MAE-MORAE AND THE LANGUAGES OF EPI (VANUATU)

DARRELL TRYON

1. INTRODUCTION

There are currently six languages native to Epi which are spoken on that island. These are: Lamenu, Lewo, Bieria, Baki, Maii and Bierebo (see Map). There are also three non-native Melanesian languages spoken on Epi, namely Paamese (spoken by refugees from the volcanic island of Lopevi), Mae (spoken by people of the same name who migrated to Epi from north-east Malakula), and Nakanamanga (spoken in south-east Epi by people who came originally from Tongoa in the nearby Shepherd Islands).

The languages of Epi are still not very well known, with early works such as Codrington (1885), Ray (1926) and Ivens (1937-39, 1939-42) still constituting the main sources. In more recent times Tryon (1973, 1986) and Early (1993, 1994) have produced a number of papers on these languages, drawing attention to such features as stem-initial consonant alternation and verb serialisation.

The languages of Epi may be subgrouped as represented in the tree diagram which follows:
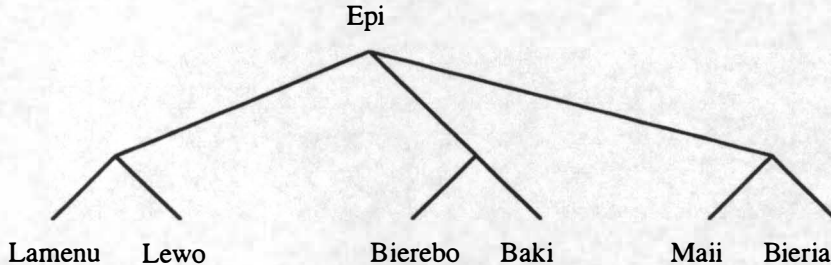
In terms of their position within the Oceanic subgroup, Pawley (1972) considered that the Epi languages were members of a Central New Hebridean subgroup, which tentatively included the languages of Malakula. Pawley's classification has been expanded and amplified since that time, although the position of the Epi languages has remained relatively unaltered.

Tryon (1976) found that the languages of Epi form a single lower-order subgroup within the East New Hebrides group, itself a subgroup of the huge North and Central New Hebrides group. This conclusion is not very different from Pawley's earlier subgrouping (1972), based on a small number of witness languages.

Clark (1985) compared the Vanuatu language subgroupings proposed by Pawley and Tryon and concluded that all of the non-Polynesian languages (there are three Polynesian Outlier languages spoken in Vanuatu) of Vanuatu constitute a single subgroup of Oceanic.
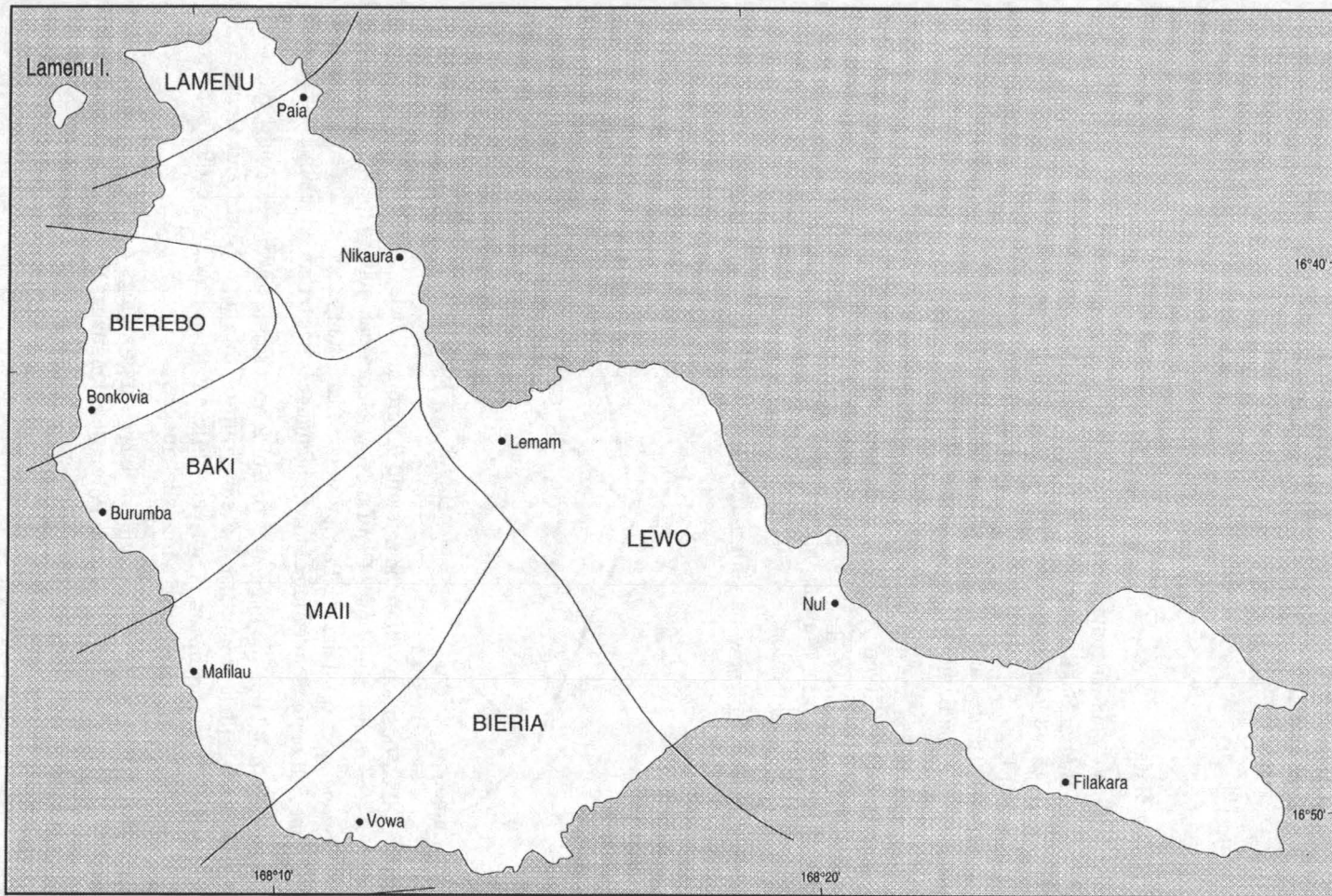
MAP: THE LANGUAGES OF EPI

With respect to the languages of Epi, Clark considered that they were most closely related to the languages of Efate and the Shepherd Islands and that they constitute a primary branching within a Central Vanuatu subgroup. This Central Vanuatu subgroup includes the languages of Malakula, Pentecost, Ambrym, Paama, Epi and the Efate area.

While the languages of Epi do share a few morphosyntactic innovations with those of Efate, they share in two phonological developments which distinguish them from the Efate languages and from most other languages in the Central Vanuatu subgroup. These are the merger of POC *s and *ns (more recently reinterpreted as *s and *z: Ross 1988) as zero in all of the Epi languages except Bieria where they merge as /h/, and the merger of POC *d and *l as /l/, whereas *d and *l do not merge in the Efate area.

In this paper I focus on the language known as Maii (Mae-Morae), formerly spoken at Mae-Morae village in the west of Epi, but now spoken in the more recently established littoral village of Mafilao.

2. MAII AND STEM-INITIAL CONSONANT ALTERNATION

All of the languages of Epi are characterised by extensive stem-initial consonant alternation with verbs (see Tryon 1986).[1] These alternations are exemplified in summary form in Table 1. (Stem-initial consonant alternation is also common in the languages of the Efate area, Namakir and Nakanamanga, and also in the languages to the north of Epi, especially Paama, Ambrym, Pentecost and Ambae: see Lynch 1975; Walsh 1982; Crowley 1982; Clark 1985; Crowley 1991.)

In Maii, the major characteristic in terms of verb morphology is that the basic tense/aspect distinction is between realis and irrealis, rather than between past and future or past and non-past. In Maii, as in all other Epi languages, the realis/irrealis distinction is maintained in the vast majority of cases by verb stem-initial consonant alternation. For example:[2]

(1)   a.   *Inəvəmə nə-m-daa   lakai.*
            yesterday I-REAL-cut.REAL wood
            I cut the wood yesterday.

       b.   *Raambiə nə-raa   lakai.*
            tomorrow I-cut.IRR wood
            I shall cut the wood tomorrow.

On the basis of these consonant alternations, five verb stem classes may be distinguished in Maii as follows:

---

1   Verbs in Maii also include a subclass of verb bases which may also serve as noun modifiers/adjectives.
2   Abbreviations used in the examples are as follows:

ACC	accompaniment	IRR	irrealis
ART	article	MULT	multiplicative
BEN	benefactive	PL	plural
FUT	future	POSS	possessive
INCEPT	inceptive	REAL	realis
IO	indirect object		

1. Class 1: *d-/r-*

In this verb class the irrealis and realis stem forms differ in that the realis form has its initial consonant in *d-*, this changing to *r-* to mark irrealis. In addition to the stem-initial consonant alternation, the realis marker *mV-* is obligatory between the subject marker and the verb stem. Members of this stem class include:

-daa/-raa	to cut, hoe
-dəkə/-rəkə	to be, stay
-duluwaa/-ruluwaa	to call out
-dumal/-rumal	to stand up
-dun/-run	to roast vegetables

For example:

(2)   a.   *Nə-m-duluwaa.*
          I-REAL-call.out.REAL
          I called out.

    b.   *Tə   nə-ruluwaa.*
          FUT   I-call.out.IRR
          I will call out.

2. Class 2: *mb-/v-*

In this class all realis stems have consonant-initial *mb-*, which alternates with *v-* to express irrealis. With this class the realis marker *mV-* is not required. Members of this stem class include:

-mbakuə/-vakuə	to row
-mbanmə/-vanmə	to come
-mbar/-var	to get, carry, take
-mbe/-ve	to be, exist
-mbər/-vər	to say, tell
-mbivi/-vivi	to work
-mbol/-vol	to dance
-mbuar/-vuar	to bite
-mbul/-vul	to buy, pay

For example:

(3)   a.   *Ləmbaŋə mbuar   ilə-ŋ.*
          dog   Ø.bite.REAL leg-my
          The dog bit my leg.

    b.   *Tə   ləmbaŋə vuar-tnau.*
          FUT   dog   Ø.bite.IRR-me
          The dog will bite me.

3. Class 3: *i-*

With this verb class (vowel-initial) the realis/irrealis distinction is of course not maintained by a consonant alternation, but rather by the presence of the realis marker *mV-* together with

a rule which states that to form the irrealis the first vowel of the verb stem is dropped and the second vowel lengthened. Thus in example (4) it will be seen that *-iop > -oop*, 'see':

(4) a. *Nə-m-iop   ləmbaŋə.*
       I-REAL-see.REAL   dog
       I saw the dog.

    b. *Tə   n-oop   ləmbaŋə.*
       FUT I-see.IRR   dog
       I will see the dog.

(5) a. *Nə-m-iənəmban.*
       I-REAL-sleep
       I slept.

    b. *Tə   n-oonəmban.*[3]
       FUT I-sleep.IRR
       I shall sleep.

Other members of this class include:

-ial/-aal	to plant
-iap/-aap	to sharpen
-iau/-aau	to sing
-iəvaavə/-oovaavə	to float
-iul/-uul	to laugh

4. Class 4: *f-* and *m-*

This stem class is exceptional in Maii in that it is the only one which does not require the overt realis marker *mV-*. In Maii there is no change between realis and irrealis stems beginning with *f* or *m*. For example:

(6) a. *Inəvəmə nə-ma n-top.*
       yesterday I-drink ART-sugarcane
       I ate (lit. drank) sugarcane yesterday.

    b. *Nə-ma n-top   raambiə.*
       I-drink ART-sugarcane tomorrow
       I'll eat (lit. drink) sugarcane tomorrow.

(7) a. *Nə-fandə mbukai.*
       I-tie.up   pig
       I tied up the pig.

    b. *Tə   nə-fandə mbukai.*
       FUT I-tie   pig
       I shall tie up the pig.

---

3   Note that where the realis stem has initial *-iə*, the irrealis form becomes *oo* (thus *iə > oo*).

Other members of this class include:

-fak	to slash
-fərei	to write
-fil	to cough
-flae	to spit
-fluŋ	to want, try
-fuŋgo	to do, make
-ma	to chew (sugarcane)
-mar	to die
-maul	to live, be alive
-mol	to go out
-mun	to drink

5. Class 5: General Stem Class

All verbs not belonging to the four classes listed above may be assigned to Class 5. This class is characterised by identical realis and irrealis verb stems, but with the obligatory presence of the realis prefix *mV-* with all members. It is this feature which distinguishes Class 4 from Class 5. For example:

(8) a. *Inəvəmə nə-m-ləŋə   n-tai   m-dum.*
      yesterday I-REAL-hear ART-sea REAL-roar
      Yesterday I heard the sea roaring.

  b. *Tə   ne-ləŋə raambiə.*
      FUT I-hear   tomorrow
      I will hear it tomorrow.

(9) a. *N-man   m-kakə   m-ləvə   ndan tnau.*
      ART-bird REAL-fly REAL-go from me
      The bird flew away from me.

  b. *Tə   n-man   kakə ləvə ndan tnau.*
      FUT ART-bird fly   go   from me
      The bird will fly away from me.

Note that third person singular actors are indicated by a zero morpheme. Some members of stem Class 5 are as follows:

-kai	to cry
-kakə	to fly
-kan	to eat
-kərə	to marry
-kirkir	to run
-lai	to hit
-ləŋə	to hear
-lolo	to swim, bathe
-luk	to hide

-tak	to pull
-top	to bury
-tul	to sew

In summary, there are five verb stem classes in Maii, as follows:

1. Stems beginning with *d-/r-* (Class 1);
2. Stems beginning with *mb-/v-* (Class 2);
3. Stems beginning with *i-* (Class 3);
4. Stems beginning with *f-* or *m-* (Class 4);
5. Stems beginning with *k-*, *l-* , *n-* or *t-* [all others] (Class 5).

The realis/irrealis distinction is indicated in Classes 1 and 2, then, in two ways:

1. By the insertion of the realis marker *mV-* between the subject marker and the verb stem (with the exception of Class 4).

2. By means of the consonant alternations *d-/r-* and *mb-/v-* (where the realis marker has merged with the *mb-*).

With other verb classes (and especially with Class 5, with the largest membership) the realis/irrealis distinction is indicated simply by the realis marker *mV-*, between the subject marker and the verb stem.

3. EPI LANGUAGES AND VERB-STEM ALTERNATION

Stem-initial alternations are not confined to the verb phrase in Maii, however. They are also found with certain prepositional phrases. Before moving on to examine these, it should be observed that in all Epi languages there is a realis marker of the form **-mV-* which occurs, potentially, between the subject marker and the verb stem. A summary table with examples from all of the Epi languages is presented as Table 1.

In the languages of Epi, however, the realis marker is only used with a certain number of stem-initial consonants. In other cases, there is no overt reflex of **-mV-*, but rather an alternation, usually of an oral/nasal grade (or more properly fortis/lenis) nature, between stem-initial consonants to signal the realis/irrealis distinction. The process has been fully illustrated above.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF STEM-INITIAL CONSONANT ALTERNATIONS

The development of stem-initial consonant alternations was considered at length by Lynch (1975) for Nguna, of the neighbouring Efate-Shepherds group of languages. Their development in the languages of Epi was considered by Tryon (1986) and for the languages of central Vanuatu in general by Crowley (1991).

Briefly, if one were to consider the development of the consonantal pairs set out in Table 1, one would recognise that they follow a regular developmental pattern, as follows: '

(a) With all of the Epi languages, a form **-mV-* preceded all verb stems to indicate realis, becoming prefixed to the verb stem throughout.

(b) In the case of a number of stem-initial consonants, especially those reflecting Proto Epi *p*, *t*, *d* and to a lesser extent *k* and *g*, stem-initial alternations developed as a result of the interaction (assimilation) of the realis marker and the initial consonant of the verb stem.

(c) With other stem-initial consonants, especially those reflecting Proto Epi *l*, *w* and *m*, the presence of the realis marker produced only the sequences *m-l*, *m-w* and *m-m*.

While the current Epi languages may be presumed to have followed the path of assimilation of the initial /m/ of the realis marker *-mV-* to the initial consonant of the verb stem, once the vowel of the realis marker was lost (normal in unstressed position), no single set of developmental rules has been devised which covers all of the languages. This lack of a single developmental process from Proto Epi to the present-day languages suggests strongly that the consonant alternations in Epi languages and by implication elsewhere in Vanuatu are probably the result of independent parallel development. However, as Crowley (1991:179) notes, the patterns are so widespread and at the same time so similar that it does not seem plausible to argue that these features have evolved completely independently since the break-up of Proto Central Vanuatu. A comparison of the sound correspondences (Table 2) and the alternating pairs of verb stems (Table 1) shows that the irrealis verb stem forms are regular reflexes of the protoforms, while the realis verb stem forms do not follow the regular sound correspondences. In fact the phonemic status of the voiced members of the consonant pairs in the languages of Epi may be questioned according to some phonological theories since it is extremely difficult to discover voiced/voiceless stop oppositions which do not involve realis/irrealis verb stem oppositions.

While the development of the alternations may be described as regular, there are some minor irregularities in Maii and its closest relative Bieria, with respect to the development of *m+t*, which suggest that the process is not complete yet.

In Bieria, for example, as well as the *t/nd* stem-initial alternation derived from *t/*m-t*, there are also a few *t*-initial stems where the collocation of *m+t* has not produced a consonantal alternation. Rather the assimilatory process has not developed beyond stage one (in (a) above). Thus:

(10) a.   *Ne-tokosan.*   I shall sit down.
           No-ndokosan.   I sat down.

but:

      b.   *Ne-te.*   I shall cut.
           No-m-te   I cut.

Bieria doubly marks realis/irrealis with many verbs, first by means of the stem-initial consonant alternation and secondly by means of the vowel of the subject marker. Thus:

(11)   *No-matak.*   I am afraid.
           Ne-matak.   I shall be afraid.

It has been suggested (Tryon 1986) that this method of distinguishing realis from irrealis may have developed with verb stems whose initial consonants we have seen do not participate in the alternation process, for example those beginning with *m-*, *l-* or *w-*. However, the vowel of the Bieria subject marker also differs between realis and irrealis even where a stem-initial consonant alternation occurs, as in:

	LEWO	NUL	BIEREBO	BAKI	MAII	BIERIA
1. *p/*m-p	*v/p* vano/pano 'go'	*ø/p* en/pen 'go'	*v/p* vtali/ptali 'laugh'	*v/mb* vio/mbio 'call out'	*v/mb* buar/mbuar 'bite'	*v/mb* vek/mbek 'go'
2. *pu/*m-pu	*w/pw* wwere/pwere 'pull'		*w/pw* weli/pweli 'buy'			
3. *t/*m-t	*s/s [*tu]* suluia/suluia 'sew' *t/t* taŋi/taŋi 'cry'	*s/s [*tu]* smalu/smalu 'stand' *t/t* te/te 'cut'	*t/nd* teŋi/ndeŋi 'cry' tika/ndika 'stay'	*t/č* teŋi/čeŋi 'cry' telan/čelan 'light'	*r/md* raa/m-daa 'cut' *t/mt* tul/m-tul 'sew'	*t/nd* tokosan/ndokosan 'sit' *t/mt* te/m-te 'cut' *s/ms [*tu]* sul/m-sul 'sew'
4. *d/*m-d	*l/ml* loŋea/m-loŋea 'hear'	*l/ml* loŋea/m-loŋea 'hear'	*č/nǰ* čoŋo/nǰoŋo 'hear'	*č/mč* čoŋ/m-čoŋ 'hear'	*l/ml* ləŋə/m-ləŋə 'hear'	*l/ml* loŋo/m-loŋo 'hear'
5. *k/*m-k	*k/k* karia/karia 'bite' kilia/kilia 'know'	*k/k* kania/kania 'eat' kilia/kilia 'know'	*s/s* sani/sani 'eat' sari/sari 'bite'	*s/č* sen/čen 'eat'	*k/mk* kan/m-kan 'eat'	*k/mk* kan/m-kan 'eat'
6. *g/*m-g			*k/ng* kariri/ngiriri 'run'			
7. *s/*m-s						*h/m̥* hul/m̥ul 'rub'
8. *V/*mi-V	*V/miV* uveve/mi-uveve 'breathe'	*V/miV* iu/mi-iu 'blow'	*V/miV* iliwi/mi-iliwi 'stoop'	*V/miV* al/mi-al 'see'	*V/ɲiV* op/mi-op 'see'	*V/miV* at/mi-at 'tie'
9. *l/*m-l	*l/ml* lilua/m-lilua 'vomit'	*l/ml* lualua/m-lualua 'vomit'	*č/nǰ* čulua/nǰulua 'vomit'	*č/mč* čuluo/m-čuluo 'vomit'	*l/ml* lualuə/m-lualuə 'vomit'	*l/ml* luwa/m-luawa 'vomit'
10. *w/*m-w	*w/mw* we/m-we 'hit'	*w/mw* we/m-we 'hit'	*w/mw* we/m-we 'hit'	*w/mw* we/m-we 'hit'		
11. *m/*m-m	*m/m* mai/mai 'be sick'	*m/m* munia/munia 'drink'	*m/m* mrau/mrau 'fear'	*m/m* mun/mun 'drink'	*m/m* mar/mar 'die'	*m/m* mat/mat 'die'

<p align="center">TABLE 2: EPI SOUND CORRESPONDENCES[4]</p>

POC	*p	*mp	*t	*nt	*ik	*ŋk	*d	*nd	*q	*ŋp
PEP	*p	*b	*t	[*d]	*k	*g	*l	*l	0	*pw
LAM	v, p		t, s	[s]	k		l	l	0	p
VIS	v, p	p	t	t	k		;	;	0	p
MAP	v, p	b	t	t	k	k	l	l	0	p
NIK	v, p	p	t	t	k	g	l	l	0	p
NUV	v, p	p	t		k		l	l	0	p
MAT	0, p	p	t	t	k		l	l	0	pw
NUL	0, p	p	t	t	k		l	l	0	pw
FIL	0, p	p	t	t	k		l	l	0	pw
TAV	v, p	p	t	t	s, k[1]	g	l	l	0	v
BON	v, p	p	t	t	s, k[1]	g	l, c[2]	c[3]	0	v
BUR	v, p	b	t	t	s, k[1]	g	l, c[2]	c[3]	0	p
YEV	v, p	b	t	t	k	g	l, c[2]	c[3]	0	p
BAK	v, p	b	t	t	s, k[1]	k	l, c[2]	l	0	bw
MAI	v, p	b	t	[d]	k	k, ŋ	l	l	0	p
VOW	v, p	b	t, s	[r]	k	k, ŋ	l	l	0	b

POC	*s	*ns	*m	*n	*ñ	*ŋ	*l	*R	*w	*y
PEP	*h	*h	*m	*n	*ñ	*ŋ	*l	*R, 0	*w	0
LAM	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
VIS	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
MAP	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
NIK	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
NUV	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
MAT	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
NUL	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
FIL	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
TAV	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	l, 0	w	
BON	0	0	m	n	ñ	ŋ	l, c[2]	l, 0	w	0
BUR	0	0	m	n	ñ	ŋ	l, c[2]	l, 0	w	
YEV	0	0	m	n	ñ	ŋ	l, c[2]	l, 0	w	
BAK	0	0	m	n	ñ	ŋ	l, c[2]	l, 0[4]	w	
MAI	0	0	m	n	n	ŋ	l	0	w	0
VOW	h	h	m	n	n	ŋ	l, 0	0	w	

[1] With pronouns.

[2] [c] initial; [l] intervocalic.

[3] Examples reflect *nd in word-initial position only.

[4] POC *R reflected as /l/ throughout Epi only reflecting a few POC items; otherwise *R is reflected as zero.

---

4   Language abbreviations used in this table are as follows:

BAK	Baki	NUL	Nul
BON	Bonkovia	NUV	Nuvi
BUR	Burupika	PEP	Proto Epi
FIL	Filakara	POC	Proto Oceanic
LAM	Lamenu	TAV	Tavio
MAI	Maii	VIS	Visena
MAP	Mapremo	VOW	Vowa
MAT	Mate	YEV	Yevali
NIK	Nikauru		

(12) a. *Nove   no-mbek   va.*
        yesterday I-go.REAL home
        I went home yesterday.

   b. *Tambia   ne-vek   va.*
        tomorrow I-go.IRR home
        I'm going home tomorrow.

5. PREPOSITIONAL AND OTHER FUNCTIONS OF ALTERNATIONS IN MAII

In Maii, consonantal alternations are not restricted to the verb phrase nor to verb stems. They also occur with the following:

a) Multiplicatives: *mbaka-/vaka-*
b) Inceptives: *mbaalik/vaalik*
c) Benefactives/Indirect Object: *mbikin/vikin*
d) Accompaniment: *mblakən/vlakən*

a) Multiplicatives are indicated by *mbaka-* (Realis) and *vaka-* (Irrealis), preceding numerals, thus:

(13) a. *Fuŋgo mbaka-tol.*
        Ø-do   MULT.REAL-three
        He/she did it three times.

   b. *Tə fuŋgo vaka-tol.*
        FUT Ø-do MULT.IRR-three
        He/she will do it three times.

b) Inceptives, indicated by *mbaalik/vaalik*, may occur either sentence-initially or -finally, as in:

(14) *Mbaalik   nə-frei əvrə ndə.*
       INCEPT.REAL I-write thing only
       I began to write things.

(15) *Mə-mbənmə   iə ndə ukau ŋei mbaalik.*
       we.EXC-come in only year this INCEPT.REAL
       We came and started only this year.

(16) *Nə-fluŋ ndə nə-vənmə   Vila vaalik   nə.*
       I-want only I-come.IRR Vila INCEPT.IRR this
       I just want to come to Vila for the first time.

(17) *Nə-m-daa   ndə mbaalik.*
       I-REAL-cut.REAL only INCEPT.REAL
       I've started cutting it.

(18) *Lə-fuŋgo-ŋgar ndə mbaalik.*
       they-make-DUR only INCEPT.REAL
       They just repaired them.

c) Benefactives/Indirect Object are indicated by *mbikin/vikin* followed by the beneficiary/ indirect object, as in the following:

(19) a. *M-kun   mbikin   tnau.*
         REAL-give BEN.REAL me
         He/she gave it to me.

     b. *Tə   kun   vikin   tnau.*
         FUT Ø.give BEN.IRR me
         He/she will give it to me.

(20) *Ne-m-kun   mbiki-n.*
      I-REAL-give   BEN.REAL-him
      I gave it to him.

(21) *Nə-m-kimbiə   mbiki-n.*
      I-REAL-call.out BEN.REAL-him
      I called out to him.

(22) *Vərə k-awə   rambiiə   nə-kun n-baŋ   vikin-kə.*
      say   you-come tomorrow I-give ART-canoe BEN.IRR-you
      If you come tomorrow, I will give you a canoe.

Where indirect object rather than benefactive is intended, then *kin* + object is the normal structure, as in:

(23) *Nə-marək kin ləmbaŋə.*
      I-fear   IO   dog
      I am scared of the dog.

(24) *Nə-m-kai kin kəna-ŋ   taata.*
      I-REAL-cry IO   POSS-my   father
      I cried for my father.

Another form of benefactive/indirect object involves the verb *mbe/ve* 'to be', followed by a possessive pronoun. Thus:

(25) *Nə-mbar   lakai təknə mbe   kəna-mə.*
      I-take.REAL wood some be.REAL POSS-you
      I took some wood for you.

(26) *Tə   nə-var   ni-vi   təknə ve   ŋga-mə.*
      FUT I-take.IRR ART-banana some be.IRR POSS-you
      I shall get some bananas for you.

d) Accompaniment is indicated by *mblakən/vlakən* followed by a complement, either nominal or pronominal. Thus:

(27) a. *Nə-m-iimbə   mblakən   a-ŋ   ləmbaŋə.*
         I-REAL-go.REAL ACC.REAL POSS-my dog
         I went with my dog.

b.   *Tə   n-iivə   vlakən   a-ŋ   ləmbaŋə.*
FUT I-go.IRR ACC.IRR POSS-my   dog
I shall go with my dog.

(28)   *Tnau   mblakən   nəkma iluə mə-m-ləvə.*
I   ACC.REAL child   two we.EXC-REAL-go
I went with two boys.

(29)   *Ndu   mblakən   lurə-nə lakai ŋalə.*
be   ACC.REAL leaf-him tree   they.PL
They remain with their leaves on (evergreen trees).

6. SOURCES OF EXTRA VERB PHRASE ALTERNATIONS

Evidence from within Maii, and corroborating evidence from other Epi languages, suggests that the prepositions and other morphological features outside the nuclear verb phrase involving stem-initial consonant alternation are probably verbal in origin and quite likely part of the verb serialisation which characterises so many of the languages of this part of Melanesia.

Consider first the accompaniment marker *mblakən/vlakən* 'with'. On the basis of evidence from the neighbouring Baki language, where the cognate form is *mbica/vica*, 'with' (Maii /l/ corresponds to Baki /c/), the Maii form *mblakən* is probably morphologically complex: *mbla-kən* (originally *mbila/vila-kin*). In Maii, *kin* is an indirect object marker (see examples (19) - (26)). And /i/ would normally become /ə/ in unstressed position, which would be the case with *mblakən*. The only meaning I know for the verb stem *-mbla/-vla* in Maii is 'to saw, to sharpen with a file'. The semantic connection between this and accompaniment is not obvious, however.

The benefactive/indirect object marker *mbikin/vikin* is also most probably morphologically complex: *mbi-kin*, from Maii *mbe/ve* 'to be' plus *kin* 'to, indirect object'. In neighbouring Baki, the verb 'to be' is also *mbe/ve*, which is also used there as a numeral prefix, as in the following:

(30)   *Pen   na-vuru   nyando ve-cuwo.*
tomorrow I-catch.IRR fish   be.IRR-two
Tomorrow I will catch two fish.

This is relevant also when considering the multiplicative prefix *mbaka-/vaka-* which also exhibits stem-initial consonant alternation in Maii (see example (13)).

Returning to the benefactive 'for, to', it is common in all of the languages of Epi that this be expressed as a verb phrase, again involving stem-initial consonant alternation. Thus in Baki we have:

(31)   *No-ndu   mbuk   van-cau.*
I-give   book   it.go.IRR-you
I'll give the book to you.

(32)   *Ne-mbwar   mane   mban-cau.*
        I-take.REAL   money it-go.REAL-you
        I took the money for you.

The Maii inceptive *mbaalik/vaalik* is again probably morphologically complex also, *mbaalik/vaa-lik*, although at this point I am unable to assign any precise meaning to its component parts, except perhaps that the first element *mbaa-/vaa-* may reflect POC **pano* 'go'. So here again it is possible that the inceptive is in fact a non-nuclear verb serialisation.

REFERENCES

Clark, Ross, 1985, Languages of north and central Vanuatu: groups, chains, clusters and waves. In Andrew Pawley and Lois Carrington, eds *Austronesian linguistics at the 15th Pacific Science Congress*, 199-236. *PL*, C-88.

Codrington, R.H., 1885, *The Melanesian languages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Crowley, Terry, 1982, *The Paamese language of Vanuatu. PL*, B-87.

1991, Parallel development and shared innovation: some developments in Central Vanuatu inflectional morphology. *Oceanic Linguistics* 30/2:179-222.

Early, Robert, 1993, Nuclear layer serialization in Lewo. *Oceanic Linguistics* 32/1:65-93.

1994, Lewo. In Peter Kahrel and René van den Berg, eds *Typological studies in negation*, 65-92. Typological Studies in Language 29. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Ivens, W.G., 1937-39, A grammar of the language of Lamalanga, North Raga, New Hebrides. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 9/3:733-763.

1939-42, A grammar of the language of Lobaha, Lepers' Island, New Hebrides. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10/1:345-363.

Lynch, John, 1975, Oral/nasal alternation and the realis/irrealis distinction in Oceanic languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 14/2:87-99.

Pawley, Andrew K., 1972, On the internal relationships of Eastern Oceanic languages. In R.C. Green and M. Kelly, eds *Studies in Oceanic culture history* 3, 1-142. Pacific Anthropological Records 13. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum.

Ray, Sidney H., 1926, *A comparative study of the Melanesian island languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ross, M.D., 1988, *Proto Oceanic and the Austronesian languages of western Melanesia. PL*, C-98.

Tryon, D.T., 1973, Linguistic subgrouping in the New Hebrides: a preliminary approach. *Oceanic Linguistics* 12:303-351.

1976, *New Hebrides languages: an internal classification. PL*, C-50.

1986, Stem-initial consonant alternation in the languages of Epi, Vanuatu: a case of assimilation? In Paul Geraghty, Lois Carrington and S.A. Wurm, eds *FOCAL II: papers from the Fourth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics*, 239-258. *PL*, C-94.

Walsh, D.S., 1982, Variation of verb-initial consonants in some Eastern Oceanic languages. In Amran Halim, Lois Carrington and S.A. Wurm, eds *Papers from the Third International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics*, vol.1: *Currents in Oceanic*, 231-242. *PL*, C-74.