

Midori Osumi. 1995. *Tinrin grammar*. Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No. 25. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 304 pp. \$35.00, paper.

Tinrin (or Tîrî) is a Melanesian language spoken in southern New Caledonia by approximately 400 speakers (according to the April 1983 census cited in this book). This excellent grammar of the language by Midori Osumi (O) is valuable for the wealth and accuracy of its contents, its rigorous scientific analysis, and its clear and logical presentation. It is a reference grammar based on extensive fieldwork and a sound theoretical foundation. The terminology used is easily understandable to linguists of whatever theoretical background.

One example of the author's rigorous and exhaustive approach is the 25-page section dealing with the description and combination of prehead and posthead verbal modifiers, including their preferential order of occurrence (195). Whoever has done extensive fieldwork knows the amount of patience and determination that is necessary to collect such data. O's affection for her informants and interest in their culture is also obvious. Evidence of this appears in the interesting table that sums up the use of the various second person pronouns (singular, dual, and plural) according to the type of relative addressed (140). Section 8.1.2.3 on interjections is equally well documented.

This work will also be valuable for dialectology and for comparative linguistics. O collected interesting data on the dialectal variations of Tinrin spoken in the villages of Grand Couli and La Foa and on the Ile des Pins. (Her informants were descendants of people transported to the island after the 1878 upheaval.) O thus highlights the unstable status of those minority languages, spoken by few speakers, when confronted by bilingualism and the absence of a linguistic standard. Her field data differ quite noticeably from Grace's (1976) data collected twenty years earlier in La Foa from a native speaker of Grand Couli.

The book is divided into eight well-organized chapters, with 33 summary tables that allow easy visualization of each enumeration and combination of the elements described.

**PHONOLOGY.** The phonological system of Tinrin is fairly complex and similar to that of other languages of southern New Caledonia. There are 8 oral

vowels, 6 nasal vowels, and their 14 corresponding long vowels, 30 consonants, no final consonants, and no consonant clusters. There is a contrast between (voiceless) stops and prenasalized stops, the distinctive criterion being prenasalization. The canonical structure is  $CV_1(V_1)$ , with stress on the first syllable. Long vowels contain two moras that comprise a single syllable for purposes of stress assignment, but two syllables for intonation (29).

From a comparative viewpoint, it is difficult to decide whether Xârâcùù, one of the closest languages to Tinrin, is more directly akin to the Grand Couli or the La Foa dialects. Xârâcùù resembles the La Foa dialect with regard to labiovelar consonants, but its vowels correspond more closely to those of Grand Couli.

O cites Grace's (1973:49) ambiguous characterization of New Caledonian languages as being "notable for their aberrant nature within the Austronesian language family." However, Grace does not question their genetic position within the Oceanic group. He only points out their phonological complexity, as well as the difficulty of tracing the complex phonetic changes that have occurred among them, especially in the more southern languages. O thus underestimates current research when she states that "the data on New Caledonian languages are still too poor to allow one to make any positive statement on subgrouping" (1). This is only true for five west coast languages close to Tinrin (on which see Leenhardt 1946, not cited by O). The historical evolution of the more conservative northern languages has been thoroughly studied. (See, in particular, Haudricourt 1971 and Ozanne-Rivierre 1982.) In fact, as Geraghty (1989:141) observes, "the area is arguably the best-described in Melanesia."

**SPELLING.** In O's orthography, retroflex stops are written with an added *r*; /ð/ is written *dh*, probably by analogy with /θ/ written *th* in the Loyalty Islands. /ɓ/ is written *ò*, even though Haudricourt and others (1979) proposed *ô* to spell that particular phoneme in all the languages of the mainland. The word for 'maternal uncle' is cited as either *warrâbù* or *warrabù* (6), which highlights the tricky question of whether to choose a phonological or phonetic spelling, since the oral/nasal contrast in vowels is neutralized before nasal or prenasalized consonants. One curious choice is the spelling Tinrin rather than Tîrî for the language name. The latter accords with previous usage and with the orthography O herself proposes.

**WORD CLASSES.** Tinrin is an isolating language with little morphological marking. Word classes are distinguished mainly by syntactic function. In addition, Tinrin is characterized by a high degree of polysemy and homonymy/homophony. O is well aware of these problems and mentions them repeatedly (from p. 1, n. 1). Yet she tends to interpret elements as polysemous, sometimes rightly, as in the listing of multifunctional forms in Table 3.11 (99), and sometimes wrongly, when contradicting comparative and reconstructed evidence, as in the case of the morpheme *nrâ*.

In Tinrin *nrâ* has various homonymous values and functions (past, progressive, 3sg subject, possessive, nominal subject marker, etc.), which Osumi thoroughly and accurately analyses. However, the main question is which function or value surfaces in a specific context. To take one instance, O's interpretation of sentences like (820) as passive is puzzling:

- (820) *mwâ hêrrê hôdrô nrâ toni*  
 hut **imprn** burn **sm** (?) Tony  
 'The hut somebody (Tony) burned.'

Does *nrâ* here mark a nominal subject or a possessive? These morphemes differ in Xârâcùù (*rè* marks possessives, *nâ* or *ngê* marks nominal subjects; Moysse-Faurie 1995) and lead me to the following interpretation: *hêrrê* is a bound noun meaning 'contents, essence, product'; when preposed to a verb, it is a nominalizing prefix. In this case, *nrâ* is the general possessive preposition, and the possessor *toni* is the agent, just as in *wake nrâ nrü* (work **poss** 2sg) 'your work' (145, ex. 294). I would thus gloss (820) as in (820'). Xârâcùù has an equivalent construction, and so does Nêlêmwâ, spoken in the far north of the mainland (Bril 1995).

- (820') *mwâ hêrrê-hôdrô nrâ toni*  
 hut **nmz-burn** **poss** Tony  
 (lit.) 'hut-burning of Tony'

Xârâcùù

- pwî êê-chutââ rè anyââ*  
 banana **nmz-cook** **poss** mummy  
 'bananas cooked by Mummy' (lit. 'bananas-cooking of Mummy')

Nêlêmwâ

- na khuxi mugic shâ-khîlî-wo i ye*  
 1sg eat bananas **nmz-cook-suf** **poss** 3sg  
 'I ate the bananas she cooked.' (lit. 'bananas-cooking of her')

Although the English (or French) translation often sounds better with a passive, the Xârâcùù, Nêlêmwâ, and—in my view—Tinrin constructions are nominal possessive clauses.

In negative imperative clauses, as well, the morpheme *nrâ*, which O glosses **obl**, is also the possessive marker, in my view, as the equivalent clause in Xârâcùù suggests.

- (775) *savaa odho (nrâ) kafe*  
**proh** drink **obl** coffee  
 'Don't drink coffee!'

Xârâcùù

- witaa wîjö rè kafe*  
**proh** drink **poss** coffee

In Tinrin, there is yet another *nrâ*, a postverbal morpheme (akin to Xârâcùù *na* and Ajië *mâ*), which O lists among the posthead verbal modifiers (204), but

which is actually a past marker and should be listed with other tense/aspect markers. And conversely, why is *nnerre* ‘regrettably’ listed with tense/aspect markers (171), when its possible combination with all other such markers seems to suggest that it does not belong to the same paradigm?

Another crucial issue in the study of these languages is the question of the motivation or demotivation for various morphosyntactic devices. O attempts to draw semantic distinctions between bound nouns and link nouns: “bound noun constructions express the most inalienable possessive relationships” (external body-part nouns, secretions “inevitably related or attributable to their possessor,” parts of plants, kinship terms, and so on; 65–66). Internal organs and body products that are “just temporary manifestations of the body” (66) use link noun constructions. However, the current process of grammaticalization that affects and differentiates the two categories cannot always be accounted for semantically. Comparison with neighboring languages shows that, while the two categories—bound nouns and link nouns—undoubtedly exist, there is a great deal of variation among languages as to which category a particular noun belongs to. Processes of fossilization and demotivation are frequent. Thus, ‘stomach’ is a free-form noun in Xârâcùù (*bwati rè nâ* [stomach poss 1sg] ‘my stomach’) and a bound form noun in Tinrin (*pwari-rò* ‘my stomach’). Still, it should be noted that in both Tinrin and Xârâcùù ‘fire, firewood’ has a unique possessive form: Tin *nre* ‘fire’, *nre ò nrü* ‘your fire’; Xâr *nè* ‘fire’, *nèù-rò* ‘your fire’. (In Xârâcùù at least, this unique determination can be accounted for by the conservation of the etymological final vowel in the POC form \*api ‘fire’.) O thinks that historically “the meaning as a free form may be primary, extended to indicate kinship or the part of a plant” (66). The opposite is more probable, as bound nouns tend to become free nouns. (See Ozanne-Rivierre 1991.)

Overlooking diachrony and comparative data sometimes leads to misinterpretations. Thus, O assigns two meanings to a single lexeme *wii-* in Tinrin—‘soul, shade, picture’ when used as a bound noun, and ‘fiber, vine, tendon’ when used as a link noun—and uses this supposed polysemy to buttress the semantic distinction she makes between the two nominal categories. But in Xârâcùù, we find two different lexemes, *kwéé* ‘shade, etc.’, and *kwii* ‘fiber, etc.’. Thus, it would be wiser to resort to two different entries for *wii-*, as did Grace (1976). Similarly, O interprets Tinrin *nô* (62) as a bound noun with two related meanings according to whether the possessor is animate (‘bone, bodily liquid’ [?]) or inanimate (‘juice, liquid’). In neighboring languages, ‘bone’ (POC \*suRi) and ‘liquid’ (POC \*suRuq) are often phonologically similar, and they may well have become homophonous in Tinrin. (Cf. Xâr *nyî-* ‘bone’ or ‘liquid’; Cèmuhî *duu-* ‘bone’, *du-* ‘liquid’; Ajië *juu-* ‘bone’, *jârâ* ‘liquid’). Elsewhere (72), Tinrin *fwa* is translated ‘to rain’ (Xâr *xwa*) in an intransitive impersonal construction, and ‘to sprout, shoot’ (Xâr *tuè*) as a common verb. Again, in my view, this is a case of homophony.

On the other hand, I believe that the verb *fwi* should be considered a single entity, even though it appears in different constructions with different but related meanings, because the facts are similar in neighboring languages. It means ‘to amount to’ as a transitive impersonal verb, ‘to exist’ as an intransitive impersonal verb, and ‘to make, do’ as a common verb. The prefix *fô-* (Xâr *xwâ-*) is also polysemous, as O shows (105–106), also correctly distinguishing it from the homophonous common noun meaning ‘species, a particular kind’.

**OTHER POINTS OF TYPOLOGICAL INTEREST.** Tinrin expresses the comitative case exactly like Ajië (de La Fontinelle 1976), by the use of an independent pronoun referring to all participants, followed by an object pronoun corresponding to the accompanied participant: *komu* (1dl exc) *-nrî* (3sg) ‘I with him’; *hari* (1pl inc) *-rri* (3pl) ‘we with them’.

The use of the same word to denote relative position in both space and time (a fact frequently noted in Oceanic languages) is well laid out in Table 3.3, for example, *mââde* (adv) ‘in front of [in space]; before [in time]’; (verb) ‘go ahead [in space]; precede [in time]’ (58). Tinrin location nouns may be used without any preposition, a usage only possible with time nouns in Xârâcùù.

Among the various verb classes, the small subclass of reflexive verbs is noteworthy. These are transitive verbs with a compulsory pronominal object coreferent with the subject. Such verbs also exist in Xârâcùù but, strangely enough, they are not etymologically related in the two languages, although some have common meanings, as in ‘to put on airs’ (Tin *nêê*, Xâr *pètù* or *pètoa*); ‘(do) in vain’ (Tin *-vesò*, Xâr *-chëe*).

Equally of interest is the class of attributes, which exists in all New Caledonian languages, for example, *tro* ‘just, real, indigenous’ (Xâr *dö*); *nrôô* ‘old’ (Xâr *nûû*); *doo* ‘used, worn out’ (Xâr *jöö*).

In all New Caledonian languages, as in many other Oceanic languages, verbs of movement such as *fî* ‘go’ and *mê* ‘come’ are used both as directionals and as spatial and temporal modifiers. The fact that they may be placed far from the verb does not make them prepositions, as O suggests. Example (174), where *fî* is separated from the verb by the preposition *ru* ‘at’, and example (179), where *mê* is separated from the verb by the preposition *ru* ‘in’, actually employ a common device, the inclusion of the preposition in the verbal group. The directionals, being rightmost, may also come after object pronouns.

O also makes interesting remarks on word order and subject marking in Tinrin. To begin with, only pronouns may occur as subjects in a verb phrase. Such pronouns are compulsory, whether the explicit and optional subject nominal (a noun or independent pronoun) is preposed or postposed. (In the latter case, it is then marked as subject by *nrâ*). In coordinate clauses with coreferential NPs, the occurrence of the coreferent subject pronoun is also compulsory: “When the two coordinate clauses contain coreferential NPs, the second occurrence of the NP is normally reduced to a pronominal form” (257).

Thus, in Tinrin, as in Ajië, word order is sV(O) (mS), or S sV(O) if the subject nominal is topicalized (where s = subject pronoun and m = subject case marker). In Xârâcùù, on the other hand, a topicalized nominal subject does not require the presence of a coreferent subject pronoun in the verb phrase, so the word-order may be SV(O) or sV(O) (mS). It should be noted that in Tinrin, as in Xârâcùù, any kind of postverbal noun subject must be marked by the subject case marker.

Object pronouns and proper nouns receive different treatment in Tinrin. Pronouns must be postverbal (could this be the beginning or end result of cliticization?), whereas proper nouns may be separated from the verb. Like Xârâcùù, Tinrin tends to include not only object pronouns but also some relators in the verb phrase, due to the topicalization of an indirect object or an oblique phrase (Moyses-Faurie 1991). (This section on objects [7.6] contains the unique typing error of the whole book, obviously due to some unfortunate cut-and-paste operation: example [642] should be translated 'He hits the side-car with a stone' and not 'He spat at people'!)

Relatives using *a* as an attribute marker show some interesting developments. To begin with, *a* is a verb nominalizer, expressing (singular) agent nouns. It forms a paradigm with dual *truu* and plural *mê*: *a-via* 'a soldier' (lit. 'one who fights'), *truu-via* 'two soldiers', *mê-via* 'soldiers'. In the relative-clause construction, on the other hand, a relativized subject NP (whether singular, dual, or plural) is most commonly constructed with *a*. Xârâcùù follows a similar evolution when the head NP is inanimate, but agreement in number remains compulsory when the head noun is an animate. The other type of relative clause, common in New Caledonia, is merely juxtaposed, or marked by a demonstrative pronoun that links the head NP and the relative clause.

I have already stated why I would not analyze *hêrrê* constructions (8.1.4.1) as passives. But O's analysis of *nrî* constructions (8.1.4.2) seems quite convincing and typologically interesting. The form *-nrî* is a detransitivizing suffix. When applied to some verbs (reducing their arguments to one, a Patient), it conveys a resultative/stative meaning. Such *-nrî* constructions "may have developed from reflexivization and acquired a passive meaning . . . only when the subject was third person singular inanimate" (255–256). Chapter 8 ends a bit rapidly on emphatic constructions. Only one example of cleft subject constructions is given. It would have been interesting to analyze whether cases of anaphoric pronominal coreference are similar to those of topicalization and relativization.

Two appendices and a comprehensive index complete the grammar. Appendix A lists the basic kinship terms (enabling me to notice a mistake in example [55], where *audrê* 'father' is glossed as 'mother'). Appendix B presents three short texts. The index lists lexical words with specific grammatical characteristics (such as their possessive determination type), terms or linguistic concepts used in the book, and all the languages cited.

To conclude, it should be pointed out that this reference grammar of a Kanak language of New Caledonia is the first written in English. Let us hope that its greater accessibility to English speakers will spur their curiosity about Kanak languages, which have been mostly described in French until now.

Claire Moyse-Faurie  
LACITO-CNRS, Paris

## REFERENCES

- Blust, Robert, ed. 1991. *Currents in Pacific linguistics: Papers on Austronesian languages and ethnolinguistics in honour of George W. Grace*. Pacific Linguistics C-117. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Bril, Isabelle. 1995. La structure de l'énoncé dans la langue nêlêmwa, Nouvelle-Calédonie. Doctoral diss., Paris 7. 600 pp.
- La Fontinelle, Jacqueline de. 1976. *La langue de Houaïlou, Nouvelle-Calédonie: Description phonologique et description syntaxique*. Paris: SELAF. 383 pp.
- Geraghty Paul. 1989. The reconstruction of Proto-Southern Oceanic. In *VICAL 1, Oceanic languages: Papers from the Fifth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics*, ed. by Ray Harlow and Robin Hooper, pp. 141–156. Auckland: Linguistic Society of New Zealand.
- Grace, George W. 1973. Research on the position of the New Caledonian languages: A progress report. University of Hawai'i *Working Papers in Linguistics* 5(7):49–62.
- . 1976. *Grand Couli dictionary (New Caledonia)*. Pacific Linguistics C-12. Canberra: Australian National University. 113 pp.
- Haudricourt, André G. 1971. New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands. In *Current trends in linguistics*, vol. 8, *Linguistics in Oceania*, ed. by Thomas A. Sebeok, pp. 359–396. The Hague: Mouton.
- Leenhardt Maurice. 1946. *Langues et dialectes de l'Austro-Mélanésie*. Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, no. 10. Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie. 414 pp.
- Moyse-Faurie, Claire. 1991. Relational morphemes and a transitivity suffix in Xârâcùù (New Caledonia). In *Currents in Pacific linguistics: Papers on Austronesian languages and ethnolinguistics in honour of George W. Grace*, ed. by Robert Blust, pp. 305–320. Pacific Linguistics C-117. Canberra: Australian National University.
- . 1995. *Le xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie): Éléments de syntaxe*. *Langues et Cultures du Pacifique* 10. Paris: Peeters-Selaf. 256 pp.
- Ozanne-Rivierre, Françoise. 1982. Phonologie comparée des langues de Hienghène et du Proto-Océanien. In *Dictionnaire thématique des langues de la région de Hienghène (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*, ed. by André G. Haudricourt and Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre, pp. 9–61. Lacito-Documents Asie-Austronésie 4. Paris: Peeters-Selaf. 285 pp.
- . 1991. Incorporation of genitive relators in the languages of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands. In *Currents in Pacific linguistics: Papers on Austronesian languages and ethnolinguistics in honour of George W. Grace*, ed. by Robert Blust, pp. 321–338. Pacific Linguistics C-117. Canberra: Australian National University.