

THE TYPOLOGY OF THE TAYO LANGUAGE OF ST LOUIS, NEW CALEDONIA

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1. INTRODUCTION¹

The aim of this paper is to identify and to describe briefly a number of structures in Tayo whose Melanesian origin can scarcely be doubted. Tayo did not exist prior to 1860, which was when the Marist mission was established at St Louis, some 15 kilometres from Noumea in the Far South of New Caledonia. In the village which grew alongside the Mission, there settled numbers of Melanesians, from different linguistic regions of New Caledonia, speaking related but mutually unintelligible languages. By around 1910, Tayo had become the sole first language (L_1) of children born as the third generation of the St Louis people (Ehrhart 1993:59–72). From a number of studies (Corne 1989, 1990a, 1990b; Ehrhart-Kneher & Corne 1996; and especially Ehrhart 1993; see also Chaudenson 1994; Ehrhart 1994, n.d.), it has become clear that we are in the fortunate position of being able to observe this language as it is currently spoken by the surviving members of the first generation for which it was the sole L_1 (as well as, of course, by subsequent generations). We have descriptions of the two main Melanesian languages spoken at St Louis in the first decades of the village's existence: Cèmuhi, the language of Touho (Rivierre 1980) and Drubéa (Shintani & Païta 1990), representative of the dialect group of the New Caledonian 'Far South' (see Rivierre 1973). There is as well an abundant literature concerning the New Caledonian Melanesian languages.

Tayo is a new language whose lexicon is mainly from the French spoken in New Caledonia, but whose semantic and syntactic organisation is fundamentally Melanesian in character.

Tayo continues to evolve, and there is still a range of variation which reflects in part the different tribal origins of the villagers (Ehrhart 1993:26–32). Within this variation, there is nonetheless a common core, and it is this core which is the baseline for the present investigation, which is more heuristic than definitive.²

¹ This paper is a summary of my 1995 article entitled 'A contact-induced and vernacularised language: how Melanesian is Tayo?'. The research on which it is based was supported by the former Department of Romance Languages of the University of Auckland and by two research grants from the University of Auckland Research Committee (grants F3444075 and F3444079).

² This study is based principally on the data collected by Ehrhart (1992a, 1992b, 1993), complemented by a tape recording made in 1978 by A.-G. Haudricourt and a few hours of fieldwork carried out by the author in 1988. My thanks go to Robert Carles, Sabine Ehrhart, Jim Hollyman, Vincent Holopopo,

2. PERSONAL PRONOUNS AND SUBJECT INDICES

2.1 PRONOUN MORPHOLOGY

The forms of the pronouns are given below. Some variants are omitted from this table, as are the possessives, these being dealt with in the text.

TABLE: TAYO PERSONAL PRONOUNS

	Subject and subject index	Independent pronoun	Unmarked dependent and subject index
Singular			
1	<i>ma</i>	<i>mwa</i>	
2	<i>ta</i>	<i>twa</i>	
3	<i>la</i>	<i>lia, sa</i>	
Dual			
1	<i>nude</i> ³	<i>nude</i>	<i>le</i>
2	<i>ude</i>	<i>ude</i>	
3	<i>lede</i>	<i>lede</i>	
Plural			
1	<i>nu</i>	<i>nu</i>	
2	<i>uso</i>	<i>uso</i>	
3	<i>sa, sola, lesot</i>	<i>sola, lesot</i>	

These forms have a number of variants, a partial listing of which follows. For the subject forms:⁴

- (a) 1SG *ma* may become *m* before the vowel *a*; *mwa* is a relatively frequent form of the subject among older speakers, while *mā* or *mō* (with nasal vowels) occurs only rarely and in the usage of the oldest speakers.
- (b) 2SG *ta* may become *t* before *a*; *tā*, *tō*—for the oldest speakers.
- (c) 3SG *la* may become *l* before *a*; *lia-la* is a demonstrative pronoun (singular), and an emphatic form used in thematisation.

The dual is used only by older (40+) speakers:

- (d) 1DU *nude* (inclusive and exclusive) has a form *nudø* which is felt to be “more modern”; *nude tu sel* ‘exclusive dual’.

Joseph Katé; to all those in Noumea and at St Louis who helped in various ways; and to Peter Mühlhäusler who organised some financial assistance.

³ Voiced stops are usually prenasalised in Tayo.

⁴ Abbreviations used in this paper are as follows:

CONJ	conjunctive	PREP	preposition
DEF	definite	REL	relativiser
DU	dual	SG	singular
PL	plural	SI	subject-indexing pronoun

- (e) 2DU *ude* (with or without prenasalisation of the *d*) has variants *udø*, *usot de*, *bude*; formerly, the 2DU was used as a form of respect when addressing an older person or a person holding tribal authority.
- (f) 3DU *lede*, also *ledø*, *de*, *de-la*.
- (g) 1PL *nu* may become *n* before the reduced form *a* of the future marker *va*.
- (h) 2PL (*v*)*usot*, *uso*, *su*, according to speed of speech.
- (i) 3PL *sot-la* is an archaic form remembered only by the oldest speakers; younger speakers prefer *lesot* to *sola*; *sa* has the variants *swa*, and *s* before *a*.

For the independent forms, note that *lia* (disyllabic) is usually *lya* (monosyllabic); *lia* is [3SG, +animate], *sa* is [3SG, -animate]; and that *usot* is in free variation with *uso*.

These observations show clearly that some variation is a function of evolution over time. Before examining this aspect, let us see how the system works.

2.2 THE SUBJECT AND SUBJECT-INDEXING PRONOUN

The subject pronoun is used either alone, preposed to the predicate, or as an index within VP when the subject is an independent pronoun or an NP (a lexical agent)—see §2.6:

- (1) *Lesot sa vya war mwa e sola sa reste.*
 3PL 3PL.SI come see 1SG and 3PL 3PL.SI stay
 They came to see me and they (another group) stayed behind.⁵
- (2) *Tule per sola arive de laba.*
 PL priest 3PL.SI arrive from there
 The priests came from there.

In (1), *lesot* and *sola* are independent pronoun subjects, while *sa* is a subject index; in (2), it is *sola* which is acting as the subject index. Note that *sa* '3PL, +animate' is never used as an independent pronoun, whereas *sa* '3SG, -animate' is so used.

2.3 THE INDEPENDENT PRONOUN

The independent pronoun is often used as the subject, generally but not obligatorily with a subject index. It may be in initial position, as in (1), or final, as in (3) below, according to the class of verb (minimally, ± stative), and it may be thematised in various ways, to be discussed below.

The independent pronoun is also used in non-subject functions as a direct object (*mwa* in (1) above) or as the object of a preposition (as in the possessive, see §2.5).

⁵ Tayo has few markers of tense/aspect, and they are always optional. For details, see Ehrhart (1992b, 1993:159–165).

2.4 THE DEPENDENT PRONOUN *le*

This pronoun is unmarked for number and person, and is always a subject index. Impersonal predicates have no subject: there are very few of these, but they are relatively frequent, and include:

- (i) the existential predicates/verbs *na* and *napa* (see §6);
- (ii) terms having to do with natural and meteorological phenomena such as *bota* 'be fine', *cho* 'be hot', *frwa* 'be cold', *fenwar* 'be dark/night'.

With (and only with) the second of these two categories, *le* appears to be usual (perhaps obligatory), and can be seen either as indexing the implied subject, or as an impersonal pronoun. In all other contexts it has the indexing function.

The seven contexts involved are:

- (a) with stative predicates; the subject (independent pronoun or NP) is postposed in this context:
 - (3) *Le fu lia.*
SI crazy 3SG
He is crazy.
- (b) when the subject precedes the predicate; a noun subject is usually specified by a demonstrative *-la* or a possessive; *le* has a thematising (emphasis, focus, demonstrative,...) function:
 - (4) *Lia le fu.*
3SG SI crazy
HE is crazy.
- (c) when an independent pronoun is (redundantly(?)) focused by *se*:
 - (5) *Se twa le fe sa.*
it.is 2SG SI do that
You're the one who did it.
- (d) after the relativiser *sa* (relativisation of the subject):
 - (6) *Ma bwar dolo-la sa le sal.*
1SG drink water-DEF REL SI dirty
I drank the dirty water.
- (e) after a noun phrase (but not a personal pronoun) which is the subject within a relative clause introduced by *sa* (relativisation of a non-subject):
 - (7) *tule guyav sa wawa le pla:te*
Pl guava REL grandmother SI plant
the guava trees that Grandma planted (*wawa* < Dru)

Le is also used after certain non-personal and/or indefinite pronouns, and in some interrogative structures (see Ehrhart 1993:175–176; see also §4 below).

2.5 POSSESSIVES

The possessive is constructed with the preposition *pu(r)* + the independent pronoun. Sandhi phenomena produce reduced variants: *pur twa* > *pu twa* > *puta* > *pta*.

- (8) *mater pu bude*
 mother PREP 2DU
 your (2DU) mother

2.6 DISCUSSION

The morphology of this system clearly comes from French forms, viz. the stressed (tonic, disjunctive) pronouns and similar forms which occur in spoken French, sometimes with the tag *là* added: *moi, toi, lui-là, nous, vous autres, (le)s autres(-là), ça*. The dual, an obligatory semantic category in both Drubéa (Shintani & Païta 1990:57–58) and Cèmuhi (Rivierre 1980:61, 119–122), is added, but again the forms are derived from French: *nous deux, nous deux tous seuls, vous (autres) deux, (les) deux(-là)*. The indexing pronoun *le* is probably the result of a reanalysis of French (*i*) *est* and 3SG *la* may well have a similar origin in French (*i*) *a*. To be noted are the loss of the front rounded vowel [ø] and the presence of the (Melanesian) prenasalised voiced stops [ᵐb, ᵐd]. Phonetically, there has been some evolution, with the erosion of some forms and the (re)introduction of [ø]. Apart from the prenasalised stops, perhaps, there is nothing particularly noteworthy about the morphology of this system.

The way the system works, however, is strikingly different from either French or any other French-lexicon creole. In the dual, there is a near total absence of any distinction between inclusive and exclusive, although this distinction is obligatory in Drubéa and Cèmuhi, and no evidence that such a distinction has ever been a part of the Tayo pronominal system. However, the dual itself is now being lost. There is thus an on-going evolution towards the bipolar SG/PL system of French.

This evolution has little effect on the status of the pronouns, divided as they are into the two classes of dependent and independent elements. The independent pronouns are, variously, preposed agents, postposed objects, postposed possessives, and postposed statives (as in (3) above). These functions are identical to those of Cèmuhi, although the latter uses different classes of (usually affixed) personal ‘modalities’ to handle them (Rivierre 1980:61, 121). As for the apparently double role of the subject/subject-indexing pronouns, it is a direct reflection of Cèmuhi; there, the preposed personal modalities have the following features (among others): they are not clitics, since (as in Tayo) other particles (of tense, aspect, etc.) usually occur between them and the verb; they are within VP and normally precede the verb when it is followed by a subject; they are obligatory if the lexical subject is not expressed (Rivierre 1980:119). The multiple role of the Tayo independents is the same as in Drubéa, which has only two modalities, subject and non-subject (Shintani & Païta 1990:58, 69). (The honorific role of 2DU *ude* has been mentioned in §2.1 above: in Drubéa, 2PL has this role.) For possessives, Cèmuhi and Drubéa each has a (different) system of junctors divided into various semantic categories (Rivierre 1980:68, 151–156; Shintani & Païta 1990:55): in Tayo, all these categories are collapsed into the single paradigm using *pu*. The Tayo system is clearly the result of the transfer of Melanesian conceptions, those conceptions which Drubéa and Cèmuhi hold in common: conceptions, not forms, the forms in each having only a rather distant etymological connection.

To this transfer there has been added an innovation, the dependent *le*. This indexing pronoun is unmarked for person or number and is confined to certain contexts.

The pronominal system as sketched here offers a preliminary view of the nature of this language which arose in a plurilingual contact situation. The morphology is entirely derived from French forms, either directly or through reanalysis of French strings, while the semantic organisation of the system is essentially Melanesian. This organisation is reflected in an equally Melanesian syntax based on what Cèmuhi and Drubéa have in common, but there are innovations. The one concerned here (*le*) is one such which, while it conforms syntactically and semantically to the general system, seems not to have any direct, single model; and there is an on-going evolution which, in the pronominal system, affects:

- (a) the dual (loss of a distinction of marginal import in French, or 'decreolisation', i.e. movement towards a bipolar system closer to French);
- (b) the morphology (phonetic erosion: *vuzot* > (*v*)*usot* > *uso* > (*?*so*) > *su*, plus decreolisation: loss of prenasalisation of voiced stops, (re)appearance of rounded front vowels);
- (c) the syntax (*se* for *le*, see §7).

It does not seem possible to speak here of any sort of *modification* of French, be it by simplification or by the accelerated evolution of tendencies inherent to spoken French. Nor is it a matter of the straightforward relexification of a Melanesian language, since the Tayo pronominal system shows a categorisation of the pronouns which is less complex than in Cèmuhi (which has different forms for the preposed agent, the postposed object, the possessive, and the stative) but more complex than in Drubéa (by virtue of the indexing role of *le*). The Tayo pronominal system is thus a new creation whose general inspiration is clearly Melanesian but the detail of which is unique to Tayo. Moreover, the usage of the different age groups at St Louis today shows a system which is changing, at least partly because of French/Tayo bilingualism.

These conclusions are based on a small subset of Tayo's grammar. The examination of other areas of grammar will allow an assessment of the accuracy or otherwise of the picture outlined thus far.

3. RELATIVISATION AND THEMATISATION

These two procedures are to some extent linked in Tayo because thematisation may be handled by clefting using a relative clause, as happens in French (*c'est à Laetitia qu'il s'adressera*, for example).⁶

3.1 RELATIVE CLAUSES

The relative construction has always, except in the one case to be discussed in §3.2, the subordinator/relativiser *sa*: antecedent + *sa* + clause. Subject and non-subject relativisation

⁶ The presentation here is a brief summary of Corne (1994), which is itself based on data culled from Ehrhart (1993).

are slightly different. In subject relativisation, there is obligatorily an indexing pronoun, either *le* or 3SG/DU?/PL,⁷ preposed to the verb in the subordinate clause:

- (9) *Ma war loto sa le vya.*
 1SG see car REL SI come
 I see the car coming.
- (10) *fiy-la sa la okipe de nu*
 girl.DEF REL 3SG look.after PREP 1PL
 the girl who looked after us

With relativisation of an object, there are two cases: if the subject of the relative clause is a pronoun (11), or if it is a noun (12):

- (11) *Le bon gato sa sa fe.*
 SI good cake REL 3PL do
 The cake they made is good.
- (12) *tule guyav sa wawa le plate*
 the guava trees that Grandma planted (= (7))

Here, *le* is obligatory as the subject index.

Locatives and temporals may follow the non-subject pattern, although the use of a presentative element *se* is more usual (see §3.2):

- (13) *(se) la sa ta ete war a:ba*
 there REL 2SG been see down.there
 over there where you went to look

In summary, relative clauses are subordinated using *sa*. In all cases, a pronoun is required, either as subject or as subject index. Relativisation appears to concern only subjects and direct objects, and occasionally complements of place and time.

3.2 THEMATISATION

There are a number of thematising procedures which front a subject (an agent). One such has an optional presentative *se* and an obligatory NP + *le*:

- (14) *(Se) twa le fe sa.*
 You're the one who did it. (= (5))

Locatives are usually thematised by *se* and specified by a relative clause. Another thematisation uses *wala* + NP + *le*:

- (15) *Wala per le desan.*
 there.is priest SI descend
 Here comes the priest.

⁷ The dual is not attested in the data currently available. The nature of the difference (if any) between *le* on the one hand and 3SG/DU/PL on the other is not as yet clear: *le* seems preferred when the embedded predicate is stative, the third person pronoun elsewhere.

These procedures have a competitor in a relativisation which follows the French clefting model, using *se* + NP + *ki*:⁸

- (16) *Se Iya ki fe sa.*
 it.is 3SG REL do that
 It is he who did it.

To sum up, Tayo thematisation concerns essentially an NP subject + *le*, and uses a relativisation strategy only with locatives. But there is also a competing relativisation strategy, with *ki* and without *le*, which occurs only in the context of thematisation and which is clearly French in inspiration.

3.3 DISTRIBUTION

According to the data, relativisation conforms to a near-universal hierarchy. Tayo relativises easily on subjects, almost as easily on direct objects, and occasionally on locatives and temporals: SU > DO > LOC/TEMP. Thematisation, be it with (*se/wala*) + NP + *le* or with *se* + NP + *ki*, concerns only subjects, the first pattern being the more frequent.

3.4 DISCUSSION

If the origin of *le* can be ascribed with some certainty to a reanalysis of French *il est*, its use in relativisation and thematisation illustrates perfectly its present status, quite unconnected with any French model. In examples (9)–(15), where no other pronoun fills the role of subject or subject index, *le* is required, the relativiser *sa* being a conjunction, not a pronoun. But if (13) is contrasted with (16):

- (13) (*se*) *twa le fe sa*
 (16) *se Iya ki fe sa*

it is clear that *ki*—a French influence—is indeed a pronoun in Tayo. There is therefore a change in the direction of French: currently well established in Tayo, relativisation with *ki* will quite possibly in the future introduce further perturbations in the original relativisation and thematisation patterns (as is suggested also by the form *ka*, see fn.7).

These original systems show, even more clearly than the pronominal system does, the extent to which Tayo derives from Melanesian grammatical and semantic conceptions.

In Cèmuhî, there are two relativisation strategies which use as the relativiser either one of three semantically differentiated demonstratives (deixis or localisation of the antecedent), or one of three semantically differentiated relative pronouns derived from articles (reference to an antecedent which is [\pm definite]). In both cases, there are agreement rules; relative clauses

⁸ There is also a form *ka* (*se Iya ka met* 'it is he who puts...'), and some speakers allow non-subject thematisation with *ke* (*se mwa ke la ule war* 'it is I whom s/he wants to see') see Ehrhart (1993:153). The existential impersonal verbs *na*, *napa* may also occur in what appear to be thematising and/or focusing roles; the various constructions observed in the data include *na* NP *le* VP, *na* NP VP, *na* NP *ke/ki/ka/sa le* VP; while some of these appear to be prompted by French patterns, there are at present insufficient data available to allow a clear view of the exact semantic (if any) or sociolinguistic correlates of these constructions.

follow the antecedent; subject relativisation allows a following subject-indexing pronoun. Subjects and direct objects may be relativised (Rivierre 1980:172–176).

In Drubéa, subject relative pronouns are identical in form to the 3SG/DU/PL personal pronouns, and there is a fourth form unmarked for person/number; direct object relative pronouns have different forms, and are optional; there are agreement rules; relative clauses follow the antecedent; there are no subject-indexing rules (Shintani & Païta 1990:83–86).

Emphasis on a constituent in Cèmuhi may be handled by clefting and relativisation (Rivierre 1980:207, n.71), but this is ‘much less frequent’ than ‘thematism’ (Rivierre 1980:207–212). Thematism, in essence, fronts subjects or direct objects, the remainder of the sentence (the ‘comment’) being coordinated (not subordinated) and obligatorily containing a resumptive personal modality. Sentential adverbs of time and place, when fronted, do not have such a resumptive, but locative complements of the verb do. Any fronted element may be preceded by a presentative.

Thematism in Drubéa (Shintani & Païta 1990:107) is less complex: a presentative is used, and while relativisation may occur, resumptive pronouns are generally absent. Only subjects are thematised.

These systems are considerably more complex than that of Tayo. Nevertheless, for Tayo relative clauses the parallels are obvious. Subject indexing is obligatory. Subject and direct object relativisation are allowed. Given that non-relative *sa* is, variously, 3PL animate subject, 3SG inanimate subject and non-subject (‘this, that, it’), and, with postposed *-la*, the inanimate demonstrative pronoun (usually singular), its selection as the relative pronoun is unsurprising.

Thematism in Tayo, with the exception of the *se* + NP + *ki* clefting pattern, displays some features reminiscent of Cèmuhi thematism: subject indexing, an optional presentative, and sometimes (for locatives) emphasis through relativisation. Cèmuhi can front direct objects, while Drubéa cannot: this may account for Tayo’s resistance to the fronting of anything other than the subject.

It is clear that Tayo’s relativisation and thematism strategies have a Melanesian architecture: they reflect Melanesian constructions, adapting the common ground and smoothing over a lot of the complex and conflicting detail.

In contrast, the clefting of the subject + relativisation with *ki* (and *ka*) is a French structure, but one which is contextually constrained in Tayo in that it applies only to subjects. (In French, clefting can occur with most constituents of a sentence.) This French-inspired construction is competing with the Melanesian-inspired thematism using the subject index *le* and the presentative *se* (this last is of course directly derived from French *c’est*, but its optional status in Tayo parallels the similarly optional status of the Cèmuhi presentative (Rivierre 1980:211). Ehrhart (1993:152) informs us that *ki* is ‘more modern’ than *sa* (a matter we shall return to in due course), but it must be pointed out here that the model is that of formal French (*c’est moi qui* VP) rather than of popular French (*c’est moi que je* VP).

Although the relative clause constructions characteristic of popular French (Frei 1929:183–191; Guiraud 1966) are not especially a feature of New Caledonian French (NCF), one could be tempted to try to establish some link between popular, spoken French and Tayo. In fact, it is clear that the relative clauses of Tayo do not follow any French model, formal or popular. Popular French allows, for example, *l’homme qu’il arrive*—invariable *que* + subject pronoun; it also allows *l’homme que j’ai vu*—*que* + object pronoun. Thus,

Tayo agrees superficially and accidentally with popular French as far as subject relativisation is concerned, but refuses the object pronoun (**mek-la sa ma war lya* 'the man that I saw (him)'). Furthermore, neither formal nor popular French offers any explanation for the gaps that exist in the distribution of Tayo relative clauses.

In summary, then, Tayo relativisation has nothing to do at all with French, except for the *se NP ki VP* clefting pattern; even this last is constrained with respect to its domain (subject only) and is in competition with the Melanesian type of thematisation.

The situation here is thus identical to the one described earlier for the pronominal system. The relativisations and thematisations of Tayo are not modifications of French patterns, nor straightforward relexifications of Melanesian constructions; they are new patterns with a general Melanesian configuration but whose detail is peculiar to Tayo. The modern data, in addition, show ongoing changes which derive, at least in part, from Tayo/French bilingualism.

Thus far, we have seen two areas of Tayo grammar, each of which shows the language in the same light. The next three areas are covered a little more superficially, pending further investigation.

4. INTERROGATION

Only interrogation bearing on NP, and the interrogations 'where' and 'when' are considered here. The interrogatives are: (*se*) *ki* 'who(m)', (*se*) *kwa* 'what', *u* 'where', *ka* 'when'.

(a) [+ animate], subject: *se ki le V*; object: *se ki NP V* and *NP V ki*; statives: *se ki NP* and *NP se ki*; object of a preposition: Prep *ki*:

(17) *Se ki le vya laba?*
it.is who SI come over.there
Who's (that) coming?

(18)a. *Se ki ta war?*
it.is who 2SG see
Whom did you see?

b. *Ta war ki?*
2SG see who
Whom did you see?

(19) *Frer pu ta se ki?*
brother PREP 2SG it.is who
Who is your brother?

(20) *Sa pa kone se peti pu ki.*
3PL NEG know it.is child PREP who
They did not know to whom the child belonged.

There are variants, including relative clauses, sometimes with *sa* but also with the relativiser *ki* or with (*se*) *ki ki*, *ki se ki*, and other more-or-less French-inspired formulae.

(b) [- animate], subject: *se kwa sa le V*; object: *V kwa* and *se kwa sa NP V*; object of a preposition: Prep *kwa*:

- (21) *Se kwa sa le to:be?*
 it.is what REL SI fall
 What fell?
- (22)a. *Ta fe kwa?*
 2SG do what
 What are you doing?
- b. *Se kwa sa la di?*
 it.is what REL 3SG say
 What did he say?
- (23) *Ta kone ma rigole de kwa?*
 2SG know 1SG laugh PREP what
 Do you know at what (why) I am laughing?

(c) the locative *u* always follows the verb:

- (24) *N a bare u?*
 1PL FUT go where
 Where will we go? (*bare* < NCF *barrer* 'go, leave')

but can also be the predicate head:

- (25) *Le u lia?*
 SI where 3SG
 Where is he?

de u is always final:

- (26) *Sola kuver ave lapay de u?*
 3PL cover PREP straw from where
 They cover the roof with straw from where?

(d) the temporal *ka* may be initial or final; *se ka sa* + relative clause also occurs:

- (27)a. *La vya ka?*
 3SG come when
 When is she coming?
- b. *Ka la vya?*
 when 3SG come
 When is she coming?
- (28) *Se ka sa sola arive isi?*
 it.is when REL 3SG arrive here
 When did they arrive (here)?

With respect to the position of the interrogative word(s), most of these structures reflect either Cèmuhĩ or Drubéa or both:

- (i) [+ animate], subject: initial in Dru (Shintani & Païta 1990:96) and in Cèm (Rivierre 1980:218); object: not known, but probably final; stative: final in Cèm (Rivierre 1980:218); Prep + Q: final in Dru (Shintani & Païta 1990:96) and in Cèm (Rivierre 1980:218).

- (ii) [- animate], subject: initial in Dru (Shintani & Païta 1990:95) and in Cèm (Rivierre 1980:219); object: final in Dru (Shintani & Païta 1990:95) and in Cèm (Rivierre 1980:219); Prep + Q: final in Cèm (Rivierre 1980:219).
- (iii) locative: always final in Dru (Shintani & Païta 1990:96), usually final in Cèm (Rivierre 1980:220).
- (iv) temporal: initial and final in Dru (Shintani & Païta 1990:96) and in Cèm (Rivierre 1980:220; for the equivalent of *se ka sa* in Cèm, see Rivierre 1980:221).

As can be seen, the parallels are striking. Nonetheless, the conclusion that yet again Melanesian patterns are the direct motivations for the Tayo constructions must be qualified by the observation that in spoken New Caledonian French the same word orders occur. Comparative studies of interrogative word order in New Caledonian and popular French might perhaps allow an estimation of the extent of Melanesian influence on the local New Caledonian French, but for the moment all that can be done is to note the fact that there are parallels between Tayo and Cèm/Dru, and some differences (e.g. example (22b)) between Tayo and its Melanesian predecessors at St Louis.

5. IMPERATIVES

A declarative sentence may serve as an imperative with the appropriate intonation contour and in an appropriate (real-life) context; a particle *ko* may support such an imperative:

- (29)a. *Ta fe bya!*
2SG do well
Be good!
- b. *Ta ko fe bya!*
2SG *ko* do well
Be very good!

A subjectless verb may be used for the 2SG/PL imperative:

- (30) *Pitchare Iya!*
pinch 3SG
Pinch him/her! (*pitchare* < Dru)

and the independent pronoun may be pre- or postposed:

- (31)a. *Muche, twa!*
blow.nose 2SG
Blow/Wipe your nose (, you)!
- b. *Usot, desa:de de la!*
2PL descend from there
Get down from there, you lot!

In the first person plural, the use of the pronoun *nu* is obligatory, always preposed; the Future marker *va* is often used in this context (*nu va* > *nu a* > *na*):

- (32) *Nu (va) asi!*
1PL (FUT) sit
Let's sit down!

There are other procedures (see Ehrhart 1993:177–179 for details), among which the use of *fo* ‘be necessary’ may be noted:

- (33) *Fo sach!*
 must well.behaved
 Be good!

In the negative, *pa* is preposed to the verb, while *fo* > *fopa* (*ke*):

- (34)a. *Fopa parle kom sa.*
 must.NEG speak like that
 Don’t speak like that.
- b. *Fopa ke ta fe sa.*
 must.NEG CONJ 2SG do that
 Don’t do that.⁹
- (35) *Pa tuche!*
 NEG.touch
 Don’t touch!

Another frequently used construction has *napa beswa de* ‘there is no need to’:

- (36) *Napa beswa de di no pu lya.*
 have.NEG need PREP say name PREP 3SG
 Don’t say his/her name.

These data may be briefly compared with imperatives in Cèmuhî and Drubéa. In the latter (Shintani & Païta 1990:97–98), a subject pronoun is optional; a verb equivalent to *fopa* is used sentence-initially, while another, equivalent to *napa beswa de*, is used predicate-initially; an element postposed to the verb can reinforce an imperative, cf. preposed *ko* in (29b). In Cèmuhî, a preposed personal modality (a pronoun) is optional, and there are two different verbs which express prohibition (negative imperative) (Rivierre 1980:222–223). Once again, a number of similarities can be seen between Tayo and the two Melanesian languages. All of the Tayo structures have an equivalent in French, to be sure, but a frequently used Tayo procedure, illustrated by (29) and (32), corresponds to a rather formal register in French (*tu seras sage, mon enfant!*; *nous nous assiérons, Messieurs, s’il vous plaît!*), while other Tayo imperatives correspond to more relaxed styles. The significant thing here is that Tayo has selected, from the range of French models putatively available, precisely those which correspond to Melanesian notions of ordering and forbidding.

6. THE IMPERSONAL INDEPENDENT VERB

The verb *na*, and its negative counterpart *napa*, are existential verbs which do not require a preposed personal modality. They have a number of variants which Ehrhart (1993:173) considers “decreolized”: *ya, yana* in the present, *nave* and *yanave* in the past, *(ya)navepa* for the negative of the past.

The verb *na* is used for the notion ‘to have, possess’:

⁹ In other contexts, the same sentence could have other readings (‘you mustn’t do that’, ‘you shouldn’t have done that’, ...).

- (37) *Na boku kusa pu mwa ke twa.*
 have many cousin PREP 1SG than 2SG
 I have more cousins than you do.

as well as that of 'be present':

- (38) *Napa Childa? napa Childa.*
 have.NEG Gilda
 Is Gilda there? No.

and 'there is/are/etc.':

- (39) *Na dolo partu.*
 have water everywhere
 There is/was water everywhere.

The Melanesian architecture seems very clear here. In Cèmuhî (Rivierre 1980:62, 70, 213, 215) there is an impersonal verb (three forms, 'there is', 'there isn't' and 'there is no longer'), but the meaning 'to have, possess' is usually expressed by a postposed personal modality (*two/the-2/child/of-him* 'he has two children'), to which may be optionally preposed a particle (*(there-is)/fear/of-him* 'he is afraid' [he has fear]). In Drubéa (Shintani & Païta 1990:68, 93), the match with Tayo is even closer: the same impersonal verb, in the affirmative or the negative, expresses 'there is' (39) and 'have, possess' (37), and in the negative 'there is not' and 'not be present' (38) (*there-is-not/of-you* 'you were not there'). The semantics of (37)–(39) do not come from French.¹⁰

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A large number of potentially revealing phenomena are not dealt with in this paper. For example, there are few adjectives in Tayo which are postposed to the noun: Ehrhart (1993:145–146) says that postposed adjectives seem to be an open class, but the usual strategy is relativisation (*dolo sa le sal* 'the water which is dirty/the dirty water'); as it happens, in Cèmuhî postposed stative verbs—the local equivalent of adjectives—are an abbreviated form of relative clause through deletion of an invariably recoverable relativiser (Rivierre 1980:143, 160–161); in Drubéa, the adjective follows the noun (Shintani & Païta 1990:54–55); both languages have however a short inventory (different in each) of preposed nominal determinants. Nothing has been said here about comparatives, little about the word order, nothing on the aspect markers (but see Corne 1993; Ehrhart 1992a, 1993:159–165), nothing on negatives. Yet these are all areas of interest: it is not, for example, impossible that the contrastive study of the tense/aspect systems of Drubéa (Shintani & Païta 1990:25–41, 44) and of Cèmuhî (Rivierre 1980:97–118) will provide the beginnings of an explanation for the existence in Tayo of some distinctions (Completive, Future, Continuative) and the absence of others which occur in other creole languages (Anterior, Irrealis,...).

While much descriptive and comparative work remains to be done, we have now a fairly clear picture, variation included, of Tayo some 130 years after the permanent settlement at St Louis of the Marists and their Cèmuhî-speaking associates. The grammatical areas examined

¹⁰ Nor from Réunionnais (Chaudenson 1994:135); although there are certainly some parallels in the use of the impersonal *na* (and associated forms) in Tayo and in Réunionnais, as in (39) for example, the semantics of (37)–(38) are no more Réunionnais than they are French.

here encapsulate the development of Tayo from its beginnings to the present: traces of its early stages are still visible; its emerged, conventionalised (or vernacularised), and essentially Melanesian form is well attested; and we can see the effects of recent French influences on this new language.

The relatively detailed study of the pronominal system and of the relativisation and thematisation strategies have shown that Tayo is in no way a modification of French, nor a relexification of a Melanesian language, but that it is a new creation which is typologically Melanesian. And yet, as soon as certain variants are considered, it is far from clear just what the syntactic rules actually are. For example, *le sek latam* 'the table is dry' is instantly recognisable as a Stative Predicate + Subject Melanesian pattern, but what about the variant form *se sek latam* 'it is dry, the table'?¹¹ It seems that replacing *le* by *se* causes a profound change in the grammar of the sentence, a change which is in the direction of French. Most variations of this kind noted here and especially by Ehrhart (1993), are part and parcel of the normal usage of those members of the tribe who have a certain level of knowledge of French. We are left then with a grammar of a Melanesian type onto which are grafted structures belonging to another grammar, that of French. This Melanesian-type grammar is, however, less complex than that of any given ancestral language. If sometimes it includes what is common to Cèmuhî and Drubéa,¹² by the regularisation or elimination of specific features, it is still more than a simplified calque, as is shown by such innovations as *le*.

In the light of these remarks, let us now consider an element of the St Louis tribal oral tradition (Ehrhart 1993:27):

Before, all we did was express the Melanesian language in French because there were people from all over. It was a translation into French of the (Melanesian) language. We translate(d) the language into French. [My translation.]

This view captures a part of the truth. It claims that Tayo is merely relexified Melanesian. It is a correct view in so far as all the Melanesian languages involved in the formation of Tayo agree on how any self-respecting grammar should organise things, and it is this convergence which explains the Melanesian 'feel' of Tayo. But it is only a partial view, since no account is taken either of innovations or of the French input in the formation of the new language. For example, the adjectives which are preposed to the noun include: *gra* 'big, long, tall', *gro* 'big, fat', *peti* 'little, young', *vye* 'old', *move* 'bad'. Their preposing in Tayo can only have come from French, since neither Cèmuhî nor Drubéa allow this order for these items. The word order of Tayo must not be overlooked in this context, either: if the basic word order puts a lexical subject after the verb, Tayo also allows (beyond thematisation) an initial subject which reflects French grammar (as do present-day versions of some Melanesian languages of southern New Caledonia). If one were to take literally the view expressed by the oral tradition of the St Louis villagers, Tayo would indeed be "une langue mélanésienne à vocabulaire français", to rephrase Sylvain's famous formula. But, as has been seen, this is a partial view, since French too provided some input to the formation of Tayo.

Tayo, a language formed and relatively stabilised towards the beginning of the century, illustrates aptly the various procedures implicated in the formation of a new language. It may be noted in passing that the settlement and sociodemographic history of St Louis and the

¹¹ cf. French *la table est sèche* and *c'est sec, la table*, the latter being an unremarkable case of right-dislocation.

¹² And probably Xârâcùù as well; this language is not discussed here for practical reasons.

linguistic data advanced here provide mutual support: the social history prefigures the results of the linguistic analysis, just as these last reflect that history.

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