Perhaps one of the most perplexing problems encountered in the construction of symbolic systems which purport to represent the real world in any way is how to represent time -- or, more accurately, the relations in time between events. But one can turn to any language one might have handy and find there readymade a coherent representation of the temporal relations between events. However, there is not any necessary agreement in how different languages describe the perception of time nor are the descriptions even simple. As Whorf (1939) has lucidly argued, turning from one’s own language to another will, at first, reveal a bewildering difference in how time is perceived or talked about by the speakers of that language.

The perception of temporal relations between events find their way into a language in a number of ways. We will not entertain any abstract speculation about what these linguistic manifestations of time tell us about how time is perceived but instead show how these linguistic manifestations of time in texts provide a coherence and structure to a text as a narrative event. [1] We will pose two very general questions about the temporal organization of any text: how are events referred to in a text related to one another in narrative time and what linguistic form do these relations take?

The data for this paper are three relatively long texts in Bakweri, a Bantu language of west Cameroun (Guthrie A.22): a myth, the story of the little girl Viá, and two descriptions of everyday events in Cameroun: one of hunting with traps and the other of going to visit one’s grandmother. [2] This analysis of Bakweri oral narratives focusses on the temporal relations between individual events and the collection of events into episodes. Three interlocking tiers provide a frame for temporal organization of a text in this language. Sentential particles linking clauses (or propositions; in this case, the linguistic representation of an event) provide the lowest tier. These particles express strict succession of events in time and through their interaction with tense allow a sequence of contiguous events to cohere together. Temporary shifts in tense from nonpast to past forms, which I will describe shortly, create the second tier, marking episode boundaries between sequences of events. Since both the sentential particles and tense are
categories expressed within clauses, the temporal units
designated by these two tiers are discrete. Finally, lexi-
cal items or phrases, equivalent to English temporal sub-
stantives, allow for separating one series of episodes from
another. Though such overt lexical time reference tends to
coincide with the tense shifts of the second tier, this is
not always true. The domain of the largest temporal units -
for which I lack a good name - may extend slightly beyond a
second tier boundary at times.

In the story of the little girl Víá, the most frequent
temporal linking particle, zi translated '(and) then', in-
troduces nearly half of the some 150 clauses in the text.
Clauses introduced with zi take a variant of a nonpast form
of the verb, specifically a secondary development of the
present/future form consisting of a high rather than low
tone subject prefix. This secondary tense form is contrast-
ed with the primary nonpast tense forms in the following
paradigms:

(1)     High tone root    Low tone root
-ko'k 'bite'    -ko'k 'be-big'

zi form  ák'óká (H'HL)  ákóká (HLL)
present/  ákóká (LHL)    ákóká (LLL)
progressive ákóká (HLHL) ákóká (HLLL)

The basis for deriving the zi forms from the present/future
forms is the tone sandhi in high tone roots. Normally any
high tone following a low tone downsteps, that is, lowers to
a midtone, automatically.

(2) /LH/ --> [LM]

If for any reason, that low tone should become high, as it
has in the zi forms for morphological reasons, the second
high tone still downsteps, though by rule rather than au-
tomatically; thus preserving in part the original tone con-
figuration (an apostrophe indicates this non-automatic down-
step).

(3) if {LH}, --> *{HH}, then *{HH} --> /H'H/ --> [HM]
    e.g., ák'óká 'then he bites' <-- ákóká 'he bites'

The zi form for ák'óká 'then he bites' shows this
phenomenon; the tone sequence [HML] is derived from the
basic [LML] of the present/future ákóká 'he bites'.

The verbs in clauses which mark episode boundaries in
this text show another secondary form, the so-called when tense, but this one, though similar to the \( \zY \) forms in its high toned subject prefix (though note the \(-\hat{e}\) rather than \(-\hat{a}\) root extension), is obviously derived from a past rather than a nonpast base, specifically the hesternal or distant past form. The following contrastive paradigm demonstrates this development (Note also that the perfect is secondarily derived from the hesternal form).

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{High tone root} & \text{Low tone root} \\
/-\text{kôk } '\text{bite}' & /-\text{kôk } '\text{be-big}' \\
\end{array}
\]

- when form: \( \text{ám'akôkê (HLHF)} \)
- hesternal: \( \text{ám'akôkà (LLHH)} \)
- perfect: \( \text{ám'ákòkà (H'HHL)} \)

Tense marking in Bakweri also varies under negation, relativization of subjects vs. non-subjects, as well as a number of phonological parameters. A formal and semantic analysis will be presented elsewhere. Only two further points are relevant here. First, the most elaborated tense distinctions occur in positive, independent clauses. The opposition of past and nonpast forms (as illustrated in the proportion below) provides the source for the secondary developments just described. Second, on each side of this fundamental opposition, the distinguishing feature is suprasegmental. Different tone patterns characterize the various tenses; the segments' purpose being to bear the tones.

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
\text{past} & \text{nonpast} & \\
\text{hesternal} & \text{matinal} & \text{pres/fut} & \text{progressive} \\
\text{Sp-mà- } & \text{Sp- } & \text{Sp- } & \text{Sp-å- } \\
\sqrt{-\hat{a}} & \sqrt{-\hat{a}} & \sqrt{-\hat{a}} & \sqrt{-\hat{a}} \\
\text{L...L... } & \text{L... } & \text{L... } & \text{H...L... } \\
\text{proximal} & \text{exhortative} & \\
\text{Sp-m'á- } & \text{Sp- } & \text{Sp- } & \text{Sp-å- } \\
\sqrt{-\hat{a}} & \sqrt{-\hat{a}} & \sqrt{-\hat{a}} & \sqrt{-\hat{a}} \\
\text{H...H... } & \text{H... } & \text{H... } & \text{H... } \\
\text{or} & & & \\
\text{Sp- } & \text{Sp- } & \text{H... } \\
\sqrt{-\hat{a}} & \sqrt{-\hat{a}} & \sqrt{-\hat{a}} \\
\text{L...L... } & \text{L...L... } & \\
\end{array}
\]

I have taken a section of the story of the little girl
Viá to illustrate the interlocking use of the linking particle zi and tense. In this early section of the story, Viá has disobeyed her mother's command to stay at home and is sneaking along behind her as she walks to the farm. (For convenience, the verbs have been listed in a column to the right and glossed closely. The zi forms are starred.)

Verbs

| (6) | 1) nàngó yêní âmá ávèŋgà ômb'úza | *á-vèŋgà | 3s-glance | THEN |
|     | 2) zi  á'ôngámá óvèwùlë | *á-'ôngámá | 3s-hide | THEN |
|     | 3) nàtE zi  âmá âÈndE | *á-ÈndE | 3s-go | THEN |
|     | 4) âmá  âúkë | á-úkë | 3s-arrive | EXHORTATIVE |
|     | 5) átÈånÈ ñmwanà  èkí | *á-tÈånÈ | 3s-remain | THEN |
|     | 6) âmá  âúkë | á-úkë | 3s-arrive | EXHORTATIVE |
|     | 7) zi  âmàvÈngÈ mÈnÈ | *á-mà-vèŋgÈ | 3s-past-glance | WHEN |
|     | 8) viá  âèviá  lÈndÈ ovewule | *á-è-viá | 3s-before-know | BEFORE |
|     | 9) zi  nàngó yêní ânmw'ÈnÈ | *á=mò=ÈnÈ | 3s=3s=see | THEN |

1. Her mother then glances back, 2. then Via hides in the elephant grass, 3. Until just then she (her mother) walks, 4. just as she's about to arrive, 5. she remains only a short distance away, 6. until she will arrive, 7. Then when she glances back like that, 8. before Via knows to go into the elephant grass, 9. then her mother sees her.
The shift from a nonpast to a past tense occurs in the seventh clause, where Viá is discovered. All events prior to the discovery simply follow one on another as indicated by the zi form of the verbs in (6.1, 2, 3, 5). The expectation of Viá's discovery is intensified by the use of the exhortative form of the verb in (6.4) and (6.6), which has the connotation of an imminent but yet unrealized event. Though this event is the arrival of Viá's mother at the farm, the new episode begins with the realization of Viá's presence not of arriving. In the new episode, use of the zi form resumes in (6.9).

Identical nonpast tense marking here draws the events immediately prior to Viá's discovery tightly together. The shift to an overt past form momentarily disrupts this coherence, and thus moves the narrative bodily to the next episode or series of contiguous and cohering events. This analysis is unintentionally foreshadowed in Jespersen's (1924) discussion of the difference in usage between the imperfect and the aorist.

E. then (1) 'next, after that', as in "then he went to France"... and (2) 'at that time,' as in "then he lived in France"... The aorist carries the narrative on, it tells us what happen next, while the imperfect lingers over the conditions as they were at that time and expatiates on them with more or less of prolixity. One tense gives movement, the other a pause... We may perhaps be allowed with some exaggeration to say in the biblical phrase that the imperfect is used by him to whom one day is as a thousand years, and the aorist by him to whom a thousand years are as one day...the distinction has no reference to the action itself, and we get much nearer the truth of the matter if we say that it is a difference in the speed of the narrative; if the speaker wants his presentation of the facts to hurry on toward the present moment, he will use the aorist; if, on the other hand, he lingers and takes a look around, he will use the imperfect. The tense distinction is really, therefore, a tempo distinction. The imperfect is lento and the aorist allegro, or perhaps we should say ritardando and accelerando, respectively.' (276)

Jespersen's impressions of the differences in usage between the two tenses find a functional parallel in the tense alternation in Bakweri narratives, though I suspect
that a full appreciation of the subjective force of the tem­
poral structure thereby achieved is inaccessible to the
analyst.

Our next example is taken from a point somewhat later
in the same story.

(7) 1) zì nàngó yènì áwòtéá
then mother her she begins
litíà mó'óndá
to till the field,
1. Then her mother begins to till
the field,
2) zì ámàtíë ámàtíë
then when she tilled when she tilled
2. then when she tilled and tilled,
3) näTE nmuwáambò víá ãmá ìyà
until soon Via she says "Mother,
nààzà ìlpà
I want to shit"
3. shortly, Via says "Mother, I want
"PRESENT"
to shit."
4) ãmá wè'É
she says "Wee!" (an exclamation of
"PRESENT"
surprise or disgust)
5) ãmá ló'ówà nánù
she says "the shit like here
nàzát'ánÈ nál'ílà
I cannot I eat it"
5. She says "The shit here, I
"PRESENT"
cannot eat it!"
6) zì ëEndÈ óz'áawá ìmàgà
then she walks to the edge farm
3s-walk
6. Then she walks to the edge of the
farm,
7) zì ëEndÈ ó'ímá ó'ímá
then she walks she digs she digs
3s-go
7. Then she walks, (then) she digs, (and then) she digs a hole.
*á-'ímá
3s-dig
8) ãmá ìnmÉ ánù
she says "shit toward here!"
8. She says, "Shit in here!"
9) zì víá ëEndÈ
then Via she walks
3s-go
9. Then Via walks (over there),
*á-EndÈ
3s-go
TOT
10) áŋ'ética áŋgâ
she shits toward there
10. (then) she shits there.

11) ámâñé ámâñé
when she shat when she shat
11. She shat and shat,

12) nátë méâ méenĩ mék'ũwâ
until intestines her they finish
1'ũwâzâ coming out
12. until her intestines all come out,

13) zĩ ʔãlțâñâ ʔiṭâmêfê
then she is not able to stand either
13. then she is unable to stand up also. THEN

1. Then her mother begins to till the field, 2. then when she has tilled and tilled, 3. shortly Via says "Mother, I want to shit." 4. She says "Wee!" 5. She says "The shit here, I cannot eat it!" 6. Then she walks to the edge of the farm, 7. then she walks, (then) she digs, (and then) she digs a hole. 8. She says "Shit in here!" 9. Then Via walks (over there), 10. (then) she shits there. 11. She shat and shat, 12. until her intestines all come out, 13. then she is unable to stand up also. [4]

In 7.2 and 7.11, we find the shifts to a past tense form; all other clauses, except those containing direct quotation, show the zĩ form of the verb, which again creates immediate textual coherence. Direct quotation interrupts the otherwise orderly marking of temporal relations within the narrative. Following Benveniste’s (1969) discussion of the distribution of the French tenses, we can distinguish between two types of speech events: narrative and discourse. [5]

Discourse precludes the use of few (if any) tenses: in French, only the aorist (il fait) and the pluperfect (il avait fait) do not appear, while in Bakweri all tenses may appear; but in both languages only a few tenses appear in narrative: the aorist, perfect (il a fait), and the pluperfect in French (N.B. The perfect appears in both planes) and, with few exceptions [6], the zĩ (ãmɛndê 'then he goes') and when (ãmɛndê 'when he went') forms in Bakweri. Thus simple paradigmatic oppositions within the category of tense do not accurately represent the facts of usage in either language. The essential mark of direct quotation in the Bakweri texts is the appearance of a variety of tense forms, interrupting the orderly narration of events. Furthermore, the apparent function of direct quotation is not to advance the narration of events but rather for the protagonists to
comment on events or situations. Events only take place in narrative, strictly construed, compare Benveniste,

"The historical utterance...characterizes the narration of past events. These three terms, "narration," "event," and "past," are of equal importance. Events which took place at a certain moment of time are presented without any intervention of the speaker in the narration. In order for them to have occurred, these events must belong to the past...The historical intention does indeed constitute one of the important functions of language; it impresses upon it its specific temporality" (1969, 206).

In Bakweri, the secondary developments of past and non-past bases or more precisely the consequent structural configuration of narrative is the key to the episodic organization of a text. That the device for marking episode boundaries is the temporary substitution of a past for a nonpast form is irrelevant. [7]

The following examples illustrate how tense shift and lexical time reference interlock.

(8)  
  a) wû wómûkê night when it arrived
      'When night arrived...'
  b) zi é'élélé émâjê then the morning when IT came
      'Then when the morning came...'
  cf.
  c) ŋângô yêní ámâjê mother her when SHE came
    é'élélé the-morning
    'When her mother came (in) the morning...'

These examples are especially crucial to the argument that temporal organization in Bakweri oral narratives is a matter of alternating between two opposed types of tense marking, since they demonstrate how when a narrative is advanced significantly through the mention of later times of day, these mentions coincide with the shift to a past tense form in the clause in which they occur. The mention may be thematic or adjunctive; in (8b) the temporal substantive is the subject of the clause while in (8c) it is simply a sort of adverbial
adjunct indicating more precisely when Vía's mother reappeared. Progressing from an earlier to a later time of day can be accomplished in a single leap through the use of temporal substantives and this can, though it need not be, the event which advances the narrative to the next episode.

Thus far we have seen that temporal organization of Bakweri oral narratives is episodic and that the boundaries between episodes occur where a clause containing a secondary past form interrupts a series of clauses containing nonpast forms. However, in the descriptions of everyday events, the picture is somewhat different. Within episodes present/future forms predominate, while either a distal or, much more frequently, a proximal perfect perfect mark episode boundaries.

In the section from the description of hunting in Cameroon (below), proximal perfects, in vākpwédē 'if they have just entered' and wówitē 'if they have just killed' mark episode boundaries in the fourth and eighth clauses, but there are two other episode boundaries, in the second and sixth clauses, both with the familiar when form vámakulētē 'if when they finished'.

(9)

1) a) wōngà vān'āā mândāo
   they build small houses
b) ēmā vātānē līnāngēā
   which they can sleep in
   1. They build small houses which
      they can sleep in.
2) zē vámakulētē
   then if when they finished
   2. Then, if they finished,
3) mōtōtē ākpwēēā hwāngā
   each person he enters into bush
   na véōzd vé ngūndēlī
   with wires of trap
   3. each person enters the bush
      with trapping wires.
They build small houses which they can sleep in. 2. Then, if they are finished (building), 3. each person enters the bush with trapping wires. 4. If they have gone into the bush with their wires, 5a. they set traps in places b. where they see c. that they can catch game. 6. If they have finished setting traps, 7. they return to their houses. 8. Some, who set their traps before, if they have killed first, 9. they carry (the game) back to
their small houses or to their huts.

Is there, then, any difference between the two means of marking episode boundaries?

All four clauses indicate the completion of a task begun earlier: building huts in (9.2), entering the bush in (9.4), and setting traps in (9.6); the killing completed in (9.8) is at least inferable as the intended result of the earlier events. In two cases, the event is echoed through repetition of the verb in the boundary clause: (9.3) âkwôéea 'he (each person) enters into... (9.4) vákwélîtê 'if they have just entered' and (9.5a) vâkwô 0wó 'if they set traps... (9.6) vámakûlêtê likówó 'if when they finished setting traps'. Though (9.1) wôngâ 'they build' > lôngâ 'build'-nonfinite (cf. (9.6) likówó 'set traps'-nonfinite) is not echoed in (9.2), it is fairly evident that lôngâ has undergone ellipsis, since what they've finished, i.e., building, is recoverable from the preceding clause. Finally subsequent events in each case are contingent on the completion of the earlier events in the boundary clauses: (9.2) vámakûlêtê (lôngâ) 'if when they finished (building)... (9.3) âkwôéea 'he (each person) enters into'; (9.4) vákwélîtê 'if they have just entered... (9.5a) vâkwô 0wó 'if they set traps'; (9.6) vámakûlêtê likówó 'if when they finished setting traps... (9.7) vâtîmâ 'they return'; and (9.8) wólîtê 'if they have just killed... (9.9) vájâànâ 'they carry'. The sequence of an indicative following a conditional in each pair further reinforces the sense that later events depend on earlier ones. All of these similarities lead us to ask why bother to use a perfect at all? [8]

The difference lies in the nature of the event in the boundary clause. vákwélîtê wôngâ 'if they have just entered (into) the bush' tells us something about the state of the hunters, i.e., their location. Neither vámakûlêtê (lôngâ) 'if when they finished (building)' nor vámakûlêtê likówó 'if when they finished setting traps' tells us anything about the state of the hunters, rather the hunters have brought building huts and setting traps to a state of completion. The focus of the action in clauses in the proximal perfect is back onto the subject rather than outward onto the object.

Subject focus is even more evident in (9.8), where the proximal perfect in wólîtê 'if they have just killed' inactivates an otherwise transitive action. The killing is an accomplishment of the hunters at this point in the text rather than an action which they are performing. As argued above, its accomplishment is a prerequisite for the action 'performed' in (9.9) vájâànâ 'they carry', but is also the
desired result of the entire enterprise. Once the killing is accomplished the hunters can return home to their families. That the killing is only hypothetical (indicated by the verbal suffix -tE 'if') represents a separate layer of connectivity between events, specifically the dependency of subsequent events on prior preparation. The use of the perfect, however, represents the result or sum of prior events, now evident in the narrative present. The absence of a direct object in (9.8) and in (9.9) as well stems from a tendency to delete noun phrases recoverable from context, here pama 'game, meat'. The two kinds of episode boundary differ, then, in focus: in the marked case the proximal perfect brings the state of the subject to the fore [9], but in the neutral case, the event simply happens and a shift to a past tense is sufficient.

A distal perfect is also exercised to mark episode boundaries in the descriptions of everyday events; for example, in

(10)
1) ñmwé'énà mó yonndó móm'úkàtÉ
   If the day of the journey has arrived,

2) mombokmbá yènì avèmÉ wèkòmÈ
   grandchild her she leaves town

3) zí áa já
   then she is coming

4) ångá m'ëmÉ ámb'ákòkàtÉ
   there just if she has become big

5) àëndÉ mónmwîtÈ
   she goes herself

6) àvélifetÈ mòzàlì
   if she is still a small one

7) émá òzikòkì gwàmù
   who she has not grown up good

8) á'ítí lëndÉ mónmwîtÈ
   she is fit to go herself

9) (who is) fit to go by herself,

Verbs
mó-m'á-úkà-tÉ
3s-past-arrive-
DISTAL PERFECT

*avèmÈ
3s-leave
PRESENT

á-a-jà
3s-augt-come

á-m'á-kòkà-tÉ
3s-past-be big-
DISTAL PERFECT

*à-lendÈ
3s-go
PRESEN

à-vé-lì-fe-tÉ
3s-be-prf-still

à-zí-kòk-ì
3s-not-be big-prf

á-fí-it-ì
3s-be fit-prf

PROXIMAL PERFECT
If the day of the journey has arrived, her grandchild leaves her town. Then she is coming. If she has grown up already, she goes by herself. If she is still small, (one) who has not grown up enough yet, to be fit to go by herself, her father is fit to go with her. He escorts her.

A distal perfect appears in (10.1) and (10.4), while a proximal perfect in (10.6) marks another episode boundary in this excerpt from the description of a young girl's visit to her grandmother.

The use of the distal perfect momúkatè 'if it has arrived' with a temporal substantive ñmwe'énè mò yǒndò 'the day of going' as subject is identical to use of when forms with similar subjects in the Viá story in (8) to announce the arrival of a particular day or time of day. The distal perfect in (10.4) am'ákòkòtè 'if she has become big (grown up)' (conditionally) designates reaching a state. Use of the distal rather than proximal form in (10.4) adds a sense that growing up takes some time; cf. vákpwéllètè 'if they have just entered in (9.4) above where the transition from the earlier to the present state is much briefer. The distal form also contrasts syntagmatically with the proximal forms in (10.6,7,8), which are simply stative. Proximal forms lack the inchoative force of distal forms, which overtly designate a transition from an earlier state antonymous to the present one.

The episodic structure described for the Viá myth is obviously retained in the everyday descriptions. Individual events progress chronologically in much the same way in both kinds of narrative. However, the substitution of past for nonpast forms as the signifiant of an episode boundary is partially replaced by the marked subject focus construction in the perfect. This is essentially a change in detail (with respect to temporal organization of a text), the author of a text is telling us more about the involvement of the protagonists in the events of the story. I suspect that the simple and basic episodic structure of the Viá myth is a rhetorical and mnemonic frame for a text. The more informal
everyday descriptions which do not belong to the oral tradition show a greater variety of boundary devices because they were composed on the spot rather than remembered.

Conclusion

To briefly recapitulate, the linking particles and the parallelism in nonpast tense forms allow the speaker to express an immediate connectivity of successive events within a certain restricted span of time. It would of interest to determine what the size of this span of time may be, though at least for the myths it is likely that episodes are to some extent formulaically limited. My suspicion is that, otherwise, there is really no limit except that which the speaker may impose to organize his story. Shifting to past tense forms allows him to shift each episode to a state of being both prior and complete with respect to later events. Overt lexical time reference allows him to place large sections of his narrative within a time scale independent of the more immediate temporal relations between events. Each tier, however, preserves the sense that time, at least cosmologically, goes forward; tense changes and clause linkage simply allow the speaker to indicate that the place in time occupied by any one event is not temporarily arbitrary.

This investigation has had two purposes: one overt, the other covert. The overt purpose has been to describe the device of tense alternation used in organizing a text temporally in Bakweri. The array of clauses produced by the past - nonpast alternation defines the episodic structure of a text in this language. The covert purpose was to determine what the various tense and aspect distinctions in Bakweri mean from their behavior in connected speech. This purpose was not achieved in any simple way, since we have neither found out what distinguishes individual verb forms in the 'present', 'past', 'perfect', etc. nor determined the meaning of individual oppositions such as past : nonpast. What we have discovered is how the forms may be used to organize a text. To repeat a point made earlier, it is not important that the episodic structure of Bakweri texts is based on a past - nonpast alternation. What is important is that there be some device which provides structure to a text. In Bakweri it happens to be a tense alternation.

Epilogue

Recently, Nessa Wolfson (1979) has discussed the use of the English 'historical present' and its alternation with past tense forms in ordinary conversational narratives. She
argues that the places in a narrative where a past tense form replaces the historical present coincide with a significant event in the course of the story (here, for convenience, an 'episode boundary'). English and Bakweri are strikingly similar in how narratives are temporally organized, except in English past forms are not restricted to single clauses at a boundary, but instead an entire episode may be in the past. That two otherwise dissimilar languages should hit on nearly the same device strongly suggests that there is something fundamentally meaningful about the past - nonpast (= E. historical present) alternation. However, neither individual forms in isolation nor paradigmatic oppositions of tense and aspect in the two languages have similar meanings. Their alternation within a narrative temporally calibrates the progression of events with respect to the chronology of narrative time. Further investigation of the temporal organization of narratives would do well to determine the psychological advantage obtained from an episodic structure for the remembering, telling, and understanding of stories, rather than worrying about the significance of using a nonpast form to describe a past event.

FOOTNOTES

* This paper has greatly benefited from discussions with Charles Fillmore, Meredith Hoffman, George Lakoff, Sarah Michaels, Johanna Nichols, and Anthony Woodbury. I should probably have taken more heed of their suggestions. Of course, any errors or faults which remain are mine alone. The inspiration and patience of the two consultants for Bakweri, Mary and Martin, has been inestimable. I offer them my warmest thanks.

The phonemes of Bakweri are given in the chart below:

**CONSONANTS**

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The phonemes of Bakweri are also given in the chart below:

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Tones: 'V' = high tone; 'V' = low tone; 'V' = falling tone; 'V' = rising tone (the last two frequently are the result of coalescence of level tones). An apostrophe indicates downstep. For further discussion, see Kingston (1978).

I should also note that I will not be speculating about time itself in this paper at all, but rather about temporal relations between events and how specific languages refer to them. The concern here is with time as it is manifest in grammatical categories, particularly the deictic category of tense. Of course, all such linguistic representations are the result of a speech community's continuing perception and description of the information that impinges on their senses, but it does not concern me here whether these representations are phenomenologically accurate -- if accuracy can be measured independently of a linguistic or some other symbolic description. Temporal relations are so thoroughly contained within the linguistic system that one would hardly expect anyone to sincerely complain that he had no way to express a particular and precise perception in his language, though he may express it more or less well or it may require more or less thought depending. Such complaints will only arise in the context of translation from one language or symbolic system to another. The issue of complete autonomy or relativity of perception is, of course, arguable, for each individual's perception will differ somewhat from any other's. But in the case where two individuals speak the same language, they will at least share the knowledge of one selfconsistent means of communicating a perception.

The texts were collected from two speakers of Bakweri, Mary Efosi Ngomba Westbrook and Martin Yangange Musonge, during the spring and summer of 1978 in a field methods class taught at the University of California at Berkeley by Charles J. Fillmore. Mary told the story of Viá and Martin gave the descriptions of everyday life in Cameroun. According to both Mary and Martin the myths are the kind told around the hearth at night following supper. Each member of the family, including children,
will tell a story. Visitors bring new stories, which may be added to a family's stock, or a family member may bring back a new story from a visit to another compound. In some not fully understood way the stories which are told around the hearth are a class apart, different from stories which can be told at any time. They are referred to by different words: gbwító pl. màltó for stories told at night, which may include singing, and mònèntìgà pl. mèndèntìngà which are stories which can be told during the day, conversationally, and which don't include singing. There are even different verbs for describing the telling of the two kinds of stories: for gbwító the verb lòvá or lòvéá 'tell' or 'tell to' is used and for mònèntìgà the verb liñúvá also 'tell' is used. It may even be the case that there are stories which are not told when a stranger is present. Also, it appears that there are stories that one tells as a child and stories that only an adult may tell, though it may be that one doesn't or can't learn the stories all at once.

3 Labels are only mnemonic at this point in our investigation; otherwise: 'Sp' indicates subject prefix, '√' root, other symbols in the line below the labels indicate actual segments. The next line indicates the the tones of the form: '√' in this line indicates that the tone of the root does not change. The formal description of tense distinctions in Bakweri depends crucially on the detailed data provided in Gensler (1978), without which this discussion would have been much less satisfactory. See his work for sample paradigms. It should be noted that he may not agree with the analysis presented here nor is he responsible for any errors of interpretation.

An hesternal past (yesterday and before) with low tone subject prefix and low tone tense prefix mà- differs from a distal perfect which has the preroot tense sequence /H'H/ (> [HM]) rather than /LL/. The suffixes, -éhalf and -élì (for vowel final roots) or -ì (for roots ending in a consonant), mark a recent past (earlier today, e.g., this morning, thus 'matinal') and a proximal perfect, respectively. Non-past forms are expressed by alternations in the tone pattern of the verb and alternations of the root extension, i.e., low tone on the subject prefix for present/future forms and high tone on the subject prefix for progressive and exhortative forms. A preroot augment -à- with low tone creates the preroot falling contour characteristic of the progressive, which is absent in the exhortative forms; however, an -è root extension replaces the -à of the rest of the paradigm.

4 This section of the narrative describes the beginning of
Vía's punishment for having disobeyed her mother. The appropriateness of the punishment becomes evident once you know that the reason that she shouldn't have followed her mother to the farm is that one is not allowed to urinate or pass excrement there. In addition, the passing of her intestines is not, in fact, as fantastic as it might appear for the edema which accompanies amoebic dysentery can cause prolapsis of the colon, not to mention the fact that the loss of fluids can make one so weak as not to be able to stand up again. I am indebted to Newton Kingston, a parasitologist, for this explanation of Vía's predicament. See also Hemingway's account of suffering from this condition in his Green Hills of Africa.

Already I had had one of the diseases and had experienced the necessity of washing a three-inch bit of my large intestine with soap and water and tucking it back where it belonged an unnumbered amount of times a day. (283)

That Vía is suffering from something like dysentery may also be suggested by the intensifying repetition of the verb ámânê 'when she shat' in (7.11). Similar intensification, though with the purpose of stretching the episode preceding Vía's becoming stuck in a hole in the ground, occurs in the repetition of the verbs ámâtîê 'when she tilled' and á'îná 'then she digs' in (7.2) and (7.7), respectively.

5 Benveniste distinguishes "two planes of utterance...that of history and that of discourse." (206, his emphasis). Our distinction is equivalent, except that we are talking about quotation rather than ordinary discourse; we simply use the word 'narrative' in place of 'history' since 'narrative' fits better within the discussion of varieties of oral (as opposed to written) speech events.

6 One is the use of the exhortative in the first section of the Vía story, but note that the exhortative is properly a nonpast (both formally and semantically) and as such its appearance is appropriately embedded within the body of a single episode.

7 Except that the clear derivation of the when form from a past base and the zî form from a nonpast base allows us to construe the event in a when tensed clause as anterior to those in following zî tensed clauses; thereby linking that event to the following rather than preceding episode.

8 A more fundamental question also arises at this point;
that is, what is an episode boundary? I have spoken of a
correlation between the presentation of events and verb
morphology, particularly tense marking. Otherwise, a
first pass through the texts revealed that one event is
at least locally linked to the next. I then searched for
a means of extending this local notion of narrative time.
The chaining of clauses through nonpast tense marking in­
terrupted by single clauses in the past augments local
linkage (by zì) and order of presentation. In this
analysis the interruptions mark episode boundaries. Two
further questions follow: what, if anything, in the pro­
gression of events coincides with a temporal episode
boundary and are there any other means of dividing a text
into episodes? To a great extent, both of these questions
are beyond the scope of this paper; however, episode
boundaries signal shifts in narrative time of substantial
if unspecified duration, as compared to the sense of im­
mediate succession of one event on another within an ep­
isode. Shifts in location, completion of an event or
series of events, beginning a new series, and other
changes of state relevant to the participants also coin­
cide with episode boundaries. In brief, the configura­
tion of tense marking in a narrative formally defines an
episodic structure within which events semantically
cohere. The semantic analogue of the episode, which is
structurally defined, might be the paragraph, in which
events related to one another in kind, result, or direc­
tion are drawn together.

Two other closely related functions can be attributed to
the proximal perfect. First, predicate nominal construc­
tions take the form

(i) (NPx) Spx-(vé lì) (-ndí) NPy, 'NPx is an NPy'
(vé nì)

with the copula in its two most common (and possibly
only) forms: -vé lì < -vé-(é)lì 'be' in the proximal per­
fact and -vénì < -vé-ÉnÉ-l 'be with' = 'have', used in
possessive constructions, and also in the proximal per­
fact. The copula indicates that the referent of NPx be­
longs to the class designated by NPy (-ndí is an emphatic
postposition frequently occurring in these construc­
tions), e.g.,
(ii) a) ëfëò èmá nà'áá láv'ánnù nààŋgë
the-way which I want to-tell-of-here now
èvéllindì ëfëò yá lìzõngõ
it-be the-way of hunting
'The way that I want to talk about here now
is the way of hunting...

b) mà'ázõngõ màvellì nál ná nàì
the-hunting they-be kind by kind
'...the huntings are of various kinds'

In (a) ëfëò yá lìzõngõ 'the way of hunting' is an identifying predicate of ëfëò èmá... 'the way which...'. and nál ná nál 'various kinds' is a distributive equational predicate of mà'ázõngõ 'the huntings'. Second, Bakweri lacks adjectives as a separable form class; stative verbs take their place. When these verbs appear in predicates, their unmarked form is the proximal perfect, e.g., nàwàwí 'I am tall' (cf. nàwàwà in the simple nonpast 'I will become tall', an inchoative, and nàm'awàwà in the distal perfect 'I've become tall'. Both are different from a simple description of the subject's state or attributes.) Stative verbs may take what Chao (1968: 312) has called "cognate objects", i.e., nouns related semantically to, or expressing extent or direction of, the condition expressed by the stative verb, e.g., àwàwí mòtè 'he is tall (of) height', àwàmì mòfò 'she is clever (of) head', àwàmì mìlà 'she is clever (of) hand' = 'she is kind', àwàtì mòbó-tì 'he is dressed (with) clothes', àtúmì mòzòmò 'he is stripped naked'. Neither of the last two examples is strictly a stative verb, but they take on stative force in the proximal perfect and may enter into cognate object constructions. Frequently, cognate object constructions have predicate nominal paraphrases, e.g., àwèllìnì mozóm-bó 'he is naked', ñàwèllètì mòzàllì 'if-she-still-be small', èvéñì màkwàzìì 'she has smartness', èvéñì nìmmèmè mò wòvé 'she has heart of badness' = 'she is mean, cruel'. Nonfinite verbal complements are also possible with these stative verbs in the proximal perfect, e.g., àdítì ìNdë mònìvwìtì 'she-is-fit to-go herself' and the standard form for comparative constructions with lákà 'to pass, exceed', e.g., njënil òngõ mùnänà àwàmì làkà 'who that man he-be-tall to-pass? = 'who is that man taller than?'. This evidence of predication of identity, possession, quantity, quality, etc.; in short, states rather than activities of the subject reinforces the interpretation of the difference between the two kinds of episode boundaries.
REFERENCES


Wolfson, N. 1979. The conversational historical present alternation. Lg. 55.1. 168-82.