

13 *Two be's or not two be's? On the copulas of Wayan Fijian*

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1 Introduction

This paper investigates the grammar and semantics of two copula forms in Wayan, a dialect of the Western Fijian language spoken on Waya and Viwa Island, in the Yasawa group, on the western fringe of the Fijian archipelago.¹

Regional linguistic diversification no doubt began in Fiji soon after the archipelago was first settled by bearers of the Lapita culture about 3,000 years ago. Today the diversity among Fijian speech traditions (well documented in Geraghty 1983) is not far short of that exhibited by the Romance group of Indo-European or by the Polynesian languages. The smallest named regional varieties within the Fijian group are often called 'communalects', a communalect being a regionally homogeneous speech tradition usually spoken by at most six or seven villages. There are perhaps 300 Fijian communalects. Diffusion within Fiji has made it hard to define discrete subgroups but there is general agreement that there are two main subgroups, Eastern and Western Fijian, with the boundary running roughly north-south down the centre of Viti Levu and to the west of Vanua Levu (Geraghty 1983; Pawley and Sayaba 1971; Schutz 1962). Each of these two subgroups consists of an extremely diverse dialect chain. Standard Fijian (also known as Bauan) belongs to the Eastern subgroup.

¹ For the Wayan data cited here I am particularly indebted to the late Timoci Sayaba and his daughters Adi Kelera Sayaba and Luisa Luveniyali. This paper is a byproduct of work on a Wayan-English dictionary that Timoci and I began many years ago. For valuable critical commentary on early drafts of this paper I thank Paul Geraghty, whose scepticism on certain points led me to rethink parts of the analysis, and to Robert Early and Alan Jones. Thanks are also due to those who offered comments at oral presentations of the paper, in particular, to Patrick Griffiths, and to Aubrey Parke, who provided some comparative data from western Viti Levu. The Wenner-Gren foundation and the New Zealand University Grants Committee supported fieldwork on the Wayan language, carried out at various times between 1967 and 1995.

Western Fijian communalects differ from most Eastern Fijian varieties, including Standard Fijian, in having at least one and usually two different words that mark an identifying or equational relation between subject and predicate nominals. In Wayan there are two such words: *tia* and *ni-*; these will be glossed 'be' in illustrative sentences.² In these and later examples the predicate nominal will be highlighted in bold type.

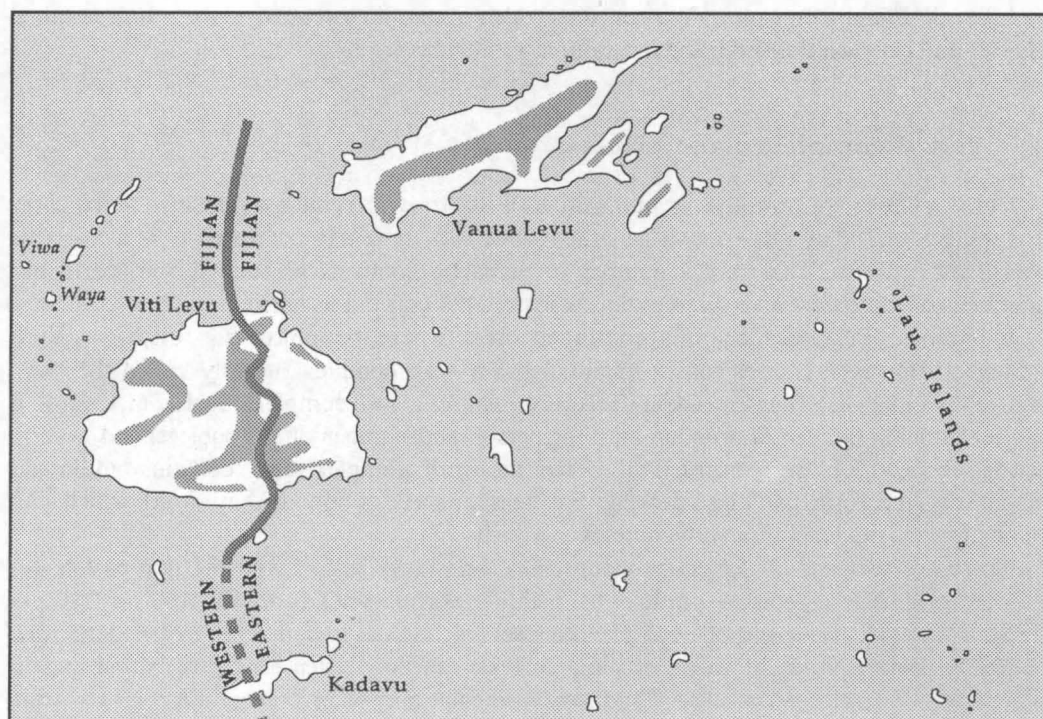
- (1) *Ei tam tia vūniwai o Esita, ei tia nasi.*
 3SG.NONPAST³ not be doctor PROP Esita 3SG.NONPAST be nurse
 'Esita is not a doctor, she's a nurse.'
- (2) *Ei tam ni-i Domisi, ei teni tamata.*
 3SG.NONPAST not be-PROP Domisi 3SG.NONPAST different person
 'It's not Domisi, it's a different person.'

There are no detailed published accounts of the grammar of *tia* and *ni-* or cognate forms in any Fijian communalect but a brief analysis is given by Geraghty (1983:231-233). He notes that reflexes of a reconstructed 'equational' marker **tia* (realised variously as *tia*, *te*, and *sa*) appear widely in the Western Fijian subgroup and also in Kadavu, and that nearly all Western communalects (but not those of Kadavu) have a second equational marker, *ni-*. Geraghty (1983:232) says that "What **tia* and *ni* do is to mark uniquely comments of nominal sentences"; *tia* is said to occur before common nominal comments, as in example (1), while *ni-* occurs before proper nominals, i.e. pronouns or proper nouns, as in (2).

2 Cognates of *tia* and *ni-* are present in nearly all Western communalects and in Kadavu, Ono, Beqa and Deuba (Geraghty 1983:231-234 and pers. comm.). While the form *tia* is widespread and can be regarded as the proto-type, cognates take the form *te* in Nakoroboya, Magodro, and *sa* in Baravi and Tubaniwai. *ni-* has the mutation *ne-* in the Serua region, but elsewhere is generally *ni-*.

3 Abbreviations used in glossing examples:

∅	zero morpheme (third singular subject)	OPT	optative mood
1	first person	PAST	past tense
2	second person	PF	perfective aspect
3	third person	PL	plural (more than a few)
COM	specific common noun marker	POSS	possessive
COMP	complementiser	PRO	pronoun
DL	dual	PROG	progressive aspect
EXC	exclusive	PROP	proper noun marker
FUT	future	RCP	reciprocal or plural subject marker
HYP	hypothetical	S	subject
INC	inclusive	SG	singular
NONPAST	non-past tense	TR	transitive suffix
NP	noun phrase	V	verb
O	direct object		



■ mountain range

Map: Boundary of Eastern and Western Fijian subgroups

Geraghty's discussion indicates the following hypotheses about Western Fijian *tia* (and its phonological variants) and *ni-*:

- (i) Both forms mark comments, or new information, in topic-comment sentences.
- (ii) The two forms are functional equivalents, i.e. they have no other functions besides introducing a comment predicate.
- (iii) They are, syntactically, in complementary distribution, with *tia* marking common nominals and *ni-* proper nominals. One might treat the two copulas as suppletive forms, variant realisations of a single grammatical functor.
- (iv) *Tia* and *ni-* occur only in nominal sentences; therefore, neither element is a verb. However, doubt is cast on (iv) because Geraghty (1983:232) slips in the contradictory remark that *ni-* is perhaps best described as an "equational verb" and because sentences such as (1) and (2) carry distinctive features clearly identifying them as verbal constructions.

I do not wish to suggest that Geraghty still supports each of these hypotheses but at any rate they provided a useful point of departure for the present study. I will argue that hypothesis (i) is true of Wayan *tia* and *ni-*, but (ii) and (iv) are not true and (iii) is only half-true. Before we address these matters, however, it is necessary to summarise some relevant features of Wayan grammar.

2 Background notes on Wayan grammar

Like all Fijian languages, Wayan distinguishes sharply between verbal and nominal clauses and between transitive and intransitive verbal clauses.

2.1 Verbal complexes and clauses

Verbal clauses are transitive or intransitive. With a few exceptions, transitive verbs carry a transitive suffix of one of two general forms: *-Ci-* or *-Cakini-* (where *C* is a variable consonant or zero). There are a number of semantic contrasts associated with particular alternants of these transitive suffixes but these need not concern us here.

In intransitive clauses the normal constituent order (where the subject is a full NP) is Verb + Subject. However, clauses consist minimally of a verb complex (usually called the 'verb phrase' by Fijianists). In independent declarative clauses a verb complex consists at least of a subject pronoun (preverbal pronoun marking person-and-number of the subject) and a verb, acting as head of the construction. Often the verb complex also contains additional diagnostic free form particles marking, e.g. tense, aspect or mood. Any word which can stand alone as the head of a verb complex is a verb.

There are two sets of subject pronouns. One set shows fusion with the non-past tense-marker (originally a separate particle **i*), yielding portmanteau forms *qi* '1SG', *e* '2SG', *ei* '3SG', *ti* '1INC.DL', *eri* '1EXC.DL', etc. The other set (*qu* '1SG', *o* '2SG', *a* '3SG', *tu* '1INC.DL', *aru* '1EXC.DL', etc.) is used elsewhere, in some contexts marking a tenseless proposition and in other contexts marking past tense. Third person singular may be zero in certain contexts while second person pronouns may be omitted in imperative constructions. Zero third person pronouns in Wayan text are represented here by \emptyset .

- (3) *Ei na rewa na le-m vinā-ti-a.*
 3SG.NONPAST FUT possible COM POSS-2SG want-TR-3SG
 'What you want will be possible.' (lit. 'It will be possible your want-it.')
- (4) *A laka muni o Esita.*
 3SG.PAST go also PROP Esita.
 'Esita went too.'

Transitive clauses contain both a subject and a direct object. Although the preferred word order, for clauses with full NPs as core arguments, is VOS, the orders VSO and SOV are also common. Minimally, however, S and O consist of pronouns, with the subject pronoun always preceding and the object pronoun following the verb. The subject pronoun is retained even when there is a full NP subject. When the direct object is a common NP, the object pronoun is retained. The same applies to oblique case with human or higher animals referents. NPs. In these contexts the pronouns serve as determiners, marking the number and specificity of the coreferential NP, as in examples (5)–(7).

- (5) *Qu tola-vi-ra na driadria.*
 1SG.PAST see-TR-3PL COM child
 'I saw the children.' (lit. 'I saw-them the child.')
- (6) *Aru rairai garu-ti-a na ika na tui.*
 3DL.PAST probably smell-TR-3SG COM fish COM dog
 'The (two) dogs probably smelt the fish.' (lit. 'They-2 the dogs smelt-it the fish.')

- (7) *Aru vinā-ti-a na waqa o Lasa qa Manu.*
 3DL.PAST want-TR-3SG COM boat PROP Lasa and Manu
 'Lasa and Manu wanted the boat.' (lit. 'They-2 Lasa and Manu wanted-it the boat.')

All transitive verbs can be passivised by adding the prefix *lei-* while (usually) retaining the transitive suffix in the form *-Ci* or *-Caki* (see examples (44) and (48) below). The agent is not expressed in passive constructions.

Constructions with non-specific (generic) objects are considered intransitive. The verb in such constructions usually takes its intransitive form and the generic object noun is not preceded by a pronominal determiner or common noun marker; the noun acts as a modifier of the verb, as in example (8).

- (8) *Eri sā tali loga nō na alewa-sewa.*
 3DL PF.NONPAST weave mat PROG COM woman-little
 'The girls are weaving mats.' (lit. 'The girls are mat-weaving.')

2.2 Existential verbs

Existential verbs, as distinct from copulas, are one-place predicates used to assert the existence (or non-existence) of something. Existential verbs often contain more additional elements of meaning, such as location, or a certain posture, duration, or shape and size. Wayan has several one-place verbs that have claims to be called existential. These include *tau*¹ 'exist, be present', *tau*² 'be placed, positioned, situated', *nō* 'stay, sit, reside', *tū* 'stand, be situated (permanently)', and *vō* 'remain, be left over'. There are also negative and quasi-negative existentials: *lala* 'not exist, be none', *vele* 'be absent, disappear'. Some of these verbs are exemplified below.

- (9) *Ei tau na kalou.*
 3SG.NONPAST exist COM god
 'God exists./There is a God.'
- (10) *Ei tau vata na le-dru were.*
 3SG.NONPAST placed together COM POSS-3DL house
 'Their houses are situated together.'
- (11) *Eri sewa na tamata eri nō doki i anuanu?*
 3DL.NONPAST some COM person 3DL.NONPAST stay lie on island
 'Are there any people living on the island?'
- (12) *Ei lala o tama-ya.*
 3SG.NONPAST not.exist PROP father-3SG.POSS
 'He has no father.' (lit. 'He/it does not exist, his father.')

2.3 Nominal constructions

Noun phrases are either proper or common. Proper noun phrases, which name unique individuals or places, are by definition definite. They consist minimally of the elements: proper article + head. The proper article (i.e. proper noun marker) takes the form *i* or zero immediately after a transitive verb; elsewhere it is either *o* or *ko*. The head of a proper

phrase may consist of the interrogative *ei* 'who?', an independent pronoun, a personal or place name, or a kinship term.

Common nouns may be definite or indefinite. Indefinite nouns may be specific or generic. In most contexts common nouns are preceded by the article *na*, which according to most Fijianists simply marks the noun as common and is neutral as to its definiteness.⁴ Definite phrases usually consist minimally of *na* + noun preceded by a pronoun marking person-and-number, where the pronoun serves as a determiner or indexing element, as in examples (5)–(7) above and (13)–(14).

- (13) *I vei o kora na driadria?*
 at where PROP 3PL COM child
 'Where are the children?'

- (14) *Cō-vi-ra na driadria.*
 call-TR-3PL COM child
 'Call the children.'

Specific noun phrases consist minimally of the elements: common noun marker + noun. Often, however, the first element is a quantifier phrase. A quantifier phrase usually consists of a third person pronoun (sometimes zero) and tense-aspect-mood marker (often merged with the pronoun) plus a numeral or other quantifier, e.g. *lia* 'one', *rua* 'two', *sewa* 'some'. Generic noun phrases are unmarked (carry no common noun marker or pronoun).

Quantifier bases are a subclass of intransitive verbs with some eccentric properties. They typically follow elements distinctive of verb phrases, namely preverbal subject pronouns and tense-aspect-mood markers. If a quantifier verb is the head of a clause, as in (15), then the clause is classified as verbal:

- (15) *Ei rua boto na ika.*
 3SG.NONPAST two only COM fish
 'There are only two fish.'

However, when a quantifier phrase modifies a noun phrase, as in examples (15) and (16), the sequence quantifier phrase + noun phrase functions as an indefinite noun phrase:

- (16) *Aru kau ati a sewa na ika.*
 3DL.PAST carry thither 3SG.PAST some COM fish
 'They (2) took some fish.'

Nominal clauses consist of two juxtaposed noun phrases, one of which typically provides old information, the other new, so that we can speak of a subject-predicate or topic-comment relation. Two types of nominal clauses may be distinguished according to the semantic relationship holding between the NPs. In one type the relationship is *equational*, in that what is asserted (or questioned) is identity of reference between the two NPs. In this type the NPs

⁴ Writers on Standard Fijian and other varieties of Fijian usually regard the common article as neutral with regard to definiteness of the noun phrase (Arms 1974:61-63; Dixon 1988:114; Milner 1972). A different view is taken by Schutz (1982), who argues that in Standard Fijian, before a common noun, there is a contrast between *na*, which marks the noun as definite, and the absence of a marker, which indicates that the noun is generic. He proposes that adding *e dua na* 'one', before a *na* phrase does not make that phrase indefinite, but rather makes a definite phrase more general.

may occur in either order – subject-predicate or predicate-subject – although the preferred order is subject-predicate. The subject-predicate contrast can be identified by features of intonation.

- (17) *O mna-iau o Lani.*
 PROP mother-1SG.POSS PROP Lani
 'My mother is Lani.'
- (18) *O koya o tama-dru.*
 PROP 3SG PROP father-3DL.POSS
 'He is their father.'

In the interrogative form of an equational nominal construction, however, the order is almost always subject-predicate:

- (19) *O ei o mna-m?*
 PROP who PROP mother-2SG.POSS
 'Who is your mother?'

In the second type the predicate nominal is a non-specific NP which identifies the subject by naming its class.

- (20) *O Nomani na vāvālagi vinā.*
 PROP Nomani COM European good
 'Nomani (Norman) is a good European.'

The class-membership relation may be emphasised by formulating the predicate as an indefinite noun phrase with a numeral, as in:

- (21) *Ei lia na alewa vinā o mna-m.*
 3SG.NONPAST one COM woman good PROP mother-2SG.POSS
 'Your mother is a good woman.'

A still more emphatic assertion of the class-membership relation can be achieved by adding the modifier *mataqali* 'kind, sort' before the noun:

- (22) *O Noma ei lia na mataqali vāvālagi vinā.*
 PROP Noma 3SG.NONPAST one COM type European good
 'Norma is a good sort of European.'

3 Wayan *tia* and *ni-*

3.1 On copulas

Wayan has other clause types that do not fit the major types of verbal and nominal construction referred to here. Among these are clauses formed with *tia* and *ni-*, which are two place predicates belonging, or allied to the family of elements known as 'copulas'.

In his extensive study of non-verbal predication, Hengeveld (1992:32) describes a copula as a semantically empty form that links a subject NP with a non-verbal predicate that says what the subject is, identifying or characterising it in some way. Copulas may be non-verbal but are often realised as dummy verbs, which carry verbal inflections such as tense, aspect or mood, but otherwise make no independent contribution to the meaning of a sentence, e.g. English 'be' in *Peter is President, John is a farmer, Millie is charming*. Hengeveld (1992:32)

argues that “the shades of meaning often attributed to a copula can be traced back to other characteristics of the sentence, such as the nature of the non-verbal predicate and its arguments”.

Elements that have some of the qualities of copulas are known as ‘quasi-copulas’ or ‘semi-copulas’. They are often verbs that have some independent meaning of an aspectual, modal or perceptual sort, e.g. *become*, *remain*, *prove*, *seem*, *stand*, *taste*, or Spanish *ser* and *estar*, but which otherwise enable a nonverbal lexeme or phrase to act as a main predicate, as in examples (23) and (24).

(23) *The young soldier became/proved/seemed/stood/remained a hero.*

(24) *It seemed/stood/tasted/became firm.*

Let us now look more closely at the properties of *tia* and *ni-* constructions. In discussing these, I will use the terms ‘topic’ interchangeably with ‘subject’ and ‘comment’ interchangeably with ‘predicate nominal’

3.2 *tia* constructions

Tia requires two arguments, call them X and Y, and links them in a classifying or class-membership relationship, where X denotes the member and Y the class. All *tia* constructions ask or presuppose the question ‘What (kind of thing) is X?’ or make (or deny) the assertion ‘X is a (kind of) Y’.⁵ The question can be framed using *tia* and the common noun interrogative *ava*:

(25) *Ei tia ava?*
3SG.NONPAST be what
‘What (kind of thing) is it?’

An appropriate answer to (25) might be any of the following:

(26) *Ei tia kwā vinā.*
3SG.NONPAST be thing good
‘It’s a good thing.’

(27) *Ei tam tia moko, ei tia vokai.*
3SG.NONPAST not be small.lizard 3SG.NONPAST be iguana
‘It is not a lizard, it’s an iguana.’

(28) *Ei rairai tia kucuve ei vesaru nō i*
3SG.NONPAST appears be rat 3SG.NONPAST scratch PROG in
na kovate.
COM cupboard
‘It’s probably a rat scratching in the cupboard.’

⁵ The ‘kind’ meaning is implicit. There is a term for ‘kind’ or ‘sort’, namely *mataqali*, and one can use this to ask explicitly ‘What kind of thing is X?’, using a nominal construction:

Na mataqali ika ava na ika sōkwē?
COM kind fish what COM fish that
‘What sort of fish is that fish?’

Constituent X is the grammatical subject or topic and represents old or assumed information, the thing talked about. X is always definite, consisting of a pronoun, a proper noun or a definite common noun phrase. The pronoun may be any person. Y is the predicate nominal or comment, giving information about the topic. Y is always an unmarked common nominal (never an adjective, adverb or proper noun. (Here 'unmarked' refers to the absence of a prenominal determiner indicating specificity, definiteness or number.) The word *tia* takes the predicate nominal as its complement.

To the question in (29):

- (29) *O sã tia ava (o iko)?*
 2SG.PAST PF be what PROP 2SG
 'What were you?'

(where the topic is represented both by a preverbal pronoun *e* and by a noun phrase containing an optional independent pronoun *iko*, which adds emphasis) an appropriate answer might be either (30) or (31):

- (30) *Qu sã tia idinia.*
 1SG.NONPAST PF be engineer
 'I was an engineer.'
- (31) *A sui-ti-i au me qu tia kaisĩ.*
 3SG.PAST swear-TR-PROP me COMP 1SG be bastard
 'He called me a bastard' (lit. 'He swore (at) me that I am a bastard.')

To the question in (32):

- (32) *E tia ava ivu-ã?*
 2SG.NONPAST be what to-3SG
 'What are you to her?'

which asks for information about how the addressee (the topic) is related to a certain third person, an appropriate answer is one that specifies a kind of kinship relation, as in (33):

- (33) *Qi tia alewa ivu-ã, eri vi-gwaneni.*
 1SG.NONPAST be female to-3SG 1EXC.DL.NONPAST RCP-cross.sibling
 'I am (a) sister to him, we are brother and sister.'

Examples (25)–(33) all have as topic a preverbal subject pronoun. However, the topic can be a full NP:

- (34) *Sã ø tia ivakacola balavu na õcoi.*
 PF 3SG be life-preserver long COM idleness
 'Idleness is a life-preserver.'/'Idleness makes for a long life.'
- (35) *Sã ø tia mate ni tũqwãqwã na sasala.*
 PF 3SG be sickness of old.age COM arthritis
 'Arthritis is an affliction of old age.'
- (36) *Sã ø tia tamata na qẽ kwẽ.*
 PF 3SG be live.egg COM egg this
 'This is a live egg.'/'This egg has live young (in it).'

The topic NP usually follows the comment but may be placed first in order to highlight it. This fronting seems to be common when the topic is a heavy noun phrase, such as a clause or nominalisation that describes an event or situation whose agent is in question.

- (37) *Na vula i samasama sã ø tia gauna ni ākeli.*
 COM month of yellowing.leaves PF 3SG be time for harvesting
 ‘The dry season is the time to harvest wild yams.’
- (38) *Ne itaba were ei na tara-a,*
 COM kind house 3SG.NONPAST FUT make-3SG
ei sã tia were ni cagilaba.
 3SG.NONPAST PF be house for hurricane
 ‘The type of house he will build, will be a house for hurricane conditions.’
- (39) *Na tara-a ni cakacaka kwē sã ø tia iseva ni tuba.*
 COM do-3SG of work this PF 3SG be key of door
 ‘Doing this work is a key to the door (of success).’

For some *tia* constructions introduced by the complementiser *me*, or *me lai* an appropriate English translation is ‘X becomes/ends up as/results in a Y’. In such cases the verb taking the *tia* clause as complement is usually *aco* ‘arrive, happen’.

- (40) *Ei na aco me ø la-i tia matanibose o Inoke.*
 3SG.NONPAST FUT arrive COMP 3SG go-to be representative PROP Inoke
 ‘Inoke will end up being a (parliamentary) representative.’
- (41) *Aru sã sema-vata na drā ni alewa qa ni tagwane*
 3DL PF join-together COM blood of woman and of man
sã ø aco me ø tia tamata.
 PF 3SG arrive COMP 3SG be human.being
 ‘When the blood of a female and a male mix it results in a human being.’

x is for a Y

Virtually all the examples considered so far can be translated into English as ‘X is a Y’. However, there are many cases where the comment classifies the topic by naming its use: ‘X is to be used as a Y’ or ‘X is for Y’. This purposive use is most often (but by no means exclusively) associated with the preverbal particle *me*, the irrealis complementiser, as in examples (42)–(44), or *me* plus the auxiliary *la-i* ‘go to, go in order to’, as in (45). The topic of the *tia* clause is often the subject of a verb in a higher clause, as in:

- (42) *Na aqona ei vakaagataki me ø tia icō*
 COM kava 3SG.NONPAST used COMP 3SG be invocation
ni alo.
 for spirits
 ‘Kava is to be used as an invocation to the spirits.’
- (43) *Vakaaga-takini-a na bitu me ø tia ise.*
 use-TR-it COM bamboo COMP 3SG be knife
 ‘Use the bamboo for/as a knife.’

- (44) *Sā* \emptyset *lei-letaki* *ne* *ilavo* *ni* *werenivola*,
 PF 3SG PASS-diverted COM money for library
me \emptyset *la-i* *tia* *bure*.
 COMP 3SG go-to be dormitory
 'The money for a library has been diverted, (to be used) for a dormitory.'
- (45) *Kau* *sewa* *mai* *na* *uga* *me* \emptyset *la-i* *tia* *bē*.
 carry some hither COM hermit.crab COMP 3SG go-to be bait
 'Bring some hermit crabs for bait.'

The difference between the 'X is a Y' and 'X is for Y' interpretations does not reflect a difference in the function of *tia* itself. It is attributable instead to the accompanying tense-aspect and auxiliary markers, or, in some cases, to cultural knowledge shared by the Wayan speech community. For example, in (46) the 'is for' reading for each of the *tia* clauses depends on knowing that *benu* can refer not only to a feast ending a widow's period of wearing mourning clothes but also to a gift of food contributed to such a feast, and that a pig is an appropriate donation to the feast.

- (46) *Ei* *tia* *ava* *na* *qō* *eki?* – *Ei* *tia*
 3SG.NONPAST be what COM pig that 3SG.NONPAST be
benu.
 food.for.mourning.feast.
 'What is this pig (for)?' – 'It is for a feast ending a widow's mourning.'

The question simply asks 'What is this pig? The answer shows that the question has been given a purposive reading.

Can the predicate nominal be referential?

The predicate nominal in a *tia* construction always lacks a determiner or common noun marker. Now, in canonical verbal clauses when there is no determiner (a pronoun or specific common noun marker) before a common noun that directly follows a verb, that noun is marked as non-referential. However, it is well known that, in various languages, the parameters of referentiality (definiteness, specificity, coreference) that apply to normal arguments do not readily apply to predicate nominals. So it may be unwise to take the absence of a determiner before the predicate nominal in a *tia* clause as strong evidence that the nominal is non-referential.

Having entered that caveat, it does seem that in *tia* constructions the comment is always understood as being non-referential. In examples (1) and (25)–(46) the comment tells us that the topic is (is not, or may be) a certain kind of thing but it does not identify a particular referent.

In some cases, the predicate nominal may on first reading seem to refer to a unique or specific entity, as in examples (47)–(49).

- (47) *Magā* *qu* *kē* *tia* *Tui* *qu* *na* *kē* *boco-ni-a*
 if 1SG HYP be king 1SG FUT.HYP extinguish-TR-3SG
vakalia *na* *solī* *ivakacavacava*.
 for.ever COM give taxes.
 'If I were King I would abolish taxes for ever.'

- (48) A *lei-tara sila na masu qa qei ø tia*
 3SG.PAST PASS-do first COM prayer and then 3SG be
vunau i takū.
 sermon at after
 'A prayer was said first, then afterwards there was a sermon.'
- (49) A *tia ikatolu o Manasa i na wavu.*
 3SG.PAST be third.one PROP Tui in COM race
 'Manasa came third (was the third one) in the race.'
 (Here *ikatolu* is a common noun, 'third one'.)

However, on reflection it can be seen that this is not really the case. The king in (47) is a hypothetical king. The sermon in (48) is a generic notion, a standard event in a church service, and in (49) a similar interpretation is available for the positions in a race.

Is *tia* a verb?

The word *tia* appears to be a true copula in that its meaning can be described as relational rather than lexical. Its only function is to mark a class-inclusion relation between predicate and subject nominals.

If *tia* is a copula, what part of speech is it? The clauses which *tia* occurs in are, plainly, verbal. Invariably *tia* is preceded by an element which is diagnostic of a verb complex, such as a preverbal subject pronoun, or a tense, aspect or mood marker, or the preverbal negator *tam* 'not'. It is true that *tia* does not meet the first test of verbness: being able to stand alone as the head of the verb complex. It requires a partner, the predicate nominal, but this is consistent with its use as a copula. Together, the partners function as a verb.

Tia and its predicate nominal constitute an inseparable unit within the verb complex. That is to say, the predicate nominal always directly follows *tia*, and precedes any postverbal modifiers that occur within the verb complex. The *tia* + predicate nominal unit can take the same range of postverbal modifiers as typical verbs do, e.g. the directional makers *ati* 'thither, towards a goal' and *mai* 'towards speaker', the aspect marker *nō* 'progressive' and the oblique case anaphor *kā* 'thereat, thereby, therewith, etc.', as in:

- (50) *M-o tia idinia ati.*
 OPT-2SG be engineer thither
 'You should go on being an engineer.'
- (51) *Sā tia idinia cakacā mai.*
 PF be engineer bad hither
 'He's getting to be a bad engineer.'
- (52) *Ei tia asala nō ni le-dru were na velau.*
 3SG.NONPAST be ridgepole PROG of POSS-3DL house the ironwood
 'The ironwood is (serving as) the ridgepole of their house.'
- (53) *Na gauna o si tia bete kā.*
 COM time 2SG.PAST still be priest thereat
 'At the time when you were still a priest.'

There appears to be one other particle in Wayan whose use shows some degree of likeness to *tia*. The particle *teni* 'different, other, strange' can immediately follow a subject pronoun

only when partnered by a following noun. It marks the following noun as a predicate referring to an entity that is not the one expected, or as one that is not familiar.

(54) *Ei teni tamata, ei tam ni-i Domisi.*
 3SG.NONPAST different person 3SG.NONPAST not be-PROP Domisi
 'It's a different person/a stranger, it's not Domisi.'

(55) *Ei rairai teni ika.*
 3SG.NONPAST seem other fish.'
 It seems to be a different fish/a strange fish.'

However, the *teni* + noun sequence is less verb-like than *tia* + noun. As far as I know, it cannot occur with the same range of postverbal modifiers, e.g. *mai*, *ati*, *kā* and *nō*, as *tia* can.

3.2 *ni-* constructions

Ni- constructions resemble *tia* constructions (i) in having a subject (or topic) which represents given or assumed information and (ii) in having a predicate nominal (or comment) which adds new information. However, they differ from *tia* constructions in being fully equational, i.e. the subject X and the predicate Y refer to the same particular entity. Typically *ni-* constructions consist of the question 'X is who/which one?' or 'X is the what?', or, presupposing such a question, assert that 'X is So-and-so' or 'X is the such-and-such'.

There are certain additional properties of *ni-* clauses which distinguish them from *tia* clauses: (a) The predicate nominal must be definite. (b) The predicate nominal can be proper as well as common. (c) The first element in a common predicate nominal must be a pronominal suffix, drawn from the set that marks direct object of transitive verbs. (d) The predicate nominal can consist of a pronoun alone, of any person. (e) The subject nominal cannot be a first or second person pronoun; it can only be a noun or a third person pronoun. Arguably, property (b) follows from the coreferentiality requirement.

Predicate nominals consisting of a proper noun phrase

When the predicate nominal is a proper noun or personal pronoun it is incorporated into the verb complex. Example (56) describes a misidentification:

(56) *A sētava o Nasi me kē ni-i Mosese*
 3SG.PAST mistake PROP Nurse COMP HYP be-PROP Mosese
o Veresa.
 PROP Veresa
 'Nurse mistook Veresa for Mosese.'/'Nurse wrongly took Veresa to be Mosese.'

Example (57) denies that person X and person Y are identical:

(57) *Ei tam ni-i Luisa na alewa sōkwē.*
 3SG.NONPAST not be-PROP Luisa COM woman that
 'That woman is not Luisa.'

Predicate nominals consisting of a common noun phrase

In examples (58)–(62) the predicate nominal is a common noun phrase. In common predicate nominals the first element is invariably a pronominal suffix, marking the number of the nominal.

- (58) *Ei tam ni-a le-qiau ne ilavo.*
 3SG.NONPAST not be-3SG POSS-1SG COM money
 ‘The money is not mine.’
- (59) *Ei rairai ni-ru na vūnivola*
 3SG.NONPAST seems be-3DL COM clerk
aru driva-ti-a ne ilavo.
 3DL steal-TR-3SG COM money
 ‘It seems that it was the clerks who stole the money.’
- (60) *Sā ni-ru ē na alewa ei vinā-ti-a vali.*
 PF be-3DL those COM woman 3SG.NONPAST want-TR-3SG around
 ‘The women he fancies are those (2).’
- (61) *Sā ∅ ni-a kwē e mata.*
 PF 3SG be-3SG this 3SG eye
 ‘This is its eye.’ or ‘Its eye is this one.’
- (62) *Sā ∅ ni-a sōkwē na lea were o Kini.*
 PF 3SG be-3SG that COM her house PROP Kini
 ‘That one is Kini’s house.’ OR ‘Kini’s house is that one.’

When the predicate nominal is a common noun phrase, the head noun and its marker *na* stand outside the verb complex, forming a separate phrase. In these respects the predicate nominal of *ni-* patterns exactly like a direct object of a transitive verb. The kinds of material that may intervene between *ni-* and its predicate nominal include postverbal modifiers and the subject noun phrase. In examples (63) and (64), respectively, the intervening material consists of the postverbal modifiers *nō magā* ‘still continuing’ and *boto* ‘only’.

- (63) *E si ni-a nō magā ne itūtū.*
 3SG.NONPAST still be-3SG PROG still COM situation
 ‘The situation is still the same.’ OR ‘There’s been no change in the situation.’
- (64) *Sā lala na ika, sā ∅ ni-a boto e saumomo!*
 PF none COM fish PF 3SG be-3SG only 3SG bones
 ‘The fish is all gone, there’s only the bones (left)!’

In (65) the subject nominal, *e aca mai Viwa* ‘its name in Viwa’, intervenes.

- (65) *Na sam, ei ni-a e aca mai Viwa*
 COM seaslug 3SG.NONPAST be-3SG 3SG.POSS name at Viwa
na bosucu ni waitaci.
 COM slug of sea
 ‘The sea-hare, its name at Viwa is the sea-slug.’

Because either a subject or a predicate common noun phrase may directly follow the verb, it is sometimes hard to determine which is the subject and which is the predicate nominal of a

ni- clause. In the case of (66), for example, this uncertainty is reflected in the alternative translations (a) and (b) given below.

- (66) *O kora na rōroro ei ni-a dra aca na lā ua.*
 PROP they COM fishers 3SG.NONPAST be-it 3PL name COM leg wave
 (a) 'Those who fish, their name is 'surf-legs'.
 (b) 'Those who fish, 'surf-legs' is their name.'

Predicate nominals consisting of a pronominal suffix

In examples (67)–(69) the predicate nominal consists simply of a pronominal suffix, which is incorporated in the verb complex. The set of pronominal suffixes that follows *ni*- is identical to the 'object' pronoun set that follows transitive verbs.

- (67) *Sā ∅ ni-ko!*
 PF 3SG be-2SG
 'You are the one!' OR 'It is you!'
- (68) *Sā ∅ ni-ru!*
 PF 3SG be-3DL
 'They are the ones (now)!'
- (69) *Sā ni-a dū na kwā qi cakacā-ti-a.*
 PF be-3SG truly COM thing I hate-TR-3SG
 'That's the thing I really hate.' (OR 'The thing I really hate is that one.')
- (70) *A ni-au na bete sōkwē!*
 3SG.PAST be-1SG COM priest that
 'That priest was me!'

Predicate nominals consisting of a possessed kinship term

Wayan kinship terms, when they have definite reference, share some grammatical properties with proper nouns and others properties with common nouns.

Kinship terms resemble common nouns in that they can take a definite possessive modifier. In fact, kinship terms referring to a particular individual must be possessed in this way in *ni*- constructions. To ask 'How are you related to So-and-so?' Wayans typically say 'So-and-so is your what?'. The interrogative pronoun is treated as a kinship term taking the preposed possessive pronoun typical of part-whole possession and of one subclass of kinship terms, as in:

- (71) *Ei ni-a m ava o Taina?*
 3SG.NONPAST be-3SG your what PROP Taina
 'Taina is your what?' (i.e. 'What relation is Taina to you?')

Most kinship terms resemble proper nouns in that they take the proper article *o* or *i*, rather than a common article, and in that they do not take a pronominal determiner. Thus:

- (72) *Ei ni-i mna-iau o Taina.*
 3SG.NONPAST be-PROP mother-1SG.POSS PROP Mere
 'Taina is my mother.'

- (73) *Ei ni-i tubu-dru o Voli.*
 3SG.NONPAST be-PROP grandparent-3DL.POSS PROP Voli
 'Voli is *their* grandfather.'

If the assertion is 'My mother is *Taina*', with *Taina* as new information, it should be expressed with *Taina* as the predicate nominal:

- (74) *Ei ni-i Taina o mna-m.*
 3SG.NONPAST be-PROP Taina PROP mother-2SG.POSS
 'Your mother is *Taina*.'

In passing we may note that when the predicate noun is proper it may be presented in either of two ways. It may be integrated into the noun phrase directly governed by *ni-*, in which case the proper noun marker is *-i*, cliticised to the verb, and the kinship noun plus its possessive pronoun directly follows the verb, as in examples (72)–(74). The alternative is exemplified by (75) and (76). Here the noun appears as part of an appositive proper noun phrase, introduced by the independent form of the proper article *o*, or by zero in the case of a few kinship terms that take a preposed possessive pronoun. The noun phrase stands in apposition to a coreferential pronoun which is governed by *ni-*.

- (75) *Ei ni-ru o tubu-dru o Voli.*
 3SG.NONPAST be-3DL PROP grandparent-3DL.POSS PROP Voli
 'Voli is their grandfather.' ('Voli is to them, grandfather.')
- (76) *A tata-ni-i Nari me ø ni-a e lewe.*
 3SG.PAST speak-TR-PROP Nari COMP 3SG be-3SG 3SG spouse
 'He asked Nari to be his wife.'

3.3 Minimal pairs for *tia* and *ni-*

Crucial evidence for functional contrast between *tia* and *ni-* is the presence of pairs of sentences, with the same lexical content and syntactic structure, differing only in the form of the copula and its obligatory grammatical correlates. The a and b pairs in examples (77)–(78) fit the bill. As I understand it, the contrast in each pair is between a non-specific and a definite predicate nominal.

- (77)a. *Ei tia qasenivuli o Sailasa.*
 3SG.NONPAST be priest PROP Tevita
 'Sailasa is a teacher.'
- b. *Ei ni-a na qasenivuli o Tevita.*
 3SG.NONPAST be-3SG COM priest PROP Tevita
 'Sailasa is the teacher.'
- (78)a. *O setava-takini-i Risi me tia bete.*
 2SG.PAST mistake-TR-3SG Rhys COMP be priest
 'You mistook Rhys for a priest.'
- b. *O setava-takini-i Risi me ø ni-a na bete.*
 2SG.PAST mistake-TR-PROP Rhys COMP 3SG be-3SG COM priest
 'You mistook Rhys for the priest.' (lit. 'You mistook Rhys that he is the priest.')

4 Conclusions

Wayan *tia* and *ni-* constructions resemble each other in being verbal clauses in which the copula marks some sort of identifying relation between topic and comment nominal.⁶ Both construction types require a definite nominal as subject. However, there are several differences between them, including the following:

- (i) The two verbs are not functional equivalents. *Tia* marks a class-membership relation between subject and predicate nominals. It introduces a non-referential predicate nominal, which characterises the topic as being a certain kind of thing. By contrast, *ni-* marks an equational relation. It introduces a predicate nominal that is definite and coreferential with the subject nominal.
- (ii) A *tia* predicate nominal must be a common noun. (This constraint is a corollary of the fact that *tia* marks a taxonomic or 'kind-of' relationship between subject and predicate nominals.) A *ni-* predicate nominal can be either proper or common. (This is a corollary of the fact that *ni-* equates two specific or definite entities.)
- (iii) *Tia* and its predicate nominal make up an inseparable unit within the verb complex. By contrast, *ni-* is not so closely bound to its predicate nominal when that nominal is common. Other postverbal modifiers and even other adjuncts may intervene between *ni-* and the nominal. However, the pronominal determiner of the nominal must be attached directly to *ni-*. In these respects *ni-* and its predicate nominal behave exactly like a transitive verb.

The origins of these two copula forms are uncertain. *Tia* may be cognate with Standard Fijian *dua* 'one', both of which possibly come from early Oceanic **tia*, **tea* or **tua*, which has been reconstructed as either a numeral 'one' or a marker of indefiniteness (Pawley 1972:52). *Ni-* may derive from certain of the uses of the early Oceanic verbal suffix **-ni-*, which derived transitive verbs when added to the applicative suffix **-Caki(ni)-* (Evans n.d.) and which still has this function in Wayan. Copular *ni-* has certain morphosyntactic characteristics which seem to be relics of its earlier association with transitivity **-ni-*. In

⁶ Wayan has purely nominal clauses (see §2.3 and note 4) which cover a range of functions similar to *tia* and *ni-* clauses. A *tia* clause may be paraphrased by a nominal clause in which the predicate nominal is a common noun, introduced by the common noun marker *na*:

O *Noma na nasi vinā.*
 PROP Noma COM nurse good
 'Norma is a good nurse.'

A paraphrase that more emphatically expresses the class-membership relation is achieved by adding the modifier *mataqali* 'kind, sort' before the noun, and reinforced by putting a quantifier phrase at the beginning of the predicate.

O *Noma ei lia na mataqali nasi vinā.*
 PROP Noma 3SG.NONPAST one COM type European good
 'Norma is a good sort of nurse.'

A *ni-* clause may be paraphrased by juxtaposing two definite nominals.

O *koya o tama-dru.*
 PROP 3SG PROP father-3DL.POSS
 'He is their father.'

Whether there are subtle semantic and pragmatic differences between the copular and nominal constructions remains a matter for future study. My impression is that Wayan speakers use *tia* and *ni-* constructions more often than their nominal equivalents.

particular, copular *ni-* requires the predicate nominal to begin with, or consist of a pronoun, and that pronoun has the same form as the pronominal suffixes that mark direct objects of transitive verbs: *-a*, *-ru*, etc.

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