

Temporal Relations in Bakweri Oral Narratives*

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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 Víá, 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, lexical items or phrases, equivalent to English temporal substantives, 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, zĩ translated '(and) then', introduces nearly half of the some 150 clauses in the text. Clauses introduced with zĩ 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 contrasted with the primary nonpast tense forms in the following paradigms:

(1)	High tone root	Low tone root
	√ -kók 'bite'	√ -kòk 'be-big'
<u>zĩ</u> form	ák'ókà (H'HL)	ákòkà (HLL)
present/		
future	àkókà (LHL)	àkòkà (LLL)
progressive	áàkókà (HLHL)	áàkòkà (HLLL)

The basis for deriving the zĩ 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 zĩ forms for morphological reasons, the second high tone still downsteps, though by rule rather than automatically; thus preserving in part the original tone configuration (an apostrophe indicates this non-automatic downstep).

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

The zĩ form for ák'ókà 'then he bites' shows this phenomenon; the tone sequence [HML] is derived from the basic [LML] of the present/future àkókà '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 $\underline{z\dot{i}}$ forms in its high toned subject prefix (though note the $\underline{-\acute{e}}$ rather than $-\acute{a}$ 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.).

(4)	High tone root / -kók 'bite'	Low tone root / -kòk 'be-big'
when form	ámàkókê (HLHF)	ámàkòkê (HLLF)
hesternal	àmàkóká (LLHH)	àmàkòká (LLLH)
perfect	ám'ákókà (H'HHL)	ám'ákòkà (H'HLL)

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.

(5) Positive, independent tense/apsect proportion [3]

past		nonpast	
hesternal	mátinal	pres/fut	progressive
Sp-mà-√-á	Sp-√-éáì	Sp-√-à	Sp-à-√-à
L...L.√...H	L...√...HHL	L...√...L	H...L.√...L
Perfect			
distal	proximal		exhortative
Sp-m'á-√-à	Sp-√-éìì		Sp-√-è
H....H.√...L	L...√...H.L		H....√...L
	or		
	Sp-√-ì		
	L...√...L		

I have taken a section of the story of the little girl

Víá to illustrate the interlocking use of the linking particle zí and tense. In this early section of the story, Víá 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 zí forms are starred.)

		Verbs
1)	nàngó yèní àmá ávÈngÈ ómb'úzà mother her just she glances behind	*á-vÈngÈ 3s-glance THEN
2)	zí á'óngámá óvèwùlé then she hides in the grasses 2. then she (Via) hides in the elephant grass,	*á-'óngámá 3s-hide THEN
3)	nátÈ zí àmá áÈndÈ until then just she walks 3. until just then she walks.	*á-ÈndÈ 3s-go THEN
4)	ámá áúkè just she should arrive 4. Just as she's about to arrive,	á-úkè 3s-arrive EXHORTATIVE
5)	átÈÈnÈ ñmwánà èkí she remains small place 5. she remains (only) a short distance away,	*á-tÈÈnÈ 3s-remain THEN
6)	òmá áúkè until she should arrive 6. until she will arrive,	á-úkè 3s-arrive EXHORTATIVE
7)	zí ámàvÈngÈ mÈnÈ then when she glances like that 7. then when she glances (back) like that,	á-mà-vÈngÈ 3s-past-glanc WHEN
8)	víá àévíá lÈndÈ ovejule Via before she knows to go in grasses 8. before Via knows to go into the elephant grass,	à-é-víá 3s-before-kno BEFORE
9)	zí nàngó yèní áñmw'ÈnÈ then mother her she sees her 9. then her mother sees her.	*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 Vía is discovered. All events prior to the discovery simply follow one on another as indicated by the zì form of the verbs in (6.1,2,3,5). The expectation of Vía'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 Vía's mother at the farm, the new episode begins with the realization of Vía's presence not of arriving. In the new episode, use of the zì form resumes in (6.9).

Identical nonpast tense marking here draws the events immediately prior to Vía'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 temporal structure thereby achieved is inaccessible to the analyst.

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

- | | | Verbs |
|-----|---|--|
| (7) | | |
| 1) | zǐ nàngó yèní áwòtéá
then mother her she begins
lǐtíà mó'óndá
to till the field | *á-wòtéá
3s-begin
THEN |
| | 1. Then her mother begins to till
the field, | |
| 2) | zǐ ámàtíê ámàtíê
then when she tilled when she tilled | á-mà-tíê
3s-past-till
WHEN |
| | 2. then when she tilled and tilled, | |
| 3) | nátÈ ñmwáábò víá àmá íyà
until soon Via she says "Mother,
nààzà lǐnà
I want to shit" | "nà-àzà"
1s-want
"PRESENT" |
| | 3. shortly, Via says "Mother, I want
to shit." | |
| 4) | ámá wĕ'É
she says "Wee!" (an exclamation of
surprise or disgust) | --- |
| 5) | ámá ló'ówá nánù
she says "the shit like here
nàzát'ánÈ nál'ílà
I cannot I eat it" | "nà-zá-t'ánÈ
1s-not-be able
na=l'i=la"
1s=3s=eat
"PRESENT" |
| | 5. She says "The shit here, I
cannot eat it!" | |
| 6) | zǐ áÈndÈ óz'ááwá wàngá
then she walks to the edge farm
6. Then she walks to the edge of the
of the farm, | *á-ÈndÈ
3s-walk
THEN |
| 7) | zǐ áÈndÈ á'ímá á'ímá
then she walks she digs she digs
Èfòndí
a hole | *á-ÈndÈ
3s-go
*á-'ímá
3s-dig
THEN |
| | 7. then she walks, (then) she digs,
(and then) she digs a hole. | |
| 8) | ámá ñééâ ánù
she says "shit toward here!"
8. She says, "Shit in here!" | "ná-éâ"
shit-toward
"IMPERATIVE" |
| 9) | zǐ víá áÈndÈ
then Via she walks
9. Then Via walks (over there), | *á-ÈndÈ
3s-go
THEN |

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------------------------------|
| 10) | án' ééyá àngá
she shits toward there
10. (then) she shits there. | *á-ṅá-é(y)á
3s-shit-toward
THEN |
| 11) | ámàṅé ámàṅé
when she shat when she shat
11. She shat and shat, | á-mà-ṅé
3s-past-shit
WHEN |
| 12) | nátÈ méà méení mék'úwá
until intestines her they finish
1'íwúzà
coming out
12. until her intestines all come out, | *mé-k'úwà
3p-finish
THEN |
| 13) | zì àzìtánÈ lìtÈmÈfÈ
then she is not able to stand either
13. then she is unable to stand up also. | *à-zì-tánÈ
3s-not-be able
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 zì 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 zì (áÈndÈ 'then he goes') and when (ámÈndÈ '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) | | Verbs |
| a) | wû wómùkê | wó-mà-úk-ê |
| | night when it arrived | 3s-past-arrive-√ex |
| | 'When night arrived...' | |
| b) | zí é'élélé émàjê | é-mà-jà-ê |
| | then the morning when IT came | 3s-past-come-√ex |
| | 'Then when the morning came...' | |
| cf. | | |
| c) | nàngó yèní ámàjê | á-mà-jà-ê |
| | mother her when SHE came | 3s-past-come-√ex |
| | 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 Víá'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 Bakwéri 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 (àEndÈ 'he goes/he will go', marked with an asterisk below) forms predominate, while either a distal (ám'EndÈ 'he has gone') or, much more frequently, a proximal (àEndì 'he has just gone') perfect mark episode boundaries.

In the section from the description of hunting in Cameroon (below), proximal perfects, in vákpwélitÈ 'if they have just entered' and wówitÈ '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 vámàkúlÈtÈ 'if when they finished'.

(9)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1) a) wóngà | ván'áá | mándáo | Verbs |
| | they build | small houses | *vá-óngà |
| b) é má | vátánÈ | lìnàngéà | 3p-build |
| | which they can | sleep in | *vá-tánÈ |
| 1. They build small houses which | | | 3p-be able |
| they can sleep in. | | | PRESENT |
| 2) zĩ | vámàkúlÈtÈ | | vá-mà-kúlÈ-tÈ |
| then if when they finished | | | 3p-past-finish-if |
| 2. Then, if they finished, | | | WHEN |
| 3) mòtòtÈ | àkpwéà | ówàngá | *à-kpwá-éà |
| each person he enters into bush | | | 3s-enter-toward |
| na véòzò vé ngùndèlì | | | PRESENT |
| with wires of trap | | | |
| 3. each person enters the bush | | | |
| with trapping wires. | | | |

- 4) vákpwélìtÉ
if they've just entered
ówàngá na véòzò véáwù
into the bush with wires their
4. If they've just gone into the
bush with their wires,
- 5) a) vák'ówò ìngùndèlì èkí *vák-k'ówò
they set traps place 3p-set traps
b) é má vÈn'È ná *vák-Èn'È
where they see like 3p-see
c) 'é má vát'ánÈ vól'Émbeà *vák-t'ánÈ
where they can they catch 3p-be able
jàmà *vák-l'Émbeà
game 3p-catch
5. (then) they set traps (in a)
place where they see that
they can catch game. THEN
- 6) vàmàkùlÈtÉ ìkówó vák-mà-kùlÈ-tÉ
if when they finished setting 3p-past-finish-if
traps WHEN
6. If they finished setting traps,
- 7) vátìmbà ómàndáò máwù *vák-tìmbà
they return to houses their 3p-return
7. they return to their houses. PRESENT
- 8) lóngò é má vólóm'á vák-lómá
some who they make before 3p-precede
ìkówó èngèlè yá PRESENT
setting traps, the time of
mòlòmÈ wówitÉ
first if they've just killed
8. Some who set their traps
before, if they've killed
first,
- 9) vájààná óv'án'ááwù vá *vák-ja-ana
they bring to their small of 3p-come-with
màndáò tó ómàwóndò máwù PRESENT
houses or to huts their
9. they bring (the game) to their
small houses or to their huts.

1. 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) àkpweéá 'he (each person) enters into...' (9.4) vákpwélítÉ 'if they have just entered' and (9.5a) vák'òwò '(then) they set traps...' (9.6) vámàkúlÉtÉ líkówó 'if when they finished setting traps'. Though (9.1) wóngà 'they build' > lóngà 'build'-nonfinite (cf. (9.6) líkówó 'set traps'-nonfinite) is not echoed in (9.2), it is fairly evident that lóngà 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) vámàkúlÉtÉ (lóngà) 'if when they finished (building)... (9.3) àkpweéá 'he (each person) enters into'; (9.4) vákpwélítÉ 'if they have just entered... (9.5a) vák'owo '(then) they set traps'; (9.6) vámàkúlÉtÉ líkówó 'if when they finished setting traps... (9.7) vátimbà 'they return'; and (9.8) wówítÉ 'if they have just killed... (9.9) vájààná 'they bring'. 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. vákpwélítÉ ówàngá 'if they have just entered (into) the bush' tells us something about the state of the hunters, i.e., their location. Neither vámàkúlÉtÉ (lóngà) 'if when they finished (building)' nor vámàkúlÉtÉ líkówó '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 wówítÉ '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) vájààná '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 *-tÉ* '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 *námà* '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) <i>ɲwé'énà mÓ yòndò móm'úkàtÉ</i>
the day of going if it has arrived | Verbs
mó-m'á-úkà-tÉ
3s-past-arrive- |
| 1. If the day of the journey has arrived, | DISTAL PERFECT |
| 2) <i>mòmbámbá yèní àvÈmÈ wékòmè</i>
grandchild her she leaves town | *à-vÈmÈ
3s-leave |
| 2. her grandchild leaves her town. | PRESENT |
| 3) <i>zì áájà</i>
then she is coming | á-à-jà
3s-augt-come |
| 3. Then she is coming. | PROGRESSIVE |
| 4) <i>àngá m'ÉNÉ ám'ákòkàtÉ</i>
there just if she has become big | á-m'á-kòkà-tÉ
3s-past-be big- |
| 4. If she has grown up already, | DISTAL PERFECT |
| 5) <i>àÈndÈ mÓɲmwítí</i>
she goes herself | *à-ÈndÈ
3s-go |
| 5. she goes by herself. | PRESENT |
| 6) <i>àvéllífÉt'É mòzàll</i>
if she is still a small one | à-vé-lì-fÉ-tÉ
3s-be-prf-still |
| 6. If she is still small, | PROXIMAL PERFECT |
| 7) <i>émá àzíkòkí gwámù</i>
who she has not grown up good | à-zí-kòk-í
3s-not-be big-p |
| 7. who has not grown up enough yet, | PROXIMAL PERFECT |
| 8) <i>áf'ítí lÈndÈ mÓɲmwítí</i>
she is fit to go herself | á-f'ít-í
3s-be fit-prf |
| 8. (who is) fit to go by herself, | PROXIMAL PERFECT |

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>9) zàngó yèní àfítà
 father her he is fit
 ànmwÉndÉnÉ
 he goes with her
 9. Her father is fit to go with her.</p> <p>10) àmòlí'ÉlÉ
 he escorts her
 10. He escorts her.</p> | <p>*à-fítà
 3s-be_fit
 *à=mò=Énd-ÉnÉ
 3s=3s=go-with
 PRESENT
 *à=mò=lí'ÉlÉ
 3s=3s=escort
 PRESENT</p> |
|--|---|

1. If the day of the journey has arrived, 2. her grandchild leaves her town. 3. Then she is coming. 4. If she has grown up already, 5. she goes by herself. 6. If she is still small, 7. (one) who has not grown up enough yet, 8. to be fit to go by herself, 9. her father is fit to go with her. 10. 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 móm'úkàtÉ 'if it has arrived' with a temporal substantive nmwé'énà mó yòndò 'the day of going' as subject is identical to use of 'when' forms with similar subjects in the Víá story in (8) to announce the arrival of a particular day or time of day. The distal perfect in (10.4) ám'ákòkàtÉ '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. vákpwélítÉ '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 Víá 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 Víá 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 Bakwéri. 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 Bakwéri 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 Bakwéri texts is based on a past - nonpast alternation. What is important is that there be some device which provides structure to a text. In Bakwéri 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 - non-past (= 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

	Lab.	Alv.	Ret.	Pal.	Vel.	Lab.-Vel.
Stops						
vls.		t		j	k	kpw
vd.						gb(w)
N-vd.	mb	nd		nj	ŋg	ŋmgbw
Nasals	m	n		ɲ		ɲmw
Spirants	f		z			
Glides	v			y		w
Lateral		l				

VOWELS

	Front	Back
High	i	u
High-mid	e	o
Low-mid	E	O
Low	a	

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

- 1 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.
- 2 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 Vía 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. màító for stories told at night, which may include singing, and mòndèngà pl. mèndnèngà 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 lòv́á or lòvéá 'tell' or 'tell to' is used and for mòndèngà the verb litúv́á 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 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 tone sequence /H'H/ (> [HM]) rather than /LL/. The suffixes, -éá and -éì (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 ámànè '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 ámátíè 'when she tilled' and á'imá '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 zi form from a nonpast base allows us to construe the event in a when tensed clause as anterior to those in following zi 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 interrupted by single clauses in the past augments local linkage (by zi) and order of presentation. In this analysis the interruptions mark episode boundaries. Two further questions follow: what, if anything, in the progression 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 immediate succession of one event on another within an episode. 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 coincide with episode boundaries. In brief, the configuration 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 direction are drawn together.

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

(i) (NPx) Spx-(véli) (-ndí) NPy, 'NPx is an NPy'
(véni)

with the copula in its two most common (and possibly only) forms: -véli < -vé-(é)li 'be' in the proximal perfect and -véni < -vé-ÉnÉ-í 'be with' = 'have', used in possessive constructions, and also in the proximal perfect. The copula indicates that the referent of NPx belongs to the class designated by NPy (-ndí is an emphatic postposition frequently occurring in these constructions), e.g.,

- (ii) a) èféò émá ná'ázà lów'ánù náàngè
 the-way which I want to-tell-of-here now
èvélindí èféò yá lìzòngò
 it-be the-way of hunting
 'The way that I want to talk about here now
 is the way of hunting...'
 b) má'ázòngò màvéllì náì ná náì
 the-hunting they-be kind by kind
 '...the huntings are of various kinds'

In (a) èféò yá lìzòngò 'the way of hunting' is an identifying predicate of èféò émá... 'the way which...' and náì ná náì 'various kinds' is a distributive equational predicate of má'ázòngò '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. nàwàwá in the simple nonpast 'I will become tall', an inchoative, and nám'áwàwà 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', àwámì mófò 'she is clever (of) head', àwámì lliá 'she is clever (of) hand' = 'she is kind', àwòtì mbó-tí 'he is dressed (with) clothes', àtúmì mòzómbo '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., àvélindí mòzóm-bó 'he is naked', àvélifètè mòzàllì 'if-she-still-be small', àvéni màkpwázi 'she has smartness', àvéni nmwémá mó w'ové '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., áfítì lèndè mómwítì 'she-is-fit to-go herself' and the standard form for comparative constructions with lákà 'to pass, exceed', e.g., njénè òngó múnánà áw'ámì lákà '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.

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