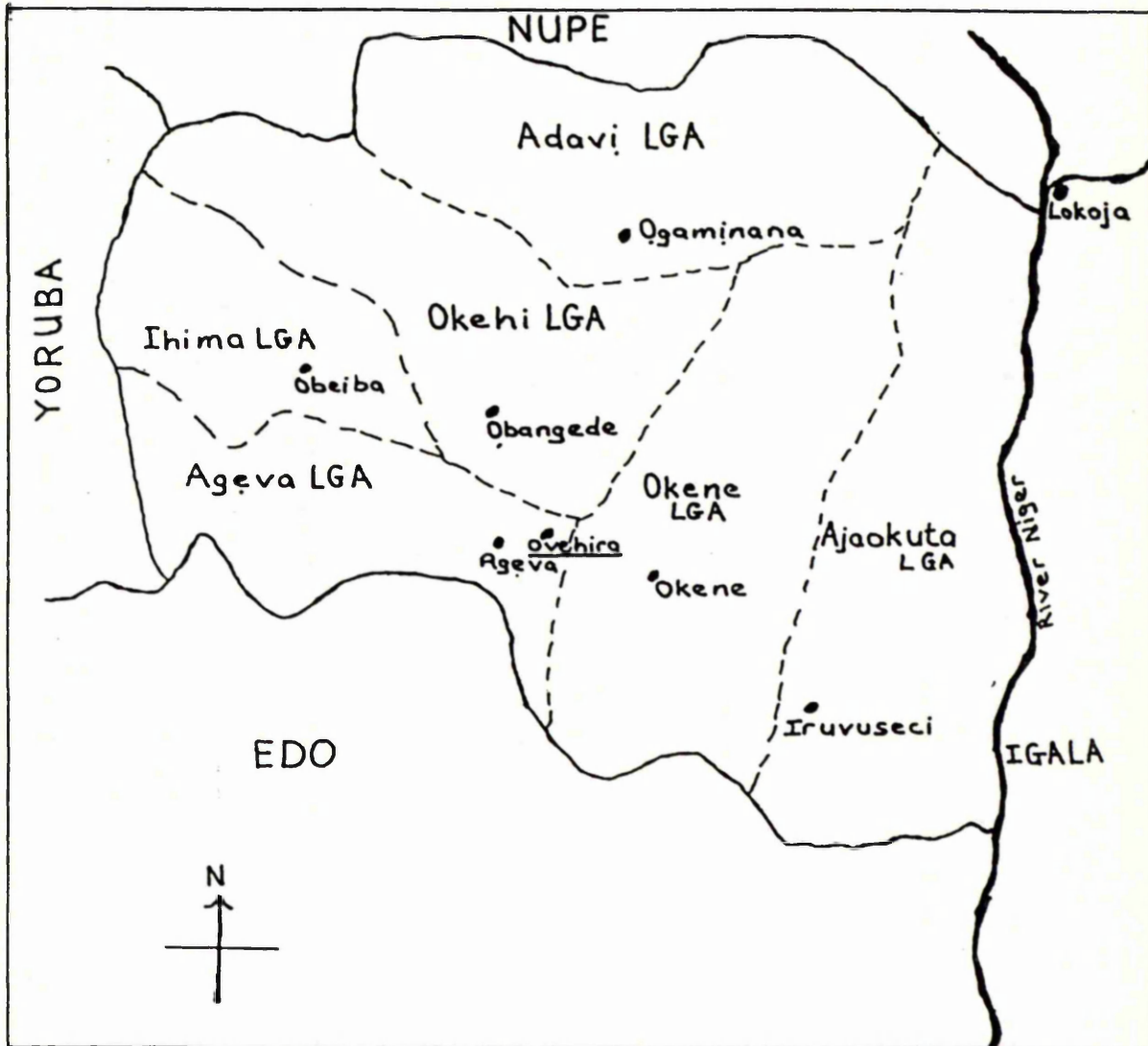
Scale: 0 _____ 10 _____ 20 ML

Source: Ageva LGA maps of Kwara State and Local Governments
Ageva, 1982.

Ovehira: My home town.

1.2   The Language Name: EBIRA

The name 'Igbirra' was used in the past to refer to the language and the people. This name was used in literature for a long time. This spelling for the language and the people came about largely due to historical developments and contact with Yoruba, a major dominant language neighbour to Ebira. However, the people themselves call their language EBIRA [ēbìrã], and refer to themselves as ANEBIRA [anébìrã], 'people of Ebira'. In 1974, a strong ethnic organisation known as Ebira People's Association (EPA) formally changed the language name from Igbirra to Ebira and published this change in the Nigerian daily newspapers. Writers in the language and about the language have gradually changed to the correct name, Ebira, for the language. Therefore, I am using the name Ebira for the language in this study for the simple reason that any proper synchronic linguistic study has to give an objective account of what the speakers of the language say about their language.

1.3   Neighbouring Languages

The main neighbouring languages of Ebira are Yoruba to the west, Igala to the east, Edo to the south, and Nupe to the north (see map on page 23). Among these, Yoruba seems to have had more influence than others on

Ebira in various ways. For example, western education
and missionary activities spread from Yoruba land to
Ebira land. The first schools in Ebira land were
established by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and
the Roman Catholic Mission. Most teachers in these
schools in the early days were Yorubas and Yoruba was the
medium of instruction in the schools for the first three
years. This is one reason why a number of educated Ebira
people are bilingual. It was only in the third or fourth
year of primary instruction that English was introduced
as the medium of instruction. I myself went through this
system in my early days of formal education.

Another example of Yoruba influence on Ebira is in
the area of agriculture. Ebira land has a very small
area compared to the population of the tribe. The land
itself is very hilly and mountainous. In fact, it is
among the hills of the area that large quantities of iron
were discovered in the late sixties, leading to the
establishment of the Ajaokuta Steel Industry by the
Federal Government in the seventies. But the Ebira
people as a whole are farmers by occupation. Since their
native land is too small to meet their requirements,
especially as the whole area is so rocky, a large number
of the population are forced to look for arable land
elsewhere. Most of them spread to Yoruba land to acquire
land for farming. Through this contact they naturally

acquire *the* Yoruba language.   Therefore there are some
bilingual Ebiras among the uneducated folk as well.

     One interesting cultural factor among the Ebiras is
that they keep constant touch with their homeland
wherever they may be.   The farmer maintains two homes, so
to speak.   One is his home in Ebira native land where he
keeps his family.   His other home is a temporary one
(usually huts) in an alien land where he does his farm-
ing.   The educated folk who may have employment outside
the home land come to their homes and families as fre-
quently as possible.   Much of their property is usually
kept in their Ebira homes, not where they are employed.
The people have much attachment to their homeland.   And
this is a major factor in keeping the language alive and
dynamic for its speakers.

1.4   Language Family Affiliation

     Ebira belongs to the KWA group of the Niger-Congo
family according to the classification of African lang-
uages by Greenberg (1963, 1970).   He lists Nupe, Gbari,
Igbirra, and Gade as subgoup (d) under Kwa.   (Note that
these are not necessarily the immediate geographical
neighbours of Ebira.   See map on page 23 and the preced-
ing section, 1.3).   In a later regrouping of Nigerian
languages, Hoffmann (1976) and Bendor-Samuel et al.

(1976) separate Ebira from Nupe, Gbari, and Gade and set
up Ebira as a sub-sub group on its own. This group would
comprise the main dialect of Ebira spoken in the six LGAs
mentioned in 1.1 and only one of the local dialects, the
Igara, out of the three mentioned in 1.1. But both Hoff-
mann and Bendor-Samuel still classify Ebira as belonging
to the Kwa sub group of the Niger-Congo family.

Many languages of the West African coast belong to
the Kwa group which in fact spreads well beyond the
borders of Nigeria. Some of the important members of
this family, like the Akan languages of Ghana; Ewe,
spoken in parts of Ghana, Togo, and Benin; Yoruba in
South-West Nigeria; and Igbo in the Eastern part of
Nigeria, have received much attention in linguistic
studies.

1.5   Literature Survey

It is only in recent years that a little attention
has been given to lesser known Nigerian languages like
Ebira. The earlier records and mention of these 'minor-
ity' languages were made by missionaries and British
administrative officers. Some of those who mentioned
Ebira in their records and works include the following:

Clarke (1848) was a Baptist missionary who published
a collection of vocabularies of African languages. He

includes two varieties of Igbirra vocabulary in his collection. This is the earliest record of Igbirra dialects.

Koelle (1854) mentions three varieties of Igbirra, Opanda, Igu, and Ebira-Hima, in his book. He lists about 200 vocabulary items and about 40 phrases for each.

Cust (1883) records two dialects of Igbirra, Panda and Hima, in his work.

Johnson and Christaller (1886) published a collection of vocabularies of the Niger and the Gold Coast languages. It is said that Johnson translated the Psalms and the Catechism into the Igbirra language.

Thomas (1914) mentions Igara as a dialect of Igbirra in his book. He includes a word-list of 31 items of Igbirra.

Westermann and Bryan (1952) include Igbirra as one of the three dialect clusters of the Nupe group in their book. They list four dialects for Igbirra which are: Igbirra-Panda, Igbirra-Ihima, Igbirra-Egu, and Igara.

Brown (1958) in his record repeats the four Igbirra dialects listed by Westermann and Bryan. He only adds a

note that all the dialects of Igbirra are mutually intelligible.

It can be observed from the above that references to Igbirra in the works listed are very general and extremely limited linguistic remarks.

The literature about the Ebira language from the sixties onwards differs markedly from the earlier contributions. It was from the sixties that specific linguistic articles on the language began to surface, starting from Greenberg (1963), who surveyed languages of Africa and classified them from massive word lists. His classification of Ebira under Kwa is generally accepted as standard.

The first technical linguistic paper on the phonology of Ebira, by Ladefoged (1964), was 'Igbirra Notes and Word List'. Professor Ladefoged introduces the vowel harmonic system of the language in this paper. (See comment in 2.3 footnote.)

The next main linguistic investigation into the language is by Scholz (1976) of Summer Institute of Linguistics. Mr Scholz stayed in Ebira land from 1973 to 1976. He developed a practical Orthography for the language and published some literacy and religious pamphlets. He also supervised the translation of the

Ebira New Testament. His main linguistic publication is 'Igbirra Phonology' published in the microfiche series of SIL. There are a number of inaccuracies and semantic misrepresentations in the microfiche publication. My critique of the phonology is forthcoming.

All the above works are listed in the Bibliography at the end. The contributions of these people to the development of Ebira language is much appreciated. I draw much from their works, especally the later ones.

1.6   The Present Study

As can be observed, so far an accurate linguistic description and analysis of the Ebira language does not exist. There has been a growing desire and interest among Ebira people to develop their language to preserve their culture and identity. The Federal Government of Nigeria formulated language policies in 1977 which encouraged the development of indigenous languages for education and social purposes. Linguists and scholars in language-related disciplines are searching for sound descriptions of less known languages on which further researches and works could be based. These are some of the challenges and demands on the so called minority languages.

My aim is to present an adequate description of the
verbal piece in Ebira. The verbal piece is selected for
this study because it is the most phonologically, mor-
phologically, and grammatically complex unit in Ebira,
and therefore offers the widest scope for the descriptive
analysis of the language. The term, verbal piece, is
used to refer to the verb word, the verbal phrase, the
verbal clause, and the verbal group of various types.
These pieces are units for which the grammatical cate-
gories of mood, tense, polarity, person and number can be
stated. Other pieces, like nominal forms for which these
categories do not apply, are only described to the extent
that may be necessary for explanation of a particular
verbal piece. The greatest part of this thesis, chapters
4 to 6, describes various units of the verbal piece.

Ebira is a 'verb centred' language. An accurate
description of the verbal system covers the core of the
grammar of the language. As Professor Palmer remarks,

> The most difficult part of any language is usually
> the part that deals with the verb. Learning a
> language is to a very large degree learning how to
> operate the verbal forms of that language, and, ex-
> cept in the cases of those that are related histori-
> cally, the patterns and structure of the verb in
> each language seem to differ very[1] considerably from
> those in every other language.

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1. Palmer, F. R. 1965. A Linguistic Study of the
   English Verb. Longmans: p. 1.

My description of the Ebira verbal piece is based on my
personal knowledge of the language, tape recordings of
plays, folk narratives, and conversations of other native
speakers of Ebira. The form of Ebira described is the
spoken form. In fact, there are very few written texts
in the language as yet.

1.7 The Theoretical Basis of the Study

I have not based my description on a particular rigid
theoretical framework. In a general survey and descrip-
tion of a language for the first time, it would be dan-
gerous to impose a particular theory on it.

However, I find the prosodic framework developed by
Professor J. R. Firth (1948) and others most convenient
to describe the phonology of Ebira, Ebira being a
language having a vowel harmony system where phonetic
details of the speech stream operate beyond individual
elements of a word or a phrase. Further still, some
important syntagmatic relations and functions which are
operative in Ebira speech are economically and simply
described in terms of prosodies and prosodic elements of
structure. See 2.3.2.1 and 5.10.

I also find the syntagmatic approach, used by Dr
Bendor-Samuel (1961) in describing the Jebero verbal
piece, useful in establishing the grammatical hierarchy

for levels of units in the Ebira verbal piece. See 4.1.

In describing in detail elements of the grammatical categories of the hierarchy I find Professor Carnochan's (1970) structure in 'Categories of the Verbal Piece in Bachama' extremely useful.

I believe that one needs to be eclectic in approach to a new language in general description. Otherwise we run the risk of subjecting the language to a certain set theories which may not explain some basic phenomena that make the language what it is. I like to stress that the aim is neither to vindicate nor to invalidate the above theoretical models. I only employ them as fully as possible to explain a vital grammatical aspect of Ebira phenomena, the Verbal Piece.

CHAPTER TWO

PHONOLOGY

2.1   The Syllable Structure

The smallest units of structure in the phonology of Ebira are Consonants (C), Vowels (V) and Tones (T).   The structure of the Syllable (S) can be described in terms of these three elements.

Every syllable has a vowel or a syllabic nasal as its nucleus.   In CV syllables the C is a marginal element.

Tone is a distinctive identificational feature of the syllable.   Every syllable bears tone which is evinced by the pitch of the voiced parts, regularly carried by the vowel or the syllabic nasal.

Thus the nucleus of the syllable always carries one of the three level tones or one of the two kinetic tones of the language.

Tones on the syllables are marked as follows:

High tone   / ˉ /

Mid tone   unmarked

Low tone   / �˜ /

High-Falling tone   / ˆ /

Low-Rising tone   / ˇ /

Tone is described in detail in 2.6.

Ebira has three syllable types. The three syllable
types consist of V plus tone, N plus tone, and CV plus
tone. These are described as follows:

2.1.1   Syllable Type 1

Syllable Type 1 has this general formula:

$$S_1 \longrightarrow T(V)$$

Tone is looked on here as being a prosodic element of the
syllable as a whole, and the structure is therefore re-
written as T(V). Syllable Type 1 consists of a Vowel as
nucleus plus tone. In the following examples, the V
syllables are underlined:

ô / ộ*	v̂	a vowel syllable preverb denoting person and number, as in the first two examples below, meaning 'he, she or it'.
ô rế	v̂ cv́	'he saw'
ộ mẽ̩	v̂ cv̀	'he did'
̀ozẽ	v̀cv̀	'a road'
ọyị̀	vcv	'sun'
eehí	vvcv́	'home'

---

* Ebira is a diatic language where a noun and a pronoun
  preverb both refer to the same subject.

irehị́	vcvcv́	'house'
ðõhu	v̀v̀cv	'twenty'
ǫnę́ę̂	vcvv́	'woman'
odã́a	vcv́v	'law'
ãtã́ã́hū̀	v̀cv̀v́cv̀	'ankle'
etéẽsū	vcv́v̀cv̀	'floor'
evị́nã̀	vcv́cv̀	'water yam'
orị́hị̀	vcv́cv̀	'a teenager girl'

As illustrated above, the V syllables may occur initially or medially or finally in the phonological word. In grammatically complex words, up to 3 V syllables may occur in succession word initially, and up to 2 may occur in succession word medially or finally. For example:

ã́ãvę́, ǫ̀ hị̃ ị̃kę̀kę́	'if he is coming, he should buy a bicycle'
ãpã́ã́pã̄	'maize, corn'
ũsũ̄ũ̃	'anklet (very special ornament)'

More examples of geminate vowel sequences are described in 2.2.2.

2.1.2   Syllable Type 2

General formula:

$$S_2 \longrightarrow T\,(N)$$

Syllable Type 2 is similar to Syllable Type 1 in that it has a single segmental element, but it is a syllabic nasal, and not a vowel, that carries the tone and is the nucleus. All Type 2 syllables are followed in the same word by a CV syllable. They do not occur word finally and therefore none of the syllabic nasals ever carry either of the two kinetic tones of the language since kinetic tones only occur on word-final syllables. The articulation of the syllabic nasal is homorganic with the consonant that immediately follows it.

ǹdá	ǸCV́	'father'	(alveolar)
ɲ̀ɲá	ǸCV́	'mother'	(palatal)
ãm̀pɔ̀	V̄Ǹ̀CV̀	'a bag'	(bilabial)
īhí̀ǹnà	V̄CV́Ǹ̀CV̀	'nine'	(alveolar)
ójíŋ̀gà	V́CV́Ǹ̀CV̀	'a digger'	(velar)
caŋgadaa	CVNCVCVV	'very wide and flat'	(velar)

2.1.3   Syllable Type 3

General formula:

$$S_3 \longrightarrow T(CV)$$

Syllable Type 3 consists of margin C plus nucleus V plus Tone. For example:

hị	cv́	'to call'
sị̄	cv̀	'to look for'
ne	CV	'to throw'
hẹ̄rẹ́	cv̀cv̄	'to vomit'
kūrū	cv̀cv̄	'to tie a knot'
sáàsá	cv̂v̂cv̄	'to follow'
pőőrő	cv́v́cv́	'always, for a long time'

Monosyllabic verbs and the first syllable of poly-syllabic verbs are all of structure CV.

Ebira is an open syllable language having no syllables with final -C. Syllables Types 1, 2 and 3 are combined in organised structures to form words and other grammatical constructions. Most words in the language consist of one to four syllables, only a few consist of more than four.

2.1.4   Summary of one to four Syllable Structures

The syllable structures listed overleaf give a summary of the structure of words of one to four syllables in the language.

Monosyllables	V	N-	CV
Disyllables	VV	VCV	NCV
	CVV	CVCV	
Trisyllables	VVV	VVCV	VNCV
	VCVV	VCVCV	CVVCV
	CVCVCV	CVNCV	
Quatrosyllables	VVCVCV	VNCVCV	VCVVCV
	VCVNCV	VCVCVCV	VCVCVV
	CVCVCVV	CVCVCVCV	

2.1.5   Labialisation as a Feature in the Syllable

Labialisation as a phonemic feature of the consonant within the syllable occurs with the fricative consonants and two velar consonants in just the words cited as examples in this section. Labialisation as a phonemic feature signals meaning contrasts with pure consonant phonemes in content words such as nouns and verbs. Contrasting pairs are given in cases where they are found to illustrate the contrast between syllables with a labial feature and syllables without one. Labialisation is symbolised with w following a consonant.

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/v/	contrast:			
	--	vwọ̀	$C^w\grave{V}$	'to cook flour meal'
	--	vọ	CV	'to cut animal meat into big pieces'

/s/	contrast:			
	--	swẹ́	$C^w\acute{V}$	'to take iron blade from hoe handle'
	--	sẹ́	$C\acute{V}$	'to chop off grass'
	--	óswe	$\acute{V}C^wV$	'water spring near a hill'
	--	òsé	$\grave{V}C\acute{V}$	'wife'
		swe	C^wV	'to start weaving a basket or mat; to initiate an idea/ proposal'
		swé	$C^w\acute{V}$	'to cough'
	--	ọswẹ́	$VC^w\acute{V}$	'ankle ornament'
	--	ọ̀sẹ̀	$\grave{V}C\grave{V}$	'alligator pepper'
		swá	$C^w\acute{V}$	'to be smooth, to be slippery'

/z/	contrast:			
	--	zwẽ̀	$C^w\grave{V}$	'to run'
	--	zé	$C\acute{V}$	'to be enough'
		zwọ́	$C^w\acute{V}$	'to be scarce'

/h/	contrast:			
	--	ẹ̀hwẹ	$\grave{V}C^wV$	'pieces of dried yam'
	--	ẹhẹ	VCV	'world, life'
		uhwẹ	VC^wV	'spirit, breath, life'
		uhwọ́	$VC^w\acute{V}$	'barn'
		ụhwọ̀	$\grave{V}C^w\grave{V}$	'knife'
		ụụ̣hwẹ	$\grave{V}\acute{V}C^wV$	'hen'
		ụhwọ́ọ	$\grave{V}C^w\acute{V}V$	'tomorrow'

/k/   -- kwọ̀ $C^W\grave{V}$ 'to grind'
    contrast: |
                   -- kọ́ $C\acute{V}$ 'to learn' (possibly
                                            a loan word from
                                            Yoruba or <u>vice
                                            versa</u>)

                   -- ụ̀kwọ̀ $\grave{V}C^W\grave{V}$ 'soap'
    contrast: |
                   -- ụ́kộ $\acute{V}C\hat{V}$ 'big, hollow stone
                                            place where raw
                                            palm oil is extrac-
                                            ted from boiled
                                            palm fruit'

              kwọ̀rọ̀ $C^W\grave{V}C\grave{V}$ 'to be thin, to iron
                                            clothes'

              kwákwaa $C^W\acute{V}C^WVV$ 'exclamation for hap-

                                            piness or surprise'.

              kwékwee $C^W\acute{V}C^WVV$ 'exclamation for
                                            sympathy'

/ŋ/   -- ŋwẹ C^WV 'to spin cotton
    contrast: | wool'
              -- ŋẹ̀ CV 'an abusive word for
                                            a child having a
                                            big head'

              -- ŋwã̀ $C^W\grave{V}$ 'to loosen or undo'
    contrast: |
              -- ŋa CV 'adverbial intensi-
                                            fier for shooting
                                            the arrow to hit
                                            the target straight
                                            and strongly

         aŋwẹ́ VC^WV 'oil'

         ã̀ŋwã̀ (hí) $\grave{V}C^W\grave{V}$ $(C\acute{V})$ 'fear'

         ọŋwẹ̀ VC^WV 'voice'

         ọ̀ŋwiŋwíí $\grave{V}C^WVC^W\grave{V}\acute{V}$ 'the sixth genera-
                                            tion of children in
                                            a family tree'

   Notice that in all these examples the labialisation
feature is always followed by a non-close vowel (a, e or
ẹ) except the last word which is a very rare vocabulary
item.

Labialisation is phonetically manifested by lip rounding with a little protruding of both lips.

An alternative analysis would be to set up six consonant phonemes, vw, sw, zw, hw, kw and ŋw, in addition to v, s, z, h, k and ŋ. For descriptive economy, however, labialisation is treated as a feature of the syllable.

Yet another suggestion would be to analyse the labialisation as a vowel. This analysis is rejected because:

a) the phonetic pronunciation is different from any other vowel element in the language.

For kọ̈ and vọ there is lip rounding, which can be related to the rounded back vowel, while in kwọ̈ and vwọ̈ there is additional closer lip rounding which cannot easily be related to the -ọ, nor can the rounding for the consonant articulation in the other examples be related at all to the following vowels, which are e, ẹ, and a, all unrounded non-close vowels.

b) The labialised syllables have only one tone each, and therefore cannot be considered to involve any vowel sequences.

2.1.6   Palatalisation as a Feature in the Syllable

Palatalisation as a feature within the syllable occurs only with the glottal fricative phoneme /h/ and is found in just a few nominal words of VCV or VCVCV syllable structure. That palatalised glottal fricative

may contrast with pure glottal fricative is exemplified
below. Palatalisation is symbolised with y following the
glottal fricative and y following the C in the syllable
structure.

/h/			
contrast:	-- i̱hyḙ̄	VC^{y}V̀	'teeth ridge, alveolar'
	-- ẹhẹ	VCV	'world, life'
contrast:	-- ḭhyḛ̄rḛ̄	V̀CVC^{y}V̀	'faeces'
	-- ō̱hḛ̄rḛ̄	V̀CV́CV	'male name'
contrast:	-- ḭhyā̱mā̱	V̀C^{y}V́CV́	'louse, lice'
	-- ō̱hā̱ma	V̀CV́CV	'an imitator'
	ḭhyō̱ō̱	V̀C^{y}V́v	'then, a few days ago'
	ī̱rī̱hyā̱	V̀CV̀^{y}CV̀	'hernia of the testicles'
	ḭhyḗnhyere	V́^{y}CV́N^{y}CVCV	'hedgehog'
	i̱hyḛ̄mḭhyḛmḛ̄	V^{y}CV́CV́^{y}CVCV̀	'sweet potato'

The seven words listed above are the only words found
within the corpus of this study which manifest this very
rare syllable feature.

The arguments for not setting up additional phonemes
for labialisation advanced in the preceding section hold
for palatalisation. Therefore hy is not set up as a
separate phoneme.

Labialisation and palatalisation occur across mor-
pheme or word boundaries under specific phonological
conditions. These are discussed in 3.2 and 3.3, with
regard to these features being prosodic elements of the
syllable.

2.2   The Vowel Phonemes

Ebira has <u>nine</u> vowel phonemes. They are described below.

2.2.1   Description

It is possible to cite many words for lexical evidence for each phoneme established. Such lists would make this section unnecessarily long. The intention is just to provide sufficient data necessary for background under-standing of further grammatical analysis of the verbal piece in the chapters that follow.

/i/   [i]   Close front vowel with lips spread. It has almost Cardinal 1 quality.

      hī̠   'to weave'

      iyá̠   'pounded yam'

/i̠/   [i̠]   A front vowel between close and half-close and with lips spread; it is slightly retracted.

      hi̠̠   'to call'

      i̠̠tã   'cloth'

/e/   [e]   Half-close front vowel with lips spread and rather more open than Cardinal 2.

      rɛ̠́   'to see'

      ezí̠   'children'

/ẹ/   [ẹ]   Half-open front vowel with lips neutral
             to spread, and rather more open than Car-
             dinal 3.

             bẹ̃   'to carve'

             ẹvṹ   'goat'

/a/   [a]   Open central vowel with lips spread

             pã   'to train'

             anọ   'salt'

/ọ/   [ọ]   Half-open to open back vowel with lips
             open rounded

             tọ̃   'to chew'

             ọcĩ   'stick'

/o/   [o]   Half-close back vowel with close rounded
             lips, and rather more open than Cardinal
             7.

             po   'to mix with liquid'

             ohi   'broom'

/ụ/   [ụ]   A back rounded vowel between close and
             half-close with lips close rounded. It is
             slightly advanced.

             hụ̃   'to boil'

             ụ̃pã   'skin, hide'

/u/   [u]   Close back vowel with lips close rounded.
             It has almost Cardinal 8 quality.

             hũ   'to drink'

             uné   'gazelle'

All these nine vowel phonemes occur word initially, word medially, and word finally in the language. Each one of the vowels can also occur in sequences of two vowels in a word or a sentence.

2.2.2 Geminate Vowel Sequences (Phonetically Long Vowels)

Phonetically long vowels occur in Ebira but they are treated as sequences of the same vowel, VV and VVV, phonologically and morphologically. I interpret double length vowels as sequences of two vowels for the reasons given in this section.

Two identical vowels can occur intially, medially or finally in a word in the language. They are not manifestation of a length feature as each of the identical vowels may bear a different tone; and since as mentioned in 2.1, tone is a distinctive feature of the syllable, a geminate vowel sequence spreads over two syllables. All possible two syllable tone combinations allowed by the language can occur on geminate vowels in all positions. For tone analysis, see 2.6.

There are no sequences of non-identical vowels within a word. The syllable of the second identical vowel in a word can be regarded as a schwa, ə-, syllable as the two vowels do not constitute separate alternances. Professor Carnochan, discussing a similar occurrence in Igbo, states:

> The vowel sound in the second syllable of each example is the same as in the final syllable; together they constitute one alternance .... In this syllable I recognize a syllabic: ə. This V-ə

phonological notation indicates the interdependence of the syllables and correlates with[2] hearing the same vowel sound in both syllables.

Professor Carnochan's Igbo examples have a CVCV syllable structure. In the Ebira examples the vowels are contiguous. However, the two languages manifest a structural ə-syllable prosody. See chapter 3 for full discussion of syntactic prosodies in Ebira.

2.2.2.1   Initial Geminate Vowel Sequences, V-ə

In the following examples double vowels are written for two vowel sequences in phonetic representation while ə-syllable is written for the second vowel in the syllable structure representation. A contrasting pair with a single vowel in the same position is given below each word except where one cannot be found:

ụ̄ụ̄hwẹ̄   VəCV   [__ ‾‾ —]   'hen'

ụhwẹ̄   VCV   [— ‾‾]   'moon'

āāhẹ̀   VəCV   [__ __ __]   'play, drama'

ahẹ̀   VCV   [— ‾‾]   'song'

---
2. Carnochan, J. 1960. "Vowel Harmony in Igbo" in Palmer, F. R. (ed.), 1970, Prosodic Analysis, Oxford University Press, 1970; p. 224.

ǫ́ǫhẹ	V́əCV	[⎺ ⎺ ⎯]	'free of charge'
ohẹ́	VCV́	[⎯ ⎺]	'a pillar of a house'
ǫ̀ǫ̀ɲị	V̀əCV	[__ __ ⎯]	'one'
ǫ̀ɲí	V̀CV́	[__ ⎺]	'mother'
ę̀ę̀va	V̀əCV	[__ __⎯]	'two'
ęva	VCV	[⎯ ⎯]	'oracle'
ę̀ę̀hí	V̀əCV́	[__ __ ⎺]	'five'
ęhí	VCV́	[⎯ ⎺]	'sweat'

All Ebira basic numbers when counting have initial double vowels. These are:

ǫ̀ǫ̀ɲị	'one'	ę̀ę̀va	'two'
ę̀ę̀tã	'three'	ę̀ę̀nã	'four'
ę̀ę̀hí	'five'		
ę̀ę̀wũ	'ten'	ǒǒhu	'twenty'

2.2.2.2   Medial Geminate Vowel Sequences, -Və-

ā̀pá̄apā̀	V̀CV́əCV̀	[__ ‾ — __]	'maize'
apápa	VCV́CV	[— ‾ —]	'bean bread'
ā̀tā́āhṳ̀	V̀CV̀V́CV̀	[__ __ ‾ __]	'ankle'
ā̀tāhṵ́	V̀CV̀CV́	[__ __ ‾]	'kernel of palm fruit'
etéēsṳ̀	VCV́əCV̀	[— ‾ __ __]	'floor'
íkí̄ı̄zā̀	V́CV́əCV̀	[‾ ‾ __ __]	'cow peas'

    Words having geminate vowel sequences medially are
rare in the language.

2.2.2.3   Final Geminate Vowel Sequences, -Və

ọnóọ	VCV́ə	[— ‾ —]	'that' (demonstrative)
ọ̀nọ̀	V̀CV̀	[__ __]	'warning'
ẹnę́ẹ	VCV́ə	[__ ‾ —]	'those' (subj. demonstrative)
ę̀nę́	V̀CV́	[__ ‾]	'who' (question word, relative pronoun)
ðmumṳ̄ṳ́	V̀CVCV̀ə́	[__ — __ ‾]	'fontanel'
ðsisí̄í	V̀CVCV̀ə́	[__ — __ ‾]	'a hole in the lower part of the compound wall for water outlet'

Only two words of more than three syllables have been found in the language having a geminate vowel sequence word finally. These are the two words ending the list above and they seem to be onomatopoeic words.

2.2.3   Consonant Deletion in VV Words

Some words develop VV elements from the deletion of an intervocalic consonant from a word. These words still maintain the same number of syllables and the same tone pattern even when the medial consonant is deleted. The two versions of the same word may be in current use without any change or with very slight change in semantic connotation. Words of this pattern are extremely limited in the language.

It is the consideration of such different pronunciations for the same item, with and without the consonant, that further confirms the treatment elsewhere of long phonetic vowels as sequences of two V elements phonologically:

irehí (house) <u>or</u>   eehí   VəCV́   [— — ‾]   'home'

āwūrū   <u>or</u>   āārū   VəCV́   [__ __ ‾]   'gown'

āvābá   <u>or</u>   āābá   VəCV́   [__ __ ‾]   'all'

A few constructions of reduplicated forms in which the medial consonant is /r/ and the first and second vowels are identical, manifest consonant deletion and the development of medial VV sequence in the first part of the reduplicated form:

```
kerekere      CVCVCVCV       [— — — —]   'most', the
        or                                superlative attri-
keekere       CVəCVCV        [— — — —]   butive


dèrédèrè      CV̀CV́CV̀CV̀     [__ __ __ __]
        or                                            'to be thin'
dèèdèrè       CV̀əCV̀CV̀       [__ __ __ __]
```

Both forms of the words are in current use also.

2.2.4   Loan Words in Ebira

Loan words assimilated into Ebira conform to the syl-
lable structure of the language. Ebira has no stressed
syllables like English. VV sequences with high tone
followed by low tone occur where there is a stressed
syllable in the English words that enter the language.
Furthermore, an epenthetic vowel is added initially to
any English nominal having an initial consonant because
all nominals except bound pronoun objects in Ebira start
with a vowel. Another epenthetic vowel is added finally
to any English word having a closed syllable because
Ebira is an open syllable language. This means that some
one syllable English words may have three or four
syllables when assimilated into Ebira, as shown in the
examples below:

```
Eng.  John        ['jɔn]        CVC

Eb.   Ijoonu      [ijóònṵ]      VCV́əCV̀    [— ⎯ __ __]


Eng.  Police      [pə'lis]      CVCVC

Eb.   iporiisi    [ìpòríìsì]    V̀CV̀CV́əCV̀  [__ __ ⎯ __ __]
```

Eng. Comb   ['ko^{u}m]   CVC

Eb.   ikoomu   [ikóõmũ]   VCV́àCV̀   [— ⎺ __ __]

Eng. Tea   ['ti]   CV

Eb.   itii   [ití̃ĩ]   VCV́V̀   [— ⎺ __]

Generally phonetically 'long vowels' are fairly rare in the language. The above data illustrate all the environments where geminate vowel sequences occur.

2.2.5   The Word "Tao"

There is only one word with a sequence of non-identical vowels found in Ebira. It is a word which expresses general greetings.

tãó   CV̀V́   [__ ⎺]   'hello'

The word has an alternative form:

tãŋ^{w}ãó   CV̀CV̀V́   [__ __ ⎺]   'hello'

The alternative form is normally used by the older people, but tãó is the commonest form and the one in frequent use. It is such a common and frequent greeting among the people to the extent that other neighbouring tribes refer to us as Ebira-Tao. There are no other examples in Ebira of this final "o" in greeting whereas

in the neighbouring Yoruba language many greetings end in final o.

Yoruba	Ebira	
ẹ pẹlẹ o	tao nịnị e	'hello to you' (pl)
ẹ ku isẹ o	akɔ̗rɔ̗ nịnị e	'greeting at work'
ẹ kuabo o	ɲásẹ̃ nịnị e	'welcome'

(Note: Nịnị is a plural particle in Ebira.)

Ebira has a final "e" in greetings rather than "o" except in the one favourite word, 'tão', which has become almost synonymous with the people themselves.

2.2.6   The Status of /u/ and /ụ/ as Variants of
         /i/ and /ị/ in Word Initial and Word Medial
         Positions

/u/ and /ụ/ fluctuate with /i/ and /ị/ initially in lexical items where the second vowel is /u/ or /ụ/ respectively. The same speaker may use either form.

ītū	and	ūtū	'ceiling'
īkū	"	ūkū	'scorpion'
isū	"	usū	'house rat'
inū	"	unū	'bush rat'
ihū	"	uhū	'seed'
ịkụ̄	"	ụ̄kụ̄	'disease, sickness'
ītūtū	"	ūtūtū	'rubbish heap'
īhūhū	"	ūhūhū	'murmur'

ī̃gugu	and	ū̃gugu	'stump of a tree'
ī̃rū̃vū́	"	ū̃rū̃vū́	'toad'
irukū̃	"	urukū̃	'forest'
i̠ru̠kū̠	"	u̠ru̠ku̠	'farming'

It is only in initial position that u and u̠ fluctu-
ate with i and i̠. They contrast in all other positions.
The above words are the only ones found in the data sur-
veyed.

2.2.7 Charts of the Vowel Phonemes

I have listened to the recording of the Cardinal Vowels by Professor D. Jones and have plotted Ebira vowels according to my perception of them in relation to the cardinal vowels.

a) Traditional Cardinal Vowel Equivalent Chart
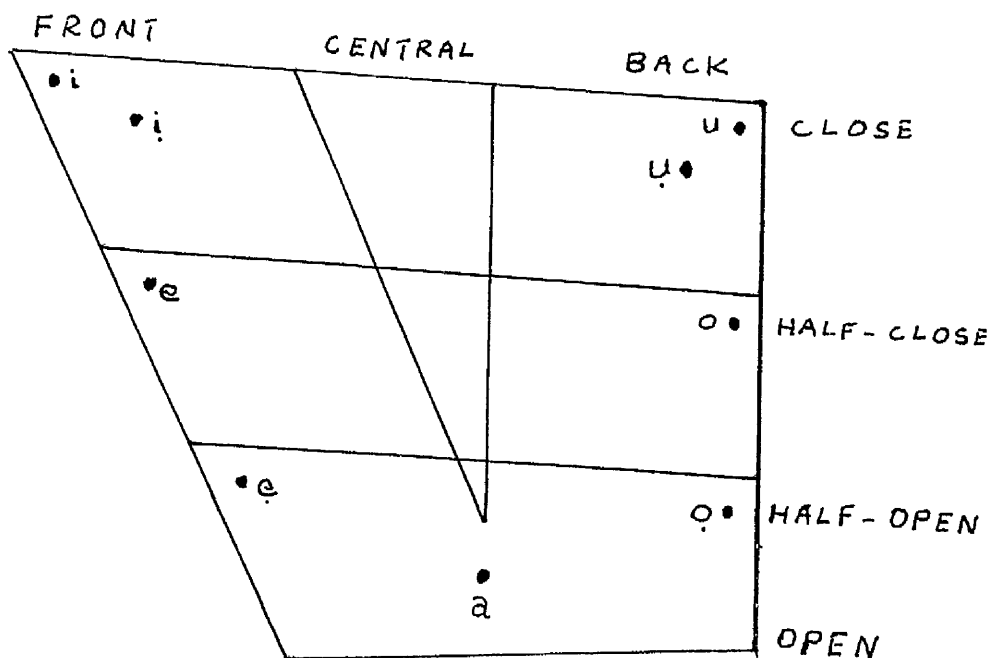
b) Descriptive Vowel Chart

LIPS	FRONT SPREAD	CENTRAL NEUTRAL	BACK ROUNDED
CLOSE	i̇ i̤		ṳ u
HALF-CLOSE	e		o
HALF-OPEN	ẹ		ọ
OPEN		a	

2.3   Vowel Harmony[*]

The vowels of a language in which harmony operates are usually in two groups. Various terms have been applied by linguists working on West African languages where vowel harmony operates to refer to the two groups. Some used the terms Fortis and Lenis to refer to them. Recently Dr J. M. Stewart[**] applied the terms Advanced Tongue Root (+ATR) and unadvanced Tongue Root (-ATR) to refer to the two vowel harmonic sets in the Akan language. Akan is a language of Ghana. It belongs to the Kwa language family, the same family that Ebira belongs to.

In Ebira, however, I am using the simple terms Harmonic Vowel Set A and Harmonic Vowel Set B in my discussion of this topic.

The nine vowels of the language operate in two harmonic sets. These are:

SET A   i e a o u

---

[*]   Professor Ladefoged first discusses Ebira vowel harmony in his article 'Igbirra Notes and Word List', The Journal of West African Languages, 1.1: 27-37. 1964. He introduces the vowels /i̧/ and /u̧/. He also mentions Ebira vowel harmony in his book A Phonetic Study of West African Languages, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1968, p. 37. Professor Ladefoged's treatment of the topic is general and typological. Further research has suggested that a more detailed description will throw light into the analysis of Ebira.

[**] Stewart, J. M. - 1967. 'Tongue-Root Position in Akan Vowel Harmony' in Phonetica 16.4: 185-204.

SET B   i̱ e̱ a o̱ u̱

The harmonic sets can be arranged as follows:

SET A	SET B	COMBINED SETS
i u e o a	i̱ u̱ e̱ o̱ a	i u i̱ u̱ e o e̱ o̱ a

The vowel /a/ is common to both sets, as shown above and in the following examples.

a-i	āyî	'chicken pox'	íyá	'pounded yam'
a-i̱	ayi̱	'flour'	i̱pá	'calabash, cup'
a-e	āgé	'a jug'	eebāā	'yes, indeed'
a-e̱	ahé̱	'song'	e̱hā	'kind of plant'
			ājā	'a special feather'
a-o̱	anó̱	'salt'	o̱há	'spear'
a-o	akó	'a cup'		
a-u̱	ākú̱	'guinea corn'	u̱kā	'food of yam flour'
a-u	āmū	'a cap'		

The vowel harmony system of Ebira manifests itself in the two major lexical word classes of the language, the Nominal class and the Verbal class.

2.3.1   The Nominal Class

The nominal class is congruent with the grammatical noun, pronoun, adjective, demonstrative, numeral and temporal.

Words of the nominal class always have an initial V syllable as distinct from those of the verbal class which always have an initial C. The initial vowel appears to be a remnant of a noun class prefix, but in the present day language very little of the noun class system remains. There are just a few examples of nouns with contrastive singular and plural prefixes. These comprise:

Singular		Plural	
ọ̄zā̄	'a person'	ā̄zā̄	'people'
ọnẹ́	'a woman'	anẹ́	'women'
ọnọrụ̄	'a man'	anọrụ̄	'men'
ọ̄zọga	'a visitor'	ā̄zọga	'visitors'
ọ̄hị̄nị̄	'a co-wife'	ẹ̄hị̄nị̄	'co-wives'
ozị̄	'child'	ezị̄	'children'
ō̄sé	'wife'	è̄sé	'wives'

Note that all of these nouns refer to persons. These few nouns with a relation of ọ/o as a prefix to the singular and a/e to the plural are reminiscent of the o/a

personal class of nouns in some Bantu languages.* This is
not a typical system of pluralisation in present Ebira.
See 4.8 for pluralisation in Ebira.

Nominal words can be formed from harmony vowels of
either Set A or Set B. But vowels from the two sets are
not normally found in the same word apart from /a/ which
belongs to both sets.

2.3.1.1   Set A: i, e, o, u, a, in nominal words

i-i	îzî	'bambara nuts'
i-e	íze	'grass cutter (big bush rodent)'
i-o	îső	'nail'
i-u	isu	'house rat'
i-a	iya	'pounded yam'
e-i	eyî	'eye'
e-e	ēcē	'wine'
e-o	ētő	'arrangement'
e-u	ekű	'masquerade'
e-a	eebãã	'yes, indeed'

* For noun classes of Bantu languages, see:
   1. Wolf, P. de, 1971. the Noun Class System of Proto
       Benue Congo. The Hague: Mouton.
   2. Hyman, L. M., 1980. Noun Clases in the Grass-
       fields Bantu Borderland. Southern California
       Occasional Papers in Linguistics, 8.

o-i	oyí	'thief'
o-e	õzẽ	'road'
o-o	õbõ	'rope'
o-u	õwú	'cotton'
o-a	---	---
u-i	ũjĩ	'basket'
u-e	uye	'meat'
u-o	útô	'cowrie shell'
u-u	ũrũ	'mushroom'
u-a	---	---
a-i	ayĩ	'chicken pox'
a-e	ãgé	'a jug'
a-o	ako	'a calabash cup'
a-u	ákũ	'inner room'
a-a	ãbã	'yam heaps'

The table below gives the summary of Set A co-occurrence of vowels in words of VCV pattern.

2nd Vowel

		i	e	o	u	a
	i	x	x	x	x	x
1st	e	x	x	x	x	x
Vowel	o	x	x	x	x	
	u	x	x	x	x	
	a	x	x	x	x	x

There are no lexical words like *oka and *uga in the language.

2.3.1.2   Set B: i̧, ȩ, o̧, u̧, a in Nominal Words

i̧-i̧	i̧hi̧	'justifition'
i̧-ȩ	i̧nȩ́	'stomach'
i̧-o̧	Ĩŋō̧	'weighing machine, scale'
i̧-u̧	ĩkū̧	'sickness, disease'
i̧-a	i̧rā́	'fire'
ȩ-i̧	ȩyi̧	'hair'
ȩ-ȩ	ȩhȩ	'world, life'
ȩ-o̧	ȩdo̧	'antelope'
ȩ-u̧	ȩwu̧	'snake'
ȩ-a	ḛ̄pā̃	'root'

o̞-i̞	o̞ci̞	'stick, tree'
o̞-e̞	o̞hé̞	'pillar of a house'
o̞-o̞	opó̞	'mask for masquerade'
o̞-u̞	o̞kũ̞	'firewood'
o̞-a	õ̞pã	'arrow'
u̞-i̞	u̞hĩ̞	'fable'
u̞-e̞	u̞ne̞	'locust bean'
u̞-o̞	ũno̞	'cow'
u̞-u̞	u̞tũ̞	'message, errand'
u̞-a	ũbã	'vulture'
a-i̞	ãrĩ̞	'fishing hook'
a-e̞	aje̞	'egg'
a-o̞	anó̞	'salt'
a-u̞	ãgũ̞	'smell'
a-a	ãtã	'testicles'

The table below summarises Set B co-occurrence of vowels in words of VCV pattern.

2nd Vowel

	i̞	e̞	o̞	u̞	a
i̞	x	x	x	x	x
e̞	x	x	x	x	x
o̞	x	x	x	x	x
u̞	x	x	x	x	x
a	x	x	x	x	x

1st Vowel (for rows)

All Set B vowels can co-occur in VCV word combina-

tions. This shows that Set B has a wider occurrence and distribution in the language, and if it was advantageous to apply the concept markedness to vowel harmony in Ebira then Set B could be considered as unmarked and Set A marked.

2.3.1.3   Nominal Words of more than Two Syllables

The vowel harmony system operates also in nouns of 3, 4, or more syllables. I will just give a few examples.

Set A: i, e, o, u, a
_____

i- - -	ìhìhìnè̀	'ants'
e- - -	ɛ́hepo	'a kind of yam'
o- - -	òkûkû	'an imaginary being'
u- - -	ukere	'wooden door'
a- - -	akûkû	'some kind of vegetable'

Set B: i̩, e̩, o̩, u̩, a
_____

i̩- - -	ȋ̩so̩vo̩	'sacrifice'
e̩- - -	e̩cûku̩	'bone'
o̩- - -	o̩gê̩dè̩	'banana'
u̩- - -	u̩kó̩ro̩	'work'
a- - -	ɓ́ru̩sã̀	'walnut'

2.3.1.4   Compound and Complex Nominal Words

There are a few instances where vowels from Set A and vowels from Set B occur in the same nominal word. Words in this class are usually names of people or of places. As in other Kwa languages (especially Yoruba), most Ebira names for people or places are a combination of two or more words. Sometimes a name could be a whole sentence. In such cases it is possible to have sequences of Set A and Set B vowels in one name. A few examples of such names are given below:

Names	Underlying words
[Ohíẹ̀kụ̀]	ōhi + irẹ̀kụ̀
	leader + war
	'captain of war'
[Ezūrẹ̀]	ezî + ụrẹ̀
	children + algae
	'the Algae clan'
[Ọ̀mẽ̀cẽ̀]	ọ̀mẹ̀ + ẽ̀cẽ̀
	maker + wine
	'wine brewer'
[Ọ̀ʃéyízá]	ọ̀sî + eyî + zá
	one who takes + eye + hold
	'one who remembers'

2.3.1.5 Other Words in the Nominal Class

All the words cited so far are <u>nouns</u>. As the nominal word class includes Pronouns, Adjectives, Demonstratives, Numerals, and Temporals, a few examples of each are given to illustrate the <u>vowel initial</u> feature and vowel harmony common to all of them.

<u>Pronoun</u>

1st person sing.	ẽmị	'I'
2nd person sing.	ẽwụ	'you'
3rd person Sing.	ọnị	'he, she, it'
1st person plural	ẽyị	'we'
2nd person plural	ẽwụ nịnị	'you'
3rd person plural	ẽnĩnị/ẽnị	'they'

<u>Adjective</u>

ógọdọ	'long'
ówéyi	'small, short'
ọ́báɲĩ	'big'
ọ́rũrụ	'many'

<u>Demonstrative</u>

ọnó̃ọ	'that'
ọnó̃nị	'this'
enẽ̃e	'those'
enẽ̃nị	'these'

<u>Numeral</u>

ọ̃ọ̃ɲị	'one'
ẽẽva	'two'
ẽẽwụ	'ten'
õõhu	'twenty'

<u>Temporal</u>

ajĩni	'today'
ẽẽrĩ	'yesterday'
ũhwó̃ó̃	'tomorrow'
ịrayĩ	'year'

2.3.2   The Verbal Class

The verbal class is congruent with the grammatical Verb, Adverb, and Ideophone. All verbal words begin with a consonant.

2.3.2.1   Harmony Span in the Verb Phrase

In the examples of nouns it is not possible to say that the first syllable controls the second or <u>vice versa</u>, but when verbal phrases are examined it is clear that it is the vowel (or vowels) in the verb stem that governs the other vowels in the phrase, making for a vowel harmony unity over the verbal phrase. Thus, for example, the 3rd person singular pronoun has two pronunciations /o/ and /ọ/ according to the vowel harmony set of the verb in the phrase.

ô sî	'he wants'	ộ sî̧	'he takes'
ô rế	'he sees'	ộ mẹ̃	'he does'
ô rõ̀	'he thinks'	ộ dṍ̧	'he gets'
ô hũ	'he drinks'	ộ hũ̧	'he boils'
		ộ dã̀	'he cuts'

In the above verbal phrases the vowel of the verb word determines whether it is the pronoun preverb /o/ or /ọ/ that precedes the word. In addition, the vowel of the verb also dominates the pronominal piece progressively within the VP. Examine the following:

Vowel Set A

ô rế ế		'he saw it'
ô tõ ó		'he arranged it'
ô pẽhế ế		'he winnowed it'
ô gono õ		'he praised him'

Vowel Set B

ọ̀ gế ẹ́		'he sewed it'
ọ̀ họ̃ ọ́		'he asked him'
ọ̀ hã ã		'he peeled it'
ọ̀ họkọ ọ́		'he rinsed it'
ọ̀ cãkã ã		'he broke it'

The harmony prosody operates from the verb word to contiguous syllables regressively and progressively. Harmony prosody is a syntagmatic feature that spreads over a unit of structure within the sentence. Professor Carnochan in dealing with a similar phenomenon in Igbo states:

> The inital syllable, the pronoun, in all these eight examples is pronounced with a high vowel; the particular degree of closeness correlating[3] with the vowel harmony of the example as a whole.

The only exceptions with regard to progressive harmony dominance concern the close vowels, i, i̱, u, u̱.

_____

3   Carnochan, J., 1960. Vowel Harmony in Igbo in Palmer, F. R. (ed.) 1970, Prosodic Analysis, Oxford University Press, 1970: p. 224.

These close vowels operate slightly differently at morpheme or word junctions. When the final vowel of the verb is one of the four close vowels, the object pronominal piece is always the lowered close back vowel /o̜/.

Vowel Set A

    ô hî ö̜   'he wove it (cloth)'

    ô hû ö̜   'he drank it'

Vowel Set B

    ô̜ hî̜ ö̜   'he called him'

    ô̜ hû̜ ö̜   'he boiled it'

(See 3.⎰⎱ for juncture prosodies with regard to close vowels.)

High tone is a marker of the object pronominal piece common to all the examples of harmony span in the VP given above.

The preverbs, represented by o/o̜ in the above examples, may be up to three sequences of vowels carrying complex tones which denote various grammatical features. Even in such cases, the harmony span of the VP is never broken. (See chapter 4 for full description of the preverbs.)

2.3.2.2   Harmony in the Verb Word

The vowel sequences in verbal lexical words of CVCV pattern are limited to vowels within each set.

Set A: i, e, o, u, a in CVCV verb words

i-i	zĩzĩ	'to shake'
i-e	cĩrê	'to wear clothes'
i-o	--	--
i-u	--	--
i-a	zĩnã	'to roll'
e-i	téɲĩ	'to repair'
e-e	pềhề	'to winnow'
e-o	--	--
e-u	--	--
e-a	cémâ	'to lift up'
o-i	--	--
o-e	--	--
o-o	võvó	'to put a child on the back'
o-u	--	--
o-a	zózã	'to be beautiful'
u-i	--	--
u-e	rũré	'to be tough'
u-o	--	--
u-u	kũrũ	'to tie a knot'
u-a	tũrã	'to pull'
a-i	dãhĩ	'to be well'
a-e	--	--
a-o	--	--
a-u	vãgũ	'to forgive'
a-a	hãrã	'to gather'

Set B: i̠, e̠, o̠, u̠, a in CVCV verb words

i̠-i̠	pî̠rí̠	'to squeeze with force'
i̠-e̠	cí̠ne̠	'to prepare/boil meat'
i̠-o̠	--	--
i̠-u̠	--	--
i̠-a	ɲí̠nã̂	'to wash'
e̠-i̠	gé̠rî̠	'to meet'
e̠-e̠	cè̠rè̠	'to write'
e̠-o̠	--	--
e̠-u̠	--	--
e̠-a	nẽ̠ba	'to be high'
o̠-i̠	--	--
o̠-e̠	--	--
o̠-o̠	hò̠kó̠]	'to rinse'
o̠-u̠	--	--
o̠-a	hó̠hã̂	'to be greedy'
u̠-i̠	--	--
u̠-e̠	mú̠ne̠	'to swallow'
u̠-o̠	--	--
u̠-u̠	sû̠tû̠	'to lie dead'
u̠-a	tu̠râ	'to build'
a-i̠	bã̂ɲî̠	'to sieve flour
a-e̠	--	--
a-o̠	--	--
a-u̠	dã̂gũ̠	'to smell'
a-a	wara	'to fry'

The tables below give the summary of Sets A and B CVCV pattern co-occurrence restrictions.

Set A

2nd Vowel

	i	e	o	u	a
i	x	x			x
e	x	x			x
o			x		x
u	x	x			x
a	x			x	x

1st Vowel

Set B

2nd Vowel

	i̥	e̥	o̥	u̥	a
i̥	x	x			x
e̥	x	x			x
o̥			x		x
u̥	x	x			x
a	x			x	x

1st Vowel

For two syllable verbs, the second vowel is usually identical with the first vowel. The close vowels can also take the half-close vowels in the second syllable. Only /a/ can co-occur in any combination with any other vowel of either set.

2.3.2.3   Comment on /a/

/a/ has occurrence restrictions with vowel Set A. Words have not been found in the language with the sequence o-a and u-a in VCV pattern.

The fact that /a/ has no co-occurrence restrictions with vowel Set B seems to suggest that /a/ belonged to vowel Set B originally and in the course of time has extended its function to vowel Set A. Another possible postulation is that vowel Set A had a counterpart of /a/ originally (in proto Ebira, probably [ə] or [ʌ]) but the phonetic distinction between this vowel and [a] was lost and /a/ now additionally carries the functional load of the missing vowel. Speculative phonology is not part of the focus of this thesis. This comment is just a possible pointer as to why there are some co-occurrence restrictions with vowel Set A and there are none with vowel Set B.

The discussion of Ebira vowel harmony systems is by no means exhaustive here. These examples are just to highlight the important role of this phenomenon in the phonology and the grammar of the language. Detailed description of the preverbs in their harmonic sets within the verbal piece is given in chapter four. Furthermore, harmony principles are illustrated in Ebira sentence examples given in all the sections of this thesis. Instrumental recording of some harmonic pairs is given in Appendix 3 at the end of the thesis.

2.3.2.4   The Adverbs and Ideophones

The lexical verbal class includes the adverbs and ideophones. Although the term adverb is applied to some lexical items in Ebira, these adverbs differ in function and syntactic order from the adverbs in English. Examine the following English sentences and their Ebira equivalents.

English   Ebira

a) He speaks <u>loudly</u>   ọ̀ kã̀rẹ́yị̀ tṹ ẹ̀ba

                               he speak   put up

b) He speaks <u>strongly</u>   ọ̀ sị́   ọ̀ŋwẹ ọ̀kã́tẹ̃́ŋṹ karẹ́yị̀

                               he take voice strong   speak

c) He speaks <u>quickly</u>   ọ̀ sị́   eyíhã́ kã̀rẹ́yị̀

                               he take haste speak

d) He speaks <u>gently</u>   ọ̀ tã̀ŋwã̀ kã̀rẹ́yị̀

                               he gently speak.

In the English sentences above all the underlined words are adverbs and all these adverbs occur sentence final, although some of the adverbs could occur preceding the verb in some styles of English. In Ebira there is no adverb at all in sentences a) - c). The function of the adverb is carried by serial verbs and nominal phrases in these sentences. It is only in sentence d) of Ebira that

there is an adverb tãŋwã, 'gently', and it precedes the
verb.

There are very few 'pure' adverbs in Ebira. These
adverbs are in two classes, those which occur preceding
the verb and those which occur following the verb. The
underlined words are adverbs in the following examples.

     nâ bûrû   'go quickly'
     go quickly

     jǒ   gérî   'stand firmly'
     stand firmly

     tãŋwã kãrẹ̃yị   'speak gently'
     gently speak

     wụsẹ̃   rịsa   'eat quickly'
     quickly eat

Adverbs can be reduplicated for intensity in whatever
position they occur, either before or after the verb.

Adverbs and ideophones are very similar in structure
and function. Ideophones are items which add particular
intensity and sound effect to a sentence in Ebira. Redu-
plication is a feature of ideophones.

Ideophones always occur after the verbs, e.g:

îzēnî ộ sū̧rẹyị woroɲi-woroɲi

bell   it sound

      'the bell sounded "woronyi-woronyi"'

ụnộkọ ộ chākā́ rū́gū̃-rū́gū̃

pot   it break

      'the pot broke "rūgū̃-rūgū̃"'

A few more ideophones are listed below:

bemi-bemi		CVCV-CVCV	'wholly, completely'
zị nâ-zị nâ		CVCV̂-CVCV̂	'forever and ever, eternally'
sẹnẹ-sẹnẹ	or	CVCV-CVCV or	
sẹẹsẹnẹ		CVVCVCV	'very, very white'
sáká-sáká	*or*	CV́CV́-CV́CV́ or	
sáásáká		CV́V́CV́CV́	'completely, all'
vānā̀-vā̀nā̀	or	CV̀CV̀-CV̀CV̀ or	'to be very uncom-
vāā̀vā̀nā̀	or	CV̀V̀CV̀CV̀ or	fortable in sick-
vā̀nāā̀		CV̀CV̀V̀	ness or pain'

bonoko-bonoko   or CVCVCV-CVCVCV   or 'to be big and

bonokoo   CVCVCVV   shapeless'

    Reduplication processes manifest some interesting phonological changes including metathesis. We need not give any emphasis to these here. However, it is worth noting that the development of geminate vowel sequences medially and finally, mentioned in 2.2.1, can be observed from the alternate forms of the reduplicated words above.

2.4   Syllabic Nasals

As mentioned in 2.1.2., syllable type 2 consists of a syllabic nasal plus tone and is followed immediately in the word by a CV syllable. The syllabic nasal may occur in words of either vowel harmony set A or B and does not interrupt the harmonic sequence system of the vowels. The syllabic nasal is always homorganic in point of articulation with the following consonant.

2.4.1   Bilabial Syllabic Nasal

/m/ [m] voiced bilabial syllabic nasal preceding bilabial consonants.

m-p	ȁm̃pȍ	'a bag'
m-b	ȋhȋm̋ba	'seven'
m-m	m̋ mȁȁ vę̏	'when I was coming...'

2.4.2   Alveolar Syllabic Nasal

/n/ [n] voiced alveolar syllabic nasal preceding alveolar consonants.

n-t	ȍn̋tę̏	'a typewriter'
n-d	n̏dȁ	'father'
n-n	ȋhȋn̋nȁ	'nine'

2.4.3   Palatal Syllabic Nasal

/ɲ/ [ɲ] · voiced palatal syllabic nasal preceding palatal and affricate consonants.

ɲ-ɲ	ɲ̀ɲá	'mother'
ɲ-c	ɔ̀ɲ́cɛ̣́rɛ̣̃	'monkey'
ɲ-j	ɛ̣̃jaɲ́jako	'dotted maize cob'

2.4.4   Velar Syllabic Nasal

/ŋ/ [ŋ] voiced velar nasal preceding velar consonants.

ŋ-k	ị̀kɔ̣̀ŋ̀kɔ̣	'bathing sponge'
ŋ-g	aŋ́gɔ̣	'yam seedling'

2.4.5   Summary of Syllabic Nasals

/m/ precedes /p/, /b/ and /m/.

/n/ precedes /t/, /d/ and /n/.

/ɲ/ precedes /ɲ/, /c/ and /j/.

/ŋ/ precedes /k/ and /g/.

A syllabic nasal is always followed by a homorganic stop, affricate, or an identical nasal, except that no word has been found with the sequence ŋ-ŋ.

The other consonants in the language are not preceded by syllabic nasals.

2.5   The Consonant Phonemes

Ebira has <u>nineteen</u> consonant phonemes.

2.5.1   Description

All the consonants are made with egressive lung air:

/p/   [p^h]   voiceless bilabial slightly aspirated plosive.

    /pã/   [p^{h}ã]   'to beg'

/b/   [b]   voiced bilabial plosive.

    /bã/   [bã]   'to dig'

/t/   [t^h]   voiceless alveolar slightly aspirated plosive.

    /tá/   [t^{h}ắ]   'to weave (a rope)'

/d/   [d]   voiced alveolar plosive.

    /dã/   [dã]   'to cut'

/k/   [k^h]   voiceless velar slightly aspirated plosive.

    /kã/   [k^{h}ã]   'to tell, to say'

/g/   [g]   voiced velar plosive.

    /gã/   [gã]   'to divide'

All the voiceless plosives are slightly aspirated but this is not distinctive, and will not be indicated in the transcription from now on.

/v/   [v]   voiced labio-dental fricative.

    /vẹ́/   [vẹ́]   'to come'

/s/ [s]   voiceless alveolar grooved fricative.

          /sḭ/ [sḭ]   'to take'

    [ʃ]   voiceless alveo-palatal grooved fricative.

          [ʃ] is an allophone of /s/ across morpheme boundaries in certain phonological conditions. This will be described later.

/z/ [z]   voiced alveolar grooved fricative.
          /zĩ/ [zĩ]   'to filter'

    [ʒ]   voiced alveo-palatal grooved fricative.

          [ʒ] is an allophone of /z/ across morpheme boundaries in certain phonological conditions. It will be described along with [ʃ].

/h/ [h]   voiceless glottal fricative.

          /hḭ/ [hḭ]   'to call'

/c/ [c]   voiceless alveo-palatal affricate.

          /cḭ/ [cḭ]   'to get nuts out of the shell with fingers'

/j/ [j]   voiced alveo-palatal affricate.

          /jḭ/ [jḭ]   'to cut stick with hand'

/m/ [m]   voiced bilabial nasal.

          /mẽ/ [mẽ]   'to do, to make'

/n/ [n]   voiced alveolar nasal.

          /ne/ [ne]   'to throw'

/ɲ/ [ɲ]   voiced palatal nasal.

          /ɲã/ [ɲã]   'to hit'

/ŋ/ [ŋ]   voiced velar nasal.

          /ŋu̥/ [ŋu̥]   'to enter'

/r/ [r]   voiced alveolar tap.

            /rɪ́/ [ɹɪ́]   'to eat'

      [l]   voiced alveolar lateral.

            [l] is in free variation with [r] but most people use [r] in their speech.

                      velar

/w/ [w]   voiced bilabial ∧ semivowel.

            /wṵ/ [wṵ]   'to kill'

/y/ [y]   voiced palatal semivowel.

            /yẹ̃/ [yẹ̃]   'to know'

2.5.2 Consonant Allophones and Conditioning

[ʃ] and [ʒ]

    [ʃ] and [ʒ] occur as allophones of /s/ and /z/ respectively under the following phonological conditions:

    /s/ in the sequence [sɪ] followed by a non-close vowel initial syllable across morpheme boundaries is realised as [ʃ]. The sounds in focus are underlined in the following examples:

    Structure: VP + NP$_o$.

si + e: ộ sɪ́ + ẽcẽ vẹ̃ > ộ ʃ ẽcẽ vẹ̃

          he took wine came   'he brought some wine'

si̥ + e: ộ sí̥ + e̩za vé̩   >   ộ ʃé̩za vé̩

       he took beans came   'he brought some beans'

si̥ + o: ộ sí̥ + ozí vé̩   >   ộ ʃózí vé̩

       he took child came   'he brought the child'

si̥ + o̩:   ộ sí̥ + o̩cí vé̩   >   ộ ʃó̩cí vé̩

       he took stick came   'he brought the stick'

si̥ + a: ộ sí̥ + aje̩ vé̩   >   ộ ʃáje̩ vé̩

       he took egg came   'he brought the eggs'

Similarly /z/ in the sequence [zi] followed by a non-close vowel initial syllable is realised as [ʒ].

Structure: VP + NP$_o$

      [zi̥] 'to hurt' + NP$_o$.

zi̥ + e: ộ zi̥ +   ezí   >   ộ ʒezí

       it hurt   children 'it hurt the children'

zi̥ + e̩:   ộ zi̥ +   e̩ŋɑ̃   >   ộ ʒe̩ŋɑ̃

       it hurt   body   'it hurt the body, i.e. he
                             felt the pain'

zi̥ + o: ộ zi̥ + ozí   >   ộ ʒozí

       it hurt child   'it hurt the child'

zi̧ + o̧:   ộ   zi̧ + o̧zã   ⟩   ộ ʒ̧o̧zã

               it hurt person   'it hurt a person'

zi̧ + a: ộ   zi̧ + ãzã   ⟩   ộ ʒ̧ãzã

               it hurt people   'it hurt the people'

On the other hand, /s/ and /z/ retain their phonetic qualities in sequence [si] or [zi] followed by <u>close</u> vowels.

si̧ + i: ộ   sî + îzî vę̂   ⟩   ộ sîzî vę̂

               he-took nuts came   'he brought bambara nuts'

si̧ + i̧:   ộ   sî + îŋộ   vę̂ ⟩ ộ sîŋộ vę̂

               he-took scales came   'he brought the scales'

si̧ + u: ộ   sî + uye vę̂   ⟩   ộ sûye vȩ

               he-took meat came   'he brought some meat'

si̧ + u̧:   ộ   sî + ûrã vę̂   ⟩   ộ sûrã vę̂

               he-took pig came   'he brought a pig'

zi̧ + i: ộ   zi̧ + îzę̂   ⟩   ộ zîzę̂

               it hurt ize   'it hurt Ize'

zi̧ + i̧:   ộ   zi̧ + i̧cã   ⟩   ộ zi̧cã

               it hurt i̧cã   'it hurt I̧cã'

zi̧ + u: ộ   zi̧ + ûrû   ⟩   ộ zûrû

               it-hurt ûrû   'it hurt Urû'

zi̧ + u̧:   ộ   zi̧ + ûno̧   ⟩   ộ zûno̧

               it-hurt cow   'it hurt the cow'

2.5.3   Chart of the Consonant Phonemes

The following chart gives a graphic display of Ebira consonants.

		Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives	vls	p	t		k	
	vd	b	d		g	
Fricatives	vls		s			h
	vd	v	z			
Affricates	vls			c		
	vd			j		
Nasals	vls					
	vd	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
Laterals	vls					
	vd		r			
Semivowels	vls					
	vd	w		y		

All the consonants can occur as syllable margin in word initial and word medial positions but never syllable or word final.

Note that the consonantal features, labialisation and palatalisation, are described in sections 2.1.5 and 2.1.6.

Throughout this thesis, the palatal and velar nasals are written phonemically as ɲ and ŋ.   In the practical orthography for the language, however, they are written as ny and ng respectively.

2.6   Tone

Tone in Ebira functions at two distinct levels.   It functions at the lexical level and at the grammatical level.

2.6.1   Tone Symbolisation

Tone is symbolised as follows:

High tone	- H -	marked	´
Mid tone	- M -	unmarked	
Low tone	- L -	marked	ˋ
High-Falling tone	- HF -	marked	ˆ
Low-Rising tone	- LR -	marked	ˇ
Down Step	- H' -	marked	

Automatic tone downstep occurs only under specific tone contractions of HLH ⟶ H'H (see 3.4.5).

It can be observed from the above that Ebira has three level tones and two kinetic tones. Lexical tone is directly related to the syllable structure as stated in 2.1. Every syllable has a tonal feature as one of its phonological components.

2.6.2   Tone Distribution

The level tones (high, mid, and low) have a very wide distribution.   The two kinetic tones (high-falling and

low-rising) do not occur word initial or word medial, ✳
except high-falling tone which occurs on the one syllable
verb prefix denoting person and number. The low-rising
tone [ˇ] is found to occur only in the nine monosyllabic
verbs listed below:

hɛ̌	'to be in possession of something by finding it'
rɛ̌	'to lick (some liquid soup or oil)'
ɲɛ̌	'to wipe (with hand, cloth, or duster)'
jɛ̧̌	'to stand, to wait'
zɛ̌	'to answer'
rɔ̌	'to make a hole through a wall or a door'
nɔ̧̌	'to make public announcement with special gong'
tɔ̧̌	'to pick up small items from the ground'
ɲǎ	'to break palm kernels with stones to get the seeds out'

2.6.3   Lexical Tone on Monosyllabic Verbs

At the lexical level, tone is phonemic in that it
minimally distinguishes two or more lexical items. It is
easy to observe some lexical contrasts on monosyllabic
items especially verbs of CV syllable structure. Tone is
an identificational feature of the verb word.

✳   See also 3.4.6 and 3.4.7

Sets of two contrastive tone verbs:

High	sí	'to pay'
Low	sî	'to look for, to want'

High	ɲí	'to have'
Mid	ɲi	'to choose'

Low	hǫ̀	'to ask'
Mid	hǫ	'to drive'

High	hé	'to excrete body waste (urine and faeces)'
Low-Rising	hě	'to be in possession of something by finding it'

Mid	nǫ	'to weave (a mat)'
Low-Rising	nǫ̌	'to make public announcement with special gong'

Low	rɔ̀	'to think'
Low-Rising	rɔ̌	'to make a hole through a wall or a door'

High	jɛ̣́	'to be happy'
Low-Rising	jɛ̣̌	'to wait'

High	yí	'to steal'
High-Falling	yî	'to refuse'

Sets of three contrastive tone verbs:

High	hū	'to drink'
Mid	hu	'to uproot'
Low	hū	'to roast in open fire'

High	tǫ̃	'to chew'
Low	tǫ̀	'to prepare mud for building walls of a house'
Low-Rising	tǫ̌	'to pick little items from the floor'

Sets of four contrastive tone verbs are extremely rare. The only set found so far is listed below:

High	nã́	'to sell'
Mid	na	'to open'
Low	nã̀	'to tear'
High-Falling	nã̂	'to leave'

Sets of five contrastive tone words have not been found in the language.

A table of monosyllabic verbs that contrast solely in lexical tone is given in Appendix 1 at the end of the thesis.

2.6.4   Lexical Tone Patterns on Disyllabic Verbs

A full range of nine lexical tone patterns that can occur on two CVCV syllable verbs are exemplified below:

1.   HH   [¯ ¯]   hárá   'to plane (wood)'

2.   HM   [¯ —]   dúdu   'to be together in action'

3.	HL	[‾‾ __]	hĭnè	'to be sweet'
4.	MH	[— ‾‾]	divĭ	'to be bad'
5.	MM	[— —]	hara	'to scratch lightly'
6.	ML	[— __]	tẹsĭ	'to care for'
7.	LH	[__ ‾‾]	hèɲĭ	'to shake'
8.	LM	[__ —]	vĭdị	'to be first'
9.	LL	[__ __]	hãrã	'to gather'

Verbs of more than two syllables have extended pattern using the same high, mid, and low tones.

2.6.5   Lexical Tone on Disyllabic Nouns

Tone also distinguishes two or more nominal lexical items of VCV syllable structure.

Sets of two contrastive tone nouns:

| usê | 'cough' |
| ùsè | 'question' |

| ĭhĭ | 'a case (usually long); fossils' |
| ihĭ | 'loss' |

| aɲã | 'blood' |
| ãɲa | 'dew' |

Sets of three contrastive tone nouns:

urū   'a kind of native red ointment worn by women who just delivered a new baby'

ūrū   'replacement of something on demand, compensation'

ūrū   'mushroom'

ọda   'a native tray'

ǭdā̄   'paint, tarmac'

ǫ́dâ   'law, order, command'

Sets of four contrastive tone nouns are rare but they do occur:

ohi   'broom'

ohí   'whistle'

ōhí   'a leader'

ōhî   'answer'

2.6.6   Lexical Tone Patterns on Disyllabic Nouns

A system of eleven contrastive tone patterns occurs on two VCV syllable nouns.

1.	HH	[‾ ‾]	ídá	'a place'
2.	HM	[‾ —]	íze	'a grass cutter (animal)'
3.	HL	[‾ __]	ákù	'inner room'

4.	MH	[— ⁻]	ahẹ́	'song'
5.	MM	[— —]	uye	'meat'
6.	ML	[— _]	anẹ̀	'egret'
7.	LH	[_ ⁻]	ōsẹ́	'wife'
8.	LM	[_ —]	ọ̀rụ	'crow'
9.	LL	[_ _]	ĩdũ	'lion'
10.	H·HF	[⁻ ⌐]	ɓdâ	'law'
11.	M HF	[_ ⌐]	ɪhî	'loss'

Nouns of more that 3 syllables have extended pattern, using the same high, mid, and low tones.

These nouns and verbs are described here in relation to tones in isolation only. Examples of tone changes which occur when they function in the verbal piece are discussed in later chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

SYNTACTIC JUNCTURES

The major syntactic juncture features of Ebira concern vowel elision, tone changes, and syllable prosodies. Each of these features is described within the grammatical structure of Ebira sentences.

3.1   Vowel Elision

As Ebira is an open syllable language, the last segment of any word is always a vowel. The first segment of nominals, with the possible exception of certain bound pronouns, is always a vowel, while verbals and some function words always start with consonants. Therefore, very frequently two vowels, labelled here as V_1 and V_2, come in juxtaposition. V_1 is the final vowel of the first item, and V_2 is the initial vowel of the second item. Within a grammatical phrase one of the two juxtaposed vowels is elided and the other one is retained. (There is only one condition in which both vowels are retained and this is described in section 3.4.7).

The nine vowel phonemes of the language can be divided into two clases according to their functional

manifestations at boundary junctures. These are close vowels and non-close vowels. The diagram below shows the divisions and their phonematic unit representations. The phonematic units are enclosed in brackets.

			FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
1	CLOSE	Raised	i (I)		u (U)
		Lowered	i̧		u̧
2	NON-CLOSE	Raised	e (E)		o (O)
		Lowered	ȩ	a (A)	o̧

In a simple grammatical VP + NP_o structure the following pattern of vowel elisions occur:

3.1.1   Close Vowels I and U as V_1 and V_2

In the following examples the close vowels i, i̧, u, and u̧ are presented in words and sentences to illustrate the pattern of elision that takes place when they occur in V_1 position and in V_2 position contiguously in certain grammatical structures.

3.1.1.1   I as V_1 and as V_2

The monosyllabic verb of CV structure /sî/ 'to want', is used as a typical word where the final vowel is /i/, that is V_1. Similarly, the verb /sî̧/ 'to take', is used as a typical word having /i̧/ as its final vowel, V_1.

Nominals having /i/ and /i̧/ as their initial vowels, such
as in /ĩzĩ/ 'bambara nuts' and /ĩŋɔ̃/ 'scales', illustrate
/i/ and /i̧/ as V$_2$ at word junctures. When the vowels /i/
and /i̧/ are juxtaposed at word junctions, in either
order, /i̧/ is elided and /i/ is retained. That means
that the raised close front vowel /i/ dominates the
lowered close front vowel /i̧/ at word junctions. Tones
are marked in the examples that follow as there is tone
movement or tone replacement when a vowel is elided.
Tone movement is described in 3.4.

i + i > i   sĩ   +   ĩzĩ   >   sĩzĩ

                     want   bambara nuts

                     ô sĩzĩ

                              'he wanted bambara nuts'

i + i̧ > i   sĩ   +   ĩ̧ŋɔ̃   >   sĩŋɔ̃

                     want   scale

                     ô sìŋɔ̧̃

                              'he wanted the scales'

i̧ + i > i   sį̃   +   ĩzĩ   >   sĩzĩ

                     take   bambara nuts

                     ɔ̧̃ sĩzĩ

                              'he took bambara nuts'

i̧ + i̧ > i̧   sį̃   +   ĩ̧ŋɔ̃   >   sį̃ŋɔ̧̃

                     take   scale

                     ɔ̧̃ sį̃ŋɔ̧̃

                              'he took the scales'

3.1.1.2   I as V_1;   U as V_2

The verbs /sî/ and /sἰ/ (see 3.1.1.1) are used here again as words having final /i/ and final /ἰ/. The nominals /ûjî/ 'basket' and /ųjἰ/ 'sugar cane' are used as examples of typical words having /u/ and /ų/ as initial vowels. When /i/ occurs as V_1 and /u/ as V_2, /i/ is elided and /u/ is retained. When /i/ occurs as V_1 and /ų/ occurs as V_2, neither is retained; instead the resulting vowel is /u/. When /ἰ/ occurs as V_1 and /u/ occurs as V_2, /ἰ/ is elided and /u/ is retained. The following examples illustrate these changes.

i + u > u   sî + ûjî   >   sūjî

look for basket

ô sūjî

'he looked for the basket'

i + ų > u   sî + ųjἰ   >   suji

look for sugar cane

ô sujἰ

'he looked for the sugar cane'

ἰ + u > u   sἰ + ûjî   >   sûjî

take   basket

ô̦ sûjî

'he took the basket'

į + u̟ > u̟   sį̃   +   u̟jị   >   su̟jị

take   sugar cane

ǫ̂ su̟jị

'he took the sugar cane'

Summary

Every vowel has two qualities out of the four given:

1. Raised or lowered;

2. Front or back.

In every combination of two close vowels (one final in a word and the other initial in the following word) in a phrase, the resulting vowel is the result of raised excluding lowered and back excluding front.

The same elision rules apply whatever the nature of the consonant that precedes V_1.

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All the examples above illustrate the grammatical sequence VP + NP. The same pattern of elision takes place within all grammatical phrases. Examples will now be given to illustrate the same combinations in the structure:

(N + N) + VP

    NP   + VP

The junction of NP + VP will be commented on later.

```
i + i > i    ozí    +    ĩzẽ    +    ộ vẹ́

             child       ĩze          he-came

             |N      +    N|          VP
             ----------------
                    NP          +      VP

                ozíĩzẽ                ộ vẹ́

             'Ize's child came'


i + i̧ > i    ozí    +    i̧cã    +    ộ vẹ́

             child       i̧cã          he-came

             |N      +    N|          VP
             ----------------
                    NP          +      VP

                Ozícã                 ộ vẹ́
             'Icã's child came'


i + u > u    ozí    +    ũrũ    +    ộ nã

             child       ũrũ          he-go

             |N      +    N|          VP
             ----------------
                    NP          +      VP

                ozũrũ                 ộ nã
             'Urũ's child went'
```

$$i + \underset{.}{u} > u \quad oz\acute{\underset{.}{i}} \quad + \quad \underset{.}{u}m\underset{.}{\tilde{u}}s\acute{a} \quad + \quad \underset{.}{\hat{o}} \; n\hat{a}$$

child $\underset{.}{u}m\underset{.}{\tilde{u}}s\acute{a}$ he-go

$$|N \quad + \quad N| \qquad VP$$
$$\overline{}$$
$$NP \qquad\qquad + \quad VP$$

$$Oz\acute{\underset{.}{u}}m\underset{.}{\tilde{u}}s\acute{a} \qquad\qquad \underset{.}{\hat{o}} \; n\hat{a}$$

'Um$\underset{.}{\tilde{u}}$s$\acute{a}$'s child went'

In this structure there is usually a pause between the NP functioning as subject and the VP, therefore no elision takes place at this juncture. But it is also possible to pronounce the clause in rapid speech without a pause between the NP and the VP in which case the rules for elision being described would operate.

3.1.1.3   U as V_1;   I as V_2

The verbs /tú/ 'to beat' and /d$\underset{.}{u}$/ 'to chase' are used here as typical words having /u/ and /$\underset{.}{u}$/ as final vowels. The nominals /ìzé/ 'Ize, female name' and /$\underset{.}{i}$cã/ 'male name' are used as words having /i/ and /$\underset{.}{i}$/ as their initial vowels. When /u/ occurs as V_1 and /i/ occurs as V_2, /i/ is elided and /u/ is retained. When /u/ occurs as V_1 and /$\underset{.}{i}$/ occurs as V_2, /$\underset{.}{i}$/ is elided and /u/ is retained. When /$\underset{.}{u}$/ occurs as V_1 and /i/ occurs as V_2, /u/ is the resulting vowel. When /$\underset{.}{u}$/ occurs as V_1 and /$\underset{.}{i}$/ as V_2, /$\underset{.}{i}$/ is elided and /$\underset{.}{u}$/ is retained. These changes are illustrated in the following examples:

u + i > u tū + îzế > tūzế

     beat   îzế

          ô tūzế

          'he beat Ize'

u + i̥ > u tū + i̥cã > tūcã

     beat   icã

          ô tūcã

          'he beat Ica'

u̥ + i > u du̥ + îzế > duzế

     chase   îzế

          ô̥ duzế

          'he chased Ize'

u̥ + i̥ > u̥ du̥ + i̥cã > du̥cã

     chase   i̥cã

          ô̥ du̥cã

          'he chased Icã'

   The consonants (t- and d-) segments of the syllables and/or words are typical of other consonants when they occur in combination with /U/ to form words. Whatever consonant precedes /U/, the pattern of elision would be the same as the one described in 3.1.1.3 above.

In the (N + N)NP structure where U is V_1 and I or U occur as V_2 the pattern of elision is identical with that of VP + NP (see 2.1.1.3). The following two examples are given for further illustration.

u + i $\rightarrow$ u   uvú   +   ĩzé   +   ô divî

madness   ĩze   it bad

N   +   N   +   VP

uvúzé ô divi

'Ize's madness is bad/serious'

u + ụ $\rightarrow$ u   uvú   +   ụmụ́sã +   ộ tã

madness   ụmụsã   it finish

N   +   N   +   VP

Uvumụsa ộ tã

'Ụmụsa's madness is finished, i.e.
Umụsa is healed of madness'

Here again, because there is a natural pause between the NP functioning as the subject and the VP in the above structure, no elision takes place between the NP final vowel and the VP initial vowel, even though the two vowels come in juxtaposition.

3.1.1.4   U as V_1 and as V_2

The verbs /tú/   'to beat/hit'

and /dụ/   'to chase'

are used as examples of typical words which show the pattern of elision. When /u/ occurs as V_1; and /ụ/ occurs

as V$_2$, V$_2$ is elided and V$_1$ is retained, that is, /u/ is retained. When /ṳ/ occurs as V$_1$ and /u/ as V$_2$, then V$_2$, /u/, is retained.

The nominals /usû/   'rat'

    and /ṳvá/   'crocodile'

are used to illustrate words having /u/ and /ṳ/ as the initial vowels.

u + u > u   tû   +   usû > tûsû

           hit   rat

           ô tûsû

           'he hit a rat'

u + ṳ > u   tû   +   ṳvá > tûvá

           hit   crocodile

           ô tûvá

           'he hit a crocodile'

ṳ + u > u   dṳ   +   usû > dusû

           chase   rat

           ǫ dusû

           'he chased a rat'

ṳ + ṳ > ṳ   dṳ   +   ṳvá > dṳvá

           chase   crocodile

           ǫ dṳvá

           'he chased a crocodile'

It is evident from these examples that the raised close back vowel /u/ dominates the raised and lowered close front vowels /i/ and /ị/, and the lowered close back vowel /ụ/ at word junctions.

3.1.2 Close Vowels as V₁, Non-Close Vowels as V₂

The pattern of elision is illustrated below.

3.1.2.1 I as V₁; and the Non-Close Vowels,
E, O and A as V₂

When either of the close front vowels, /i/ or /ị/, come in juxtaposition with any of the non-close vowels, e, ẹ, o, ọ, and a at word junctions, the close vowel is elided and the non-close vowel is retained.

Two verbs, /yí/   'to steal'

     and /jị/   'to cut'

are used in sentences of VP + NP structure to illustrate the elision pattern of close front vowel in V₁ position.

i + e > e   yí   +   ēcé > yécē

     steal   wine

     ô yécê hū

     'he stole some wine and drank it'

i + ẹ > ẹ   yí   +   ẹ̃bã > yẹ̃bã

     steal   chain

     ô yẹ̃bã

     'he stole the chain'

ị + ẹ ⟩ ẹ   jị   +   ẹ̃bã ⟩ jẹbã

        cut   chain

        ộ jẹ̃bã

        'he cut the chain off the door'

Similarly:

i + o ⟩ o	yí + ɔ̃bɔ̃ ⟩	yɔ́bɔ́	'steal a rope'
i + ọ ⟩ ọ	yí + ọcị̂ ⟩	yọ́cị̂	'steal a cane'
i + a ⟩ a	yí + ãgã́ ⟩	yã́gã́	'steal a chair'
ị + e ⟩ e	jị + ẽgṹ ⟩	jẽ́gṹ	'cut small tribal marks'
ị + o ⟩ o	jị + ɔ̃bɔ̃ ⟩	jɔ̃́bɔ̃́	'cut a rope'
ị + ọ ⟩ ọ	jị̣ + ọcị̂ ⟩	jọ̣cị̂	'cut a stick'
ị + a a	jị + avị̂ ⟩	javị̂	'cut a leaf'

For description of syllable prosodies which occur when the consonant preceding I is s, or z, or h, see section 3.3. For all other consonants the elision pattern is as illustrated above.

3.1.2.2   U as V_1; and the Non-Close Vowels
          E, O, A as V_2

The close back vowels, /u/ and /ụ/ in V_1 position and non-close vowels listed above in V_2 position at word junctions give rise to labial syllable prosody. This is described in detail in 3.2. However, two examples are given here to illustrate phonetic characteristics of the vowels in juxtaposition.

tu + e $>$ ^{W}e   tṵ + ezî $>$ t^{W}ézî   'beat the chil-
dren'

ô t^{W}ézî   ené yî   ə̃kə̃hî̦

he beat children   who stole money

'he beat the children who stole the
money'

dṵ + e̦ $>$ d^{W}e̦   dṵ + e̦vṵ $>$ d^{W}e̦vṵ   'chase a goat'

o̦ d^{W}e̦vu̦   kãnâ

he chase goat away

'he chased the goat away'

3.1.3   Non-Close Vowels E, O, A as V_1

When a non-close vowel occurs in V_1 position, there
is regularity in the pattern of elision. V_1 is always
elided and V_2 retained. It does not matter which vowel
occurs in V_2 position, whether it is a close vowel or a
non-close vowel. In the next examples, using again the VP
+ NP structure, the pattern of elision is illustrated.

It will be noticed that the preverb /o/ or /o̦/
retains in the elided forms of the phrase the quality
which it has in the non-elided forms. On the surface,
this appears to violate the rules of vowel harmony, but
in fact the preverb maintains the harmony it has with its
verb, and this helps to preserve and identify this verb
semantically.

3.1.3.1   E as V_1

a) e as V_1 in VP /rɛ̃/ 'to see' + V_2

e + i > i   rɛ̃ + îsî   ⟩   rîsî
             ô rîsî   'he saw a fly'

e + i̧ > i̧   rɛ̃ + i̧ta   ⟩   ri̧tã
             ô ri̧tã   'he saw the cloth'

e + u > u   rɛ̃ + unɛ̃   ⟩   rúne
             ô rúnɛ̃   'he saw a gazelle'

e + u̧ > u̧   rɛ̃ + ṵno̧   ⟩   rṵ́no̧
             ô rṵ́no̧   'he saw a cow'

e + e > e   rɛ̃ + ekû   ⟩   rɛ̃kû
             ô rɛ̃kû   'he saw a masquerade'

e + ȩ > ȩ   rɛ̃ + ȩvṵ   ⟩   rȩ̃vṵ
             ô rȩ̃vṵ   'he saw a goat'

e + o > o   rɛ̃ + ozî   ⟩   rõzî
             ô rõzî   'he saw a child'

e + o̧ > o̧   rɛ̃ + o̧zã   ⟩   rõ̧zã
             ô rõ̧zã   'he saw a person'

e + a > a   rɛ̃ + ãzã   ⟩   rázã
             ô rázã   'he saw some people'

b) ȩ as V_1 in VP /mȩ̃/ 'to make' + V_2

ȩ + i > i   mȩ̃ + îhî   ⟩   mîhî
             ô̧ mîhî   'he made a quiver'

ȩ + i̧ > i̧   mȩ̃ + i̧sã   ⟩   mi̧sá
             ô̧ mi̧sá   'he cooked food'

ẹ + u > u   mẹ̃ + ũjĩ   >   mũjĩ

     ô̩ mũjĩ   'he made a basket'

ẹ + ụ > ụ   mẹ̃ + ụ̃hụ̃   >   mụ̃hụ̃

     ô̩ mụ̃hụ̃   'he made a brush'

ẹ + e > e   mẹ̃ + ẽcẽ   >   mẽcẽ

     ô̩ mẽcẽ   'he made wine'

ẹ + ẹ > ẹ   mẹ̃ + ẽ̩kó̩   >   mẽ̩kó̩

     ô̩ mẽ̩kó̩   'he cooked porridge'

ẹ + o > o   mẹ̃ + óre   >   móre

     ô̩ móre   'he cooked water yam cake'

ẹ + o̩ > o̩   mẹ̃ + õ̩kũ   >   mõ̩kũ

     ô̩ mõ̩kũ   'he made a sickle'

ẹ + a > a   mẹ̃ + ãgá   >   mãgá

     ô̩ mãgá   'he made a chair'

3.1.3.2   O as V_1

a) O as V_1 in VP /tõ/ 'to arrange' + V_2

o + i > i   tõ + ĩhĩ   >   tĩhĩ

     ô tĩhĩ   'he arranged the quivers'

o + i̩ > i̩   tõ + ĩ̩tã   >   tĩ̩tã

     ô tĩ̩tã   'he arranged the pieces
            of cloth'

o + u > u   tõ + ũjĩ   >   tũjĩ

     ô tũjĩ   'he arranged the baskets'

o + ụ > ụ   tõ + ụji̩   >   tụji̩

     ô tụji̩   'he arranged the sugar canes'

o + e ⟩ e   tõ + ezí   ⟩ tezí

            ô tezí   'he arranged the chil-
dren'

o + ẹ ⟩ ẹ   tõ + ẹɲá   ⟩ tẹɲá

            ô tẹɲá   'he arranged the loads'

o + o ⟩ o   tõ + õbó   ⟩ tõbó

            ô tõbó   'he arranged the ropes'

o + ọ ⟩ ọ   tõ + ọhá   ⟩ tọhá

            ô tọhá   'he arranged the spears'

o + a ⟩ a   tõ + ãzã   ⟩ tãzã

            ô tãzã   'he arranged the people'

b) ọ as V_1 in VP /dọ/ 'to get' + V_2

ọ + i ⟩ i   dọ + íhĩ   ⟩ díhĩ

            ộ díhĩ   'he got the quiver'

ọ + ị ⟩ ị   dọ + ịtã   ⟩ dịtã

            ộ dịtã   'he got the cloth'

ọ + u ⟩ u   dọ + ũjĩ   ⟩ dũjĩ

            ộ dũjĩ   'he got the basket'

ọ + u ⟩ ụ   dọ + ụjị   ⟩ dụjị

            ộ dụjị   'he got the sugar cane'

ọ + e ⟩ e   dọ + ezí   ⟩ dézí

            ộ dézí   'he got the children'

ọ + ẹ ⟩ ẹ   dọ + ẹɲá   ⟩ dẹ́ɲá

            ộ dẹ́ɲá   'he got the load'

ọ + o ⟩ o   dọ + ozí   ⟩ dózí

            ộ dózí   'he got the child'

ọ + ọ > ọ   dọ̃ + ọha᷄   ⟩   dọ̃ha᷄

            ộ dọ̃ha᷄   'he got a spear'

ọ + a > a   dọ̃ + ãzã   ⟩   da᷄zã

            ộ da᷄zã   'he got the people'

3.1.3.3   A as V_1

a as V_1 in VP /na᷄/ 'to sell' + V_2

a + i > i   na᷄ + ĩhĩ   ⟩   nĩhĩ

            ộ nĩhĩ   'he sold a quiver'

a + ị > ị   na᷄ + ịtã   ⟩   nịtã

            ộ nịtã   'he sold cloth'

a + u > u   na᷄ + uye   ⟩   nũye

            ộ núye   'he sold meat'

a + ụ > ụ   na᷄ + ụra᷄   ⟩   nụra᷄

            ộ nụra᷄   'he sold a pig'

a + e > e   na᷄ + ẽcẽ   ⟩   nẽcẽ

            ộ nẽcẽ   'he sold wine'

a + e > ẹ   na᷄ + ẹ́zẹ̃   ⟩   nẹ̃zẹ̃

            ộ nẹ̃zẹ̃   'he sold a big drum'

a + o > o   na᷄ + õbó   ⟩   nõbó

            ộ nõbó   'he sold a rope'

a + ọ > ọ   na᷄ + ọha᷄   ⟩   nọ̃ha᷄

            ộ nọ̃ha᷄   'he sold a spear'

a + a > a   na᷄ + ãga᷄   ⟩   na᷄ga᷄

            ộ na᷄gá   'he sold a chair'

3.1.4   Summary Chart of Vowel Elision Patterns

The following chart gives the overall picture of vowel elision patterns including labial prosodic features (see 3.2).

V_1	V_2								
	i	i̧	u	u̧	e	ẹ	o	ọ	a
i	i	i	u	u	e	ẹ	o	ọ	a
i̧	i	i̧	u	u̧	e	ẹ	o	ọ	a
u	u	u	u	u	ʷe	ʷẹ	ʷo	ʷọ	ʷa
u̧	u	u̧	u	u̧	ʷe	ʷẹ	ʷo	ʷọ	ʷa
e	i	i̧	u	u̧	e	ẹ	o	ọ	a
ẹ	i	i̧	u	u̧	e	ẹ	o	ọ	a
o	i	i̧	u	u̧	e	ẹ	o	ọ	a
ọ	i	i̧	u	u̧	e	ẹ	o	ọ	a
a	i	i̧	u	u̧	e	ẹ	o	ọ	a

From the above chart we observe that:

a)   in all combinations where both V_1 and V_2 are vowels of the close set (i, i̧, u, u̧),

   i) <u>raised</u> vowels (i, u) dominate <u>non-raised vowels</u> (i̧, u̧);

   ii)   <u>backness</u> dominates <u>frontness</u>.

b)   In all combinations where V_1 and/or V_2 is a vowel of the non-close set (e, ẹ, o, ọ, a), V_2 always dominates V_1.

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3.1.5 Harmony of the Subject (Preverb) Pronoun

It will be observed from the examples in the preced-
ing sections that in the grammatical structure Pronoun +
Verb + Noun object, the pronoun vowel harmonises with the
vowel of the verb. Even when the vowel of the verb is
lost by elision the pronoun continues to harmonise with
that underlying vowel, irrespective of the harmony set of
the noun. In the normal running pronunciation, therefore,
any harmonic similarity between the pronoun and the new
combination of verb + noun object is accidental, the pro-
noun in some cases being in harmony, and in other cases
out of harmony.

The phonological notation can be stated thus:

```
           Pr.    Vb.                      N. obj.
H a/b [ (V      CV) ]      +      H a/b [ (VCV) ]   =


                 H a/b [ (V) ] + H a/b [ (CVCV) ]
```

3.2 Labial Syllable Prosody

A syllable prosody is a feature which characterises a
whole syllable, rather than one specific element of that
syllable.

The syllables /tu/ and /dụ/, for example, are charac-
terised by lip rounding for the consonants as much as for
the vowels. Indeed, in the junction forms this prosody
is maintained by the lip rounding for the consonant even

when the vowel is elided. This applies to all -Cu and

-Cu̧ examples, whatever the C, when followed by a non-

close vowel. Labial prosody is represented by w̲ in the

elision forms.

3.2.1   U̲ ̲a̲s̲ ̲V̲$_1$ ̲ ̲i̲n̲ ̲V̲P̲ ̲+̲ ̲N̲P̲ ̲S̲t̲r̲u̲c̲t̲u̲r̲e̲s̲

tu + e > twe   tú + ezí   >   twézí

                beat children

                ô twézí

                'he beat the children'

tu + ȩ > twȩ   tú + ȩvú̧   >   twȩvú̧

                beat goat

                ô twȩvú̧

                'he beat a goat'

tu + o > two   tú + ozí   >   twőzí

                beat child

                ô twőzí

                'he beat a child'

tu + o̧ > two̧   tú + o̧zã   >   two̧zã

                beat person

                ô two̧zã

                'he beat a person'

tu + a > twa   tú + ãzã   >   twãzã

                beat people

                ô twãzã

                'he beat people'

dụ + e $>$ dwe   dụ + ezí $>$ dwezí

                  chase children

                  ộ dwezi

                  'he chased the children away

dụ + ẹ $>$ dwẹ   dụ + ẹvú $>$ dwẹvú

                  chase goat

                  ộ dwẹvú

                  'he chased a goat (away)'

dụ + o $>$ dwo   dụ + ózí $>$ dwozí

                  chase child

                  ộ dwózí

                  'he chased a child (away)'

du + ọ $>$ dwọ   dụ + ọzã $>$ dwọ̀zã

                  chase person

                  ộ dwọ̀zã

                  'he chased a person (away)'

dụ + a $>$ dwa   dụ + ãzã $>$ dwàzã

                  chase people

                  ộ dwàzà

                  'he chased people (away)'

We can represent these examples in the following phonological notation.

$$^{w}(CV_1) \quad + \quad (V_2) \quad > \quad {}^{w}(CV_2)$$

3.2.2   U as V_1 in (N + N)NP Structure

When /u/ and /ụ/ occur as V_1 in N + N complex NP structure they manifest exactly the same labial syllable prosody as in VP + NP listed above. (This confirms the regularity of labial syllable prosody resulting from /u/ and /ụ/ in the environment of non-close vowels in the language.) Examples where /u/ and /ụ/ occur as V_1 are given in (N + N)NP structures and in a larger structure of NP_s + VP + NP_o.

ụ + ọ > wọ   ẹvụ́ + ọ̀mụ̄yā   ⟩   ẹvwọ́mụ̄yā

                   goat + ọ̀mụ̄yā   goat (of) ọ̀mụ̄yā

                   |N + N| 'ọ̀mụ̄yā's goat'
                   ─────────
                       NP

   NP + VP Structure:

       ẹvụ́ + ọ̀mụ̄yā + ộ rị́   +   ẹnụ + ọ̀mụ́ha
       |goat ọ̀mụ̄yā| it ate |yam + ọ̀mụ́ha|
       ─────────────   ──────   ─────────────

           NP_s +   VP + NP_o

The sentence in the elided form would be:

       ẹvwọ́mụ̄yā   ộ rẹ́nwọ́mụ́ha

       goat (of) ọ́mụ̄yā   it ate yam (of) ọ̀mụ́ha

       'ọ̀mụ̄ya's goat ate ọ̀mụ́ha's yam'

The underlined syllables represent the rounding juncture prosody of the (N + N) NP structure.

3.3   Palatal Syllable Prosody

Like the labial syllable prosody, palatal syllable prosody occurs at morpheme or word junctions. But unlike the labial prosody it is limited to syllables beginning with one of the consonants /h/, /s/, and /z/, and occurring before front close vowels /i/ and /i̟/ when these segments occur in CV words and such words come in juxtaposition with other words having non-close initial vowels. When a word, having a CV sequence where the C is /h/, /s/ or /z/ and the V is /i/ or /i̟/, is followed by a non-close initial vowel in the next word, palatal prosody always occurs at the junction. In the case of /h/ + /i/ or /i̟/ the prosodic feature /y/ is written immediately following it /hy/. In the cases of /s/ and /z/ + /i/ or /i̟/ the palatal exponent of /i/ or /i̟/ would give rise to allophonic variation *[ʃ]* and *[ʒ]* respectively. These are exemplified below.

3.3.1   /hi/ or /hi̟/ + Non-Close Vowels E, O, A

The structure VP + NP of the imperative and the indicative moods, is used in the examples.

        VP /hi̥/   'to buy'

        or /hi̥/   'to call'

is used in the examples.

Semantic constraints limit the choice of VP to /hi̥/ or /hi̥/ 'to buy', or 'to call' respectively. There are se-

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quences /hĩ/ 'to sweep' and /hĩ/ 'to weave', and /hi/ 'to string (beads)'. These can only precede particular kinds of nouns and such nouns do not have non-close initial vowels. However, the principle of palatal prosody would apply in any environment of /hi/ or /hị/ plus a nominal with a non-close initial vowel.

Selected noun phrases are used to follow the VP in the following examples:

hị + e 〉 hye   hĩ + ēcē 〉 hyēcē

                 buy + wine

                 ộ hyēcē

                 'he bought some wine'

hị + ẹ 〉 hyẹ   hĩ + ẹza 〉 hyẹza

                 buy + beans

                 ộ hyẹza

                 'he bought some beans'

hị + o 〉 hyo   hĩ + ozĩ 〉 hyózĩ

                 call + child

                 ộ hyózĩ

                 'he called the child'

hị + ọ 〉 hyọ   hĩ + ọmũyã 〉 hyọ́mũyã

                 call + ọmũyã

                 ộ hyọ́mũyã

                 'he called ọmũyã'

hi̤ + a ﹥ hya   hḭ + anọ ﹥ hyanọ

buy + salt

ộ hyanọ

'he bought some salt'

3.3.2   /si/ or /sḭ/ + Non-Close Vowels, E, O, A

/si/ or /sḭ/ followed by a non-close initial vowel in the next word gives rise to the allophonic variant [ʃ]. The following examples are written phonemically except that the phonetic symbol [ʃ] is used to indicate the fused form.

si + e ﹥[ʃe]   sḭ   + ezḭ   ﹥   [ʃezḭ]

look for + children

[ộ ʃezḭ]

'he looked for the children'

si + ẹ ﹥[ʃe]   sḭ   + ẹza   ﹥   [ʃẹza]

look for + beans

[ộ ʃẹza]

'he looked for some beans'

si + o ﹥[ʃo]   sḭ   + ozḭ   ﹥   [ʃozḭ̃]

look for + child

[ộ ʃozḭ]

'he looked for the child'

si + o > [ʃo]   sî   + ̃ọmụ̄yã̄   >   [ʃ ̃ọmụ̄yã̄]

look for + ̃ọmụ̄yã̄

[ô ʃ ̃ọmụ̄yã̄]

'he looked for Omụ̄yã̄'

si + a > [ʃa]   sî   + anộ   >   [ʃanộ]

look for + some salt

[ô ʃanộ́]

'he looked for salt'

3.3.3 /zi/ or /zị/ + Non-Close Vowels E, O, A

Similarly, /zi/ or /zị/ in the environment of non-close vowels gives rise to the allophonic variant [ʒ] at word junctions.

zị + e >[ʒe]   zị   + ezî   >   [ʒezî]

hurt + children   'hurt the children'

(ịrẹsụ̄)   ộ   ʒezî

(head)   it-hurt + children

'the children had headaches'

zị + ẹ > [ʒẹ]   zị + ẹnẹbẹ́nî   >   [ʒẹnẹbẹ́nî]

hurt + elder brother

(ịrẹsụ̄)   ộ ʒẹnẹbẹ́nî

'the elder brother had a headache'

zị + o >[ʒo]   zị + ozí   >   [ʒozí]

            hurt + child

            (ịrẹsụ)   ô ʒozí

            'the child had a headache'

zị́ + ọ >[ʒọ]   zị + ọ̃mṳyã̄   >   [ʒọ̃mṳyã̄]

            hurt + ọ̃mṳyã̄

            (ịrẹsụ)   ộ ʒọ̃mṳyã̄

            'Ọmṳyã̄ had a headache'

zị + a >[ʒa]   zị + ã̄dá̃ava   >   [ʒã̄dá̃ava]

            hurt + ã̄dá̃ava

            (ịrẹsụ)   ộ ʒã̄dá̃ava

            'Adá̃ava had a headache'

3.3.4   /hi/, /si/, and /zi/ in (N + N)NP Structure

    All the examples given for /hi/, /si/, and /zi/ above
are in VP + NP structure. It is pertinent to point out
the same palatal prosodic rule would apply in (N + N)NP
structure. One example each in which /hi/, /si/, /zi/
sequences occur in (N + N)NP structures will suffice to
confirm the validity of the rule.

ohi   + ozí   >   ohyõzí   (see   3.5.1)
broom + child   broom (of) child
                'the child's broom'

õsĩ   + ẹnụ   [õʃẹ̃nụ]   (ʃee 3.5.)

poker + yam   poker (of) yam

                  'a poker for picking hot yams

                  from the pot'

ozí   + ọ̃mṵyã   [oʒǫ̃mṵyã]   (ʃee 3.5.1)

child + ọ̃mṵyã   child (of) ọ̃mṵyã

                  'ọ̃mṵyã's child'

3.3.5 /hi/, /si/, or /zi/ + Close Vowels, I and U

   /hi/, /si/, or /zi/ followed by a close initial vowel
in the next word does not manifest palatial juncture syl-
lable prosody. Examine these examples:

hĩ + i > hi   hĩ   +   íze̋   >   híze̋

                   buy   +   íze̋

                   ộ híze̋

                   'he bought íze̋ (grass cutter)'

hĩ + u > hu   hĩ   +   ṵrã́   >   hṵrã́

                   buy   +   pig

                   ộ hṵrã́

                   'he bought a pig'

sì + i > si   sî   +   îzé > sîzé

                look +   îzé

                    ô sîzé

                'he looked for Ize'

sì + u > su   sì   +   ūrû > sùrû

                look +   ùrú

                    ô sùrû

                'he looked for Urú'

zi̧ + i > zi   zi̧   +   îzé > zîzé

                hurt +   ìzé

                    ô̧ zîzé

                'it hurt Ìzé'

zi̧ + u > zu   zi̧   +   ūrû > zùrú

                hurt +   ūrû

                    ô̧ zùrû

                'it hurt Ùrú'

It can be observed that it is the normal rule of vowel elision of close vowels that operates in the above examples. See 3.1.

3.4   Tone Changes

When two vowels of successive syllables come in jux-
taposition one of the vowels is elided and the other one
retained as described in 3.1. Every syllable has a tone
largely carried by the vowel in Ebira, and morphotonemic
changes that occur differ from the patterns of the vowels
described. The three level tones of the language exhibit
varying dominant characteristics at word junctions.

These are exemplified below, using the imperative
mood of the verbal piece of VP + NP_o structure. This
structure also illustrates the contractions of three syl-
lable tones to two tones. The labels T_1 and T_2 are used
to illustrate the pattern of tone changes at junctions.
T_1 is the tone on the final syllable of the verb. T_2 is
the tone of the initial syllable of the noun object.

3.4.1   High Tone /ˊ/ as T_1

When High tone occurs as T_1, whatever other tone
occurs as T_2, T_1, High tone, will always dominate T_2.

T_1 T_2 Examples

H + H > H   yí   + ípe   >   yípe

                steal + flute   'steal reed flute'

                [⎺ ⎺ —]   >   [⎺ —]

                H + H M   >   H M

H + M > H   rɪ̣ + uye   >   rṹye

                   eat + meat   'eat meat'

                   [‾ — —]   >   [‾ —]

                   H + M   M   >   H   M

H + L > H   rɪ̣ + ūzɪ̀   >   rṹzɪ̀

                   eat + vegetable   'eat boiled
                                       vegetable'

                   [‾ _ _]   >   [‾ _]

                   H + L   L   >   H   L

3.4.2   Mid Tone /-/ as T_1

When Mid tone occurs as T_1 any tone that may occur as T_2 will always dominate T_1.

M + H > H   du̧ + ɪ́ze   >   dṹze

                   chase + ɪ́ze   'chase the grass cutter'

                   [— ‾ —]   >   [‾ —]

                   M + H   M   >   H   M

M + M > M   du̧ + uye   >   duye

                   chase + animal   'chase the animal'

                   [— — —]   >   [— —]

                   M + M   M   >   M   M

M + L > L   na + ȭzȇ   >   nȭzȇ

                   open + door   'open the door'

                   [— _ _]   >   [_ _]

                   M + L   L   >   L   L

3.4.3   Low Tone /ˋ/ as T_1

Similarly, when Low tone occurs as T_1, any tone that may occur as T_2 will dominate T_1.

L + H > H   hǐ + ǐpe > hǐpe

                  buy + flute   'buy a reed flute'

                  [__ ‾ —] > [‾ —]

                  L + H M   > H M

L + M > M   dã + eɲi > deɲi

                  fetch + water   'fetch water'

                  [__ — —] > [— —]

                  L + M M   > M M

L + L > L   nẽ + ẽpẽ > nẽpẽ

                  cook + soup   'cook the soup'

                  [__ __ __] > [__ __]

                  L + L L   > L L

3.4.4   A Summary Chart of the Three Level Tones at Junctions

The table overleaf gives the overall summary of the shifting and dominance of the three level tones at word junctions.

	T$_2$			
		H	M	L
T$_1$	H	H	H	H
	M	H	M	L
	L	H	M	L

We can observe from the chart that:

a) High tone, whether it occurs as T$_1$ or as T$_2$ dominates other tones.

b) T$_2$ dominates T$_1$ in all other cases.

3.4.5   Automatic Downstep

When high tone as T$_1$ is followed by low tone as T$_2$, the high tone dominates but automatic downstep occurs when the tone on the following syllable is high. For example:

VP + NP   rɪ̣ + ụ̄rā̃   >   rụ́rā̃*   'eat pig (pork)'

            H + L H   >   H' H

            eat + pig

(N + N)NP   ozɪ́ + ɪ̂zέ   >   ozɪ́zέ   'Izέ's child'

            M H + L H   >   M H'H

            child + ɪ̂zέ

---

* ['] after high tone denotes downstep.

The tone environment, H + LH $>$ H'H, seems to be
the only environment found yet where automatic downstep
occurs. H'H is the same phonetically as H M.

3.4.6   High-Falling Tone [^] at Junctions

High-falling tone does not occur word initial except
on the verb prefix / ô/ộ / where the syllable may stand
as an independent morpheme sometimes. High-falling tone
normally occurs word final and it may come in juxaposi-
tion with other tones. When it occurs at morpheme or
word junctions its high tonetic exponent is dominant and
it would dominate other tones just like the level high
tone – either in VP + NP or (N + N)NP structure as shown
below. The high-falling tone functions at junctions in
exactly the same way as high tone.

VP + NP   kựrâ   + oyí $>$ kựróyî

             cry (at) + thief   'cry at a thief'

             H HF   + M H $>$ H H H

       ộ kựróyî   'he shouted and/or clap-
                                  ped his hands at a thief
                                  who is caught'

(N + N)NP   ópô   + ãri $>$ ópári

             long drum + ãri   'Ari's long drum'

             H HF   + L M $>$ H H M

             ópári   ô zózã

             long drum (of) ãri   is good

             'Ari's long drum is good'

3.4.7 Low-Rising Tone [ˇ] at Junctions

It was mentioned earlier that low-rising tone has a very rare occurrence and distribution in the language. It occurs only on the monosyllabic verbs listed in 2.6.2. For that reason, it only occurs in VP + NP structure and it can only occur as T_1 and never as T_2. This is the only situation in the language where V_1 and V_2 are juxtaposed that <u>both</u> vowels retain their vocalic character. When low-rising tone occurs as T_1, its tonetic exponents of low and high spread over the two vowels that are juxtaposed. The low tone exponent occurs on V_1 while the high tone exponent dominates the inherent tone of V_2. The VP

   /hě/   'to be in possession of something by
                     finding it

is used to juxtapose with nominals having initial high, mid, and low tones.

   hě + ípe > hěípe   'find and possess reed flute'
   find + flute

   LR + HM   > LHM

             ô hěípe 'he is in possession of the
                       reed flute he found'

hè̌ + e̩nu̩ > hè̄é̩nu̩ 'find and possess a yam'

find + yam

LR + MM > LHM

ô hè̄é̩nu̩ 'he is in possession of a yam
he found'

hè̌ + ṳno̩ > hè̄ṵ́no̩ 'find and possess a cow'

find + cow

LR + LM > LHM

ô hè̄ṵ́no̩ 'he is in possession of a cow
he found'

3.5   High Tone as a Syntactic Juncture Feature

High tone is used to mark a genitive relationship and a locative relationship between two nominals. The genitive high tone can only occur in an NP + NP structure. The locative high tone can occur in an NP + NP structure as well as in VP + NP structure. These are described below giving some emphasis to syntactic demarcative features as well.

3.5.1   The Genitive High Tone

The genitive relationship between two nominals is marked by a high tone on the initial syllable of the second nominal. Thus irrespective of the inherent tones of V_1 and V_2, this genitive high tone dominates. Most nouns can occur in genitival relationship with other nouns.

Noun$_1$		Noun$_2$	Genitive NP
ozí	+	ìzé	ozízé
M H	+	L H	M H'H
child	+	Izé	'Izé's child'
ẹnụ	+	ozí	enʷózí
M M	+	M H	M H H
yam	+	ozí	'the child's yam'

òsì	+	ẹnụ		òʃẹ̃nụ	
L L	+	M M		L H M	
poker	+	yam		'the poker (of) for yam'	

ịpá	+	ẽcẽ		ịpécẽ	
M H	+	L L		M H L	
cup	+	wine		'the cup of wine'	

ọhá	+	íze		ọhíze	
M H	+	H M		M H M	
spear	+	grasscutter		'spear of grasscutter, i.e. a spear for hunting grasscutter'	

ípé	+	ozí		ípózí	
H H	+	M H		H H H	
flute	+	child		'the child's flute'	

ẹnụ	+	ídá		ẹnúdá	
M M	+	H H		M H H	
yam	+	ídá		'Ida's yam'	

ẽcẽ	+	ídá		ẽcídá	
L L	+	H H		L H H	
wine	+	ídá		'Ida's wine'	

ĩdṵ	+	ðhĩ	ĩd^{w}ðhĩ
L L	+	L H	L H H
lion	+	chief	'the chief's lion'

Thus we can posit that in addition to the grammatical function, high tone is an important syntactic juncture feature. It always supercedes other tones at such word junctions.

3.5.2   The Locative High Tone

The locative relationship between two nominals in a transitive clause is marked by a high tone on the initial syllable of the second nominal. Similar to the genitive high tone, the locative tone can occur on NP + NP structure. The distinction between the genitive high tone and the locative high tone is syntactically and semantically determined. One main distinction is that the second nominal phrase carrying initial high tone in locative phrases is always a name of a place or a particular location whereas the second nominal phrase of the genitive can be any noun.

VP	+	NP$_1$	+	NP$_2$
ȏ hĩ	+	ẹnu	+	āgɛ́va
HF L	+	M M	+	L H M
he buy	+	yam	+	āgɛ́va

ȏ hyẹnu āgɛ́va

HF M M H'H M

'he bought yam at Agɛ́va'

Note that the locative high tone replaces the low

tone of initial syllable [ā-] of āgḗva in NP$_2$ ṭʰẹ rɛf ʿɨ

ˑ ᵊgᵊⁿ ˑ ⱨⱨˑ ᵗᵒ ᵃᵘⱨₑⱨₕⱨᵢ ⱨᵒ₩ᵖᵃˑᵗ₩ⱨⱨ

ǫ nā	+	íze	+	ōhù	
HF + H	+	H M	+	L L	
he + sell		grass- + cutter		market	

ǫ níze ōhù

HF H M H L

'he sold a grass cutter in the market'

The first noun is the direct object of the verb and the second noun is a locative and may be considered as a separate phrase.

There may be a natural pause between NP$_1$ and NP$_2$ in the above structures, and no vowel elision takes place between the two vowels that come in juxtaposition.

There is a class of verbs which take locative phrase directly without any other NP preceding the LP. These are verbs in which there is a relationship with a speci-

fic location implied. These include verbs like,

    [rá]   'to live in or inhabit a place'

    [z^{w}ẽ]   'to run in a race at a place'

    [gé̩]   'to meet at a place'

<u>VP</u>   <u>NP</u>$_{o Loc}$

    o̩ rá + abá   o̩ rábá

    HF H + M H   HF H H

    he live + abá   'he lived in Abá'

    ô zwẽ + ẽkó   ô zwẽkó

    HF L + L H   HF H'H

    he run + ẽkó   'he ran (a race) at Ekó'

    ê̩ gé̩ + è̩gé̩   ê̩ gé̩gé̩

    HF H + L H   HF H H

   they meet + è̩gé̩   'they met at Egé̩'

    Similar to the genitive tone, the locative high tone, in addition to its grammatical function, marks a syntactic junction. The junctions between <u>e̩nu</u> and <u>ãgé̩va</u>; <u>íze</u> and <u>ōhù</u>; <u>rá</u> and <u>abá</u>; <u>zwẽ</u> and <u>ẽkó</u>; and <u>gé̩</u> and <u>è̩gé̩</u> in the above sentences are marked by high tone.

    We can conclude this section with the remark that <u>high tone</u> is a dominant tone, carrying heavy lexical, grammatical, and juncture functions in Ebira.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE VERBAL PIECE: PHRASE RANK

4.1   The Verbal Piece

The term 'verbal piece' is well known in linguistic studies, but is often used in slightly different ways. In this thesis the term verbal piece is used to cover any grammatical unit (at whatever rank) which has a verb as its nucleus.   It enables me to treat various categories of the verbal clause, the verbal phrase, the verbal group, and the verbal word. The description of the verbal piece in Ebira covers a very large part of the grammar of the language.   It is the core of the grammar.

4.2   The Grammatical Hierarchy

For descriptive purposes, a grammatical hierarchy comprising various units is established.   The units are sentence, clause, phrase, and word.   Each unit is made up of units of the next lower rank.   Thus sentence unit consists of clauses, clause unit consists of phrases, and phrase unit consists of words.

4.2.1   Sentence Rank

The structure of the sentence unit can be diagrammed as follows:

$$S \longrightarrow \pm \text{Dep. Cl.}^3 + \text{Ind. Cl.} \pm \text{Dep. Cl.}^3$$

The sentence normally contains one obligatory independent clause, also called the main clause, one or more optional clauses before the independent clause, and one or more optional clauses after the independent clause. Up to three dependent clauses may occur in sequence but usually not more than one occurs.

Examples:

a)   // Ọmụ̄yā ọ̄ọ̄   mẹ̃ ụkọ́rọ ẹ̃tẹ̃ rẹ̃   /

    Omuya he-if do work   well/hard

        Dep. Cl.

    ộ   vâ   ɲ̃ị̃   ẹ̃kẹ̃hị̃ //

    he   will   have money

        Ind. Cl.

    'if Ọmụ̄yā works hard, he will be rich'

b)   // Ọmụ̄yā āā   mẹ   ụkọ́rọ ẹ̃tẹ̃ rẹ̃ /

    Omuya he-is doing work   well/hard

         Ind. Cl.

     ḿ   mẽ̃ rẽ́   ɛ̃́ //

    when I   see him

         Dep. Cl.

    'Ọmụ̄yā was working hard when I saw him'

Sentence (a) contains one dependent clause before the main clause and sentence (b) contains one dependent clause after the main clause. Conditional dependent clauses usually precede the main clause, and purpose and reason dependent clauses usually follow the main clause.

4.2.2   Clause Rank (Verbal Clauses Only)

The structure of the verbal clause consists of an obligatory verbal phrase, optional nominal subject and optional nominal object. It can be diagrammed as:

$$\text{Verb Cl.} \longrightarrow \pm NP_S + VP \pm NP_O$$

While NP_S is described here as 'optional', whether or not a given clause will include an NP_S, will depend on:

(1)   the mood of the clause: Imperative clauses never include an NP_S;

(2)   the discourse structure: for example, where a sequence of clauses share the same NP_S, this will usually occur only in the first clause of the sequence.

Similarly, whether or not a given clause includes an NP_O is determined by two factors:

(1)   the nature of the verb in the VP: for example, transitive verbs are usually followed by NP_O,

intransitive verbs are never followed by NP_o
(see further, 5.5);

(2)   the discourse structure of the text: for
example, in Serial Verb Constructions, more
than one verb may share the same NP_o, and this
will occur only in the first clause of the
series, although its presence is implied in
subsequent clauses. (See chapter 6 for Serial
Verb Constructions.)

Expansion of the clause consists of optional Temporal
phrase, or Adverbial phrase, or Locative phrase. See
further description in chapter 5.

4.2.3   Phrase Rank

There are several types of phrase units. These are:

Nominal phrase

Verbal phrase

Adverbial phrase

Temporal phrase

Locative phrase

The focus of this description is the Verbal Phrase.
The structure of other types of phrases is only described
to the extent that is necessary to explain the verbal
piece.

4.3   The Verbal Phrase

The verbal phrase is the nucleus of the clause. The nucleus of the verbal phrase is the verb word, which is obligatory and constant in form. Every verbal phrase contains a verb word.

4.3.1   The Structure of the Verbal Phrase

Grammatical changes, such as difference of mood, tense, number, person, and polarity are signalled by the use of preverbal items, some of which are words, others being affixes. Preverbs also signal some dependent or independent relationships in the clause. These preverbs vary in tone and phonetic shape. In particular, their form is governed by the vowel harmony set of the verb which they qualify. Thus if the vowel of the verb word belongs to vowel harmony Set A, the vowels of all its preverbs also belong to Set A.

Up to three preverbs may occur in a verbal phrase, and preverbs are therefore grouped according to 'orders', showing the order in which they will occur when they co-occur in the same VP. Order 1 preverbs occur first, followed by Order 2 preverbs, followed by Order 3 preverbs, followed by the verb. There are, however, a number of co-occurrence restrictions, which will be described below.

(a)   ọ̀   yị̀   vâ   vẹ̀

Order 1   2   3   V

       3rd per. sing. neg. fut. verb

       he   not   will come

            'he will not come'

(b)   ọ̀   yị̀   vâ   nâ   â

Order 1   2   3   V   post V

       3rd per. sing. neg. fut. verb pron. obj.

       he   not   will sell it

            'he will not sell it'

Analysis of the language makes it necessary to set up a number of grammatical categories, which are summarised in section 4.3.2. In brief, these are signalled by the different orders of preverbs as follows:

Order 1 Signals	Order 2 Signals	Order 3 Signals
Tense: Past-simple	Polarity: Negative	Tense: Future
Progressive	or	Immediate
Habitual	Tense: Perfective	or General
Person: 1st, 2nd, 3rd		
Number: Singular and		
Plural		

Thus person and number are signalled by preverbs of Order 1, polarity by preverbs of Order 2, while the differences of tense may be signalled by preverbs of any of the three orders in particular cases.

Order 1 preverbs are prefixes and are phonologically bound to the verb or to any preverb which they precede, although in the orthography they are written as separate words.

Another element of the VP is the pronoun object, a 'postverb' which is a suffix to the verb word. See example (b) above. The form of the pronoun object is also governed by the vowel harmony Set of the verb.

Thus the structure of the verbal phrase may be diagrammed as follows:

$$VP \longrightarrow \; + Pre\; V_1 \pm Pre\; V_2 \pm Pre\; V_3 + V \pm Post\; V$$

All verbal phrases have an obligatory verb item, and (except the imperative) an obligatory Order 1 preverb. These structures account for all 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular and plural examples in the past simple, progressive, and habitual positive tenses. Negative examples have the additional Order 2 negative preverb. Perfective and Future tense examples have the appropriate Order 2 or Order 3 preverbs.

4.3.2   Summary of Grammatical Categories Signalled in the Verbal Phrase in Independent Clauses

The following display summarises the grammatical cate-
gories which are signalled in verbal phrase:

```
          ┌──Indicative
          ├──Interrogative
  MOOD ────┤──Imperative
          └──Subjunctive

          ┌──Present (continuous)
          │                  ┌──Simple
          ├──Past────────────┤
          │                  └──Perfective
  TENSE ───┤
(indicative and             ┌──General
 interrogative   ├──Future───┤
 clauses only)              └──Immediate
          └──Habitual

          ┌──Positive
  POLARITY ┤
          └──Negative

          ┌──First
  PERSON ──┤──Second
          └──Third

          ┌──Singular
  NUMBER ──┤
          └──Plural
```
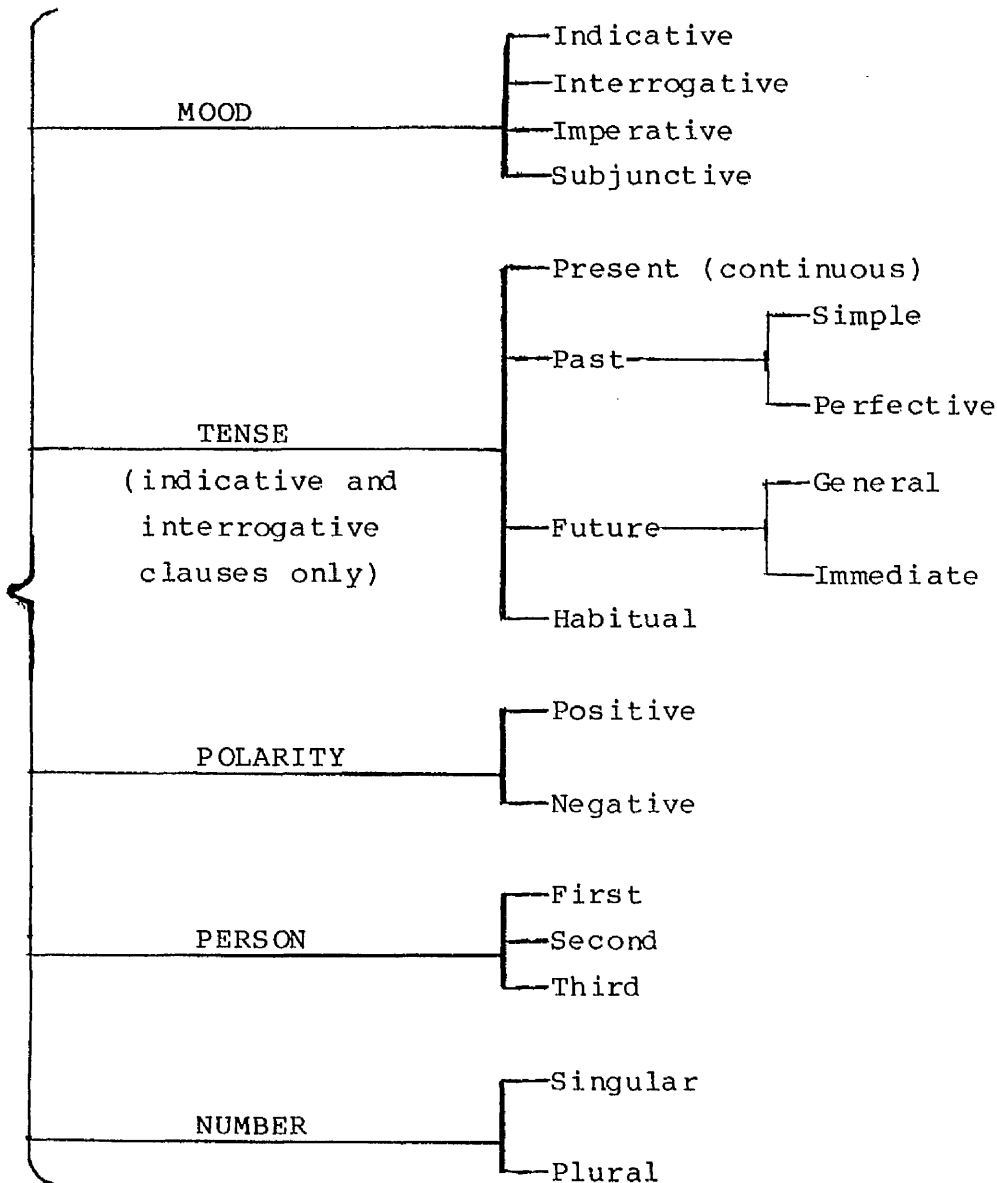
Note that there are no gender distinctions in the
grammatical categories of the VP.

If one took full account of high register as a fea-
ture of Interrogative pieces, it might be possible to
consider Mood as a category not of the verbal phrase but
of the whole verbal clause. Here, however, Mood is taken
as a category of the verbal phrase since there are dis-
tinctive features for Mood within the verbal phrase.
(See 4.5.1 for the definition of high register.)

There is concord within the clause with respect to
number and person between the noun phrase subject (NP_s)
and the verb phrase (VP) determined by the NP_s and marked
by sets of preverbs as follows:

> Singular: o, ọ and a

> Plural: e, ẹ and (a)

Examples:

Singular:

ocu	ô	rɛ́	ekú
ocu	he	see	masquerade
NP_s	+	VP	NP_o

'Ocu saw the masquerade'

ocu	ộ	ná	ẹnụ
ocu	he	sell	yam
NP^s	+	VP	NP_o

'Ocu sold some yams'

Plural:

    ocu   ọnịrị   oke   ê   rĕ   ekū

    ocu   and   oke   they see   masquerade

    NP_s +   VP NP_o

    'Ocu and Oke saw the masquerade'

    ocu   ọnịrị   oke   ẹ́   nã   ẹnụ

    ocu   and   oke   they sell   yams

    NP_s +   VP NP_o

    'Ocu and Oke sold some yams'

The only exception to the concord rule is that in the present continuous tense of the indicative mood the preverb for the 3rd person singular and plural is the same, ãã.

Examples:

Singular:

    ocu   ãã   vẹ́

    ocu   he-is   coming

    NP_s +   VP

    'Ocu is coming'

<u>Plural</u>:

ocu   ọnịrị oke   āā   vẹ́

ocu   and   oke (he-is)   coming

       NP_s   +   VP

'Ocu and Oke are coming'

More examples of concord can be observed in chapter 5
where Clause Rank is discussed.

Any given verbal phrase exemplifies <u>one</u> option from
each of the sets of options listed above. Thus a VP will
be either Indicative, or Interrogative, or Imperative, or
Subjunctive. A given Indicative or Interrogative VP
will <u>also</u> be either present continuous, or past, or
future, positive or negative, also either first, second,
or third person, and either singular or plural.

There are a number of co-occurrence restrictions in
the selections of these options, and these will be
described below.

Charts 1 - 4 below (sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7)
display the specific sets of preverbs which express each
of these categories in the VP, and also (chart 4) the
preverbs which signal some dependent clause relation-
ships.

Chart 1   displays the preverbs which signal
TENSE options.

Chart 2   displays the preverbs which signal
           MOOD options.

Chart 3   displays the preverbs which signal
           NEGATIVE POLARITY.

Chart 4   displays the preverbs which signal
           DEPENDENT CLAUSE relationships.

For each chart, there are two variant forms, vowel
harmony Set A and vowel harmony Set B. As described
earlier, it is the vowel harmony Set of the verb which
determines the harmony Set of all the preverbs in any
VP.

PERSON and NUMBER categories are displayed on the
charts as they interplay with other categories. Some-
times preverbs signalling person and number fuse with
other preverbs.

Example: ḿ mɛ́ɛ́   hũ

           PreV$_1$ +   V

           am I   +   drink

           'am I drinking?'

In the preverb ḿ m̲ɛ̲́ɛ̲́ it is not possible to say which

part is person, which part is number and which part is
tense. There are more preverbs of this structure in the
charts.

INDICATIVE MOOD, POSITIVE POLARITY and INDEPENDENT
CLAUSE relationship are taken as the basic unmarked form
of the VP.

4.4   CHART 1: TENSE

Chart 1 shows how preverbs signal different TENSE options in indicative, positive verbal phrases. It is significant that the range of tense options which occur in interrogative verbal phrases and also in negative indicative verbal phrases is different from the tense options in indicative positive verbal phrases. These are displayed in Chart 2 (for interrogative) and Chart 3 (for negative) respectively.

There are no contrastive tense options for either the Imperative or Subjunctive moods.

(Please see next two pages.)

INDICATIVE MOOD

CHART 1: TENSE

HARMONY SET A

T E N S E	1st Pers. Sing.	2nd Pers. Sing.	3rd Pers. Sing.	1st Pers. Plural	2nd Pers. Plural	3rd Pers. Plural	Tone	Verbs
			PERSON AND NUMBER					
Present Continuous	mẽẽ	wẽẽ	ẽ ẽ	yẽẽ	wẽẽ ... nini	ɛ́ yẽe	L L (H M H)	
Past Simple	mẽ	wẽ	ɔ̃	yẽ	wẽ ... nini	ɛ̃	HF	hũ
Past Perfective	mẽ rẽe	wẽ rẽe	ɔ̃ rẽe	yẽ rẽe	wẽ rẽe ... nini	ɛ̃ rẽe	H M H	ne
Past Perfective	mẽ sĩ	wẽ sĩ	ɔ̃ sĩ	yẽ sĩ	wẽ sĩ ... nini	ɛ̃ sĩ	H H	sĩsĩ
Future General	mi vẽ	u vẽ	o vẽ	i vẽ	u vẽ ... nini	e vẽ	M HF	-- 'drink'
Future Immediate	mẽẽ vẽ	wẽẽ vẽ	ẽẽ vẽ	yẽẽ vẽ	wẽẽ vẽ ... nini	ɛ̃ yẽe vẽ	L L HF / H M HF	'throw'
Habitual	mii	uu	oo	ii	uu ... nini	ee	M M	'paint'

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H A R M O N Y   S E T   B

T E N S E	1st Pers. Sing.	2nd Pers. Sing.	3rd Pers. Sing.	1st Pers. Plural	2nd Pers. Plural	3rd Pers. Plural	Tone	Verbs
Present Continuous	mãã	wãã	ãã	yãã	wãã ... nịnị	ɛ́yɛ́aa	L L (H H'H)	
Past Simple	mâ	wâ	ô.	yâ	wâ ... nịnị	ê.	HF	nã
Past Perfective	mâ rɛ́a	wâ rɛ́a	ô rɛ́a	yâ rɛ́a	wâ rɛ́a ... nịnị	ɛ̣̂rɛ́a	H M H	hî.
Past Perfective	mâ sị́	wâ sị́	ô sị́	yâ sị́	wâ sị́ ... nịnị	ê. sị́	H H	cãkã
Future General	mị̂ vâ	ụ̂ vâ	o. vâ	i. vâ	u vâ ... nịnị	e. vâ	M HF	--
Future Immediate	mãã vâ	wãã vâ	ãã vâ	yãã vâ	wãã vâ ... nịnị	ê yãã vâ	L L HF (H M H)	'sell'
Habitual	mịị	uụ	oọ	iị	uụ ... nịnị	ee.	M M	'buy'

'break'

The Past perfective preverb has two forms, the particles
rɛ́e or rɛ́a and sị́ or sị́.

Both of them denote perfective and both are in current use. They can be used interchangeably in most contexts by the same speaker. The only distinction which occurs in their use is described in 4.4.3.

Points of Interest

1. Note that the contrast between Harmony Set A pre-
   verbs and Harmony Set B preverbs in the charts is
   not purely phonological. One might have expected
   that first person singular Set B would be mẹẹ ,
   however, instead the form which occurs is maa. Some
   forms, however, are purely phonologically condition-
   ed. A study of all four charts of the preverbs
   shows that the following rules apply:

   i / ị   is always phonologically predictable

   u / ụ   "   "   "   "

   o / ọ   "   "   "   "

   but   e   may pair with ẹ (phonological)

            or with a (morphological)

   Note that a never occurs in Set A preverbs. In pre-
   verbs, a only occurs in the Set B counterpart of
   preverbs which have the vowel e in Set A. Thus in
   preverbs there are really only 4 vowel oppositions,
   as opposed to 5 oppositions in all other word
   classes and positions. See the comment in 2.3.2.3
   on the ambivalence of a.

2. From the above it may be seen that the preverbs in
   Ebira are extremely complex. In this description I
   do not attempt to explain everything. A comparative

study of related languages might give insight on the historical origin of the present forms, but such a study is outside the scope of this synchronic description.

3.   Note that the preverb for the 2nd person is the same for singular and plural, we/wa. n̤i̤n̤i̤ is a plural marker that is always added after the verb when the 2nd person subject is plural to distinguish it from the 2nd person singular.

n̤i̤n̤i̤ is not a part of any preverb and it is independent of the intra-vowel harmony sequences of the VP. It always occurs after the VP and the object of the VP, hence the dots between the VP and n̤i̤n̤i̤ in all the charts. Pluralisation will be described in full in 4.8.

4.   As shown in Chart 1, there are tonal classes of verbs, and tone has been discussed in detail in 2.6.3 and 2.6.4.

4.4.1 Tense: Present Continuous

The Order 1 preverb which signals the Present Continuous tense in the VP is:

       mèè̃ '1st person singular' for harmony Set A
       ‾‾‾
            verbs,

and

       mã̀ã̀ '1st person singular' for harmony Set B
       ‾‾‾
            verbs.

Examples:

SET A

mèè̃   hú

Order 1

1st pers. sing.   V

Present Cont. Tense

    I am   drink

          VP

     'I am drinking'

SET B

mã̀ã̀   ná

Order 1

1st pers. sing.

Present Cont. Tense

    I am   sell

          VP

     'I am selling'

A paradigm of the Present Continuous tense preverbs
in the VP is given below:

SET A

mẽẽ	hũ		'I am drinking'
wẽẽ	hũ		'you (sing.) are drinking'
ẽẽ	hũ		'he is drinking'
yẽẽ	hũ		'we are drinking'
wẽẽ	hũ	nịnị	'you (pl.) are drinking'
éyée	hũ		'they are drinking'

SET B

mãã	nã		'I am selling'
wãã	nã		'you (sing.) are selling'
ãã	nã		'he is selling'
yãã	nã		'we are selling'
wãã	nã	nịnị	'you (pl.) are selling'
ẹyãã	nã		'they are selling'

4.4.2   Tense: Past Simple

Although this tense has usually been named Past
Simple because it most frequently has past meaning, in
fact, it can also have present meaning in some contexts.
There is no contrast between past and present in Ebira in
the simple form of the VP. Distinctions of time are indi-
cated by other expressions, such as temporals.

mê	hû
I	drink

could mean

mê	hû	(eyîneyîni)
'I	drink	(every day)'

or

mê	hû	(ẽẽrĩ)
'I	drank	(yesterday)'

The Order 1 preverb which signals this tense in the VP is

	mê	for 1st person singular for Set A
	──	
and	mâ	for 1st person singular for Set B.
	──	

The paradigm for this tense is as follows:

SET A

mê	hû		'I drank'
wê	hû		'you (sing.) drank'
ô	hû		'he drank'
yê	hû		'we drank'
wê	hû	nini	'you (pl.) drank'
ê	hû		'they drank'

SET B

mâ	nã̀		'I tore'
wâ	nã̀		'you (sing.) tore'
ǫ̂	nã̀		'he tore'
yâ	nã̀		'we tore'
wâ	nã̀	nị̀nị̀	'you (pl.) tore'
ê̩	nã̀		'they tore'

4.4.3   Te nse: Past Perfective

The Past Perfective tense is signalled by two
preverbs. These are preverbs of Orders 1 and 2.

Preverb Order 1 is mɛ́ and Order 2 is sí or rɛ́e for
Set A.

Preverb Order 1 is mã̀ and Order 2 is si̥ or rãa for
Set B.

The re are two forms of the preverb particle denoting
perfective both in Sets A and B. There does not seem to
be any distinction in meaning between either of these
Order 2 particles. The same speaker may use them inter-
changeably.

There is, however, a difference of form in the way
that the two particles are used in the Past Perfective
tense. This can be illustrated from the following
example:

              mɛ́   sí   hṹ
       or
              mɛ́   rɛ́e   hú
both mean
          'I have drunk'

In a VP where there is a pronominal object or a
nominal object, the object normally follows the verb.
However, when the perfective particle sí / si̥ is used

the object may precede the verb as in the following
examples:

     mɛ́   sɪ̂   ɛ̃cɛ̃   hṹ

     I   have   wine   drunk

        'I have drunk wine'

and

     mɛ́   sɪ̂   ǫ́   hṹ

     I   have   it   drunk

        'I have drunk it'

Note that the form of the preverb sɪ̂ is still
governed by the vowel harmony set of the verb, even
though it is separated from it by the pronominal object
or NP$_O$

When rɛ́e / ráa perfective particle is used the object
never precedes the verb.

Examples:
        me   rɛ́e   hṹ   ǫ́

        I   have   drink   it

        'I have drunk it'

        ma   ráa   rɪ́   ǫ́

        I   have   eat   it

        'I have eaten it'

The paradigm for the Past Perfective tense follows:

Past Perfective Tense

SET A

wé	sî	hû		'you (sing.) have drunk'
ő	sî	hû		'he has drunk'
yế	sî	hû	'	'we have drunk'
wế	sî	hû	nịnị	'you (pl.) have drunk'
é	sî	hû		'they have drunk'
mế	rếe	hû		'I have drunk'
wế	rếe	hû		'you (sing.) have drunk'
ő	rếe	hû		'he has drunk'
ɯ�025é	rếe	hû	nịnị	'you (pl.) have drunk'
é	rếe	hû		'they have drunk'

SET B

mấ	sị̂	nã̄		'I have torn'
wấ	sị̂	nã̄		'you (sing.) have torn'
ộ	sị̂	nã̄		'he has torn'
yấ	sị̂	nã̄		'we have torn'
wấ	sị̂	nã̄	nịnị	'you (pl.) have torn'
ẹ́	sị̂	nã̄		'they have torn'
mấ	rấa	nấ		'I have sold'
wấ	rấa	nấ		'you (sing.) have sold'
ộ	rấa	nấ		'he has sold'
yấ	rấa	nấ		'we have sold'
wấ	rấa	nấ	nịnị	'you (pl.) have sold'
ẹ́	rấa	nấ		'they have sold'

4.4.4   Tense: Future

Ebira distinguishes between two forms of the future. These are Future General, and Future Immediate. The Future General refers to any time from the moment of speaking till indefinite time in the future. It could be the next hour, the next day, the next month or many years to come. Events or things referred to in Future General may or may not happen.

On the other hand, the Future Immediate refers to time that is definite and not too far away. Events referred to in the Immediate Future Tense are most likely to happen within a foreseeable definite time. Usually there are signs or some evidence which suggest some degree of certainty.

Both Future General and Future Immediate are signalled by two preverbs. They differ in Order 1 preverb but the Order 3 preverb is the same for both.

4.4.4.1   Future General

Future General is signalled by the preverbs:

Order 1 mî (1st pers. sing.) and Order 3 vê for Set A harmony words;

Order 1 mî (1st pers. sing.) and Order 3 vâ for Set B harmony words.

The examples are given in the paradigm overleaf.

SET A

mɪ́	vê	hû		'I will drink'
ɑ́	vê	hû		'you (sing.) will drink'
ɔ́	vê	hû		'he will drink'
ɪ́	vê	hû		'we will drink'
ɑ́	vê	hû	ni̥ni̥	'you (pl.) will drink'
é	vê	hû		'they will drink'

SET B

mɪ̥́	vâ	nã́		'I will sell'
ɑ̥́	vâ	nã́		'you (sing.) will sell'
ɔ̥́	vâ	nã́		'he will sell'
ɪ̥́	vâ	nã́		'we will sell'
ɑ̥́	vâ	nã́	ni̥ni̥	'you (pl.) will sell'
é̥	vâ	nã́		'they will sell'

4.4.4.2 Future Immediate

The Future Immediate is signalled in the VP by the preverbs

Order 1 mēē (1st pers. sing.) and Order 3 vê for Set A
harmony verbs;

and

Order 1 māā (1st pers. sing.) and Order 3 vâ for Set B
harmony verbs.

The paradigm:

SET A

mēē	vê	hū		'I am about to drink'
wēē	vê	hū		'you (sing.) are about to drink'
ēē	vê	hū		'he is about to drink'
yēē	vê	hū		'we are about to drink'
wēē	vê	hū	nịnị	'you (pl.) are about to drink'
e yéé	vê	hū		'they are about to drink'

SET B

māā	vâ	nā́		'I am about to sell'
wāā	vâ	nā́		'you (sing.) are about to sell'
āā	vâ	nā́		'he is about to sell'
yāā	vâ	nā́		'we are about to sell'
wāā	vâ	nā́	nịnị	'you (pl.) are about to sell'
ẹ yáá	vâ	nā́		'they are about to sell'

4.4.5   Tense: Habitual

The Habitual tense in Ebira denotes actions which are performed regularly and have become the habit of the individuals concerned. This tense represents what may be translated in English as, usually, normally, or habitually. The tense is signalled in the VP by preverb Order 1 only which is

            mii (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
and
            mii̧ (1st pers sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

This is the only tense that carries mid tone and mid tone only in the preverbs in all its forms. The paradigm is given below.

SET A

mii	hǔ		'I habitually drink'
uu	hǔ		'you (sing.) habitually drink'
oo	hǔ		'he habitually drinks'
ii	hǔ		'we habitually drink'
uu	hǔ	ni̧ni̧	'you (pl.) habitually drink'
ee	hǔ		'they habitually drink'

SET B

mi̧i̧	ná		'I habitually sell'
u̧u̧	ná		'you (sing.) habitually sell'
o̧o̧	ná		'he habitually sells'
i̧i̧	ná		'we habitually sell'
u̧u̧	ná	ni̧ni̧	'you (pl.) habitually sell'
ȩȩ	ná		'they habitually sell'

4.5   <u>CHART 2: MOOD</u>

The Indicative Mood has already been illustrated in Chart 1, where all the examples are indicative. Chart 2 shows how preverbs signal different options in the verbal phrase for the other moods.

H A R M O N Y   S E T   A

MOOD		1st Pers. Sing.	2nd Pers. Sing.	3rd Pers. Sing.	1st Pers. Plural	2nd Pers. Plural	3rd Pers. Plural	Tone	Verbs
					P E R S O N A N D N U M B E R				
I	Present Continuous	ḿ mɛ́ɛ́	ū w ɛ̂	ɛ́ ɛ̂ɛ̂	ɨ́ yɛ́ɛ́	ū wɛ̂ɛ̂...nịnị	ɛ́ yɛ́ɛ́	H H'H	hʋ̀
N									
T	Past Simple	mɛ́ɛ́	wɛ̂ɛ̂	ôô	yɛ́ɛ́	wɛ̂ɛ̂...nịnị	ôô	H H	rô
E									
R									
R	Past Perfective	mɛ́ɛ́ sî	wɛ̂ɛ̂ sî	ôô sî	yɛ́ɛ́ sî	wɛ̂ɛ̂ sî...nịnị	ôô sî	H H H	zîzî
O									
G	Future	mɛ́ɛ́ vɛ̂	wɛ̂ɛ̂ vɛ̂	ôô vɛ̂	yɛ́ɛ́ vɛ̂	wɛ̂ɛ̂ vɛ̂...nịnị	ɛ́ɛ́ vɛ̂	H H HF	---
A									'roast'
T	Habitual	m mɛ̂e	u wɛ̂e	o ôo	i yɛ̂e	u wɛe...nịnị	e ɛ̂e	M H M	'think'
I									
V	Imperative	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	'shake'
E	Subjunctive	me	we	ô	ye	we...nịnị	ɛ̂	M (L)	

H A R M O N Y   S E T   B

M O O D	P E R S O N A N D N U M B E R						Tone	Verbs
	1st Pers. Sing.	2nd Pers. Sing.	3rd Pers. Sing.	1st Pers. Plural	2nd Pers. Plural	3rd Pers. Plural		
Present Continuous	ḿ máá	ʊ̧ wáá	á áá	í̧ yáá	ʊ̧ wáá...ninị	ȩ̧ yáá	H H'H H H'H	ná
Past Simple	máá	wáá	óó.	yáá	wáá...ninị	ȩ́ȩ́.	H H	hú
Past Perfective	máá sí̧	wáá sí̧	óó. sí̧	yáá si̧	wáá sí̧...ninị	ȩ́ȩ́. sí̧	H H H	cáàkā
Future	máá vâ	wáá vâ	óó. vâ	yáá vâ	wáá vâ...ninị	ȩ́ȩ́. vâ	H H HF	--
Habitual	m máa	ʊ̧ wáa	o. óo.	i̧ yáa	ʊ̧ wáa...ninị	e. ȩ̧e.	M H M	'sell' 'boil'
Imperative	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
Subjunctive	ma	wa	ò.	ya	wa...ninị	ȩ̀.	M (L)	'break'

As in the Indicative Mood, rée / ráa may occur as alternative to sí / sí̧ in the past perfective tense.

4.5.1   The Interrogative Mood

The Interrogative mood is also signalled by preverbs
in the verbal phrase. All the tenses listed in Chart 1
may be used in the Interrogative mood, except that there
is only one form of the future, Future General, with no
contrast between Future General and Future Immediate.
This reflects the fact that Future Immediate always
implies some degree of definiteness, a definite expec-
tation that the action or event will happen, and this is
semantically incompatible with the Interrogative mood.

In addition to specific preverbs with high tone shown
in Chart 2, high register is a feature of the Interroga-
tive mood. High register is defined as raising of the
voice pitch above the normal pitch level when uttering a
phrase or a sentence. The high pitch spreads over the
entire phrase or utterance delimited by pauses.

4.5.1.1   The Interrogative Present Continuous Tense

The Interrogative mood in the Present Continuous
tense is marked by a <u>double Order 1 preverb</u> which is:

        ḿ mɛ́ɛ̄ (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
and
        ḿ mā̃ā̃ (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B
                                                 verbs.

A study of column one of Chart 2 and comparison with
Chart 1 will show why the term 'double order 1' preverb
is used here. When the Order 1 preverb has a simple

vowel in the Indicative form, the Interrogative is sig-
nalled (partially) by doubling that vowel.

Examples:	Indicative	Interrogative
	Order 1 preverb (1st pers. sing.)	Order 1 Preverb (1st pers. sing.)
Past Simple:	mê / mâ	mếế / mấấ
Past Perfective:	mế / mấ	mếế / mấấ
Future General:	mi / mi	mếế / mấấ

But when the preverb already has a double vowel in
the Indicative form,

Examples:

Present Continuous:	mếẽ / mãấ	m̄ mếế / m̄ mấấ
Habitual:	mii / mii	m̄ mếe / m̄ mấa

the Interrogative is signalled (partially) by a syllabic
prefix to the preverb, whose form is largely phonologi-
cally conditioned by the following sounds:

m-	before m	1st per. sing. pres. con. tense
u- / ụ-	before w	2nd per. sing. & pl. pres. con. tense
e- / ẹ-	before e / ẹ	3rd per. pl. habitual tense
o- / ọ-	before o / ọ	3rd per. sing. habitual tense
e-	before e (Ha)	3rd per. sing. pres. con. tense
a-	before a (Hb)	3rd per. sing. pres. con. tense
i- / ị	before y	1st per. pl. pres. con. tense
e- / ẹ-	before y	3rd per. pl. pres. con. tense

(Ha), (Hb) = Harmony Set A and Harmony Set B.

The paradigm examples for the Interrogative Present Continuous tense follow. Since these forms are exclusively interrogative, there is no need to use a question mark, ?.

SET A

ḿ mɛ́ɛ́	hũ		'am I drinking?'
ũ wɛ́ɛ́	hũ		'are you (sing.) drinking?'
ɛ́ ɛ́ɛ́	hũ		'is he drinking?'
í yɛ́ɛ́	hũ		'are we drinking?'
ũ wɛ́ɛ́	hũ	nɪ̣nɪ̣	'are you (pl.) drinking?'
ɛ́ yɛ́ɛ́	hũ		'are they drinking?'

SET B

ḿ mã́ã́	nã		'am I selling?'
ṵ wã́ã́	nã		'are you (sing.) selling?'
ã́ ã́ã́	nã		'is he selling?'
ɪ̣ yã́ã́	nã		'are we selling?'
ṵ wã́ã́	nã	nɪ̣nɪ̣	'are you (pl.) selling?'
ɛ̣ yã́ã́	nã		'are they selling?'

4.5.1.2   The Interrogative Past Simple

The Interrogative Mood in the Past Simple tense is marked by Order 1 preverb:

and

mɛ́ɛ́ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
---
mã́ã́ (1st pers. sing) for harmony Set B verbs.

SET A

méé	hũ		'did I drink?'
wéé	hũ		'did you (sing.) drink?'
óó	hũ		'did he drink?'
yéé	hũ		'did we drink?'
wéé	hũ	nịnị	'did you (pl.) drink?'
éé	hũ		'did they drink?'

SET B

máá	nã		'did I sell?'
wáá	nã		'did you (sing.) sell?'
ọ́ọ́	nã		'did he sell?'
yáá	nã		'did we sell?'
wáá	nã	nịnị	'did you (pl.) sell?'
ẹ́ẹ́	nã		'did they sell?'

4.5.1.3   The Interrogative Past Perfective

The Interrogative mood in the Past Perfective is
marked by Order 1 and Order 2 preverbs:

        méé   sí (1st pers. sing.) for Set A harmony
        ---   --   verbs
and
        máá   sí (1st pers. sing.) for Set B harmony
        ---   --   verbs

    The paradigms are:

SET A

mɛ́ɛ́	sɩ̂	hû		'have I drunk?'
wɛ́ɛ́	sɩ̂	hû		'have you (sing.) drunk?'
ôô	sɩ̂	hû		'has he drunk?'
yéé	sɩ̂	hû		'have we drunk?'
wɛ́ɛ́	sɩ̂	hû	nɩni̠	'have you (pl.) drunk?'
ɛ́ɛ́	sɩ̂	hû		'have they drunk?'

SET B

mã̂ã	sɩ̠̂	nã		'have I sold?'
wã̂ã	sɩ̠́	nã		'have you (sing.) sold?'
ô̠ô̠	sɩ̠̂	nã		'has he sold?'
yã̂ã	sɩ̠̂	nã		'have we sold?'
wã̂ã	sɩ̠̂	nã	nɩni̠	'have you (pl.) sold?'
ɛ̠̂ɛ̠̂	sɩ̠̂	nã		'have they sold?'

4.5.1.4   The Interrogative Future

The Interrogative Mood in the future tense in the VP is just one form, the Future General. It is signalled by Order 1 and Order 3 preverbs:

```
        mɛ́ɛ́    vê (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A
        ---     --                                   verbs
and
        mã̂ã    vâ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B
        ---     --                                   verbs.
```

Examples: (See overleaf).

SET A

mɛ́ɛ́	vê	hú		'shall I drink?'
wɛ́ɛ́	vê	hú		'will you (sing.) drink?'
óó	vê	hú		'will he return?'
yɛ́ɛ́	vê	hú		'shall we drink?'
wɛ́ɛ́	vê	hú	ni̧ni̧	'will you (pl.) drink?'
ɛ́ɛ́	vê	hú		'will they drink?'

SET B

mãã	vâ	nã		'shall I sell?'
wãã	vâ	nã		'will you (sing.) sell?'
ó̧ó̧	vâ	nã		'will he sell?'
yãã	vâ	nã		'shall we sell?'
wãã	vâ	nã	ni̧ni̧	'will you (pl.) sell?'
ɛ̧́ɛ̧́	vâ	nã		'will they sell?'

4.5.1.5   The Interrogative Mood in Habitual Tense

   The Interrogative mood in the Habitual tense is marked in the VP by double Order 1 preverb:

	m mɛ́e (1st pers. sing.) for Set A verbs
and	-----
	m mãa (1st pers. sing.) for Set B verbs.

SET A

m mɛ́e	hú		'do I habitually drink?'
u wɛ́e	hú		'do you (sing.) habitually drink?'
o óo	hú		'does he habitually drink?'
i yɛ́e	hú		'do we habitually drink?'
u wɛ́e	hú	ni̧ni̧	'do you (pl.) habitually drink?'
e ɛ́e	hú		'do they habitually drink?'

SET B

m mãa	nã		'do I habitually sell?'
ụ wãa	nã		'do you (sing.) habitually sell?'
ọ ọ̃ọ	nã		'does he habitually sell?'
ị yãa	nã		'do we habitually sell?'
ụ wãa	nã	nịnị	'do you (pl.) habitually sell?'
ẹ ẹ̃ẹ	nã		'do they habitually sell?'

4.5.2   The Imperative Mood

The Imperative Mood in the VP has zero preverb and it is tenseless. By its structure and semantics, it can occur with second person singular and plural only. It consists only of a verb in the VP, optionally followed by a pronoun object post-verb.

Singular	a)	hũ		'drink'
	b)	hũ ọ		'drink it'
Plural	a)	hũ	nịnị	'you (pl.) drink'
	b)	hũ ọ	nịnị	'you (pl.) drink it'

The Imperative Mood is a command addressed to a second person. Therefore any action verb can occur in the Imperative Mood. Stative verbs do not occur in the Imperative Mood.

4.5.3   The Subjunctive Mood

The Subjunctive mood in the VP is similar to the
Imperative mood in that it is a mild command or a wish.
It expresses meaning similar to the meaning expressed by
should, ought to, or let ... in English.

The mood is signalled by Order 1 preverb.

    me (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
    --

and

    ma (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.
    --

Examples:

SET A

me	hũ		'I should drink'
we	hũ		'you (sing.) should drink'
ò	hũ		'he should drink'
ye	hũ		'we should drink'
we	hũ	nịnị	'you (pl.) should drink'
ẽ	hũ		'they should drink'

SET B

ma	nã		'I should sell'
wa	nã		'you (sing.) should sell'
ọ̀	nã		'he should sell'
ya	nã		'we should sell'
wa	nã	nịnị	'you (pl.) should sell'
ẹ̀	nã		'they should sell'

Note that 3rd person singular and plural preverbs have
low tone, while the others have mid tone.

4.6   CHART 3: NEGATIVE POLARITY

Chart 3 shows how preverbs signal Negative Polarity in the verbal phrase in the Indicative.

4.6.1   Negative Indicative Tenses

There are fewer tense options in negative indicative verbal phrases than in positive indicative verbal phrases. The tenses signalled by preverbs in the negative VP include only the Past Simple, the Past Perfective, Future General, and Habitual tenses.

See over for charts.

H A R M O N Y   S E T   A

NEGATIVE POLARITY	PERSON AND NUMBER						Tone	Verbs
	1st Pers. Sing.	2nd Pers. Sing.	3rd Pers. Sing.	1st Pers. Plural	2nd Pers. Plural	3rd Pers. Plural		
Past Simple	mɛ́ yî	wɛ́ yî	ɔ́ yî	yɛ́ yî	wɛ́ yî... nini	ɛ́ yî	H H	hũ
Past Perfective	mɛ̃ yî	wɛ̃ yî	ɔ̃ yî	yɛ̃ yî	wɛ̃ yî ... nini	ɛ̃ yî	H L H	rɛ́
Future	mɛ́ yî vɛ̂	wɛ́ yî vɛ̂	ɔ́ yî vɛ̂	yɛ̃ yî vɛ̂	wɛ́ yî vɛ̂ ... nini	ɛ́ yî vɛ̂	H H HF	pɛ̃hɛ̃ 'drink'
Habitual	mɛ́ me	wɛ́ me	ɔ́ me	yɛ́ me	wɛ́ me ... nini	ɛ́ me	H M	'see' 'winnow'

H A R M O N Y   S E T   B

NEGATIVE POLARITY	1st Pers. Sing.	2nd Pers. Sing.	3rd Pers. Sing.	1st Pers. Plural	2nd Pers. Plural	3rd Pers. Plural	Tone	Verbs
			P E R S O N A N D N U M B E R					
Past Simple	mḛ́ yî̠	wḛ́ yî̠	ó̠ yî̠	yḛ́ yî̠	wḛ́ yî̠...nini̠	ḛ́ yî̠	H H	nâ
Past Perfective	mḛ́ḛ̃ yî̠	wḛ́ḛ̃ yî̠	óō̠ yî̠	yḛ́ḛ̃ yî̠	wḛ́ḛ̃ yî̠ ...nini̠	ḛ́ḛ̃ yî̠	H L H	rî̠
Future	mḛ́ yî̠ vâ	wḛ́ yî̠ vâ	ó̠ yî̠ vâ	yḛ̃ yî̠ vâ	wḛ́ yî̠ vâ ...nini̠	ḛ́ yî̠ vâ	H H HF	'go'
Habitual	mã́ ma	wã́ ma	ó̠	yã́ ma	wã́ ma ...nini̠	ḛ́ ma	H M	'eat'

Negative is signalled basically by yî- / yî̠-.

Comparison with Chart 1 shows the following points of interest:

(a) In the Past Perfective, the preverb rḛ́e- / ráa- is not used but there is apparent compensa-

tory lengthening of the 1st preverb.

(b) In the Habitual tense, a completely different form, me / ma, is used to signal negative.

I have given ample paradigms for Charts 1 and 2. I
will just give a harmony pair paradigm for each of the
tenses in Chart 3.

4.6.1.1   The Negative Indicative: Past Simple

The Negative Indicative in the Past Simple tense is
signalled by preverbs:

     mḗ yĭ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs

and

     mẹ̄ yị̆ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

SET A

mḗ yĭ	hū			'I did not drink'
wḗ yi	hū			'you (sing.) did not drink'
ṓ yĭ	hū			'he did not drink'
yḗ yĭ	hū			'we did not drink'
wḗ yi	hū	nịnị̆		'you (pl.) did not drink'
ḗ yi	hū			'they did not drink'

SET B

mẹ̄ yị̆	nã			'I did not sell'
wẹ̄ yị̆	nã			'you (sing.) did not sell'
ọ yị̆	nã			'he did not sell'
yẹ̄ yị̆	nã			'we did not sell'
wẹ̄ yị̆	nã	nịnị̆		'you (pl.) did not sell'
ẹ̄ yị̆	nã			'they did not sell'

4.6.1.2   The Negative Indicative: Past Perfective

The Negative Indicative in Past Perfective tense is signalled by preverbs:

mɛ́ɛ̃ yí   (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
‾‾‾‾‾‾

and

mɛ̣́ɛ̣̃ yị́   (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.
‾‾‾‾‾‾

Set A

mɛ́ɛ̃ yí	rɛ̃		'I have not seen'
wɛ́ɛ̃ yí	rɛ̃		'you (sing.) have not seen'
ɔ̃ɔ̃ yí	rɛ̃		'he has not seen'
yɛ́ɛ̃ yí	rɛ̃		'we have not seen'
wɛ́ɛ̃ yí	rɛ̃	nịnị	'you (pl.) have not seen'
ɛ́ɛ̃ yí	rɛ̃		'they have not seen'

Set B

mɛ̣́ɛ̣̃ yị́	rị̃		'I have not eaten'
wɛ̣́ɛ̣̃ yị́	rị̃		'you (sing.) have not eaten'
ɔ̣̃ɔ̣̃ yị́	rị̃		'he has not eaten'
yɛ̣́ɛ̣̃ yị́	rị̃		'we have not eaten'
wɛ̣́ɛ̣̃ yị́	rị̃	nịnị	'you (pl.) have not eaten'
ɛ̣́ɛ̣̃ yị́	rị̃		'they have not eaten'

4.6.1.3   The Negative Indicative Future

The Negative Indicative in Future tense is signalled

by preverbs:

mɛ̃ yĩ vê (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs
----

and

mɛ̣̃ yị̃ vâ (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

Set A

mɛ̃ yĩ vê	hũ		'I will not drink'
wɛ̃ yĩ vê	hũ		'you (sing.) will not drink'
õ yĩ vê	hũ		'he will not drink'
yɛ̃ yĩ vê	hũ		'we will not drink'
wɛ̃ yĩ vê	hũ	nị nị	'you (pl.) will not drink'
ɛ̃ yĩ vê	hũ		'they will not drink'

Set B

mɛ̣̃ yị̃ vâ	nã		'I will not sell'
wɛ̣̃ yị̃ vâ	nã		'you (sing.) will not sell'
ɔ̣̃ yị̃ vâ	nã		'he sill not sell'
yɛ̣̃ yị̃ vâ	nã		'we will not sell'
wɛ̣̃ yị̃ vâ	nã	nị nị	'you (pl.) will not sell'
ɛ̣̃ yị̃ vâ	nã		'they will not sell'

4.6.1.4 The Negative Indicative - Habitual

The Negative Indicative in the Habitual tense is sig-
nalled by preverbs:

mɛ́ me   (1st per. sing) for harmony Set A verbs
-----

          and

má ma   (1st per. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

Set A

mɛ́ me   hũ ịbị̀ya   'I do not habitually drink
                                          beer'

wɛ́ me   hũ ịbị̀ya   'you (sing.) do not
                            habitually drink beer'

ó me   hũ ịbị̀ya   'he does not habitually
                                          drink beer'

yɛ́ me   hũ ịbị̀ya   'we do not habitually drink
                                          beer'

wɛ́ me   hũ ịbị̀ya nịnị   'you (pl.) do not habitu-
                                ally drink beer'

ɛ́ me   hũ ịbị̀ya   'they do not habitually
                                          drink beer'

Set B

má ma   rị̀ ụ̀rá   'I not not habitually eat
                                          pork'

wá ma   rị̀ ụ̀rá   'you (sing.) do not habitu-
                                ally eat pork'

ọ́ ma   rị̀ ụ̀rá   'he does not habitually eat
                                          pork'

yá ma   rị̀ ụ̀rá   'we do not habitually eat
                                          pork'

wá ma   rị̀ ụ̀rá nịnị   'you (pl.) do not habitu-
                                ally eat pork'

ẹ́ ma   rị̀ ụ̀rá   'they do not habitually eat
                                          pork'

Note that the negative order 2 preverbs for the Habitual tense is:

 me / ma   in contrast to the normal

yí / yị̂   in other tenses.

The language employs the preverbs me / ma in the negative habitual to maintain the mid tone which is characteristic of the Habitual tense since yí / yị̂ negative particles always carry high tone.

4.6.2   Negative Tenses in the Interrogative Mood

The Negative tense in the Interrogative Mood is not signalled by preverbs in the VP but by another element of the VP which may be labelled a prosodic suffix of the VP. This prosodic suffix is lengthening of the final vowel of the VP which will carry a mid tone and is a syllable on its own. Generally any indicative VP can be interrogativised in Ebira by lengthening the final vowel and the lengthened vowel will always carry <u>mid</u> tone. All the tenses which occur in the Negative Indicative VP could also occur in the Negative Interrogative VP. High Register as a feature of Interrogative has already been mentioned (4.5.1).Just a few sets of examples are given below. See 5.10.1 for further discussion.

Past Simple:

<u>SET A</u>

mɛ̃́ yɪ̃	hũ u		'did I not drink?'
wɛ̃́ yɪ̃	hũ u		'did you (sing.) not drink?'
ő yɪ̃	hũ u		'did he not drink?'
yɛ̃́ yɪ̃	hũ u		'did we not drink?'
wɛ̃́ yɪ̃	hũ u	nini	'did you (pl.) not drink?'
ɛ̃́ yɪ̃	hũ u		'did they not drink?'

<u>SET B</u>

mɛ̰́ yɪ̰	nã a		'did I not sell?'
wɛ̰́ yɪ̰	nã a		'did you (sing.) not sell?'
ọ̃́ yɪ̰	nã a		'did he not sell?'
yɛ̰́ yɪ̰	nã a		'did we not sell?'
wɛ̰́ yɪ̰	nã a	nini	'did you (pl.) not sell?'
ɛ̰́ yɪ̰	nã a		'did they not sell?'

Other tenses of the Negative Interrogative have paradigm examples similar to the above. The important point is that the final lengthened vowel always carries mid tone and constitutes an additional syllable.

4.6.3   Negative Imperative Mood

The Negative Imperative is formed by an initial āsŲ plus the verb. This āsŲ does not harmonise with any other forms, it remains invariable. It is difficult to classify it as a preverb, as it does not have the usual characteristics of preverbs. It cannot occur alone, and it occurs only as a way of making the negative imperative.

Examples:

2nd per. sing.   āsŲ   nâ

                                  don't   go

                                  'don't go'

2nd per. pl.   āsŲ   nâ   nịnị

                                  don't   go   pl.

                                  '(you pl.) don't go'

4.6.4   Negative Subjunctive Mood

As in the Negative Imperative, negation is not signalled in the VP by a preverb. The Negative Subjunctive has a negative phrase similar to the Negative Imperative but longer in structure. This is followed by an Order 1

preverb identical to those occurring in the Positive Sub-
junctive. See Chart 2. The negative phrase for the
Subjunctive is:

        āsṵ zệ ka   'don't let, or should not'

Examples:

SET A

āsṵ zệ ka	me hṵ		'don't let me drink'
āsṵ zệ ka	we hṵ		'don't [let you (sing.)] drink'
āsṵ zệ ka	ɔ̄ hṵ		'don't let him drink'
āsṵ zệ ka	ye hṵ		'don't let us drink'
āsṵ zệ ka	we hṵ	nịnị	'don't [let you (pl.)] drink'
āsṵ zệ ka	ẽ̄ hṵ		'don't let them drink'

SET B

āsṵ zệ ka	ma nã́		'don't let me sell'
āsṵ zệ ka	wa nã̀		'don't [let you (sing.)] sell'
āsṵ zệ ka	ɔ̰̄ nã́		'don't let him sell'
āsṵ zệ ka	ya nã́		'don't let us sell'
āsṵ zệ ka	wa nã́	nịnị	'don't [let you (pl.)] sell'
āsṵ zệ ka	ẹ̃ nã́		'don't let them sell'

    The negative phrases for the Imperative and the Sub-
junctive are not part of NP or part of VP. They are some
of the neutral elements in the language which have syn-
tactic functions but are not conveniently assigned to a
particular unit.

4.7   CHART 4: DEPENDENT CLAUSES

There are two dependent clause relationships which in Ebira are signalled by preverbs, unlike their English translations. These are "if" and "when" dependent clauses. Chart 4 displays these dependent clause preverbs.

See the next two pages.

H A R M O N Y   S E T   A

DEPENDENT CLAUSES		1st Pers. Sing.	2nd Pers. Sing.	3rd Pers. Sing.	1st Pers. Plural	2nd Pers. Plural	3rd Pers. Plural	Tone	Verbs
		P E R S O N A N D N U M B E R							
"IF"	Present Continuous	mẽ́ɛe	wẽ́ɛe	ẽ́ɛe	yẽ́ɛe	wẽ́ɛe ... nịnị	ẽ́ɛyẽ̂	L H M (L H L)	hū
	Past Simple	mẽ̄ ɛ́	wẽ̄ɛ̄	ōɔ̄	yẽ̄ɛ̄	wẽ̄ɛ̄ ... nịnị	ɛ̄ɛ̄	L H	rɛ̄
	Past Perfective	mẽ̄ɛ̄ sɨ́	wẽ̄ɛ̄ sɨ́	ōɔ̄ sɨ́	yẽ̄ɛ̄ sị	wẽ̄ɛ̄ sɨ́ ... nịnị	ɛ̄ɛ̄ sɨ́	L H H	hũsɛ̄
	Future	mẽ̄ɛ̄ vɛ̂	wẽ̄ɛ̄ vɛ̂	ōɔ̄ vɛ̂	yẽ̄ɛ̄ vɛ̂	wẽ̄ɛ̄ vɛ̂ ... nịnị	ɛ̄ɛ̄ vɛ̂	L H HF	-- 'drink'
"WHEN"	Present Continuous	m̃́ mẽ̄ɛ̄	ṹ mẽ̄ɛ̄	ɔ́ mẽ̄ɛ̄	i mẽ̄ɛ̄	ũ mẽ̄ɛ̄ ... nịnị	ɛ́ mẽ̄ɛ̄	H L L	'see'
	Past Simple	m̃́ mẽ̄	ṹ mẽ̄	ɔ́ mẽ̄	ɨ́ mẽ̄	ũ mẽ̄ ... nịnị	ɛ́ mẽ̄ɛ̄	H L	'ask'

HARMONY SET B

DEPENDENT CLAUSES		1st Pers. Sing.	2nd Pers. Sing.	3rd Pers. Sing.	1st Pers. Plural	2nd Pers. Plural	3rd Pers. Plural	Tone	Verbs
"IF"	Present Continuous	máãa	wãa̰a	ãa̰a	yãa̰a	wãa̰a ... ninị	ẽ́ɛ́yã	L H M (L H L)	vɛ̰̄
	Past Simple	mãa̰	wãa̰	ōo̰	yãa̰	wãa̰-... ninị	ẽɛ̰	L H	hî
	Past Perfective	mãa̰ sî	wãa̰ sî	ōo̰ sî	yãa̰ sî	wãa̰ sî ... ninị	ẽɛ̰ sî	L H H	cɛ̰̄rɛ̰̄
	Future	mãa̰ vâ	wãa̰ vâ	ōo̰ vâ	yãa̰ vâ	wãa̰ vâ ... ninị	ẽɛ̰ vâ	L H HF	--
									'come'
"WHEN"	Present Continuous	ḿ mãã	ṵ́ mãã	ó mãã	í mãã	ṵ́ mãã ... ninị	ɛ́ mãã	H L L	'buy'
	Past Simple	ḿ mẽ	ṵ́ mẽ	ó mẽ	í mẽ	ṵ́ me ... ninị	ɛ́ mɛ̰̄	H L	'write'

PERSON AND NUMBER

4.7.1 Dependent Clauses "if" and "when"

Two dependent clause relationships are signalled by preverbs in the verbal phrase, "if" dependent clause relationship and "when" dependent clause relationships. Four tenses are signalled by preverbs in "if" clause relationships. These are Present Continuous tense, Past Simple, Past Perfective and Future General. Two tenses are signalled in "when" clause relationships which are present continuous and past simple tenses. Examples of dependent clauses are better presented in relationships with independent clauses. A set of examples in past simple tense are given for "if" dependent clauses and another set of examples in past simple tense also is presented for "when" dependent clauses.

4.7.1.1 Dependent Clause "if"

The preverb for "if" dependent clause in the past simple tense in the VP is

        mẽ́ɛ́ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs

and

        mã̃ã́ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

SET A

(a)   mẽ́ɛ́   hũsẽ̀, mị vâ dǫ́

      I-if ask,   I will get

     'if I ask, I will get'

(b) wɛ́ɛ́   hũ̄sɛ̃, ų   vâ dɔ̣́

you (sing.)-if ask, you (sing.) will get

'if you (sing.) ask, you (sing.) will get'

(c) ɔ̃̄ɔ̃̄ hũ̄sɛ̃, ǫ vâ dɔ̣́

he-if ask   he will get

'if he asks, he will get'

(d) yɛ̃̄ɛ́ hũ̄sɛ̃, į vâ dɔ̣́

we-if ask   we will get

'if we ask, we will get'

(e) wɛ́ɛ́ hũ̄sɛ̃ nịnị, ų vâ dɔ̣́ nịnị

you-if ask pl. you will get pl.

'if you (pl.) ask, you (pl.) will get'

(f) ɛ̃̄ɛ́ hũ̀sɛ̀ ẹ vâ   dɔ̣́

they-if ask   they will get

'if they ask, they will get'

SET B

(a) mãã́ hị̄ ịsá́, mi vâ̂ rị́ ɔ̣́

I-if buy food ~~me-should~~ I will eat it

'if I buy food, I ~~should~~ will eat it'

(b) wãã́ hị̄ ịsá́, ų vâ̂ rị́ ɔ̣́

you-if buy food you ~~should~~ will eat it

'if you buy food, you ~~should~~ will eat it'

(c)   ǫ̃ǫ̃   hį̃   ịsá,   ǫ̣ √â   rį́   ǫ́

          he-if   buy   food   he-s̶h̶o̶u̶l̶d̶ (will)   eat   it

              'if he buys food, he s̶h̶o̶u̶l̶d̶ (will) eat it'

(d)   yãá   hį̃   ịsá,   ị̣ √â   rį́   ǫ́

          we-if   buy   food   we-s̶h̶o̶u̶l̶d̶ (will)   eat   it

              'if we buy food, we s̶h̶o̶u̶l̶d̶ (will) eat it'

(e)   wãá   hį̃ ịsá nịnị,   ụ √â   rį́   ǫ́   nịnị

          you-if   buy food   pl.   you-s̶h̶o̶u̶l̶d̶ (will) eat   it   pl.

           'if you (pl.) buy food, you (pl.) s̶h̶o̶u̶l̶d̶ (will) eat it'

(f)   ẽ́ẽ́   hį̃   ịsá,   ẽ √â   rį́   ǫ́

          they-if buy   food   they-s̶h̶o̶u̶l̶d̶ (will)   eat   it

              'if they buy food, they s̶h̶o̶u̶l̶d̶ (will) eat it'

4.7.1.2 Dependent Clause "when"

The preverb for "when" dependent clause in the past simple tense in the VP is Order 1 double preverb.

    ḿ mẽ̀ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set A verbs

and

    ḿ mẽ̀ (1st pers. sing.) for harmony Set B verbs.

SET A

(a)   ḿ mẽ̀   ré ế,   ǫ̂   dãhį́

          I-when   see him   he-is well

          'when I saw him, he was alright'

(b)   ú mẽ̀   ré ế,   ǫ̂   dãhį́

          you-when see him   he-is well

          'when you saw him, he was alright'

(c)   ô mẽ   ré ɛ́ ,   ộ   dãhî

       he-when   see him   he-is alright

        'when he saw him, he was alright'

(d)   í mẽ   ré ɛ́,   ộ   dãhî

       we-when   see him   he-is well

        'when we saw him, he was alright'

(e)   ṹ mẽ   ré ɛ́ nịnị,   ộ   dãhî

       you-when see him pl.   he-is well

     'when you (pl.) saw him, he was alright'

(f)   ɛ́ mẽ   ré ɛ́,   ộ   dãhî

       they-when see him   he-is   well

        'when they saw him, he was alright'

SET B

(a)   ḿ mẽ   vẹ̃,   mâ rị́ ị̃sã

       I-when   come   I   eat   food

       'when I came, I ate food'

(b)   ṹ mẽ,   vẹ̃,   wâ rị̃ ịsã

       you-when   come   you eat   food

       'when you came, you ate food'

(c)   ô mẽ,   vẹ̃,   ộ rị   ịsã

       he-when   come   he eat   food

       'when he came, he ate food'

(d)   ɪ̰ mḛ̃   vḛ̃   yâ   rɪ̰   ịsã

           we-when   come   we   eat   food

               'when we came, we ate food'

(e)   ũ mḛ̃   vḛ̃   nịnị , wâ   rɪ̰   ịsã   nịnị

           you-when   come pl. you   eat   food   pl.

             'when you (pl.) came, you (pl.) ate food'

(f)   ḛ̃ mḛ̃   vḛ̃ ,   ḛ̂   rɪ̰   ịsã

           they-when   come   they   eat   food

             'when they came, they ate food'

Note that only "when" dependent clause relationship is exemplified in the preceeding section. "When" as a question word and as a time reference word has other forms in Ebira. Those forms are not discussed here as they are not signalled by preverbs within the VP.

4.8 Pluralisation

Pluralisation is normally a grammatical category within the Nominal Phrase in the structure of the clause. But in Ebira, where some clauses may not have an NP but only VP, pluralisation is manifested in the preverb of the VP, except in one case: 2nd person plural. In 2nd person plural, the preverb is the same as 2nd person singular, and a plural marker, nini, is always appended to the VP. I will briefly describe pluralisation in the NP and then expand more on the use of nini to pluralise elements in the VP.

4.8.1 Pluralisation in the Nominal Phrase

The initial vowel singular/plural class system mentioned in 2.3.1 as a remnant from distant Bantu connection is limited to a few nominals and is not typical of Ebira pluralisation. These are repeated here:

Singular   Plural

òzā	'a person'	āzā	'people'
onęę̄	'a woman'	anęę̄	'women'
onorū̄	'a man'	anorū̄	'men'
òzǫga	'a visitor'	āzǫga	'visitors
òhịnị̄	'a co-wife'	ēhịnị̄	'co-wives'
ozị̄	'child'	ezị̄	'children'
òsę́	'wife'	ēsę́	'wives'

More commonly the language distinguishes between singular and plural in three ways, namely:

      (a)   by multiple nominal phrase,

      (b)   by using numerals,

      (c)   by using the plural marker particle nini.

4.8.1.1 Pluralisation by listing a number of nouns

One way of indicating plural in Ebira is just by listing names of individuals as items in the NP of the clause.

Example:

okè, icã, ĩzé, ocu   ẹ̀   vẹ́

Oke, Ica, Ize, Ocu   they - came

         NP   VP

'Oke, Ica, Ize, Ocu, came'

In this form of pluralisation the preverb of the VP is always the plural form of the 3rd person, e or ẹ, except in the present continuous tense, where the singular form of the preverb is often used in the VP following a multiple NP as subject.

As already mentioned in 4.3.3, VP must include a preverb indicating person and number even if there is also a preceding NP subject.

Examples:

okè   ộ   wụ   wã

okè   he   kill   them

   'Okè killed them'

```
okē  o̤nir̤ı̤   îzê   e̤    vê̤

okē  and    îzê   they  came
```

'Okē and Izê came'

In the next sentence folowing in the discourse, Oke is likely to be pronominalised, and taken up by the resumptive pronoun o / o̤ (according to harmony with the verb) and this pronoun is also the preverb. Similarly with Okē o̤nir̤ı̤ Izê, being taken up with e / e̤.

For pronoun subjects and objects see 5.9, Tables 1-3.

4.8.1.2 Pluralisation by Numerals

One other way of indicating plural in the language is by the use of specific numerals to qualify any noun in the NP.

Examples:

(a)
```
    ezî        ê̤ê̤va           é̤ vê̤
    children   two            they-came
    | N   +    NUM |
    ---------------
      . NP                     VP
         S
```
'two children came'

(b)
```
    Okē      ó̤ wṳ       uye      ê̤ê̤nà
    Okē      he-kill  | animal   four |
                       --------------
    NP         VP       NP
      S                   O
```
'Okē killed four animals'

4.8.1.3   Pluralisation by Particle Marker, ni̱ni̱

The third way and the most common way of indicating pluralisation is by the use of the plural particle marker, ni̱ni̱.

In the NP, ni̱ni̱ can pluralise either noun or pronoun (whatever function the NP may have). It only pluralises nouns or pronouns which refer to animate beings, whether persons or animals.

ni̱ni̱ can also pluralise elements in the VP (although it is not itself an element of the VP) as follows:

1.   a 2nd person pronominal preverb (subject);

2.   a 2nd person pronominal object postverb.

These will be discussed and illustrated further in 4.8.2.

In all cases, tones on ni̱ni̱ are as follows:

(a)   mid-mid, ni̱ni̱, if it qualifies a pronoun, either a free pronoun or pronoun element in the VP:

(b)   low-mid, ni̱ni̱, if it qualifies a noun.

The following examples will clarify the use of the two forms of ni̱ni̱ / ni̱ni̱.

(a)   ni̱ni̱, qualifying nominal NP_s and NP_o

          ọ̄zọ̄kū   ni̱ni̱   é̩ wu̩   uye ni̱ni̱.

          elder   pl.   they-kill   animal pl.

             NP_s VP NP_o

             'the elders killed the animals'

(b)   nịnị, qualifying a free pronoun and nȋnị quali-
        fying NP$_o$

ẹ̄wụ nịnị   é̄ ré   ezî nȋnị.

you pl.   they-see   the children

  Pn. NP   VP   NP$_o$

        'you (pl) saw the children'

(c)   nịnị, qualifying an element in the VP

wâ   wụ   nịnị

you   kill   pl.

              VP

        'you (pl.) killed'

(d)   nȋnị qualifying the NP$_o$ of the VP and nịnị qual-
        ifying the pronominal subject element of the VP

wâ   wu   uye   nȋnị   nịnị.

you   kill   animal   pl.   pl.

              VP   NP$_o$

        'you (pl.) killed the animals'

(e)   nịnị, qualifying object postverbs

okē̄   ô ré   wu   nịnị

okê̄   he-see   you   pl.

NP   VP

        'Okē̄ saw you (pl.)'

It can be observed from the above, particularly example (d), that the language employs low-mid tone for nĭnĭ which pluralises nominals and mid-mid tone for nịnị which pluralises pronominals and both avoid semantic ambiguity.

4.8.2   The Use of nịnị to Qualify Elements in the VP

In all the charts where preverbs signal various categories of the VP, the form for 2nd person singular and plural is the same. nịnị is appended to the VP to distinguish the plural from the singular. As already mentioned in the previous section, nịnị may qualify elements of the VP which refer to 2nd person plural, where the reference is to animate beings. Multiple NP and Numerals are pluralisation forms used for inanimate things.

Some representative examples of various categories of the VP where nịnị occur to pluralise the 2nd person are given below.

4.8.2.1   The Indicative Positive: Past Simple
(a)   wê   hũ   nịnị

          you   drink   pl.

                   VP   pl.

         'you (pl.) drank'

(b)   wê   hū   ǫ̃   nịnị

          you   drink it   pl.

               VP   pl.

      'you (pl.) drank it'

c)   wê   hū   ẽcẽ   nịnị

          you   drink wine   pl.

               VP NP_O pl.

      'you (pl.) drank wine'

4.8.2.2   The Interrogative Mood: Past Perfective

       wẽẽ   sĩ   ẽcẽ   hū   nịnị

       you   have   wine   drink pl.

          VP NP_O pl.

     'have you drunk wine?'

4.8.2.3   The Imperative Mood

    Although the Imperative Mood has zero preverb, to distinguish a command to singular 2nd person, and plural 2nd person, nịnị is just appended to the VP.

(a)   nâ   nịnị

           go   pl.

           VP   pl.

       'you (pl) go'

(b)   hĭ   ezĭ   nĭni   nini

call children pl.   pl.

VP   NP$_o$ pl.   pl.

'you (pl.) call the children'

It is significant to note that, nini is an indepen-
dent plural marker of fixed form. It is not considered
to be an element of the VP for two reasons:

  1.   All elements of the VP are governed by the har-
        mony set of the verb, but nini is fixed in its
        form.

  2.   It may be separated from the VP by other elements
        of the clause, as illustrated in 4.8.2.1. (b) and
        (c) above.

  nini and nĭni are two of the fixed particles which
have important syntactic and grammatical functions in
the NP and VP of the language.

C H A P T E R   F I V E

THE VERBAL PIECE: CLAUSE RANK

5.1   The Clause

As already described briefly in 4.2.2, the clause can be diagrammed as:

$$Cl. \longrightarrow \pm NP_s + VP + \underline{+} NP_o$$

The verbal phrase is the obligatory nuclear element of every verbal clause. Thus a clause may consist of just the verbal phrase. As already mentioned in chapter four, the presence of NP_s and NP_o is determined by the nature of the verb and other grammatical options. This will be discussed further below. Expansion of the clause may occur, either at the beginning of or at the end of the clause, such as Locative Phrase (LP), Temporal Phrase (TP), and Adverbial Phrase (AP). These are outside the scope of this description.

The function of the verb classes in the clause will be described in this chapter with particular reference to transitivity. The verb is the point of origin for the preverbs harmonically and the central point of reference for distinguishing various types of verbal clauses.

The following types of verbal clauses are distin-
guished in Ebira:

Thus seven types of clauses are established according
to the functions of the verb which is head of the clause
and the nominal phrase elements of the clause which com-
plement the verb in the transitivity system. These types
will now be described in detail.

After the discussion of clause types, further
features of the clause rank will be described, namely:

5.2   Transitive Clause

The transitive clause is marked by a class of verbs which take direct NP objects. The majority of Ebira verbs belong to this class. Transitive clauses may occur in any mood, tense, polarity, person, or number. All transitive verbs express actions.

The structure of transitive clause can be diagrammed as:

$$\text{Trans. Cl.} \longrightarrow \underline{+}\ NP_s + VP + NP_o$$

NP_o is an obligatory element which complements the verb in the transitive clause. Some of the common verbs used in transitive clauses include:

ré	'to see'	rɪ̣́	'to eat'
hú	'to drink'	dǫ́	'to get'
hɪ́	'to weave'	ná	'to sell'
cɛ́	'to break'	hṵ̣	'to boil

cɛ̣̃rɛ̣̃	'to write'
cãká	'to break'

Some of these verbs will be used in the examples below to illustrate transivity in various categories.

Examples:

(a)   îzé   ô   ré   ozî

            îzé   she-see   child

            (NP_S) VP NP_O

            'Ize saw the child' (indicative)

(b)   îzé ọnịrị̄ ārî   ê ré   ozî

            îzé and ārî   they-see   child

            |_____|

              (NP_S) VP NP_O

            'Izé and Arí saw the child' (indicative)

Note that while it is possible to have sentences without an NP_S, the shape of the preverb order 1 shows the person and number of NP_S which usually will have occurred previously in the discourse.

(c)   ô   ré   ozî

            he see   child

              VP NP_O

            'he saw the child' (indicative)

(d)   ê   ré   ozî

            they see   child

              VP NP_O

            'they saw the child' (indicative)

e)   ẹ́ẹ́   ná   ẹnụ

they (inter.) sell   yams

'did they sell yams?' (interrogative)

f)   cẹ̃rẹ̃   ĩwe

write   book

'write a book' (imperative)

g)   ẽ   hị̃   ĩtã

they (should)   buy   cloth

'they should buy a piece of cloth'
                            (subjunctive)

5.3   Ditransitive Clause

Some ideas, which in many languages are expressed by ditransitive verbs, are expressed in Ebira by Serial Verb constructions. See chapter 6. There are, however, a few verbs which can occur in ditransitive clauses in the language. Ditransitivity has the feature of duality, i.e. two NP_o are involved, the first being the recipient of the action. Like transitive clauses, ditransitive clauses may occur in any mood, tense, polarity, person or number. The structure of ditransitive clauses can be diagrammed as:

$$\text{Ditrans. Cl.} \longrightarrow \pm NP_s + VP + NP_{o1} + NP_{o2}$$

There are just six verbs found in this class as yet. They are:

zụ̀	'to show someone something'
kɔ́	'to teach someone something'
kụ̀	'to shave (hair) for someone' 'to lift someone's legs'
jị̃	'to bite (someone) a bite'
dã̀	'to cut part of someone off'
círe	'to plant fear in someone'

The use of these verbs will be illustrated in the examples below.

Examples:

(a)   ộ zụ̀   ozî   ẹva

       he show   child   oracle

          VP NP_{o1} NP_2

       'he showed the child the oracle'
                (indicative positive)

(b)   ọ́ yị́   kộ   ọ̀zã   iwe

       he not   teach   person   book

            VP NP_{o1} NP_{o2}

       'he did not teach a person to read a book'
                    (indicative   negative)

(c)   mị̀   vâ   kụ̂   ọ̀mụ̀yã   ịrẹsụ̀

       I   will shave   Ọmụ̀yã   head

             VP NP_{o1} NP_{o2}

       'I will shave/trim Ọmụya's hair'
                (indicative future general)

(d)   irezî   ọ́ọ́   jị̀   îzé   ịrẹrũ

       dog   it   bite   Izé   bite

       (NP_s) VP NP_{o1} NP_{o2}

       'did the dog bite Ize?' (interrogative past)

(e)   ẹ̃   dã   oyi   ụvọ̃

            they   cut   thief   hand

            VP NP_{o1} NP_{o2}

           'let them cut off the thief's hand'
                                    (subjunctive)

(f)   ekũ   ô   cire   ozĩ   ãŋwã

       masquerade he-plant   child   fear

       (NP_s) VP NP_{o1} NP_{o2}

       'the masquerade frightened the child'
                             (indicative past)

    Note the difference between relationships of the two NP_o in a ditransitive clause as distinct from relationships in a genitive complex NP functioning as object:

1. Tone
2. word order

Ditransitive Clause

        mâ   kũ   ọ̃mũyã   ịrẹsũ

        I   shave/trim   ọ̃mũyã   head

         VP NP_{o1} NP_{o2}

        'I shaved (to) ọ̃mũyã's hair'

Genitive NP_o

        ô   nã   ẹnụ   ọ̃mũyã

        he sell   yams   (of) ọ̃mũyã

         VP NP_o

        'he sold ọ̃mũyã's yams'

In the ditransitive clause, both NP_o have a direct relationship to the verb, the first being the recipient of the action.

In the genitive construction, however, the second NP element of the genitive complex NP is related directly to the first NP element, the first being the possessed item and the second the possessor. At the clause level, the complex NP functions as a unit.

In Ebira the genitive construction is used only to express possession. Many concepts which in English might be expressed by a genitive construction are expressed in Ebira by a ditransitive clause.

5.4   Semi-transitive Clause

Semi-transitive clauses are characterised by the occurrence of a verb expressing motion and a NP_O which semantically refers to a goal. The NP occurring as object always refers to a place. The NP_O cannot be pronominalised and that is an important feature of this type of clauses. When the goal referred to is a person or a thing, the serial verb construction is used as in example (iii) below. For detailed description of serial verb constructions (SVC), see chapter six.

The structure of the clause can be diagrammed as:

$$\text{Semi-trans. Cl.} \longrightarrow \underline{+} NP_S + VP + NP_O \underline{+} TP$$

Some verbs which occur in semi-transitive clauses include:

nọ	'to go'
vẹ̃	'to come'
zwè̃	'to run'
hîrã	'to fly'
tũrã	'to crawl'

There are three ways of expressing the action 'to go' in Ebira:

i)　　nâ　　always occurs in intransitive clauses.

E.g:

ǫ̂　　　　nâ

he　　　go

VP

'he went' (indicative past)

ii)　　nǫ　　always occurs in semi-transitive

clause which takes NP_o as object.

E.g:

ô　　　nǫ　　eehɪ́

he　　go　　home

VP　　　　NP$_o$

'he went home'

iii)　　na　　occurs in complex verb constructions as

an auxiliary verb. It cannot occur

clause final and it cannot take an

object. It can only co-occur with

another verb where 'motion to' is

required. For further discussion see

6.4.1.3.

E.g:

ǫ̂　　　na　　hɪ̰　　ɪ̰tã

he　　go　　buy　　cloth

VP　　　　　　NP$_o$

'he went to buy cloth'

Examples of semitransitive clauses:

(a)   ozi   ēē   tūrā   ābārā

     child   he   -   crawl   room

     (NP)   VP NP_O

'the child is crawling in the room'
                              (indicative)

(b)   vẹ́   áárẹ́   ụ̃hwọ̣̃ọ̣̃

     come   farm   tomorrow

     VP NP_O (TP)

'come to the farm tomorrow' (imperative)

Note that vẹ́, 'come', can be used either semi-transitively or intransitively, that is, in a semi-transitive clause, or intransitive clause.

E.g: ẹ̣́ẹ̣́   vẹ́

     they   come

        VP

'did they come?' (interrogative past)

See the next section for further examples of intransitive clauses.

5.5   Intransitive Clause

The intransitive clause does not normally take an object. It has the structure thus:

$$\text{Intra. Cl.} \longrightarrow \underline{+} \text{NP}_S + \text{VP}$$

The intransitive clause can occur in any mood, tense, polarity, person or number. Some common verbs used in the intransitive clause include:

nâ	'to go'
vẹ̃	'to come'
tã	'to be finished'
hẹ̃	'to be retarded in growth'
hĩ	'to be full'
sũ	'to die'
gụ	'to be complete'

Examples:

(a)   ộ   tã

it   finish

          VP

'it is finished'

(b)   ozĩ   ọnó̃ó   ộ   hẹ̃

child   that   he is retarded

      (NP$_S$)   VP

'that child is retarded (in growth)' i.e.
'the child is a dwarf' (indicative ~~present~~)
                                    past simple

(c)   ụnộkộ   ộ   sî   hî

   (pot)   it - has   full

   (NP_s)   VP

   'the pot has been filled'
   (past perfective indicative)

(d)   ādá   îzé   ēē   vê   sû

   father îzé   he - about   die

      (NP_s)   VP

   'Ize's father is about to die'
   (future immediate indicative)

5.6   <u>Stative Clause</u>

The stative clause never has an object. The clause describes the state of something. The stative clause differs from the intransitive clause of the preceding section in that:

(a)   the stative clause can only occur in the indicative and interrogative moods, past simple and future tenses. It cannot occur in the imperative and subjunctive moods, or in habitual tense, whereas the intransitive clause can occur in all the grammatical categories.

(b)   the verbs which occur in stative clauses are characterised by the fact that nouns can be readily derived from the verb roots by adding the nomiliser prefixes

o- / -ọ   or   u- / ụ-

Examples:

báɲɪ̰	'to be big'	ɔ́báɲɪ̰	
		ụbaɲɪ̰	'bigness'
wẽyɪ́	'to be small'	ɓwẽyɪ̰	
		ũwẽyɪ̰	'smallness'
jṍji	'to be black'	ɔ́jṍji	'blackness'
kã̃tã̃	'to be strong'	ɠkãtã̃	'strength'
bṵ̃rṵ̃	'to be thick'	ɔ́bṵ̃rṵ̃	'thickness'

Prefixes cannot be added to the verbs that occur in the intransitive clause to derive nouns from them.

The structure of the stative clause can be diagrammed as:

Stat. Cl. $\longrightarrow$ $\underline{+}$ NP + VP

Some verbs which occur in stative clauses are listed below. It is interesting to note that they are all di-syllabic in phonological structure.

báɲi̧	'to be big'
diví	'to be bad'
vǫ̀rǫ̀	'to be straight'
hę̃rę̃	'to be light'
rátã	'to be heavy'
gana	'to be wide'
ŋu̧rá	'to be hot'
kátã	'to be strong'
wẽyí	'to be small'
zõzã	'to be good/beautiful'
rã̀rã̃	'to be twisted'
gǫdǫ	'to be long/tall'
bu̧ru̧	'to be thick'
jõji	'to be black/dark'
hínẽ	'to be sweet'

Examples of these verbs in stative clause are given below:

(a) ozĭ̄   îzế   ộ   báɲi̧

child   îzế   he - big

        (NP$_s$)   VP

'Ize's child is big' (indicative ~~present~~ *Past simple* ~~tense~~)

(b) oze   ộ   yí̧   gana

road   it - not   wide

(NP$_s$)   VP

'the road is not wide' (negative ~~polarity~~ ~~present tense~~ *Past simple*)

(c) ȩɲã̄   ọ́ọ́   rátã̄

load   it - heavy

(NP$_s$)   VP

'is the load heavy?' (interrogative, ~~present tense~~ *Past simple*)

(d) ozĭ̄   o̧no̧ni̧   ọ́   yí̧   vâ   go̧do̧

child   this   he   not   will   tall

     (NP$_s$)   VP

'this child will not be tall'
future negative indicative)

5.7   Equative Clause

The equative clause expresses a descriptive rela-
tionship between two nominals. It can be stated in the
indicative interrogative mood and past simple and future
tenses. It does not occur in the imperative, subjunc-
tive, habitual and present continuous tense categories.
The structure of the equative clause can be diagrammed
as:

Eq. Cl. ⟶ NP + VP + NP

Only one verb has been found to occur in this clause
so far. It is:

vị   'to be'

One may ask, is /vị/ a verb at all?

It is a verb and it constitutes a class of its own.
Like other verbs it takes preverbs which harmonise with
it, and like a majority of other verbs it has a CV
structure.

Examples: (see overleaf)

(a)   arí   ǫ̂   vị   ǭkū̃rụkū̃

        ari   is   farmer

        NP (sing.)   VP   NP

        'Ari is a farmer' (indicative mood)

(b)   okẽ onịrị ārí   ề   vị   ōsōhū̃ nī̃nị

        |okẽ and ārí| are   trader pl.

               NP (pl.)   VP   NP

        Okế and Arí are traders' (indicative)

(c)   ẹ̃nī̃nị   ẹ̃   yí vị   ozube nī̃nị

        they   they-not-are   hunter pl.

        NP   VP   NP

        'they are not hunters' (negative
                                indicative)

(d)   ādā̃   ĩzế   ǭǫ́   vị   ōgũeyí

        father ĩzế   he - is   close eye person

               NP   VP   NP

        'is Ize's father a blind man?' i.e.
        'is Ize's father blind?' (interrogative
                                              mood)

Note that /vị/ can only take preverbs of Set B be-
cause it belongs to that harmonic set.

5.8   Copula Clause

The copula clause expresses an identification relationship. It only occurs in the Indicative mood and the Interrogative mood of the prosodic type (see 5.10.1 for interrogation by a prosody).

The structure can be diagrammed as:

Cop. Cl. ——⟶ NP + copula

Ebira has just two copulas which are:

    yǫ́   'it is'

    yǐ   'this is'

Examples:

(a)   îdū yǫ́

     lion it is

     NP   copula

     'it is a lion' (Indicative mood)

(b)   oyǐ yǫ́ ǫ

     thief he is

     NP   copula

     'is he a thief?' (Interrogative mood)

(c)   îkū   yî

           scorpion   this is

           NP   copula

           'this is a scorpion' (Indicative mood)

(d)   ozî   ādíve   yí ɨ

           child ādíve   this is

                  NP   copula

           'is this Adive's child?' (Interrogative
                                         mood)

There is a distinction in the usage of the copulas
y̱ǫ and y̱î.
‒‒   ‒‒

    yî   is used for description, e.g. This is my

         father's house.

    y̱ǫ   answers the question   'What is that?' or

                                 'Who is that?'

                                 My house y̱ǫ.

                                 My father y̱ǫ.

5.9   The Pronoun System in the Clause

Pronominal pieces occur as nominal phrases function-
ing in the clause as NP$_s$. They may also occur in subject
relationship   in   the   VP,   as   well   as   in   object
relationships   in   the   VP,   preverbs   or   postverbs   respec-
tively.   When   functioning   in   the   VP,   they   are   phono-
logically   bound   to   other   elements   of   the   VP.   As   these
pronominal   pieces   have   different   forms   and   functions   in
these   positions   within   the   clause,   the   full   system   is
displayed in tabular forms below and examples given.

      Table 1 shows the independent pronouns NP which may
             function as head of NP$_s$ in the clause.

      Table 2 shows the pronominal pieces, part of VP but
             not NP, which (in combination with various
             tones) signal:
             a) tense as well as person and number;
             b) subject   relationship   of   the   VP   in   the
               clause.
      Table 3 shows pronominal pieces, elements of the VP,
             which function as objects in the clause.

Table 1:   Independent Pronouns   (NP$_s$)

PERSON	NUMBER			
	Singular		Plural	
1st	ẹ̃mị	I	ẹ̃yị	we
2nd	ẹ̃wụ	you	ẹ̃wụ nịnị	you
3rd	ọnị	he, she, it	ẹ́nịnị or ẹ́nị	they

The independent pronouns as NP$_s$ are normally used for emphasis and in discourse for resumptive pronoun NP$_s$

Examples:

```
ẹ̃mị        mâ        rị́        ịsá

I           I         eat        food

NP          VP                   NP
  s                                 o
```
          'I ate the food'


```
ẹ̃wụ        wâ        rị́        ịsá

you         you       eat        food

NP          VP                   NP
  s                                 o
```
          'you ate the food'

oṇi   ộ   rí   ịsá

he   he   eat   food

NP_s   VP   NP_o

   'he ate the food'

ẽyị   yê   hũ   ẽcẽ

we   we   drink wine

NP_s   VP   NP_o

   'we drank some wine'

ẽwụ   wê   hũ   ẽcẽ   nịnị

you   you   drink winenini

NP_s   VP   NP_o   pl.

   'you (pl.) drank some wine'

ẹ́nĩnị   ê   hũ   ece

they   they   drink wine

NP_s   VP   NP_o

   'they drank some wine'

    The pronoun subjects in the gloss translation in the above examples are usually emphasised by extra stress in English.

    It can be observed in Table 1 and the examples that all the independent pronouns belong to Harmony Set B. The preverbs following them in the clause agree with them

in number and person but not in harmony. This confirms
the validity of the pronouns as independent NP$_s$.

It is of interest that all independent grammatical
words have vowels of Set B. These include the independent
pronoun subjects above, the negative imperative word āsụ
in 4.6.3, the plural marker nịnị in 4.8.1.3, the copulas
yō and yị́ in 5.8, and the preposition ị́nị́ in 6.4.1.1.

Table 2:   Pronominal Piece (Preverb), element
             of the VP, may function as subject

PERSON	NUMBER				
	Singular		Plural		
1st	mi, me/mị, mẹ, ma	I	i, ye/ị, yẹ, ya	we	
2nd	u, we/ụ, wẹ, wa	you	u, we/ụ, wẹ, wa ... nịnị	you	
3rd	o / ọ	he, she, it	e /ẹ	they	

See Charts 1 - 4 in chapter 4 for detailed descrip-
tion of the preverbs.

Table 3:   Pronominal Piece (Postverb), elements
              of the VP, functions as object

PERSON	NUMBER			
	Singular		Plural	
1st	mi/mị	me	yi/yị	·uʃ˙
2nd	wu/wụ	you	wu/wụ ninị	you
3rd	-ǫ̂, -ə̂*	him, her, it	wã	them

The following examples illustrate the pronominal postverb pieces as part of VP in the clause.

1st per. sing. - Set A

Ĩzế	ô	sî	mi
Ĩzế	she	look for	me
NP$_s$		VP	

'Izế looked for me'

1st per. sing. - Set B

Ĩzế	ǫ̂	hî	mị
Ĩzế	she	call	me
NP$_s$		VP	

'Izế called me'

---

* ə represents non-close vowels.

2nd per. sing. - Set A

okẽ	ô	tũ	wu
okẽ	he	beat	you
NP$_s$			VP

'Okẽ beat you'

2nd per. sing. Set B

okẽ	ộ	tụ̃	wụ
okẽ	he	pull	you
NP$_s$		VP	

'Okẽ pulled you out'

3rd per. sing. Set A

ĩze	ô	hĩ	ọ́
ĩze	she	weave	it
NP$_s$		VP	

'Izé wove it'

3rd per. sing. Set B

ĩze	ộ	hĩ	ọ́
ĩzé	she	call	him
NP$_s$		VP	

'Izé called him'

3rd per. sing. - Set A

i̥cã	ô	hũ	o̥
i̥cã	he	drink	it
NP$_s$		VP	

    'I̥cã drank it'

3rd per. sing. - Set B

i̥cã	o̥	hṳ	o̥
i̥cã	he	open	it
NP$_s$		VP	

    'I̥cã opened it'

These other examples are given without Person, Sets A and B, NP$_s$, and VP labels.

ocu	ô	ne	é
ocu	he	throw	it

    'Ocu threw it'

ocu	o̥	mẽ̥	é̥
ocu	he	do	it

    'Ocu did it'

```
ocu        ô       nõ      ó
ocu        he      kneaded it
```
   'Ocu kneaded it'

```
ocu        ộ       họ      ọ́
ocu        he      fence it
```
   'Ocu fenced it'

```
ocu        ộ       nã      á
ocu        he      sell it
```
   'Ocu sold it'

The following examples illustrate plural pronominal postverb pieces.

```
ẹ́nị̃nị̣    ê       tū      yi
they       they    beat    us
```
      'they beat us'

```
ẹ́nị̃nị    ệ       dụ      yị̣
they       they    chase   us
```
      'they chased us'

```
ekū        ô       tū      wu      nị̣nị̣
masquerade he      beat    you     nịnị̣
```
      'the masquerade beat you (pl.)'

ekû   ộ   dụ   wụ   nịnị

masquerade   he   chase   you   nịnị

     'the masquerade chased you (pl.)'

ekû   ô   tû   wã

masquerade   he   beat   them

     'the masquerade beat them'

ekû   ộ   dụ   wã

masquerade   he   chase   them

     'the masquerade chased them'

It can be observed from Table 3 and the examples that the 3rd person singular has interesting forms harmonically and phonologically.

For 3rd person singular:

(a)   -ộ   occurs as pronominal object when the final vowel of the verb is one of the close vowels, I and U;

(b)   -ã   when the final vowel of the verb is a non-close vowel, E, O, A, this vowel is lengthened for pronominal object.

For 3rd person plural:

     there is just one form, wã, for pronominal object for both harmony Sets A and B.

For the pronouns, high tone is a shared feature for singular and plural forms of the object pronominal 3rd person pieces, and mid tone is shared for 1st and 2nd person pieces.

5.10   Interrogation and Interrogative Words

         in the Clause

Most clause types described so far can occur in the interrogative mood which is evinced by a particular verbal phrase with specific preverbs (4.5.1). There are two other ways of transforming indicative clauses into questions. These are:

(a)   by a prosodic system of the language

(b)   by the use of question words

5.10.1   Interrogation by Prosodic Element

Any indicative clause can be transformed into a question by simply reduplicating the final vowel of the item in clause final position, the added vowel carrying mid-tone, and constituting a syllable on its own.

The added final vowel is a prosodic element of the entire clause and a feature of the interrogative mood.

This type of interrogative mood always requires a 'yes' or 'no' answer. These are referred to as polar questions.

The structure of the clause can be diagrammed thus:

$$Cl. \longrightarrow \pm NP + VP \pm NP_o + \vartheta^*$$

----

* ə is a prosodic element representing any vowel phoneme of the language.

As elsewhere, mid-tone is not marked.

Examples:

(a)   îzế   ô   rế   ozí i

        îzế   she - see   child

        (NP_s) VP NP_o

        'did Izế see the child?' (transitive clause,
                                    polar question)

(b)   ộ̂   vế e

        he   come

           VP

        'did he come?' (intransitive polar question)

(c)   okẽ   ộ kụ̂   ozí   ịrẹsụ̂ ụ

        okẽ   he-shave   child   head

        (NP_s) VP NP_{o1} NP_{o2}

        'did Okẽ shave the child's hair?'
                     (ditransitive polar question)

(d)   ịcã   vị   oyí i

        ịcã   is   thief

        NP   VP   NP

        'is Ịca a thief?' (equative clause polar
                              question)

5.10.2   Interrogative Words

There are some particles in the language which are used to introduce particular content questions of the clause. They are similar to 'wh' question words of English.

These words are:

i̱sɨ̱	'what'
i̱zɨ̱	'where'
ɨ̱hɨ̱	'when (specific day, time, reference)
ę̄nę̄	'who'
sę̄vę̄ dɨ̱	'why'
meme/mę̱mę̱	'how

Examples:

(a)   i̱sɨ̱   ö̧   mę̃

     what   he - do

              VP

     'what did he do?'

(b)   i̱zi̱   ų̄   yā

     where   you - be

              VP

     'where are you?'

(c)   i̱hi̱   ọ̃   vẹ́

       when   he - come

                      VP

       'when (which specific day) did he come?'

(d)   e̱nẽ̌   õ   rẽ́

       who   he - see

                   VP

       'who did he see?'

(e)   se̱ve̱ dí̱   ṳ   cãkã̌ ã́

       why   you - break it

                        VP

       'why did you break it?'

(f)   ṳ   mẽ̱mẽ̱   mẽ̱ ẽ́

       you   how   do-it

                      VP
                   ɖo
       'how did you ∧ it?'

With one exeption, me̱me̱ / meme 'how', interrogative words occur before the VP in the clause, irrespective of their grammatical relationship to the verb.

The exception, me̱me̱/meme, 'how', occurs within the VP, after the pronominal preverb, and preceding any other preverbs and the verb. It is of interest that, because

it occurs within the VP, its vowel sequence is governed
in respect of harmony by the vowels of the verb.

Examples:

(a)   ụ̃   mẹ̃mẹ̃   cẹ̃rẹ̃   ẹ́

      you   how   write   it

      quest.   VP

     'how did you write it?'

(b)   ũ   mẽmẽ   pẽhẽ   ế

      you   how   winnow   it

      quest.   VP

     'how did you winnow it?'

An alternative analysis would be to consider
mẹmẹ/meme as a preverb being part of the VP. However,
interrogative words substitute for phrase units which
are elements of the clause, e.g. for NP_o, NP_s;
mẹmẹ/meme substitutes for an adverbial phrase (how, this
is how). Therefore it is considered as a feature of the
clause, like other interrogative words.

Examples:

Question: ǫ̃   mȩ̃mȩ̃   ãã   vȩ́

           he   how   is   coming

           prev   ques.   VP

           'how is he coming?'

Answer: umã́tõ   ãã   sɪ̣̃   vȩ́   nị

           (by) car   he   - is   take   come

           adv. phr   VP   nị*

           'he is coming by car'

----
*   nị   is a particle that has a syntactic function in
          discourse, in that it always ends a declarative or
          a narrative statement.
          For example:
                    ẹkura   ǫbaɲị   ǫ̃   vɪ̣̃   nị

                    city   big   it   is   nị

                    'it is a big city'

          See the narrative story in chapter seven for
          further examples of nị.

C H A P T E R   S I X

THE VERBAL PIECE: SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

6.1   The Serial Verb Construction

The Serial Verb Construction, SVC for short, is a syntactic phenomenon found in many languages of West Africa, especially the Kwa group under the Niger-Congo family.   It is an important aspect of the verbal system of Kwa languages and it has attracted the attention of many linguists for some time now.   The phenomenon has been called by various names such as 'String Verbs', 'Verbal Combinations', 'Verbs in Series' and 'Compressed Sentence Constructions'.   Modern scholars, including some indigenous West African linguists like Dr Bamgbose (1972, 1974, 1982), Dr Awobuluyi (1967, 1973), and Dr George (1975)*, who have written extensively on this verbal structure, seem to have reached a consensus of opinion in adopting the name 'Serial Verb Construction'. I am using that label in my discussion of the topic with regard to Ebira in this chapter.   I aim to briefly describe the

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* References give the author and dates of works on the topic. These are listed in alphabetical order and in date order for any particular author in the Biblio- graphy at the end of the thesis. Author and date only are cited in the text.

structure as it operates in the language. Occasional references are made to Yoruba or Nupe to point out similarities and differences since these language are related to one another.

6.2　Syntactic Characteristics of Serial Verb

Constructions in Kwa Languages

The syntactic characteristics of SVC are featured in
a clause or a sentence by a sequence of two or more verbs
or verb phrases without any overt connective word between
them.

These series of verbs in the clause share a single
subject and often a single object. They also share the
same preverbs. The following examples from Ebira, Yoruba
and Nupe will illustrate the occurrence of these verbs in
the sentence.

Ebira:

oké	ọ̀	ve	vá	sị̀	ạ̄pā̄ā̄nā̄
oke	he -	come	come	take	gun

'Oke came and took a gun'

Yoruba:

olú	wá	gbé	ìbọn
olu	came	to take	gun

'Olu came and took the gun'

Nupe:

tsoda	bé	lá	egbà
tsoda	came	took	axe

'Tsoda came and took the axe'

It can be observed from the above examples that the notion which is expressed by a series of two or three verbs in the three languages can be expressed in English by two verbs and a connective or by two verbs and a preposition. Sometimes the notion expressed by two serial verbs in serial verb langages may be expressed by one verb in English. Serial Verb Construction is a complex structure.

Serial Verb Constructions can occur in grammatical categories of the VP established in Ebira in chapters four and five. These will be exemplified in the remaining sections of this chapter. All the verbs functioning as part of series in SCV will always share the same categorial features, i.e. they will share the same mood, the same tense, the same person and number, and the same polarity, and not have these categories separately.

6.3   The Verbal Status of Serial Verbs

There are several types of criteria by which verbal status may be determined in Ebira. The primary criterion is function in the verbal phrase. Secondary criteria are syllable structure and tonal pattern, all verbs have a distinctive phonological pattern. Judged by these criteria, each of the words underlined in the Ebira sentence above is potentially an independent verb except vá which is the auxiliary form for vẹ́, 'to come'. The auxiliary verbs are described later, in 6.5. For syllable structure of verbs, see 2.1.3. For tone and tone patterns on verbs, see 2.6.3 and 2.6.4.

It will be described further how verbs in series function as heads of verbal clauses and convey a composite notion as opposed to how each verb in the series functions independently and conveys its inherent lexical meaning. One example below may suffice at this point.

Ìzé	ộ	sí	èceè	vẹ́
Ìze	she	- take	wine	come

'Ìzé brought some wine'

In the above sentence Ebira serial verbs sí and vẹ́ express an action which is expressed in English by one word, 'to bring'. The two Ebira verbs which express the concept of bringing have their individual meanings apart

from the concept of bringing. They can be used independently of each other as follows:

(a)   sị   'to take'

         ộ   sị   ẹɲá   ốbáɲị

         he   take   load   big

            'he took a big load'   i.e.
            'he carried a big load'

(b)   vé   'to come'

         ộ   vé   ēērị

         he   come   yesterday

            'he came yesterday'

In the Serial Verb Construction sị and vé combine to function as the head of the VP of the indicative clause.

Function is the main criterion by which we categorise individual verbs and serial verbs in sentence constructions.

6.4   Types of Serial Verb Constructions
in Ebira

Four types of Serial Verb Constructions are found in Ebira. These include:

1.   Concomitant Serial Verb Construction

2.   Co-ordinate Serial Verb Construction

3.   Comparative Serial Verb Construction

4.   Complex Serial Verb Construction

Each of these types is described in the context of category options in which they occur with illustrative examples.

6.4.1   Concomitant Serial Verb Construction

In Concomitant Serial Verb Construction, two or three verbs are jointly used to express a concept. It may be possible for such a concept to be expressed in another language by a single verb, but semantically composite verb. The concomitant SVC can occur in indicative and interrogative moods, all the tenses, polarity; 1st, 2nd or 3rd person; singular or plural. But most of the examples are in the indicative.

An account of a limited number of common verbs in concomitant serialisation surveyed is briefly given below.

Two action verbs which occur very frequently in serialisation are:

        sị   'to take, to carry'

        yị   'to give'

Two motion verbs which also occur frequently in serialisation are:

        nâ / na   'to go'

        vệ / vã   'to come'

(Note that these are allomorphs, not harmony sets.)

Two location verbs which occur in serialisation are:

        tụ̃   'to be on / in'

        gẹ̃   'to hang on, to put on'

6.4.1.1   The Verb sị, 'to take'

Although both sị and yị occur very frequently in concomitant serialisation, the two verbs behave differently with regard to syntactic order.

        sị   never occurs as last verb
                        in a series.

        yị   always occurs last in the
                        series.

sị can be said to be the most common and the most complex of all the serial verbs of Ebira. It can co-occur with almost any other verb in serial combination. It can even co-occur with itself in some cases. Its semantic interpretation varies from context to context.

In most cases it combines with the other verb or verbs in series to represent composite concepts.

Examine the following occurrences of s𝚤̣ in various sentences.

(a)   ocu   ộ   s𝚤̣   ụ̄hwọ̃

          ocu   he - take knife

        'Ocu took a knife'

(b)   ocu   ộ   s𝚤̣   ụ̄hwọ̃   vé̩

          ocu he - take knife come

        'Ocu brought a knife'

(c)   ocu   ộ   s𝚤̣   ụ̄hwọ̃   dã ẹnụ

          ocu he - take knife cut yam

        'Ocu cut the yam with a knife'

(d)   ocu ô s𝚤̣   ụ̄hwọ̃   y𝚤̣ îzé

          ocu he - take knife give îzé

        'Ocu gave the knife to Izé'

(e)   ocu ô s𝚤̣ ụyã   r𝚤̣ oz𝚤̣

          ocu he - take suffering eat child

         'Ocu punished the child'   or
      'Ocu caused the child to suffer'

(f)   ocu ộ s𝚤̣ ụvọ̣ s𝚤̣ ọ y𝚤̣ mi

          ocu he - take hand take-it give me

        'Ocu gave it to me by hand'

It is not intended here to go into an exhaustive semantic interpretation and analysis of the occurrence of each of the sị in the above serial combinations. However, a brief remark will illustrate the frequency and the complexity of sị in serial combination with other verbs.

Sentence (a) is the only example above in which sị carries its primary lexical meaning in the sentence. In sentences (b) - (f) the composite meaning conveyed by the verbs in series differ from one to the other - although sị is shared by all. In sentences (e) - (f) the English verbs representing the composite meanings of the Ebira verbs in series have prepositions attached to them. One can observe that a concept conveyed by two different word classes in English, i.e. preposition and verb, is conveyed by one in Ebira which is the verb. It is a general observation that Kwa languages very rarely make use of prepositions syntactically, but use verbs to express relationships such as instrument, direction, and accompaniment (and many other relationships) which in many other languages, English in particular, are expressed by prepositions. It may be conjectured that perhaps English prepositions were once verbs!

There is just one preposition / ɪnɪ / found in Ebira
as yet. The preposition is used to cover the semantic
areas normally conveyed by the English prepositions
'into', 'inside', 'among'.

Examples:

ocu	ộ	yã	ɪnɪ	eehɪ
ocu	he	is	inside	the house

    'Ocu is ~~indise~~ the house'
         inside

ocu	ộ	nọ	ɪnɪ	ibãnki
ocu	he	go	inside	bank

    'Ocu went to the bank'

ocu	ộ	yà	ɪnɪ	aza	ọni	eku	tũ
ocu	he	is	in	people	which	masquerade	beat

  'Ocu is among the people the masquerade beat'

okē	ọniri	ocu	ȇ	ŋụ	ɪnɪ	eehɪ
okē	and	ocu	they	enter	inside	house

  'Oke and Ocu went into the house'

Note that ɪnɪ is another grammatical word which does
not harmonise with any other form; it is invariable. (See
5.9 note for comment on independent grammatical words.)

6.4.1.2   The Verb yí   'to give'

As mentioned in the preceding section, yí is another verb which occurs frequently in serial construction. It never occurs as VP_1 in the series but it can occur as a single independent verb in a sentence. It can occur in a transitive clause as in this sentence:

        îzé   ô   yí   ozí   ịsá

        îzé   she-give   child   food

        'Izé fed the child'

In serial construction yí normally occurs in transitive clauses where there are direct and indirect objects. The first verb in the series, where there are only two verbs, may be labelled VP_1 and the second verb may be labelled VP_2. The VP_1, which may be any transitive verb, is followed by the direct object and yí, which is always the VP_2, is followed by the indirect object. But yí is in serial relationship with VP_1 as they both share one NP and the same preverbs.

Examples:

    (a)   îzé   ộ   sí   ịsa   yí   ozí

           îzé   she-take   food   give   child

           'Izé gave food to the child'

    (b)   okè   ộ   hí   îta   yí   ðsé   anị

           okè   he-buy   cloth   give   wife   his

          'Oke bought a piece of cloth for his wife'

(c) okẽ   õ   cé̃   irecé̃   yí̠   õhín̥yí̠

     okẽ   he-lie   lie   give   chief

          'Okẽ lied to the chief'

(d) okẽ   ọ̃   mẽ̠   ụkõrọ   yí̠   õhín̥yí̠

     okẽ   he-do   work   give   chief

          'Okẽ works for the chief'

All the four Ebira sentences above have the same structure. VP_2 extends and complements the meaning of VP_1. Together the two verbs give a composite meaning of the VP in the sentence.

Comparing sí̠ and yí̠, we can observe that there is order of sequence in Serial Verb Constructions. Some verbs can occur as VP_1 and others can occur as VP_2 only. With regard to these two commonest verbs in SVC, sí̠ always occurs as VP_1 and yí̠ always occurs as VP_2, as already indicated. We can notice further that the notion conveyed by one or either of the verbs in a SVC is usually carried by the preposition in English. Professor Bamgbose, commenting on this particular aspect, remarks,

> There is no reason why a notion expressed by one
> language through a preposition or an adverb cannot
> be expressed through a verb by another language.
> This is the whole basis of differentiating func-
> tions of the verb in an SVC.[4]

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4. Bamgbose, A. 1982. 'Issues in the Analysis of Serial Verb Constructions' J.W.A.L. 12.2: 7.

6.4.1.3   Motion Verbs nâ   'to go' and vέ   'to come'
          in Serial Verb Constructions

The motion verbs nâ and vέ constitute another inter-
esting pair in Serial Verb Constructions. The two verbs
have variant forms which occur in specific clause types
and syntactic order.

The motion 'to go' has three forms as mentioned
earlier in 5.4:

nâ   occurs in intransitive clauses

nǫ   occurs in semi-transitive clauses

na   occurs in Serial Verb Constructions.

The motion 'to come' has two forms:

vέ   occurs in intransitive and semi-transitive
     clauses

vá   occurs in Serial Verb Constructions.

Whenever na and vá occur in an SVC the notion of
'purpose' is introduced into the sentence. These two
forms of 'to go' and 'to come' in SVC can be labelled
auxiliary verbs. They do not occur as independent VP_s.
They always occur with other independent verbs. For this
reason they can co-occur with their other independent
forms in sentences. Examine the following:

(a) ọ̄   nâ   na   rị́   ịsá̄
            --   --   --
     he   go   go   eat   food

     'he went (in order to) eat food'

(b) ọ̄   vé̩   vá̄   hị̄   ị̄tá̄
            --   --   --
     he   come   come   buy   cloth

     'he came (in order to) buy cloth'

The above is one occasion where it is possible to
have three verbs in series in a sentence, although one is
auxiliary and always introduces the semantic notion of
purpose. Auxiliary verbs are very few in the language.
They are described in 6.5. Whenever the idea of purpose
is introduced into an action where motion is involved it
is the auxiliary form that is used as in:

(c) ô   na   dá̄   ọcị́
            --   --
     he   go   cut   tree

     'he went and cut the tree'

(d) ọ̄   vá̄   ná̄   e̩nu̩
            --   --
     he   came   sell   yam

     'he came and sold yams'

By way of comparison with the next door neighbour Kwa
language to Ebira, Yoruba Serial Verb Constructions dif-
fer from Ebira Serial Verb Constructions with regard to
the number of verbs in series in similar constructions.
Yoruba uses two verbs where Ebira may use three. Yoruba

has just one form for the motion 'to go', ḷọ, and the
motion 'to come, wá. The following sentences illustrate
the comparison.

Ebira:

okẽ	ọ̄	nâ	na	rí	ịsá
okẽ	he - go		go	eat	food

'Okẽ went and ate food'

Yoruba:

olú	lọ	jẹ	onjẹ
olú	go	eat	food

'Olú went to eat food'

It may be pointed out also that Yoruba does not have
the preverbs in the verb pieces as there are in Ebira.
Ebira Serial Verb Constructions are more complex in some
respects than Yoruba Serial Verb Constructions.

6.4.1.4   Locative Verbs tụ́ and gẹ́ in Serial Verb
          Construction

Two verbs which occur in Concomitant Serial Verb
Construction in Ebira are:

tụ́	'to put on, to put under'
gẹ́	'to hang on'

These verbs always occur as VP_2 in serialisation with particular reference to a location. They can only occur with sɪ̣, 'to take', as VP_1.

Examples:

(a) okẽ   ộ   sɪ̣   ẹɲá   tṵ   ịrẹsṵ   ága

okẽ   he - take   load   put   head   chair

'Okẽ put the load on the chair'

(b) okẽ   ộ   sɪ̣   ẹɲá   tṵ   ĩruvõ   ága

okẽ   he - take   load   put   bottom   chair

'Okẽ put the load under the chair'

(c) okẽ   ộ   sɪ̣   ãmṵ   gẹ́   ọcɪ̣

okẽ   he - take   cap   hang   tree

'Okẽ hung the cap on the tree'

In sentence (a) sɪ̣ - - - tṵ in relation to ịrẹsṵ 'head' gives the concept 'put on'. Similarly, in (b) sɪ̣ - - - tṵ in relation to ĩrũvõ, 'bottom', gives the concept 'put under'. In sentence (c) sɪ̣ - - - gẹ́ gives the concept of 'hang on'

Note that body nouns are used to express specific parts of a location normally expressed by prepositions in English. In (c), where there can be no semantic ambiguity, the body names are not used.

Note that sɪ̣ occurs in all the three sentences but its basic meaning is not obvious at all in the composite meaning of the verbs. This illustrates a case in which

the total meaning of the verbs in series form one concept and become more important than the individual meaning of each verb. This is typical of Concomitant Verb Serialisation.

6.4.2   Co-ordinate Serial Verb Construction

In the co-ordinate SVC two verbs are used in a sentence in a particular sequential order. The action expressed by VP_1 precedes that of the VP_2. Where there is a sequence of transitive verbs which share the same NP_o semantically, that NP_o is only expressed overtly in the first NP of the series. Each verb in Co-ordinate SVC always carries the meaning it would have in a simple sentence.

Examples:

(a) okè   ộ   hĩ   uye   rĩ

     okè   he - buy   meat   eat

        'Okè bought meat and ate it'

(b) ĩzế   ộ   vwộ   ụkã   vế

     ĩzế   she - cook   ụkã   come

        'Izế cooked ụkã and brought it'

In co-ordinate SVC, it is possible to have two transitive verbs in one sentence as in (a) above. It is also possible to have a transitive verb and an intransitive verb as in (b) above.

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One characteristic of co-ordinate SVC sentence is that it can be extended to have two parts joined by a co-ordinate connective, dī, and then add a terminal particle marker, nị. The introduction of the co-ordinate connective and a terminal particle alters the style of the sentence. Note this:

(c) okẽ   ọ̀ hị̀   uye   d'ọ̀   rị̀ ọ̀   nị

     okẽ   he-bought   meat   and he   ate it ni

     'Okẽ bought meat and ate it'

In English, sentences (a) and (c) have the same translation but in Ebira there is stylistic difference. Sentence (a) is used in conversation and in descriptive discourse while sentence (c) is used in narrative discourse. Serial Verb Construction is not just a surface syntactic phenomenon, it is a stylistic and a semantic feature of the language.

Common Verbs in Co-ordinate SVC

The following verbs are frequently used together in co-ordinate SVC:

VP_1		VP_2	
hị̀	'to buy'	rị̀	'to eat'
mẹ̃	'to make'	nã	'to sell'
kã	'to move'	vẹ́	'to come'
pã	'to beg'	rị̀	'to eat'
vã	'to turn'	nâ	'to go'

It is of interest to note the tonal features of these verbs. All the verbs in VP_1 are monosyllabic low tone verbs and all the verbs in VP_2 are monosyllabic high or high-falling tone verbs. This is a surprising feature but it has been observed to be true in all the examples which have been examined. This tonal regularity may not necessarily be the case when disyllabic or multisyllabic verbs are involved.

6.4.3   Comparative Serial Verb Construction

Comparatives involving size, length, width, and weight are normally expressed in SVC structures in Ebira. Stative verbs and one specific comparative verb, hu, 'more / less', or 'more than / less than' characterise this structure. The following sentences illustrate the degrees of comparison in the language.

(a)   ákũ   îzé   ộ   báɲî

       room   îzé   it-is   big

       'Izé's room is big'

(b)   ãbãrã   okẽ   ộ   baɲî   hu

       room   okẽ   it-is   big   more

       ãkũ   îzé   nị

       room   îzé

       'Okẽ's room is bigger than Izé's room'

(c) ābārā   ārî   ǫ   baɲî   hu

     room   ārî   it-is   big   more

                kere-kere   nį

                ideophone   nį

     'Arî's room is the biggest'

The verb hu, 'to be more than or less than' is the only comparative verb which occurs in comparative SVC in Ebira. To get the notion of superlative degree, an ideophone, kere-kere, is always appended to the VP hu, which literally means, 'more than, than' or 'less than, than'.

Some verbs used in Comparative SVC include:

wēyî	hu	'smaller than'
gana	hu	'wider than'
gǫdǫ	hu	'longer/taller than'
hērē	hu	'lighter than'

6.4.4   Complex Serial Verb Construction

Complex Serial Verb Constructions involve some abstract concepts normally expressed by one verb in English. Complex SVC results from the fact that neither of the two verbs in series has direct connection with the composite meaning of the verbs put together. Furthermore, the complex SVC has a fixed collocation of verbs. Both verbs must be present for the sentence to be meaningful.

Examples:

(a) ocu   ǫ̀   dǫ́   okẽ   wũ

    ocu   he - get   okẽ   hear

   'Ocu believed Okẽ'

(b) okẽ   ǫ̀   dǫ́   îzẽ   há

    okẽ   he - get   îzẽ   save

   'Okẽ saved Izẽ'

Common verbs in complex SVC are:

    dǫ́ - - wũ   'to believe'

    dǫ́ - - há   'to save'

The difference between the Concomitant Serial Verb Construction and the Complex Serial Verb Construction is that, in the Complex type, the meaning of the two verbs taken together is one concept, which cannot be derived from the meaning of the two parts taken separately. In the Concomitant type, however, the composite meaning can be derived from the meaning of the verbs which make up the series. In the Co-ordinate type, each verb retains its separate meaning unmodified.

6.5   Auxiliary Verbs

Auxiliary verbs differ from other verbs in that auxiliary verbs cannot occur independently functioning as heads of verbal phrases. In respect of phonological structure, however, auxiliary verbs have the same structure as other verbs. They always retain their harmony set. There are only three auxiliary verbs found in Ebira as yet. For two of them, na and vá, there are apparently related forms which can occur independently in the clause. See 5.5.

The three auxiliary verbs are:

zụ́   'can'

na   'to go'

vá   'to come'

na and vá are already described in 6.4.1.3.

Examples are given here for zụ́ only.

ộ   zụ́   rị́   ịsá

he   can   eat   food

   'he can eat food'

ô   zụ́   zwè̄   ē̄cị́

he   can   run   run

   'he can run'

The description of the Serial Verb Construction in Ebira is by no means exhaustive in this chapter. My aim has been to highlight the most important aspects of the SVC in relation to the total verbal system of the language.

C H A P T E R   S E V E N

A N A L Y S E D   T E X T

Chapter seven gives a transcription of an Ebira narrative folk tale, together with a representatation of its analysis of various units of the verbal piece. The fable is typical narrative normally told to the children during the evening moonlight entertainment in a compound home. I heard the story when I was young and I recently recorded, edited, and transcribed it. There are many fables about the hare and the tortoise in the language. This is just one of them. In this fable, the hare is said to be older than the tortoise.

The narrative is presented as follows:

Line 1:   gives a broad phonetic transcription, showing vowel elisions and tone changes of connected speech;

Line 2:   gives a phonemic word-by-word transcription with all the tones;

Line 3:   gives phrase level analysis;

Line 4:   gives clause level analysis;

Line 5:   gives a literal word-for-word translation;

Line 6:   gives a free idiomatic translation;

Line 7:   gives a grammatical category label.

A single bar - / - indicates phrase breaks, a double bar - // - marks the end of dependent clauses, and a triple bar - /// - indicates the end of a sentence.

SVC indicates Serial Verb Construction in the phrase or in the sentence.

The following abbreviations are used for types of clauses in line four:

dep. tr. cl.	dependent transitive clause
ind. tr. cl.	independent transitive clause
dep. semi-tr. cl.	dependent semi-transitive clause
ind. semi-tr. cl.	independent semi-transitive clause
dep. intr. cl.	dependent intransitive clause
ind. intr. cl.	independent intransitive clause
ind. eq. cl.	independent equative clause
ind. cop. cl.	independent copula clause

The Text

The Hare and the Tortoise

1. a) ụhyádéjî oṇ̇rọ̀pàkụ́ yị́

    b) ụhị́ àdéjî oṇ̇rị ọ̀pàkụ́ / yị̇́ ///

    c)   NP   VP

    d) ind. cop. cl.

    e) fable hare   and   tortoise this is

    f) THIS IS A FABLE OF THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE.

    g) Indicative Mood.

2. a) ẹkụ́hyọ̀ɲâ   àdéjọ́hyọ́pàkụ́

    b) ẹkụ́hị́ ọ̀ɲâ / àdéjî / ọ̀ hị́ ọ̀pàkụ́ ///

    c)   P (introd.)   NP   VP

    d) ind. trans. cl.

    e) day   one   hare   he-call tortoise

    f) ONE DAY THE HARE CALLED THE TORTOISE.

    g) Indicative Mood.

3. a) d' ọ́kàárịhịnị̇ //

    b) dị́ ọ̀ ka àárịhịnị

    c)   VP

    d) dep. intr. cl.

    e) and he-say please

    f) AND HE SAID PLEASE

a) ọ̀ vá sàasọ́nị̣ nịdọ́tánị̣ nị̣

b) ọ̀ vá̱ s̱àa̱s̱á̱ onị̣ no ídá ọ̀tá ánị̣ nị̣ /// SVC

c)   VP

d) ind. semi-trans. cl.

e) he-come follow him go place friend his

f) HE SHOULD PLEASE GO WITH HIM TO HIS FRIEND'S HOUSE.

g) Subjunctive Mood.

4.   a) d' ọ́pàkụ́   kooho   nị̣

     b) dị́ ọ̀pàkụ́ / ka ooho nị̣ ///

     c)   NP   VP

     d) ind. semi-trans. cl.

     e) and tortoise say O.K.

     f) AND THE TORTOISE SAID ALRIGHT.

     g) Indicative Mood.

5.   a) íjékụ́hị sị́ tù d' énịnàà nâ nị̣

     b) íjị́ ẹkụ́hị sị́ tù // dị́ énịnị̣ àà nâ nị̣ ///

     c)   NP   VP   NP   VP

     d) dep. intr. cl.   indep. intr. cl.

     e) when day has reach   and they are going

     f) THEY STARTED GOING WHEN THE DAY CAME.

     g) Indicative Mood.

6.   a)   ādéjǫ́hyǫ́pàkwózè   d'ǫ́ka   yěé   túzǫ́ǫ

     b)   ādéjǐ / ǫ̀ hǐ ǫ̀pàkú̱ òzè̱ // dǐ ǫ̀ ka // yěé tù ǐzǫ́ǫ //

     c)   NP   VP   VP   VP

     d)   dep. tr. cl.   dep. intr. cl. dep. semi-tr. cl.

     e)   hare he-call tortoise road and he-say if-we reach there

     f)   HALF WAY, THE HARE CALLED THE TORTOISE AND SAID, WHEN WE

                                      GET THERE,

     a)   ǫ̀tám ǫ̀ǫ́   sǐsa   vé̱

     b)   ǫ̀tá ámǐ / ǫ̀ǫ́ sǐ ǐsa vé̱ // SVC

     c)   NP   VP

     d)   dep. tr. cl.

     e)   friend my if-he take food come

     f)   IF MY FRIEND BROUGHT FOOD,

     a)   navǫ́   ma   vǐdi rǐsa   dǔwa vâ rǐsa o

     b)   navǫ́   ma   vǐdǐ rǐ ǐsá // dǐ wa vâ rǐ ǐsa o ///

     c)   VP   VP

     d)   dep. tr. cl.   ind. tr. cl.

     e)   wait I first eat food and you will eat food

     f)   LET ME EAT FIRST BEFORE YOU EAT.

     g)   Subjunctive Mood.

7.   a)   d' ópàkú kènέ   vọnúrà

      b)   dí òpàkú ka // ènέ   vị   ọnúrà ///

      c)   NP   VP   NP   VP   NP

      d)   dep. intr. cl.   ind. equ. cl.

      e)   and tortoise say   who is fool

      f)   THE TORTOISE ASKED, "WHO IS A FOOL?"

      g)   Interrogative Mood.

8.   a)   oʒówéyọ́ vọ̀rọ̀ kọ̀ vǐdí   rísá

      b)   ozí ówéyí / ọ̀ vọ̀rọ̀ ka // ọ̀ vǐdí   rí   ịsá //

      c)   NP   VP   VP

      d)   dep. st. cl.   dep. tr. cl.

      e)   child small it-is right that he first eat food

      f)   THE YOUNGER PERSON OUGHT TO EAT FIRST

      a)   d' ózókwọ̀ vá rísa nị

      b)   dí òzókú   ọ̀ vá   rí ịsá nị ///

      c)   NP   VP

      d)   ind. tr. cl.

      e)   and older person he will eat food

      f)   BEFORE THE OLDER PERSON SHOULD EAT.

      g)   Subjunctive Mood.

9. a) ị̀jé̩nị̀nị̀   tū̩zó̩o̩

    b) ị̀jị́ è̩nị̀nị̀   tù ị́zó̩o̩ //

    c)   NP   VP

    d)   dep. semi-tr. cl.

    e) when they reach there

    f) WHEN THEY GOT THERE,

    a) d' ádé̩jị̀   wè̩rè̩   na   kà̩á   yó̩táni̩   ka

    b) dị̀ ádé̩jị̀ /   wè̩rè̩   na   kà̩á   yị́ ò̩tá áni̩ ka // SVC
                               __   __   __

    c)   NP   VP

    d)   dep. tr. cl.

    e) and hare quietly   go   tell it give friend his that

    f) THE HARE SECRETLY WENT TO TELL HIS FRIEND THAT

    a) ị̀jò̩ó̩   sị́ sá   vé̩

    b) ị̀jị́ ò̩ó̩   sị́ i̩sá   vé̩ //   SVC
               __   __

    c)   VP

    d)   dep. tr. cl.

    e) when if-he take food come

    f) WHEN HE BRINGS FOOD,

a) ọ̀ kàá. yọ́pàkụ̀ ka

b) ọ̀ kà á yị́ ọ̀pàkụ̀ ka // SVC
       --   --

c)   VP

d)   dep. tr. cl.

e) he-should tell it give tortoise that

f) HE SHOULD TELL THE TORTOISE

a) ọ̀ sàásọ́nị̀ na deɲi óswe àgụ̀vị́ ka

b) ó sàásá ọnị̀ na dà eɲi óswe à ɠ ụ̀vị́ ka // SVC
      ---   -- --

c)   VP

d)   dep. tr. cl.

e) he-should follow him go fetch water at-spring because
                                                     that

f) TO GO WITH HIM TO THE SPRING (place) BECAUSE

a) eɲọ́ tá o

b) eɲi ọ̀ tá o ///

c) NP VP

d) ind. intr. cl.

e) water it-finish

f) THE (drinking) WATER IS FINISHED.

g) Indicative Mood.

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10. a) d' ọ́tá déjî   kooho nị

b) dị ọtá àdéjî / ka ooho nị ///

c)   NP   VP

d)   ind. tr. cl.

e) and friend hare say O.K.

f) THE HARE'S FRIEND AGREED.

g) Indicative Mood.

11. a) îjọ́sísa vẹ́

b) îjî ộ sí ìsá vẹ́ // SVC

c)   VP

d) dep. tr. cl.

e) when he take food come

f) WHEN HE BROUGHT SOME FOOD,

a) d' ọ́kọ̀pàkwọ̀ sáasọ́nị nóswe nị

b) dị ộ ka / ọ̀pàkụ́ / ọ̀ sàasá ọnị nọ óswe nị /// SVC

c)   VP   NP   VP

d)   ind. semi-tr. cl.

e) and he say tortoise he-should follow him go spring

f) HE TOLD THE TORTOISE TO FOLLOW HIM TO THE SPRING.

g) Subjunctive Mood.

12. a) Ị̀jé sí hu dádéjì rí̧sọ́nọ́ọ sáásáká

b) Ị̀jị̀ é sí hu / dị̀ à déjì / rí̧ ị̀sá ọnọ́ọ sáká-sáká //

c)   VP   NP   VP

d)   dep. tr. cl.

e) when they have gone and hare eat food that completely

f) WHEN THEY LEFT THE HARE ATE ALL THE FOOD

a) d' ó sí zwe na tẹ nị̀

b) dí ó sí zwe na tẹ̀ nị̀ ///

c)   VP

d)   ind. intr. cl.

e) and he has run go hide

f) AND HE RAN AWAY TO HIDE.

g) Indicative Mood.

13. a) Ị̀jọ́pàkú̧ ọnị̀rọ̀tádéjì vẹ́

b) Ị̀jị̀ ọ̀pàkụ ọnị̀rị̀ ọ̀tá àdéjì / vẹ̀ //

c)   NP   VP

d)   dep intr. cl.

e) when tortoise and friend hare come

a) ê ʃ àdéjî póóró ê yí ré é

b) ê sî àdéjî póóró   //   ê yí ré é ///

c)   VP   VP

d)   dep. tr. cl.   ind. tr. cl.

e) they look for hare long time they not see him

f) THEY LOOKED FOR HARE EVERYWHERE THEY COULD NOT FIND HIM

g) Indicative Mood.

14. a) ụŋwàà   kwọ̀pàkụ́   ètẹ̀ètẹ̀rẹ̀

b) ụŋwẹ / àà kụ̀   ọ̀pàkụ́   ètẹ̀rẹ̀-ètẹ̀rẹ̀ ///

c)   NP   VP

d)   ind. tr. cl.

e) hunger it-is-biting tortoise very well

f) THE TORTOISE WAS VERY HUNGRY

g) Indicative Mood.

15. a) d' ọ́pàkụ́ ka   pàá

b) dí ọ̀pàkụ́ / ka pàá

c)   NP   VP

d)   dep. tr. cl.

e) and tortoise say never

f) THE TORTOISE VOWED NEVER

a) oṇ́oma .vàna sàasádejǐ jǐnẹ nị

b) oṇị / ́o ma vàna sàasá àdéjǐ jǐnẹ nị /// SVC

c) NP   VP

d)   ind. tr. cl.

e) he he-never again follow hare go out

f) TO GO ANYWHERE WITH THE HARE.

g) Indicative Mood.

16. a) hǔrǐhyoṇ́oọ hǔrǐhyoṇ́oọ

  b) hǔré ǐhǐ oṇ̀oọ hǔré ǐhǐ oṇ́oọ

c) d) general concluding phrase

  e) from day that from day that

  f) FROM THAT DAY

a) ̀opàkwóṇịràdéjǐ ́e ma zịzị nị

b) ̀opàkǔ oṇịrị àdéjǐ / ́e ma zịzị nị ///

c)   NP   VP

d)   ind. intr. cl.

e) tortoise and hare they never go about

f) THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE NEVER WENT OUT TOGETHER.

g) Indicative Mood.

17. a) ọ̀họ̀họyí   zẹ̌   kȁdéjọ̀ɲ́ótóbóóró

     b) ọ̀họ̀há / óyị̄ zẹ̌ ka // ȁdéjȋ / ọ̀ ɲ́í ọ̀tá ȍbóóro ///

     c)   NP   VP   NP   VP

     d)   dep. intr. cl.   ind. tr. cl.

     e) greediness it-not allow that hare he-should have friend
                                                         proper

     f) THE HARE NEVER HAD A TRUE FRIEND BECAUSE OF GREEDINESS.

     g) Indicative Mood.

A P P E N D I X   1.

A CHART OF MONOSYLLABIC VERBS

		i	ị	e	ẹ	a	ọ	o	ụ	u
p	H					x				
	M					x		x		
	L					x	x			
	HF									
	LR									
b	H				x			x		
	M					x				
	L			x		x				
	HF									
	LR									
t	H				x	x	x		x	x
	M									
	L				x		x	x	x	x
	HF	x								
	LR									
d	H					x	x			
	M					x			x	x
	L					x				x
	HF									
	LR									
k	H					x	x		x	x
	M					x				
	L					x			x	x
	HF									x
	LR									
g	H				x				x	x
	M					x			x	
	L					x			x	x
	HF									
	LR									

		i	i̦	e	e̦	a	o̦	o	u̦	u
	H	x	x		x	x	x		x	x
	M		x			x	x			
v	L					x	x		x	
	HF									
	LR									
	H	x	x		x	x			x	x
	M			x	x	x				
s	L	x			x				x	
	HF									
	LR									
	H	x		x		x	x		x	
	M		x							
z	L	x		x					x	
	HF									x
	LR				x					
	H	x	x	x		x			x	x
	M	x				x	x		x	x
h	L	x	x		x	x	x		x	x
	HF									
	LR			x						
	H	x	x	x						
	M									
c	L	x								
	HF									
	LR									
	H				x					
	M	x	x							
j	L	x								
	HF									
	LR				x					

		i	ị	e	ẹ	a	ọ	o	ụ	u
m	H	x				x				
	M					x	x			
	L				x					
	HF									
	LR									
n	H			x		x				
	M		x	x		x	x			x
	L			x		x		x		
	HF					x				
	LR						x			
ɲ	H	x	x			x				
	M		x							
	L	x								
	HF									
	LR			x						
ŋ	H									
	M				x				x	
	L					x				
	HF									
	LR									
r	H		x	x	x	x				
	M						x			
	L						x	x		
	HF									
	LR			x				x		
w	H				x	x		x	x	x
	M								x	x
	L					x				x
	HF									
	LR									
y	H	x	x	x	x	x	x			
	M									
	L					x				
	HF	x								
	LR									

A P P E N D I X   2.

A LIST OF MONOSYLLABIC VERBS

Appendix 2 shows a list of monosyllabic verbs with their gloss meaning.

pá	'to train or raise up a child'
pa	'to play tricks'
pã	'to beg'
pọ̃	'to be cheap'
po	'to mix flour in liquid'
bẽ	'to ambush, to trap someone'
bẹ́	'to carve (wood)'
ba	'to fast'
bã	'to dig'
bó	'to be old'
tî	'to sigh, to groan'
tẹ́	'to be made ashamed'
tẹ̃	'to hide'
dá	'to light a fire'
da	'to display wares'
dã	'to cut'
dụ	'to chase'
du	'to be spoiled'
dũ	'to clear bush for farming'

kā	'to get water or grains with a cup from a big container'
ka	'to say'
kã	'to fish in a small river by damming and clearing the water away'
kọ̃	'to teach, to learn'
kụ̃	'to gather'
kụ̃	'to play football'
kú	'to foam or water to boil over'
kũ	'to be late'
kû	'to happen in ancient times'
gẹ̃	'to sew'
ga	'to praise in song'
gã	'to share'
gụ̃	'to take side with'
gụ	'to be complete'
gụ̃	'to plant yam seedling'
gú	'to thatch a house'
gũ	'to close (a door)'
ví	'to be ripe'
vị̃	'to be ready (cooked food)'
vị	'to be, is'
vẹ̃	'to come'
vá	'to marry'
va	'to break dry wood'
vã	'to pour'

võ	'to be left, part of something'
vọ	'to cut meat in large pieces'
vʷõ	'to make flour meal'
vṳ́	'to put on trousers/pants or skirt'
vṳ̀	'to be rotten'
vṹ	'to be lost'
sî	'to pay'
sî̃	'to look for, to want'
sį́	'to take'
sʷe	'to initiate something'
sẹ́	'to chop off grass'
sẹ	'to come true (predictions or prophecy)'
sẽ̀	'to bargain, to market'
sʷá̃	'to be smooth'
sa	'to be bland, to lose taste'
sṹ	'to die'
zî	'to lie in wait for someone'
zî̃	'to sieve'
zị̀	'to wander'
zẽ́	'to be enough'
zʷè	'to run'
zě̃	'to agree to'
zã́	'to catch'
zʷọ̃	'to be scarce'
zṳ́	'can, able'

zṳ̀	'to fall (rain)'
zû	'to tie up an animal to a tree'
hí	'to be full'
hi	'to string (beads)'
hî	'to sweep'
hị́	'to call'
hị̄	'to buy'
hế	'to excrete body waste'
hě	'to be in possession of some- thing by finding it'
hẽ̌	'to be retarded in growth'
hã́	'to split wood with an axe'
ha	'to wake up'
hã	'to bark (a dog)'
họ	'to drive, to pilot'
họ̃	'to ask'
hṵ́	'to boil'
hụ	'to grow'
hṵ̣	'to open'
hû	'to drink'
hu	'to uproot'
hũ	'to roast (in fire)'
cí	'to get a load down off head'
cî	'to press down in order to level'
cị́	'to germinate (seeds)'
cế	'to break'

ji	'to separate two people from fighting'
jĩ	'to jump'
ji̧	'to cut off a leaf or twig'
jẽ́	'to be happy'
jẽ̌	'to wait'
mɪ́	'to put out light or fire'
mȩ̃	'to do'
mã́	'to fell (a tree)'
ma	'to give birth'
mo̧	'to measure (grains) with measuring cup'
ni̧	'to be clean'
nẽ́	'to trigger off (trap)'
ne	'to throw'
nẽ	'to prepare (gravy)'
nã́	'to sell'
na	'to open'
nã	'to tear'
nâ	'to leave'
no̧	'to go'
nɔ̌	'to make announcement with a special gong'
nð	'to knead'
nu	'to leak'
ɲɪ́	'to laugh'
ɲĩ	'to cut a tooth'

ɲɪ̰	'to have'
ɲi̧	'to choose'
ɲě	'to wipe'
ɲá̃	'to hit with hand'
ɲǎ	'to crack nuts with stones to get the seeds out'
ŋʷȩ	'to spin wool or cotton'
ŋʷã	'to loosen, to untie'
ŋu̧	'to enter'
rɪ̰	'to eat'
ré̃	'to see'
rě	'to lick the fingers'
rȩ́	'to be sharp (knife)'
rá̃	'to inhabit (a place)'
ro̧	'to pour liquid through a funnel'
rɔ̧̃	'to be easy'
rõ	'to think'
rǒ	'to make a hole through a wall'
wȩ́	'to sharpen a hunting stick'
wá̃	'to carve a pointed stick'
wã̀	'to dig in the sand'
yɪ̃	'to steal'
yɪ̂	'to refuse'
yɪ̰́	'to give, this is'
yé̃	'to understand'

yę̀   .   'to know'

yá   'to be bent'

yã   'to be in a place'

yǫ̃   'it is'

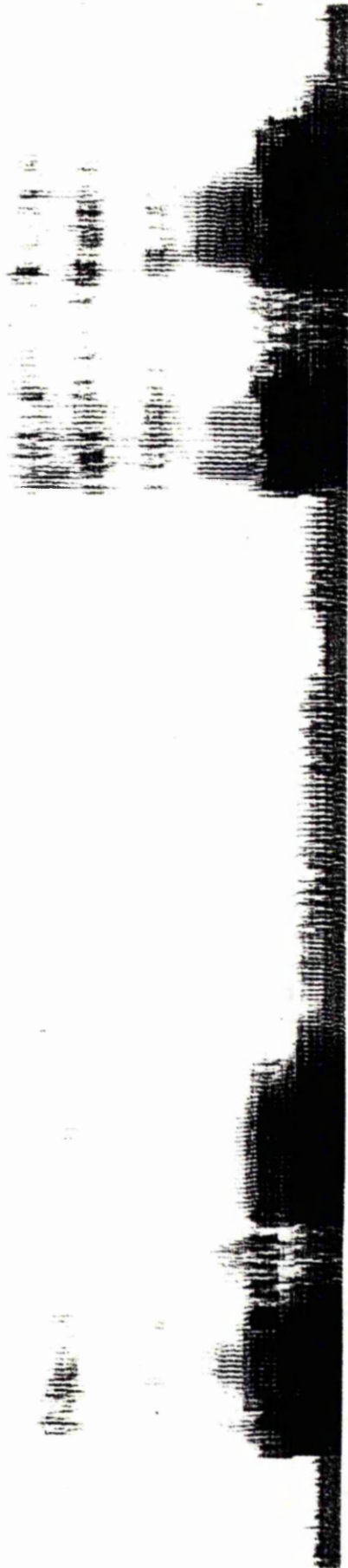# A P P E N D I X   3.

Presented here are <u>sample spectrograms</u> of my pronunciation showing words of contrastive vowel harmony sets.
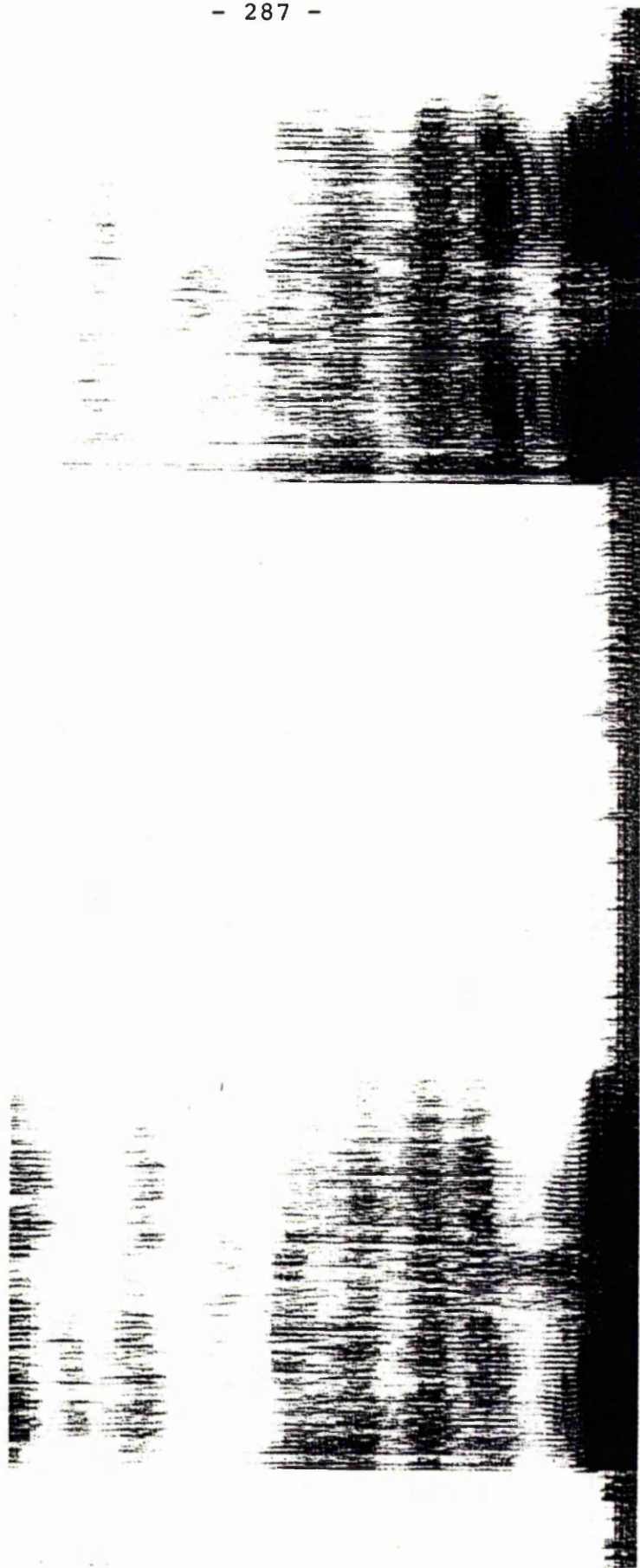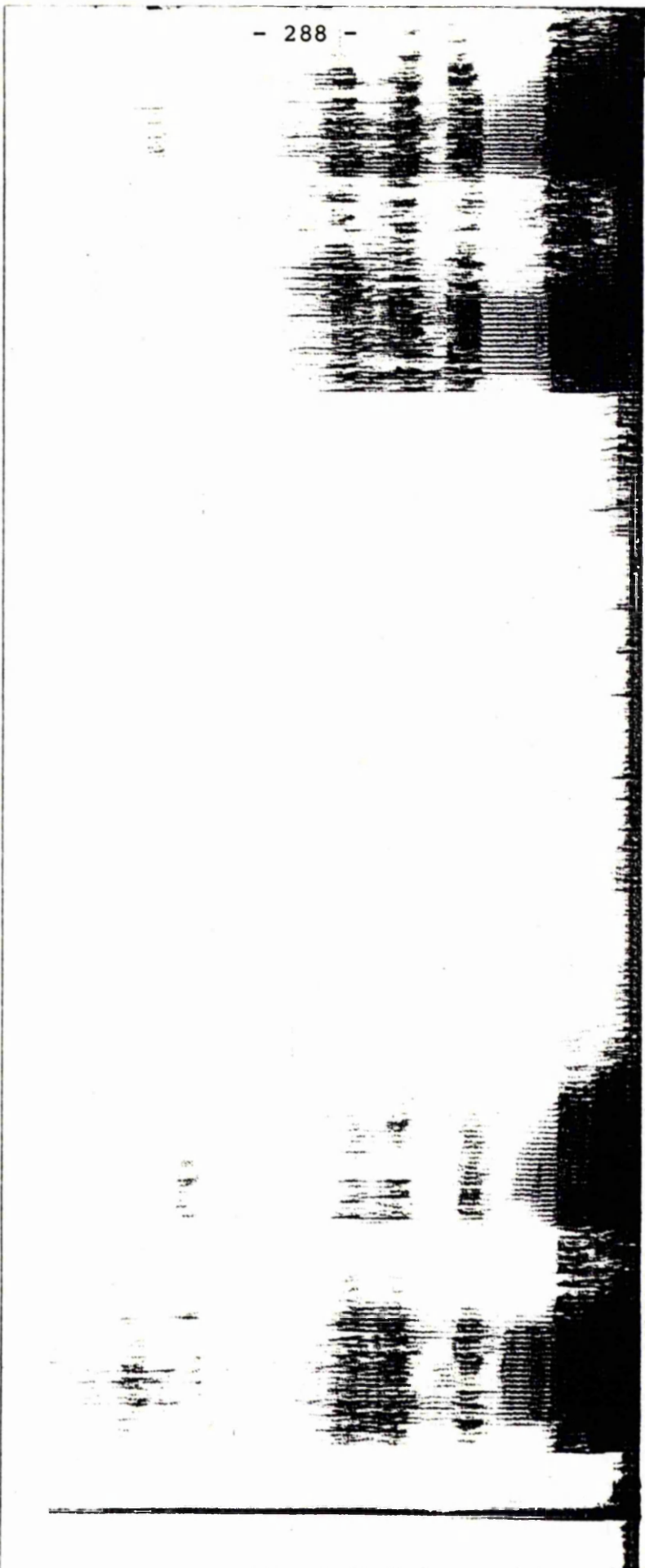
fhi: 'fnnocence'

fhi̧ 'a case'

ʔhú ʼa brushʼ

ʔhú ʼseedsʼ

ëhẹ 'world'

àhẹ 'faeces'

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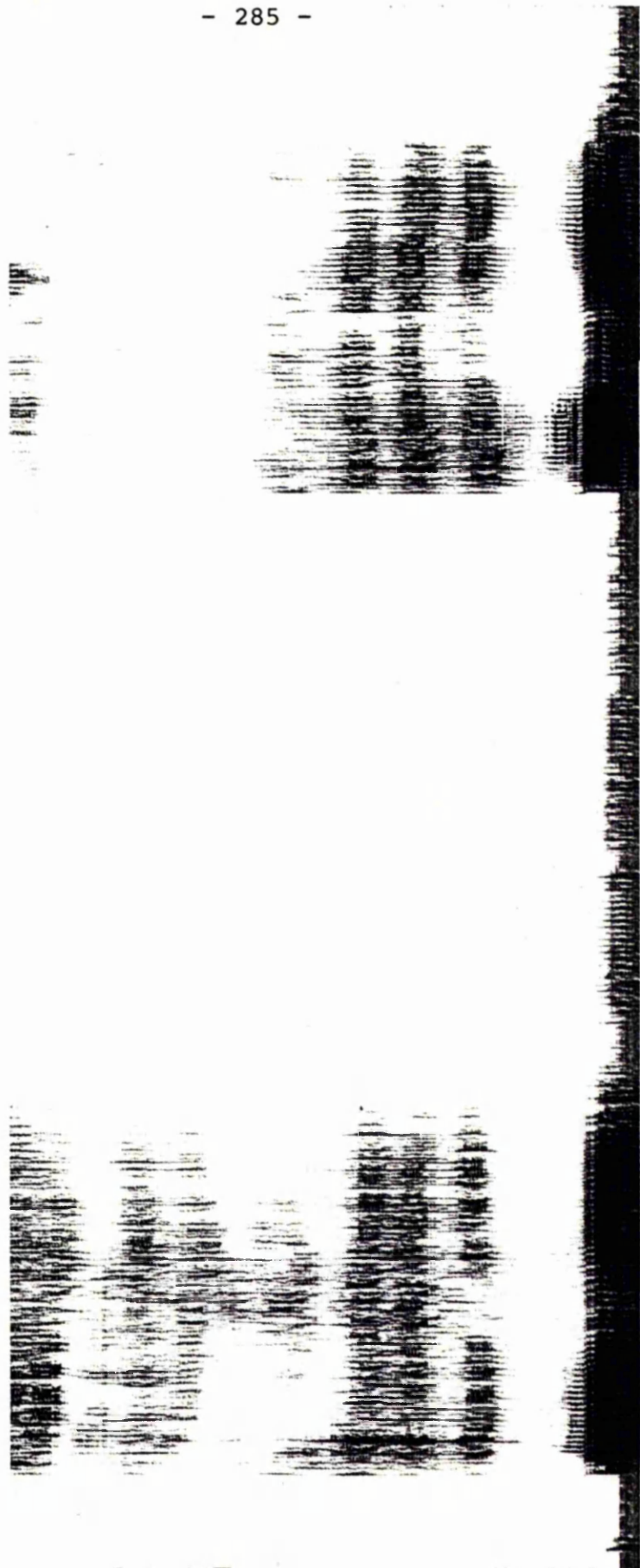
ǫhǫ́ 'a wall'

ohô 'yes'

ayǐ 'flour'

àyì 'chicken pox'

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