

The historical morphology of personal pronouns in northern Vanuatu

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1. LANGUAGE GENEALOGY AND THE MORPHOLOGY OF PRONOUNS

1.1. The Comparative Method and the Tree model

The Comparative Method is commonly hailed as a solid methodology for comparing genetically related languages, and for reconstructing the history of their linguistic systems.¹ Equally common is the assumption that the results of its analyses are best displayed in the form of a tree, or *Stammbaum*: starting from a common protolanguage, its linguistic descendants should form neatly separated branches and subgroups, each of which should be defined by a set of exclusively shared innovations. The expectation – or at least the hope – is that the historical innovations reflected in modern members of a family should be distributed in nested patterns, so as to fit a cladistic representation of that family. This belief is reflected in the vast popularity of the tree model in works of historical linguistics up to this day.

The present paper aims at separating these two lines of thought, by showing that the strength of the Comparative Method does not necessarily entail the validity of the tree model which has been so often associated with it since the Neogrammarians. In fact, I will even propose that the CM provides precisely the analytical tools necessary to demonstrate the limitations of the tree model. Indeed, the method rests on principles of consistency and regularity of sound change, which allow the linguist to conduct rigorous demonstrations in the identification of innovations for each language, and in the reconstruction of words' histories. As each innovation is assigned a set of modern languages, it becomes possible to assess how nested (and thus how tree-like) their distribution is in the family.

The argument of this paper forms part of a broader debate showing the theoretical limitations of the cladistic approach in linguistics (see Heggarty *et al.* 2010; Drinka 2013; François 2014, *f/c*; Kalyan & François *f/c*). These recent contributions, as well as numerous earlier publications by various authors (e.g. Saussure 1917; Bloomfield 1933; Ross 1988), have shown that the tree model is

incapable of dealing with the common situations of dialect continuum or sustained contact, in which isoglosses frequently intersect. The nested isoglosses assumed by a tree structure may only arise in the odd case of population splits with loss of contact; but they do not constitute the usual pattern in situations of *linkages* (Ross 1988), i.e. the normal case where related languages share innovations in chaining patterns. *Figure 1*, adapted from François (2014), illustrates the sort of configuration typical of a dialect continuum or a linkage, in which innovations are distributed in crosscutting patterns. (Letters represent dialects or languages; numbered isoglosses refer to their shared innovations.) Such a configuration is incompatible with a tree representation.

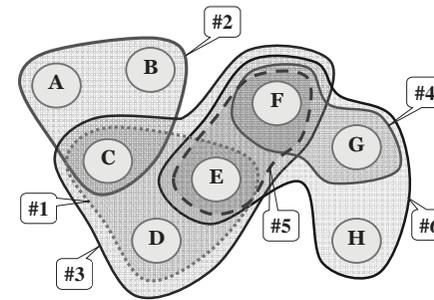


Figure 1 – Intersecting isoglosses in a dialect continuum or a linkage

1.2. A case study of pronouns in Vanuatu

The theoretical point just defined – namely, that the Comparative Method can be used to show the failure of the tree model – will be demonstrated through a case study: the *historical morphology of personal pronouns in northern Vanuatu*.

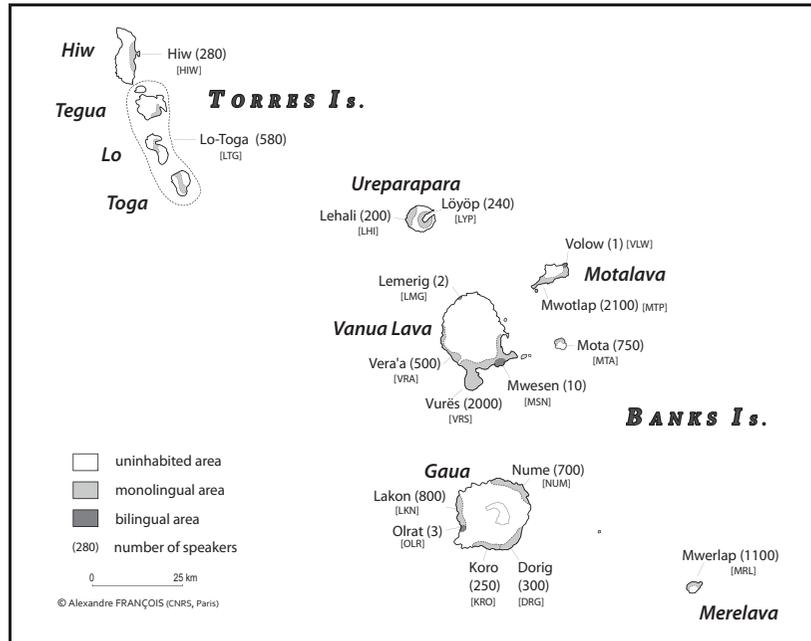
The reason underlying this choice is that morphological paradigms of personal pronouns tend to evolve language-internally, and are seldom borrowed through late contact across separate languages (see Nichols & Peterson 1996; Ross 2005:58). As a result, within a set of related languages, any morphological innovation shared by two modern members is likely to reflect the spread of a linguistic feature at an early time when the ancestors of these modern languages were still mutually intelligible, and were dialects in a continuum. In other words, shared innovations in pronominal morphology generally constitute solid diagnostic evidence for understanding the genealogical structure (internal subgrouping) of a given family.

In addition, the rich inventories of personal pronouns found in Oceanic languages – with typically 15 members in each paradigm [§3.2] – provide a critical mass of morphological forms, whose combined histories give a fair approximation of the historical relations between grammatical systems as a whole. In that sense, they offer a valuable vantage point for assessing theoretical issues of the Comparative Method with some reasonable level of detail.

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Map 1 – The seventeen languages of northern Vanuatu



Between 2003 and 2007, I collected linguistic data on the 17 languages still spoken in the Torres and Banks groups of islands, in the northernmost area of the Republic of Vanuatu. (I will henceforth designate these languages, interchangeably, as the “Torres–Banks languages” or the “Northern Vanuatu [NV] languages”.) Map 1 is a linguistic map of the archipelago, showing the name of each language together with a three-letter abbreviation, and the number of its speakers. With 17 distinct languages for a population of 9,300, this area features one of the highest levels of linguistic density in the world (François 2012); this is also true for Vanuatu as a whole, which hosts as many as 138 languages for 0.23 million people (François *et al.* 2015).

In terms of affiliation, NV languages belong to the Oceanic family – a subgroup of the Austronesian phylum that comprises about 500 languages scattered in the Pacific. Their common ancestor is known as Proto Oceanic (abbrev. *POc*), a protolanguage whose reconstruction is relatively solid. Current understanding suggests that *POc* was the language spoken by the first inhabitants of Vanuatu, about 3100 BP, and that the country’s modern languages result from the slow breakup, over three millennia, of that initial linguistic unity (Pawley 2003;

Bedford & Spriggs 2008) – in a way similar to the breakup of Latin into a mosaic of Romance dialects and languages.

This study will unfold as follows. Because one of the mainstays of the Comparative Method is the regularity of sound change, Section 2 will provide an overview of sound change in northern Vanuatu; this will prove useful later, as we examine the detailed evolution of pronominal forms. Section 3 will then list the forms of the pronouns under study, starting with a reminder of Proto Oceanic reconstructions, and followed by the full inventories of independent pronouns in the 17 Torres–Banks languages, presented here for the first time.

The following chapters will reconstruct the detailed history of each personal pronoun in northern Vanuatu, starting with singular forms (Section 4) followed by plural (Section 5), dual (Section 6) and trial (Section 7) forms. For each pronoun, I will identify the main morphological innovations it has undergone in the NV area. Finally, I will examine their distribution across the subfamily, and show in the discussion (Section 8) that it is not perfectly compatible with a tree.

2. PRINCIPLES OF SOUND CHANGE IN NORTHERN VANUATU

One of the main forces driving the diversification of Northern Vanuatu languages has been sound change. Before we can start reconstructing the historical morphology of personal pronouns in the area, it is indispensable to present the main principles of sound change in these languages.

When discussing sound change in Vanuatu, the best point of reference is Proto Oceanic [*POc*]. Comparative work initiated by Dempwolff (1938), followed by authors such as Pawley (1974), Ross (1988, 1998), or Ross, Pawley & Osmond (1998–2011), has made it possible to reconstruct a fair deal of the lexicon, phonology and morphosyntax of this protolanguage. Attempts to reconstruct the ancestor shared by all Vanuatu languages result in a protolanguage which considerably resembles Proto Oceanic: this strongly suggests that any comparison should be carried out with respect to *POc*.

2.1. Vowels

2.1.1. Principles: Proto Oceanic is reconstructed with five short monophthongs, /i e a o u/. While Mota has kept these five original vowels, the remaining Northern Vanuatu languages have increased their inventories, with between 7 and 14 phonemes in each language – including long vowels and diphthongs. Thus, Lemerig has 11 vowels {i ī e æ a ɐ ɔ ɔ̄ o u}; the Lo dialect of Lo-Toga has {i e ē a ə ɔ o u ī ē ī ā ō ɔ̄}.²

François (2005) explains the historical reason behind this increase in vowel phonemes. The key process was a form of umlaut, or metaphony, as the final unstressed vowel influenced the stressed one before disappearing. When this change took place, words originally consisted of open syllables CV, and were

² François (2011:194) lists the full vowel inventories for the 17 NV languages.

stressed on the penultimate syllable – e.g. POc **páRi* ‘stingray’, **RapiRápi* ‘evening’. In most cases, what was initially a sequence of syllables **(C)V₁(C)V₂* is reflected in modern languages by a single syllable (C)V(C), with a new vowel quality that somehow combines the properties of the two protovowels V₁ and V₂: e.g. **páRi* ‘stingray’ > HIW *vɔʔL*, LTG *vɛr*, LHI *n-væj*, etc.

Sound change involving vowels was diverse across languages, but quite regular within each language. Thus, a sequence **-á(C)i* is always reflected as /ɔ/ in Hiw, as /ɛ/ in Lo-Toga, as /æ/ in Lehali...³ This regularity, if taken into account rigorously, proves valuable when doing reconstruction. For example, a vowel /ɔ/ in Lehali always points to an etymon **-á(C)u* or **-ó(C)a*; but the same vowel /ɔ/ in Lemerig can only reflect a protoform of the form **-áCa*.

A former quadrisyllable, composed of open CV syllables and structured in two right-aligned iambic feet, would typically reduce to two CVC syllables: e.g. POc **RapiRápi* ‘evening’ > LMG *revrev*, LKN *rævræv*, DRG *ra.vrvv*. As for etyma with an odd number of syllables, they would have a “pretonic” vowel, i.e. an unstressed vowel preceding a stressed syllable. Historically, that pretonic position showed various signs of weakness. Its vowel either disappeared altogether, or was changed to schwa, or lost its own quality and assimilated to the next vowel. The data set in (1) illustrates this point with the noun **panúa* ‘inhabited land’: the list of its modern reflexes in modern Torres–Banks languages (ranked geographically from NW to SE; see *Map 1*) shows that the pretonic vowel **a* had weakened reflexes almost everywhere, and was only preserved in Mota and Lakon (François 2005: 470):⁴

- (1) The reflexes of pretonic vowels:
 POc **(na) panua* ‘island, village, inhabited land’
 > HIW *vəŋjə*; LTG *vəŋjə*; LHI *n-vəŋjə*; LYP *n-vəŋjə*; VLW *n-vəŋjə*; MTP *na-pnə*;
 LMG *n-vəŋjə*; VRA *fumuə*; VRS *vəŋjə*; MSN *vəŋjə*; MTA *vanua*; NUM *funu*;
 DRG *(v)ə*; KRO *vəŋjə*; OLR *vəŋjə*; LKN *vanə*; MRL *(vəŋjə)*.

2.1.2. *Relevance*: These observations will be relevant to our study of personal pronouns – as we shall see in later sections.

A general rule is that modern forms always reflect a longer protoform. Thus, a modern monosyllable must come from a former disyllabic form: e.g. LKN /ɣi:/ ‘3pl’ < **ɣir* < **kira*. Likewise, LMG /ɣætru/ ‘1incl:dual’, with its structure CVCCV, necessarily points to a quadrisyllabic etymon **kita-rua* (‘1incl:pl-two’).

Another point is that a former pretonic vowel can be reconstructed only based on Mota or Lakon, because its identity was lost or blurred in all other languages. Example (2), parallel with (1) above, shows the modern reflexes of the 2pl pronoun of POc, **kamiu*:

³ The regular patterns of correspondences are spelled out in François (2005).

⁴ Bracketed forms correspond to those reflexes whose meaning has changed from that of their etymon.

- (2) POc **kamiu* ‘2pl’
 > HIW *kəmi*; LTG *kəmi*; LHI *kimi*; LYP *kimi*; VLW *ʔgimi*; MTP *kimi*; LMG *kimi*;
 VRA *kami*; VRS *kami*; MSN *kimi*; MTA *kamiu*; NUM *kimi*; DRG *kmi*; KRO *kimi*;
 OLR *kimi*; LKN *ɣamu*; MRL *kemi*.

2.2. *Consonants*

The consonant inventory of Proto Oceanic, as it was reconstructed by Ross (1998), is shown in *Table 1*. *Table 2* lists the regular reflexes of some POc consonants in the 17 NV languages; it is commented on in the next section.

Table 1 – Consonant inventory for Proto Oceanic (after Ross 1998)

	labial-velar	labial	alveolar	palatal	velar	uvular
voiceless stop [ORAL GRADE]	p ^w	p	t	c	k	q
prenasalised stop [NASAL GRADE]	^m b ^w	^m b	ⁿ d	^ɲ j	^ŋ g	
nasal	m ^w	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
constrictive			s			
lateral			l			
trill			r			
prenasalised trill			ⁿ r			
tap			R			
semi-consonant	w			y		

2.2.1. *Nasal vs. Oral grade*: POc is reconstructed with two series of stops: prenasalised voiced stops, and voiceless oral stops (see *Table 1*). The tradition among Oceanic linguists is to refer to these two series of consonants respectively as *nasal grade* and *oral grade* (see Grace 1959:32, Lynch 1975; Ross 1988: 32-47). In this paper, I will keep these two terms, in small capitals.

NV languages usually keep the phonemic distinction between the two series, but with some phonetic changes.⁵ Some ORAL-GRADE consonants underwent lenition to a fricative, with or without voicing (**p* > /v/ or /f/; **k* > /ç/). In some languages, this lenition of the ORAL series triggered a “pull chain”, whereby NASAL-GRADE stops lost their prenasalisation and became oral, voiceless stops. For instance, the slot for a voiceless ⟨k⟩, which had been emptied as a result of the lenition **k* > /ç/, became filled again by a second change **ŋ* > /k/; the phonemic contrast NASAL–ORAL was thus maintained, but instead of contrasting **{ ŋg ≠ k }*, it now took the form of a contrast *{ k ≠ ç }*, respectively. Likewise, the former opposition **{ ^mb ≠ p }* is now realised as an opposition *{ ^mb ≠ v }* in some languages, as *{ p ≠ v }* in others.

⁵ The palatal stops **c* and **ɲj* were merged with **s*. The uvular **q* disappeared with no trace.

Table 2 – Reflexes of some POc consonants in modern Torres–Banks languages

POc	* ^m b ^w	* ^m b	* ⁿ d	* ^ŋ g	*p	*t	*k	*r
HIW	k ^w	p	t	k	v	t	ɣ	⁹ L
LTG	k ^w	p	ṭ -t	k	v	t, s	ɣ	r
LHI	k ^w - -k	p	ⁿ d- -n	k	v- -p	t	ɣ- -∅	j
LYP	k ^p ^w - -ŋ	p- -m	ⁿ d- -n	k- -ŋ	v- -p	t, ʃ	ɣ- -∅	j
VLW	^ŋ g ^b ^w - -ŋ ^m ^w	^m b- -m	ⁿ d- -n	^ŋ g- -ŋ	v- -p	t	ɣ	j
MTP	k ^p ^w	^m b- -m	ⁿ d- -n	k	v- -p	t	ɣ	j
LMG	k ^p ^w - -k	p	t	k	v	? , t	ɣ	r
VRA	k ^p ^w	^m b- -m	ⁿ d- -n	k	f	? , t	ɣ	r
VRS	k ^p ^w	^m b- -m	ⁿ d- -n	k	v	t	ɣ	r
MSN	k ^p ^w	p	n	k	v	t	ɣ	r
MTA	k ^p ^w	p	n	k	v	t	ɣ	r
NUM	k ^p ^w	^m b- -m	ⁿ d- -n	k	f	t	ɣ	r
DRG	k ^p ^w	^m b	ⁿ d	k	v	t	ɣ	r
KRO	k ^p ^w	^m b- -m	ⁿ d- -n	k	v	t	ɣ	r
OLR	k ^p ^w	p	ʃ	k	v	t	ɣ- -V:	r- -j
LKN	k ^p ^w	p	ʃ	k	v	t, s	ɣ	r- -V:
MRL	k ^w - -k	^m b- -m	ⁿ d- -n	k	v- -p	t	ɣ	r

This point will be relevant in our study of personal pronouns. For example, ex. (2) above listed the modern forms for 2pl. Despite appearances, the initial consonant /k-/ found in most languages is not the expected reflex of POc *k; that reflex should have been /ɣ/, which is only found in Lakon. All other languages have undergone an irregular change⁶ from ORAL to NASAL GRADE here (a fact already noted by Lynch & Ozanne-Rivierre (2001) and Clark (2009) for the rest of Vanuatu). Lakon here constitutes a pocket of retention amidst a set of innovative languages [see §5.2.1].

2.2.2. *Onset vs. Coda reflexes*: As explained in §2.1.1, NV languages went historically through a radical change in phonotactics, as a sequence of two open syllables *C₁V₁C₂V₂ lost its unstressed vowel, and changed to a closed syllable C₁V₁C₂.

In some modern languages, a POc consonant shows two different reflexes depending on its position in the syllable of the modern word. For example, prenasalised stops often lose their oral component in coda position, and are merged with the corresponding nasals. Thus, the POc word *^mb^e^mb^e ‘carry s.o. piggyback’ became /^mb^e^mb/ in Dorig, but /^mb^em/ in Mwtlap, and /p^em/ in Löyöp. These differential reflexes are shown in Table 2 above, and indicated with hyphens. For example, *^mb > {p- | -m} in Löyöp means that the regular reflex of *^mb in this language is /p/ in syllable onset position, but /m/ in coda.

⁶ Throughout this chapter, by convention I will use the sign ‘>’ when dealing with REGULAR sound change, and ‘→’ to represent an IRREGULAR change, which does not fit expected sound correspondences in the language considered: e.g. { *k^mamiu → *^ŋgamiu > /k^momi/ }. That is, ‘>’ captures purely phonological change, whereas ‘→’ refers to a morphological innovation.

These observations will prove useful when reconstructing some pronominal forms. For example, MTP /nɪk/ and VLW /nɪŋ/ ‘2sg’ are both regular reflexes of a protoform *ⁿiŋgo with a prenasalised (NASAL GRADE) stop. Likewise, forms for ‘1incl:pl’ like MTP /ɣɪm/, LMG /ɣæɪ/, DRG /ɣɪⁿd/, LKN /ɣɪʃ/ all point unambiguously to the same protoform *^kiⁿda.

2.2.3. *Other consonants*: For reasons of space, I will only discuss here one other consonant, which will be relevant to our discussion of pronouns. This is the rhotic *r, which in POc was probably an alveolar trill.

Table 2 showed the reflexes of *r in modern NV languages. The rhotic became a preploded velar lateral /⁹L/ in Hiw (François 2010), and a palatal glide /j/ in four other languages. Two languages of Gaua show differential reflexes depending on their position in the modern syllable [§2.2.2]. In Olrat, *r became a glide /j/ in coda position. In Lakon, *r disappeared from codas, yet triggered compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel (François 2005:461). This is represented in Table 2 as { r- | -j } for Olrat, and { r- | -V: } for Lakon.

These observations will be useful when we track the reflexes of two number morphemes: *^mra ‘plural’ and *^mrua ‘dual’. If we had not sorted out regular sound correspondences, it would have been difficult to unveil the presence of *^mra in Lakon’s 3pl pronoun /ɣɪ:/ < *^mɣɪr < *^mkira; or to detect *^mrua in its 2du pronoun /ɣamu:/ < *^mɣamur < *^mɣamuru < *^mkamu-rua [§6.3].

With this knowledge in mind, we can now move on to the examination of pronominal paradigms, and to the reconstruction of their morphological history.

3. PRONOMINAL PARADIGMS: THE FORMS

3.1. Proto Oceanic

The pronoun paradigm of Proto Oceanic can be reconstructed with reasonable confidence by applying the Comparative Method to modern Oceanic languages. Ross (1988:367; 2002:67) reconstructs four distinct paradigms, based on their syntactic properties: independent pronouns; subject proclitics; object enclitics; possessor suffixes. Table 3 shows the reconstructions he proposes.

Table 3 – Reconstructed forms for POc pronouns (after Ross 2002:67)

	Independent	Subject clitics I	Subject clitics II	Object enclitic	Possessor suffix
1sg	[i]au	ku=	au=	=au	- ⁹ gu
2sg	[i]ko[e]	mu=	ko=	=ko	-mu
3sg	ia	ŋa=	(y)a=, i=	=a	-ŋa
1inc:pl	kita	ta=	ta=	—	- ⁿ da
1exc:pl	ka[m]i, kamami	—	—	—	-ma[m]i
2pl	ka[m]u, kamiu	—	—	—	-m[i]u
3pl	[k]ira	ra=	ra=	=ra	- ⁿ ra

In this table, square brackets mean that modern languages point to two equally plausible reconstructions at the level of Proto Oceanic. For example, {*ka[m]u*, *kamiu*} means that three protoforms can be reconstructed for the 2pl pronoun: **kau*, **kamu*, **kamiu*; the available evidence does not allow us to privilege any of these reconstructions over the others.

3.2. Free pronouns in Northern Vanuatu

The modern languages of Northern Vanuatu reflect these four pronominal paradigms diversely. In this article, for reasons of space, I will focus on the set of independent (or ‘free’) pronouns. Tables 4 (a–d) list the forms in the 17 languages under study; for technical reasons, each of the four numbers is assigned a separate table.

The first two rows of each table include protoforms. The row for POC provides the Proto Oceanic reconstructions proposed by Ross (2002), and listed in Table 3 above. The row for PTB, or “Proto Torres–Banks”, indicates the protoforms I reconstruct for the common ancestor of the 17 Torres–Banks languages, based on the modern forms listed underneath. The arguments for these PTB reconstructions will be given in sections 4–7 of this study.

Table 4a – Independent pronouns in north Vanuatu languages: Singular

		1SG	2SG	3SG
POc	<i>p Oceanic</i>	*[i]au	*[i]ko[e]	*ia
PTB	<i>p Torres–B</i>	* <i>ṅau</i>	*(<i>n</i>) <i>iṅo</i>	* <i>niq</i>
HIW	<i>Hiw</i>	nəkə	ikə	ninə
LTG	<i>Lo-Toga</i>	nekə, nəkə	nikə	niə
LHI	<i>Lehali</i>	nɔ nɔk	nek	ke
LYP	<i>Löyöp</i>	nø nɔk	niŋ	kje
VLW	<i>Volow</i>	nɛ nɛŋ	niŋ	ṅɪ
MTP	<i>Mwotlap</i>	nɔ nɔk	nik	ki
LMG	<i>Lemerig</i>	næ	næk	ti
VRA	<i>Vera’a</i>	nɔ	nik(ɪ)	ˈdi(ɪ)
VRS	<i>Vurës</i>	nɔ na	nik	ni
MSN	<i>Mwesen</i>	nɔ na	nik	ni
MTA	<i>Mota</i>	na nau	ka ko niko	ni nia
NUM	<i>Nume</i>	na	nik	ni
DRG	<i>Dorig</i>	na	nik	ni
KRO	<i>Koro</i>	na	nik	ni
OLR	<i>Olrät</i>	na	nik	ni
LKN	<i>Lakon</i>	na	nik	ni ~ ni
MRL	<i>Mwerlap</i>	nɔ ~ næ	neäk	(ki)sɛän

Table 4b – Independent pronouns in north Vanuatu languages: Dual

	1INC.DU	1EXC.DU	2DU	3DU
POc	*kita=rua	*ka[m]i=rua	*kamiu=rua	*[k]ira=rua
PTB	* <i>ki^hda-rua</i>	* <i>Kama-rua</i>	* <i>Kamu-rua</i>	* <i>i]ra-rua</i>
HIW	tə ^h lɛ	kama ^h lɛ	kimi ^h lɛ	sə ^h lɛ
LTG	ʈɔr	kəmɔr	kəmɔr	hɔr
LHI	ɣinjɔ	mæjɔ	mɔjɔ	kɔjɔ
LYP	je ^h dɔ	mɔmjɔ	mɔjɔ	kjejɔ
VLW	ˈdɔ ˈdɔjɔ	ˈgɛmjɔ	ˈgɔmjɔ	ˈgɔjɔ
MTP	ˈdɔ ˈdɔjɔ	kamjɔ	kɔmjɔ	kɔjɔ
LMG	ɣætru	kamaru	kumru	tæru
VRA	ˈdu ɣi ^h du(ɔ)	kama ^h du(ɔ)	kumru(ɔ)	ˈduru(ɔ)
VRS	ˈdɔrɔk	kɔmɔrɔk	kɔmɔrɔŋ	rɔrɔ
MSN	ninrɔ	kɛmɛmɔ	kɔmɔrɔ	nɔrɔ(rɔ)
MTA	nara	kara	kamra	rara
NUM	ˈduru	kamar	kumur	ruru
DRG	ˈda:r	kma:r	kmur	ra:r
KRO	ˈduru	kɛmɛār	kumur	(i)rru
OLR	ʃɔrɔ	kimj	kumuj	nɔrɔ
LKN	wɔʃʃɔ	ɣama:	ɣamu:	wɔrɔ
MRL	ˈdɔrɔ	kamar	kamrɔ	karar

Table 4c – Independent pronouns in north Vanuatu languages: Trial

	1INC.TRI	1EXC.TRI	2TRI	3TRI
POc	*kita=tolu	*ka[m]i=tolu	*kamiu=tolu	*[k]ira=tolu
PTB	* <i>ki^hda-tolu</i>	* <i>Kama-tolu</i>	* <i>Kamu-tolu</i>	* <i>i]ra-tolu</i>
HIW, LTG	—	—	—	—
LHI	ɣɪntil	mætil	mitil	kejtɪl
LYP	jenʃʃɔl	mɔmʃʃɔl	mɔʃʃɔl	kjejʃʃɔl
VLW	ˈditil	ˈgɛmtɪl	ˈgɔmtɪl	ˈgɪjtɪl
MTP	ˈditɪl ~ mɪtɪl	kamtɪl	kɪmtɪl	kɪjtɪl
LMG	ɣæʔɔl	kɛmɛmʔɔl	kimiʔɔl	tæʔɔl
VRA	(ɣi) ^h ˈdɔʔɔl	kamamʔɔl	kimiʔɔl	ˈdirʔɔl
VRS	nintɔl	kɛmɛktɔl	kɪmitɔl	nɔrtɔl
MSN	nintɔl	kɛmɛmtɔl	kɪmitɔl	nortɔl
MTA	natɔl	katɔl	kamtɔl	ratɔl
NUM	ˈdɔtɔl	kamatɔl	kɔmtɔl	rɔtɔl
DRG	tɔlyɪn	tɔlkma	tɔlkmi	tɔlnɪr
KRO	tɪlɪn	kɪlkama	kɪlkimi	tɪlɪr
OLR	ʃɪlɪt	kɪlkama	kɪlkimi	tɪlɪj
LKN	t(ʃ)ɪlɪt(ʃ)	tɪlmæ	tɪlimu	tɪlɪ:
MRL	—	—	—	—

Table 4d – Independent pronouns in north Vanuatu languages: Plural

	1INC.PL	1EXC.PL	2PL	3PL
POc	*kita	*ka[m]i	*kamiu	*[k]ira
PTB	*k ⁱ da	*Kama[m]i	*Kam ⁱ u	*[k]ira
HIW	titə	kama	kimi	sisə
LTG	ɣitə, təɣə	kəməm	kəmi	nihə
LHI	ɣən	kɪməm	kimi	kɛj
LYP	jən	kɔmɔm	kimi	kjej
VLW	ɣɪn	ʔgɛm(ɛm)	ʔgimi	ʔgɪj
MTP	ɣɪn	kɛm(ɛm)	kimi	kɪj
LMG	ɣæt	kəməm	kimi	tær
VRA	ɱdi ɣi ⁿ di	kamam	kimi	ɱdir(ɪ)
VRS	nin	kɛmɛk	kimi	nɪr
MSN	nin	kɛməm	kimi	nɪr
MTA	nina	kamam	kamiu	n(e)ira
NUM	ɣin	kama	kimi	nɪr
DRG	ɣɪn	kma	kmi	nɪr
KRO	ɣɪn	kama	kimi	nɪr
OLR	ɣɪf	kama	kimi	nɪj
LKN	ɣɪf̄	ɣamæ	ɣamu	ɣɪ:
MRL	ɣeān	kemem	kemi	kɛār

The following are typographical conventions used in Tables 4a-d:

- a tilde sign (~) is used when two forms are in free variation in all contexts: e.g. LKN /ni/ ~ /ni/ ‘3sg’.
- simple brackets indicate a segment that can optionally be deleted: e.g. in MSN ‘3du’ is /nɔrɔ/ or /nɔrɔrɔ/; LKN ‘1inc:tri’ can surface as /ɣɪlɪf/ or /tɪlɪf/ or /ɣɪlɪt/.
- pointy brackets in Vera’a forms indicate a vowel that tends to elide in subject position (François 2005:464): e.g. ‘1inc:pl’ /ɣiⁿduɔ/ becomes /ɣiⁿdu/ when subject.
- a comma indicates dialectal variation, as in Lo-Toga: e.g. ‘1inc:pl’ is /ɣitə/ in the Toga dialect, /təɣə/ in the Lo dialect.
- a pipe sign (|) means that two forms are used in complementary distribution, depending on the syntactic context: e.g. in Löyöp, /nɔk/ is the 1sg subject marker with an aorist verb, /nə/ is the 1sg pronoun everywhere else.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the synchronical paradigms of free pronouns, and reconstruct the accumulation of innovations each language has been through.

3.3. The distribution of pronominal forms

Northern Vanuatu languages have several pronominal paradigms. While this article will focus on free pronouns, it is useful to briefly outline the syntactic distribution of its other pronoun paradigms.

3.3.1. *Possessive suffixes*: The set of possessive suffixes in Proto Oceanic (Table 3 p.32) has survived in all NV languages. Its rich historical morphology would warrant a study of its own; for reasons of length, I will refrain from mentioning it, as it shows limited interference with free pronouns.

3.3.2. *Object suffixes*: As Table 3 showed, POc had a defective set of enclitics for encoding the object of transitive verbs, and of certain prepositions. These clitics have been preserved in the form of suffixes, in four NV languages: Hiw, Lo-Toga, Mota, Mwerlap. Table 5 illustrates them with a preposition meaning ‘with’, which takes these object suffixes. Forms in bold include the modern reflexes of POc object clitics; plain characters show the use of free pronouns instead.

The common strategy in NV languages – just like in the rest of Oceanic – is to replace missing object suffixes with free pronouns (Evans 2003). This substitution is often an option even in cases where the suffix has been preserved: see the examples in Hiw. The majority of NV languages have generalised this pattern to all persons, thereby losing all traces of the former object pronouns of POc. Table 5 illustrates this case with Mwerlap.

Table 5 – Reflexes of POc object clitics in some NV languages

	‘with me’	‘with you’	‘with him/her’	‘with them’
POc	=au	=ko	=a	=ra
Hiw	mi nəkə	mi-kə	mi-ə / mi ninə	mi-sə / mi sisə
Toga	mi nekə	mə-kə	me	me-hə
Mwotlap	mi nɔ	mi nik	mi kɪ	mi kɪj
Mota	amen nau	amai-ko	amai-a	amai-ra
Mwerlap	mi-o	mi-ak	mi-a	mi-ar / mi ker

3.3.3. *Subject clitics*: Finally, POc had two sets of subject proclitics (Table 3 p.32). As we saw for object clitics, the tendency has been for NV languages to lose those special subject markers, and replace them with free pronouns everywhere.

That said, the northernmost languages have kept traces of these subject clitics (more precisely those of set I) in their morphology. Thus for the singular, POc *ku=, *mu=, *na= are reflected, at the level of Proto Torres-Banks, by three clitics that can be reconstructed, respectively, as *ⁿgu= ‘1sg’, *u= ‘2sg’, *ni= ‘3sg’. This has been the topic of a specific study (François 2009), to which the reader is referred. These subject clitics will be mentioned later in this study, as they have left some traces in the forms of the free pronouns in several languages of the northern Banks and of the Torres islands [see §4.1.1, 4.3].

4. SINGULAR PRONOUNS

4.1. First singular

All modern NV forms for 1sg reflect a form which can be reconstructed as ***nau**. This corresponds to POc *au, augmented with a non-etymological consonant /n-/, whose origin is unclear.

4.1.1. *The trace of former clitics:* In the six northernmost languages, that pronoun sometimes shows an extra velar, reflecting a prenasalised stop *^ʷg [§2.2.1]. In the two Torres languages, that velar is part of the modern form of the 1sg pronoun in all contexts: HIW, LO /nɔkə/, TGA /nekə/. In four languages (LHI /nɔk/, LYP /nɔk/, VLW /neŋ/, MTP /nɔk/), this longer form is only found in subject position when the verb takes the so-called ‘aorist’ aspect: this is a TAM category mostly found in dependent clauses, yielding such values as *subjunctive*, *sequential* or *narrative* (François 2003:165-199; 2009).

François (2009) showed that these forms result from the accretion of **nau* with a former clitic *^ʷgu=, formerly used to encode the 1sg subject in a dependent clause: VLW /neŋ/ < **ne*+^ʷg- < **nau* + ^ʷgu=. This clitic *^ʷgu= was itself part of a paradigm of subject clitics [§3.3.3] which can be reconstructed for Proto Torres–Banks (pTB): *^ʷgu= ‘1sg’, **u*= ‘2sg’, **ni*= ‘3sg’, *(*k*)*a*= ‘non.sg’. These forms have nowhere survived as full pronouns, but have left vestigial traces in the modern form of pronouns: this explains, for example, the alternation between /nɛ/ and /neŋ/ in Volow, depending on the aspect of the verb.

It is possible to reconstruct simple sentences at the level of Proto Torres–Banks (François 2009:191). (3) shows how a string of serialised verbs would typically involve a free pronoun (here **nau*) followed by a person-indexing TAM clitic (here *^ʷgu=):

- (3) pTB ***nau** ^ʷ**gu**= mule ^ʷ**gu**= maturu
 1sg:FREE AO:1sg= return AO:1sg= sleep
 ‘So I went back and slept.’

A modern translation of (3) in the Hiw language would be sentence (4):

- (4) Hiw **nɔkə** ŋ^wujə kə= miti^oL.
 1sg:FREE return AO:1sg= sleep
 ‘So I went back and slept.’

The /kə=/ clitic of Hiw is a regular reflex of pTB *^ʷgu=: it encodes both the aorist aspect and the 1sg person of the subject. But the crucial point here concerns the first word of the sentence: the form /nɔkə/ of the 1sg pronoun reflects the accretion of { **nau* + ^ʷgu= }.

In northern Banks, the accreted form is still restricted to clauses marked as aorist. In the Torres languages, the reflex of { **nau* + ^ʷgu= } has been generalised to all contexts (see Table 5 above).⁷

Finally, three central Banks languages – Mota, Mwesen, Vurës – have a 1sg pronoun /na/, along with the more regular reflex of **nau*. It can be shown that the /na/ form reflects a similar form of accretion as the one mentioned above, except it involves an aorist clitic **a*= < *(*k*)*a*= rather than *^ʷgu (François 2009:194). Thus, VRS-MSN /nə/ reflects **nau*, but /na/ reflects { **nau* + *a*= }.

⁷ We will see that Hiw has gone through a similar process of accretion for 3sg [§4.3], 1inc:pl [§5.1], 3pl [§5.4.2].

4.1.2. *Summary:* This section can be summarised by listing the innovations that have affected the 1sg pronoun (POc **au*), and checking which languages reflect them.

- (i1) **au* → ***nau**
 (i2) accretion of { **nau* + ^ʷgu= } before aorist verb
 (i3) accretion of { **nau* + ^ʷgu= } in all contexts
 (i4) accretion of { **nau* + (*k*)*a*= } before aorist verb

<i>i</i>	HIW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VR4	VRS	MSN	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MAL
(i1)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
(i2)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i3)	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i4)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-

4.2. *Second singular*

The free pronoun for second singular exhibits few changes from the POc form *[i]ko[e].

One innovation is the irregular change ORAL → NASAL GRADE in the velar stop: all languages point to a NASAL GRADE protophoneme *^ʷg, e.g. VLW /niŋ/ < **ni*^ʷgo. Interestingly, while this process of fortition { **k* → *^ʷg } is irregular when compared to the lexicon (see Table 2 p.31), it is observed for all velar stops in the pronoun paradigm (**kamami* → **gamami* [§5.2.1]; **ku*= → *^ʷgu= [§3.3.3]...) except for 1inclusive (**kita*). The motivation of this fortition is unclear.

While POc may be reconstructed with a 2sg pronoun *[i]ko or *[i]koe, all NV languages unambiguously point to the shorter variant *[i]ko. Only Mota has kept traces of a monosyllabic **ko*; all other languages reflect a dissyllabic form **iko*, with penultimate stress on /i/: **iko* → **i*go > HIW /ikə/. In terms of vowel change [§2.1], all languages show the expected result of a sequence **i(C)o*.

Hiw is the only language to have kept a vowel-initial etymon **iko*/**i*go. All other languages show the addition of a non-etymological consonant **n*-. **iko* → **i*go → **ni*go > LTG /nikə/, LHI /nek/, VLW /niŋ/, etc. The change is parallel with 1sg (**au* → **nau*), as well as 3sg (**ia* → **nia*), though it is difficult to know which pronoun influenced the others.

In modern Mota, /ko/ is the standard, unstressed free pronoun;⁸ /niko/ is a stressed pronoun used in focal position:

- (5) MTA **Niko** iloke **ko** me pal ŋm^wo-k o yasal ti?
 2sg:FOC here 2sg PFT₁ steal POSS-1sg ART knife PFT₂
 ‘Is it you who (you) stole my knife?’

⁸ As for the form /ka/, it is a portmanteau morpheme encoding ‘2sg:subject’ and ‘Aorist’; its form accretes **ko* and the former Aorist clitic *(*k*)*a*= (François 2009:194, cf. §4.1.1).

It is likely that Mota is here conservative of an earlier configuration, which has been lost everywhere else: namely, a contrast between an unstressed (proclitic) pronoun **[i]ko*, and an augmented form **niko* used in stressed or focal contexts. In all NV languages other than Mota, the stressed variant became the unmarked form for the 2sg pronoun, replacing the shorter **[i]ko*.⁹

4.2.1. *Summary:* The table below lists all the innovations affecting the 2sg pronoun (POc **[i]ko*).

- (i5) **[i]ko* → **[i]ŋgo*
- (i6) **iŋgo* → **niŋgo* (at least in pragmatically focal contexts)
- (i7) **niŋgo* used even in non-focal contexts

<i>i</i>	HIW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VR4	VRS	MSSV	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i5)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
(i6)	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
(i7)	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+

4.3. *Third singular*

The 3sg pronoun of POc, reconstructed as **ia*, is not reflected as such in modern NV languages. A number of them reflect an augmented form **nia*, featuring the same additional consonant as 1sg **nau* and 2sg **niŋgo*. It is quite likely that this **nia* reflects the influence of **-ña*, the 3sg possessive suffix of POc (Table 3 p.32).

The form **nia* was not preserved in all languages; however, its geographical distribution (in the Torres Is. on the one hand, in the southern Banks Is. on the other, not to mention other Vanuatu languages further south) strongly suggests that this innovative protoform was once shared by the whole Northern Vanuatu area. At some later point, some languages went through further innovations.

Several languages show evidence of a lighter pronoun **ni* (presumably an abbreviated form of **nia*). This is true, first, of Mota, in which /ni/ is to /nia/ as /ko/ is to /niko/, i.e. light vs. heavy pronouns, respectively. In other languages, **ni*= (> e.g. HIW /nə=/, MTP /ni-/) is the subject clitic coding for aorist aspect.

While Lo-Toga /niə/ reflects **nia* regularly, the Hiw form /nina/ shows the accretion of two former pronouns: the heavy **nia* and the light **ni*. The combination {**nia* + *ni*=} became **niəna* > /nina/ [see fn.7 p.37].

Other languages show innovations regarding mostly the initial consonant of the 3sg pronoun. Vera'a /ndii/ and its neighbour Lemerig /ti/ share a morphological innovation whereby **nia* became **ndia*. The origin of this /nd/ is unknown: it might result from the fortition of /n/.

⁹ Such a process of “markedness shift” (Dik 1989: 44) is frequent in pronominal paradigms. Thus Latin *ego*, initially a focal pronoun for 1sg, became the unstressed clitic *je* in modern French, and was replaced by *moi* in stressed contexts.

Four languages have a pronoun that starts with a velar stop: LHI /kɛ/, LYP /kʲɛ/, VLW /ŋgr/, MTP /ki/. These are all regular reflexes of a protoform **ŋgia*. The origin of this form is unclear; but it is possible that the velar stop was imported from the POc 3pl pronoun, **kira* [see §5.4]. Finally, Mwerlap has a 3sg pronoun /seān/ or /kiseān/. The short form /seān/ is a demonstrative; as for the /ki/ prefix, it is possibly related to **ŋgia*.

4.3.1. *Summary:* The table below lists all the innovations affecting the 3sg pronoun (POc **ia*).

- (i8) **ia* → **nia*
- (i9) **nia* → **ndia*
- (i10) **nia* → **ŋgia*
- (i11) accretion of {**nia* + *ni*=} in all contexts

<i>i</i>	HIW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VR4	VRS	MSSV	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i8)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
(i9)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i10)	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?
(i11)	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

5. PLURAL FORMS

Like virtually all Oceanic languages, those of the Torres–Banks area have at least three numbers: singular, dual and plural. Most of them even have a trial number (for groups of three referents), even though the latter has been lost in the Torres languages and in Mwerlap.

It is unclear whether POc had dual and trial numbers; but if it did, its dual and trial pronouns were derived morphologically from the plural forms, through the transparent addition of a numeral (Ross 2002:69): e.g. **kita=rua* ‘1inc:du’ < **kita* ‘1inc:pl’ + **rua* ‘two’. For this reason, it is better to examine plural pronouns first; I shall come back to other numbers in §6–7.

5.1. *First inclusive plural*

5.1.1. *A widespread innovation:* The first inclusive plural pronoun is reconstructed as **kita* for POc.

All NV languages show evidence of an irregular change from **kita* to **kiɳda*.¹⁰ This is made evident by the second consonant of each modern form, which systematically reflects a **nd* (see Table 2 p.31): **kiɳda* > TGA /ɣiɳɳ/, MTP /ɣiɳ/, LMG

¹⁰ The change was already noticed by Clark (1985) and by Lynch & Ozanne-Rivierre (2001) for North-Central Vanuatu languages more generally.

/yæʔ/, VRA /yɪⁿdi/, DRG /yɪⁿd/, LKN /yɪtʃ/, MRL /yɛān/... The change from ORAL-GRADE *t to NASAL-GRADE *d was arguably due to the analogy with the possessive suffix for 1inc:pl, POc *-ⁿda (Table 3 p.32).

Everywhere, the modern vowels are the regular reflexes of a sequence *i(C)a, so no sound change affected the original vowels. In Löyöp, the regular outcome of *i(C)a is a diphthong /iɛ(C)/; *kiⁿda was first reflected regularly as *yiɛn, but the yod resulted in the deletion of the velar fricative: *kiⁿda > *yiɛn > /jɛn/.

5.1.2. *The Torres languages:* In conformity with principles of regular sound change in the region (François 2005:462), *kiⁿda is reflected by monosyllables in most NV languages, but remains a disyllable in Vera'a /yɪⁿdi/ as well as in the Torres islands.

Among Torres languages, the Toga dialect of Lo-Toga is straightforward: *kiⁿda > *yiⁿdə > /yitə/. However, the Lo variety of Lo-Toga, as well as Hiw, reflect interferences between the free pronoun and the set of subject clitics inherited from Proto Torres-Banks [§3.3.3].

The free pronoun /yitə/ of Toga is commonly followed by a proclitic /yə=/, the aorist marker for plural subjects:

- (6) TGA wə ven mə, yitə yə= ŋ^wulə!
 AO:2sg= go hither 1inc:pl AO:pl= return
 'Come, let us all go back!'

The Lo dialect has coalesced these two morphemes /yitə + yə/ into a truncated form /təyə/:

- (7) LO wə ven mə, təyə ŋ^wulə!
 AO:2sg= go hither 1inc:pl return
 'Come, let us all go back!'

Finally, Lo has generalised this shorter form /təyə/ as the 1inc:pl pronoun not just with aorist clauses, but in all contexts (François 2009:190):

- (8) TGA yitə mi nə= tətəlwə məren li vənə.
 LO təyə mi nə= tətəlwə məren li vənə.
 1inc:pl with ART= celebration tomorrow LOC village
 'We're having [*lit.* We are with] a celebration tomorrow in the village.'

The process of fusion {*kiⁿda + ka=} > /təyə/ is analogous to the one at the source of the 1sg pronoun in the same language, /nəkə/ < { *nau + ŋu=} [§4.1.1].

The form /titə/ in neighbouring Hiw has a similar origin. In Hiw, the aorist clitic for 1inc:pl is /tə=/ (reflecting POc *ta=, see Table 3 p.32). The expected reflex of *kiⁿda, namely *yitə, was evidently fused with the clitic /tə=: *(yi)tə+tə= → /titə/ [see fn.7 p.37].

5.1.3. *Three Banks languages:* The 1inc:pl pronoun shows a further innovation in three languages of central Banks islands: MTA *nina*, VRS/MSN *nin*.

According to regular sound correspondences (Table 2 p.31), the expected reflex of *kiⁿda in these languages should have been MTA *yina, VRS/MSN *ym. The forms *nina* and *nin* thus reflect an irregular change in the pronoun's first consonant. The reason is unknown; it may be due to analogy with 3rd person pronouns, which also start with /n-/.

5.1.4. *Summary:* The table below lists the innovations affecting the 1inc:pl pronoun (POc *kita).

- (i12) *kita → *kiⁿda
 (i13) *kiⁿda → *niⁿda
 (i14) accretion of {*kiⁿda + ka=} in all contexts
 (i15) accretion of {*kiⁿda + ta=} in all contexts

	Hiw	LO	TGA	LH	LP	VW	MP	LMG	VRA	VRS	MSN	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i12)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
(i13)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i14)	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i15)	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

5.2. *First exclusive plural*

5.2.1. *Initial consonant:* The forms of the first exclusive and second person non-singular were similar in POc: 1exc:pl *ka[m]i ~ *kamami; 2pl *ka[m]u ~ *kamiu. In modern languages, these pronouns tend to show parallel evolution.

Most NV languages reflect an irregular change of the first consonant, from an ORAL-GRADE stop *k to a NASAL-GRADE one (*ŋ): 2pl *kamiu → *ŋamiu > Hiw /kəmi/, VLW /ŋgimi/, MTA /kamiu/, DRG /kmi/, MRL /kəmi/... In all languages, this fortition affected the two pronouns equally, for all non-singular numbers. Incidentally, this morphological change is reflected in a vast area – covering virtually all of Vanuatu (Clark 2009:58) – and must have diffused at an early historical time, when mutual intelligibility was still high across the archipelago.

Lakon is the only language in the area which does not show this change in the first consonant: its forms /yamə/ '1exc:pl' and /yamu/ '2pl' point to an ORAL-GRADE consonant *k. There are two ways to interpret this.

Lakon could simply be the only language to have preserved the original consonant of POc: in an area where all other languages have changed *k to *ŋ, Lakon would constitute a pocket of retention. This scenario is not implausible, especially considering how Lakon lies at the end of the Gaua dialect chain, relatively isolated from the main roads of linguistic diffusion in North Vanuatu (François 2014:182). Such a hypothesis requires that pre-Lakon already existed as a separate dialect capable of forming a pocket of retention independent of its neighbours when the fortition (*k → *ŋ) took place in Vanuatu. Surprising

though this hypothesis may be, it is made plausible by the existence of other conservative features of Lakon.¹¹

Alternatively, it may be the case that Lakon underwent the same innovation as all the other languages in the region (*k → *ŋg > /k/, yielding forms like *kamæ and *kamu); but that it later went through a second innovation of its own, whereby its first consonant changed back from NASAL to ORAL GRADE. That change, whereby putative *kamæ and *kamu would have changed their initial consonant to /ɣamæ/, /ɣamu/, could be due to analogy with other plural pronouns, thus yielding the plural pronoun paradigm /ɣɪf/, /ɣamæ/, /ɣamu/, /ɣɪ:/.

Both hypotheses seem equally costly, and equally plausible (see Clark 2009: 58).

5.2.2. *Ending of 1 exclusive plural*: Let us now look at the ending of the 1st exclusive plural form. In order to avoid being distracted by the issue of the initial consonant being ORAL or NASAL GRADE [§5.2.1], I will occasionally transcribe it using uppercase K (e.g. *Kamami).

POc is reconstructed with three possible protoforms for 1exc:pl: *kai, *kami, *kamami. As for Northern Vanuatu languages, they all point to two possible protoforms: *Kamami and *Kamai. *Kamai is reflected in HIW /kama/, in Vurës /kɛmek/ (see below), and in the five Gaua languages; otherwise *Kamami is found. Examination of other Vanuatu languages (Clark 2009:161) shows that the two cognate sets are scattered throughout the archipelago, and are likely to be both ancient. Yet if Ross' POc reconstructions are correct, *Kamai is the innovative form among the two.

The final /-k/ in Vurës demonstrably results, once again, from the accretion of the free pronoun *Kama(m)i with an aorist clitic – etymologically *ŋgu '1sg', which Vurës has generalised to other numbers (François 2009:194). It is difficult to assess whether the original form before that fusion was *Kamai or *Kamami.

5.2.3. *Summary*: I here list the innovations affecting the 1exc:pl pronoun.

- (i16) *kam- → *ŋgam-
(i17) distribution of (innovative?) *Kamai instead of *Kamami

	HIW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VRA	VRS	MSN	MFA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i16)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	?	+
(i17)	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-

¹¹ For example, Lakon is one of the few languages to have preserved certain etymological word-final consonants, when all northern Vanuatu languages have lost them (François 2005:479, 2011:200).

5.3. Second plural

The 2pl pronoun is reconstructed as *ka[m]ju or *kamiu. All NV languages except Lakon reflect a change to a NASAL-GRADE initial consonant – in a way parallel to 1exc:pl – and point to a protoform *ŋgamiu.

The Lakon form /ɣamu/ is noteworthy on several regards: first, because it is the only form which has preserved the ORAL GRADE of the initial consonant /ɣ/ [see §5.2.1]; second, because it is one of the few languages that has preserved the pretonic vowel /a/ [see §2.1.2]; third, because it shows an unexpected final vowel /u/. This form /ɣamu/ does not reflect *Kamiiu, but a form like *Kamii (with vowel metathesis), *Kamiiu or *Kamiiyu. Interestingly, *ŋgamiiyu is the form reconstructed by Clark (2009:161) at the level of “Proto North Central Vanuatu”; indeed, other cases like Lakon are found further south in Vanuatu (e.g. Ninde kamu on Malakula island, Eton kamus on Efate). One possible scenario is that all NV languages once had such a diphthong *uy, which was most often resolved into a front vowel /i/ (*-uyu > *-iu > /-i/); if so, Lakon would be the only language in the northern area to preserve a trace of the back vowel (*-uyu > /-u/). A further argument for reconstructing a vowel /u/, at least for Gaua languages, is the fact that it is also present in dual pronouns [§6.3]: forms like OLR kumuɟ, LKN yamu: ‘2dual’ point to an etymon *Kamu-ru (not *Kami-ru).

That said, the historical scenario remains speculative here. This is because, among the NV languages whose 2pl pronoun ends in /-i/, we have no way to determine which ones inherited their form directly from POc *Kamiiu, and which went through the reversal process *Kamiiu → *Kamiiyu > *Kamiiu.

5.4. Third plural

5.4.1. *Banks languages*: Proto-Oceanic is reconstructed as having a 3pl pronoun of the form *ira or *kira. A first observation is that the 15 Banks languages all have 3pl pronouns that point to a former disyllabic etymon of the form *Cira, even if this has been often obscured by regular sound change. For example, MRL /kɛ̄ar/ and VLW /ŋgij/ presuppose *ŋgira; LMG /tær/ points to *ndira; VRS /nir/ and OLR /nij/ reflect *nira...

Among Banks languages, Lakon /ɣɪ:/ is the only form which unambiguously points to *kira [see §2.2.3], and is possibly conservative of the POc form; all other languages have changed the pronoun's first consonant. Five languages (LHI, LYP, VLW, MTP, MRL) reflect a NASAL-GRADE velar *ŋg, which could well result from the fortition of the etymological *kira (→ *ŋgira). If so, this could also be the source of the spread of initial *ŋg to 3sg in these same languages, which have all replaced *nia with an irregular *ŋgia [§4.3].

VRA /ndiri/ and LMG /tær/ reflect *ndira, with an initial consonant also found for 3sg (*ndia > VRA /ndii/, LMG /ti/).

Most NV languages show an initial /n/ for 3pl (*nira). It is likely that this results from analogy with 3sg (*nia), whose initial /n/ was most probably inherited from the 3sg possessive suffix *-ña of POc [§4.3]. Notice here that I am

suggesting two reverse directions for analogical levelling (see Table 6): languages with an initial velar for their 3rd person pronouns would show an influence of the plural form upon the singular, whereas languages with a nasal would illustrate the reverse alignment.

Table 6 – Initial consonant in 3rd person pronouns: what direction for the analogy?

Language	3sg	direction	3pl
Proto Oceanic	*i _a (PRON) *-ñ _a (POSS)		*[k]ira
Proto Torres–Banks	*nia	≠	*kira
Lakon	/ni/	≠	/ɣi:/
Mwotlap	/ki/	←	/kij/
Dorig	/ni/	→	/niɾ/

5.4.2. *Torres languages*: The two Torres languages are exceptional in that their 3pl pronoun reflects a protoform *Cisa rather than *Cira: Hiw /sisə/, LTG /nihə/. At first sight, the reason for this consonant change is unclear.

However, one crucial piece of information is that the prenasalised trill of POC *nr has apparently – and surprisingly – merged with *s in the two Torres languages.¹² As Table 3 (p.32) showed, POC associated 3pl usually with a form *ra, except for the possessor suffix where it had a prenasalised suffix *-ra. The latter is regularly reflected in the Torres languages as Hiw /-sə/, LTG /-hə/: e.g. POC *mb^watu-*ra* ‘their heads’ > *k^watu-*sa* > Hiw /k^witi-sə/, LTG /k^wətu-hə/.

The Torres languages have generalised that {*-ra > *-sa} form to all instances of 3pl pronouns. For example, they have an object suffix of the same form (see Table 5 p.36). It is therefore very likely that what seems to be a *Cisa reconstruction for 3pl is really the reflex of an earlier *Cⁱra – itself ultimately modelled by analogy on the 3pl *-ra possessive suffix of POC.

The initial consonant of that 3pl pronoun differs between the two languages. Lo-Toga has /nihə/ ‘3pl’, which is obviously parallel with /niə/ ‘3sg’. This is reminiscent of the *nira form reconstructible for various languages of the Banks, except that Lo-Toga /nihə/ really points to a local variant *ni^rra. Using the symbols ‘→’ for *morphological innovations* and ‘>’ for *regular sound change* [see fn.6 p.31], I reconstruct: POC *[k]ira → *nira → *ni^rra > *nisa > LTG /nihə/.

As for the initial consonant of Hiw /sisə/, it is due to a process of analogy with the pronouns of 3sg /ninə/ and of 1inc:pl /titə/. The sequence of change for Hiw could thus be POC *[k]ira → *nira → *ni^rra > *nisa > *nisə → /sisə/.

5.4.3. *Summary*: The table below lists the innovations affecting the 3pl pronoun (POC *[k]ira).

- (i18) *[k]ira → *ngira
 (i19) *[k]ira → *nira
 (i20) *nira → *ndira

¹² Thus, the tree *Pipturus argenteus*, whose name is locally reconstructable as *a^rrom^wea, becomes LHI /ⁿdɪŋ^wjɛ/, but Hiw /asəŋ^wjɛ/ and LTG /həŋ^wi/.

- (i21) *nira → *ni^rra > *nisa
 (i22) *ni^rra > *nisa → /sisə/

i	Hiw	Lo	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VRA	VRS	MSN	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL	
(i18)	–	–	–	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	+
(i19)	?	+	+	–	–	–	–	?	?	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–
(i20)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(i21)	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
(i22)	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

6. DUAL FORMS

There is clear evidence that the dual pronouns were historically – at the level of Proto Oceanic – formed by combining the plural radical with the numeral *rua ‘two’: e.g. *kita=rua (1inc:pl=two) ‘1inc:du, you and I’. However, dual pronouns in modern NV languages are not compositional any more, and rest on etymons which have long become opaque. This is clear from the fact that the morphological connection between plural and dual forms has usually been lost: for example, the etymon *kitarua has evolved in modern languages as a single word, more or less independently of the evolution of *kita alone, and/or of *rua alone.

The data set in (9) shows the form of the numeral ‘two’ in NV languages. While these numerals take different prefixes (not shown here), their radicals are all regular reflexes of POC *rua ‘two’:

- (9) Reflexes of the numeral ‘two’:
 POC *rua > Hiw -*ɾə*; LTG -*rɪə*; LHI -*jɔ*; LYP -*jɔ*; VLW -*jɔ*; MTP -*jɔ*; LMG -*ru*;
 VRA -*ru*; VRS -*rɔ*; MSN -*rɔ*; MTA -*rua*; NUM -*ru*; DRG -*rɔ*; KRO -*rɔ*; OLR -*rɔ*;
 LKN -*rɔ*; MRL -*rɔ*.

This set will be useful below, as we examine the varying degree of compositionality shown by modern dual pronouns in the area. For example, LMG /ɣætɾu/ ‘1inc.dual’ could potentially parse as /ɣæt/ ‘1inc.pl’ + /-ru/ ‘two’; whereas MTA /nara/ cannot be analysed synchronically as the combination of /nina/ and /-rua/.

6.1. First inclusive dual

All modern forms of the first inclusive dual ultimately reflect *kita=rua.¹³ To be precise, they all show a trace of the irregular change *kita > *ki^rda which is also characteristic of 1inc:pl [§5.1.1]. In other words, the common protoform underlying all 1inc:du pronouns in NV would be *ki^rdarua. At an early stage, that form would have been recognisable as the combination of *kita ~ ki^rda ‘1inc:pl’

¹³ The dialectology of 1inc:du pronouns in northern Vanuatu is also discussed in François (2011:201 sqq.).

plus the numeral ‘two’, but processes of sound change have blurred this morphological connection in most languages.

6.1.1. *One etymon, many changes:* Only two modern NV forms are still compositional: LMG /ɣæt-ru/, MSN /nin-ro/. It is quite possible that these are not conservative, but reflect a recent recreation of dual pronouns based on plural forms. Other languages have more opaque forms. For example, LHI /ɣinjə/ reflects **kiⁿdarua*, but shows apophony in comparison with the plural /ɣen/.

Some languages went through syncope, as **kiⁿdarua* was shortened to **kiⁿdua* > LYP /jeⁿdəʊ/, VRA /ɣiⁿduəʊ/. This is also the etymon of LKN /wəʃfəʊ/, which reflects a series of regular changes: **kiⁿdua* > **ɣəⁿdəʊ* > **ɣəʃfəʊ* > **ɣəʃfəʊ* > /wəʃfəʊ/.

All other languages reflect a protoform showing loss of the initial (unstressed) syllable: **kiⁿdarua* > **darua* > MRL /ⁿdəʊʊ/, KRO /ⁿduru/, MTP /ⁿdəʊʊ/, OLR /f^orəʊ/, HIW /tə^ləʊ/... Notice how the vowel in **da*- systematically assimilated to the (stressed) final vowel, a regular phenomenon in the area [§2.1.1].

VRS /ⁿdəʊrək/ includes a non-etymological consonant /k/. This corresponds to an earlier TAM marker (see §5.2.2, and François 2009:194).

MTA /nara/ also reflects **darua*, but with an irregular simplification of *-*rua* to *-*ra* – a change found for all its dual pronouns: /nara/, /kara/, /kamra/, /rara/.

DRG /ⁿda:r/ cannot reflect **darua*, and points to an irregular protoform **dāru*. This probably results from analogy with 1exc:du /kma:r/ < **ngamāru* – a truncated form which is attested in other languages [§6.2].

Lo-Toga has an irregular 1inc:du form /təʊr/. It also points to an etymon of the form **dāru*, but with an unexpected vowel (**dāru* would normally have yielded a lower vowel */təʊr/).

Finally, MTP-VLW /ⁿdəʊ/ and VRA /ⁿdu/ are cliticised variants of the pronoun, restricted to subject position. They are both shortened forms of the free pronoun – respectively /ⁿdəʊʊ/ and /ɣiⁿduəʊ/. Surprising though it seems, /ⁿdəʊ/ and /ⁿdu/ thus ultimately descend from **kita=rua*, through layers of phonological and morphological change.

6.1.2. Summary

i	HIW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VRA	VRS	MSN	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i23)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
(i24)	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
(i25)	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	?	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
(i26)	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
(i27)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-

Let us list all the innovations affecting the 1inc:du pronoun (POc **kita=rua*).

- (i23) *kitarua → *kiⁿdarua
- (i24) *kiⁿdarua → *kiⁿdua
- (i25) *kiⁿdarua → *darua

- (i26) *ⁿdarua → *ⁿdaru
- (i27) *ⁿdarua → *ⁿdara

6.2. First exclusive dual

6.2.1. *Micro-paradigms in each language:* Almost all languages in the area show very similar forms for 1exc:du and 2du pronouns, often yielding minimal pairs; yet they do so in unpredictable ways, which cannot be explained easily using a single historical scenario. For example :

- LTG /kəməʊr/ ‘1exc:du’ vs. /kəməʊr/ ‘2du’ only differ in the height of the last vowel
- LHI /mæjəʊ/ vs. /məjəʊ/ (respectively) differ in the quality of the first vowel
- LYP /məmjəʊ/ vs. /məjəʊ/ differ in the presence of a consonant /m/ for 1exc:du
- MTA /kara/ vs. /kamra/ also contrast by the presence of /m/, but with a reverse pattern from Löyöp
- VRS /kəmərəʊk/ vs. /kəmərəʊ/ show a different final (non-etymological) consonant...

Evidently, each language has created its own micro-paradigm for dual pronouns, in which 1exc:du and 2du have tended to coevolve and influence each other so as to enter in a minimal-pair relationship. Morphological levelling and analogy must have taken place, not only between these two pronouns in each language, but also between the dual, trial and plural forms in the same system. Therefore, it makes limited sense to compare languages by examining each pronoun set individually as we have been doing in previous sections; this approach may allow us to propose protoforms for each pronoun, but the intricate history of forms in each language would take us beyond the limits of this study.

6.2.2. *Paths of evolution:* Comparison of the various 1exc:du pronouns points to an ultimate protoform **kama=rua*. The initial consonant is preserved as *k > /ɣ/ in Lakon (see our discussion of the plural forms in §5.2.1) and changed to **ng* everywhere else. Again, this initial consonant will be henceforth represented as **K* (whether ORAL or NASAL GRADE).

The etymon **Kamarua* is still transparently preserved, for example, in MTP /kamjəʊ/, LMG /kamaru/. VRS /kəmərəʊk/ adds to this an extra consonant /k/ found elsewhere in its non-singular pronouns [§5.2.2, 6.1.1]. VRA /kamaⁿduəʊ/ shows an irregular change of **r* to **n*, probably by analogy with /ɣiⁿduəʊ/ ‘1inc:du’.

Several languages in the Torres and in southern Banks show evidence of a truncation **Kamarua* → **Kamāru*, with subsequent shift in stress placement:

- (10) Irregular change for 1exc:du: **Kama-rua* → **Kamāru*
 > LTG *kəməʊr*; NUM *kamar*; DRG *kma:r*; KRO *kemēār*; OLR *kamij*; LKN *yama*;; MRL *kamar*.

Remember that the long vowel of Lakon is the regular reflex of a final /r/ [§2.2.3]: **Kamarua* → **Kamāru* > **ɣamar* > /ɣama:./.

We saw that 1exc:pl pronouns had two protoforms: **Kamai* and **Kamami* [§5.2.2]. Likewise, some dual pronouns show an extra /m/, surely by analogy with

their plural forms: LYP /mɔmjɔ/ (cf. plural /kɔmɔm/), MSN /kɛmɛmrɔ/ (cf. plural /kɛmɛm/).

Two languages show apocope of the dual pronoun's initial syllable: LHI /mæjɔ/ (cf. plural /kɔmɛm/), LYP /mɔmjɔ/ (cf. plural /kɔmɔm/).¹⁴

Finally, Mota shows a drastic reduction of the pronoun, from *Kamarua to /kara/. This is specific to this language, and involves no shared innovation with its neighbours.

6.2.3. Summary: Below are the most significant innovations affecting the 1exc:du pronoun (POc *Kama-rua).

- (i28) *Kamarua → *Kamaru
- (i29) *Kamarua → *Kamami-rua
- (i30) *Kama(mi)rua → *ma(mi)rua (apocope)

i	HIW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VRA	VRS	MSN	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i28)	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
(i29)	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i30)	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

6.3. Second dual

The protoform which can be locally reconstructed for the 2du pronoun is *Kamurua.

The quality of the first vowel is preserved, as usual [§2.1.2], in Mota and Lakon, but also in Mwerlap. All other languages have weakened that first vowel either to a schwa, or to a copy of the following high vowel: LTG /kəmor/, NUM /kumur/, NUM /kɔmɔrɔ/. In several languages, the latter high vowel, which was unstressed, subsequently disappeared: *Kamurúa > *Kəmurúa > *Kumurúa > VRA /kumruɔ/, MTP /kɔmjɔ/.

Just like 1exc:du *Kamarúa was sometimes truncated to *Kamáru, likewise the 2du *Kamurúa was shortened to *Kamúru. This process affected essentially the same languages (except Mwerlap) :

- (11) Irregular change for 1exc:du: *Kamu-rúa → *Kamúru
> LTG kəmor; NUM kumur; DRG kmur; KRO kumur; OLR kumu; LKN yamu.

Another form of truncation is initial apocope. Again, it took place in the same languages as we saw for 1exc:du, namely Lehali and Löyöp.

The main innovations affecting the 2du pronoun (PTB *Kamu-rua) are summarised below.

- (i31) *Kamurua → *Kamuru
- (i32) *Kamurua → *murua

¹⁴ See a similar apocope for 1inc:du, *kiⁿdarua > *ndarua [§6.1.1].

i	HIW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VRA	VRS	MSN	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i31)	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-
(i32)	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

6.4. Third dual

6.4.1. Reconstructing a likely protoform: The morphology of 3dual pronouns is closely linked to developments in the 3rd plural pronouns. Thus, an innovation affecting the initial consonant of a plural pronoun was almost always reflected in the dual and the trial pronouns.

The diversity of modern forms makes it difficult to reconstruct a common protoform. The answer may come from the southern Banks languages, whose dual pronouns have been kept distinct from their plural counterparts. Thus Vurës has /nr/ for 3pl (from *nira, itself altered from POc *[k]ira), but /rorɔ/ for 3du. The latter would be the regular reflex of an etymon *rarúa. If indeed 3pl in POc had the form *kira or *ira, then it is reasonable to reconstruct *ira-rua as the oldest possible form of the 3du pronoun in northern Vanuatu.

- (12) Reflexes of *(i)ra-rua ‘3 dual’:
> VRS rɔrɔ; MTA rara; NUM ruru; DRG ra:r; KRO (i)rru.

Among these, Dorig shows evidence of a truncation *rarúa → *ráru, by analogy with other persons; this is the only language of Gaua where this truncation affected all four dual pronouns.

Other languages usually aligned their 3rd dual with their 3rd plural pronoun in one way or another; this is usually reflected in the pronouns' initial consonant. Based on 3pl *nira, Mwesen and Olrat have created an analogous form *nirarua or *narua for 3du: *nirarúa > *nə̀rə̀rɔ > MSN /nɔrɔrɔ/; *narúa > *nə̀rɔ > OLR /nɔrɔ/.

Lemerig and Vera'a point to a 3du form *ndarua > LMG /tæru/, VRA /nduru/.

Lakon did the same with its ORAL-GRADE consonant /ɣ-/ (<*k-). Compare its 3pl /ɣɪ:/ < *kira with its 3du /wɔrɔ/ < *ɣɔrɔ < *ɣə̀rɔ < *kə̀rɔ < *karua.

Those languages in northern Banks that have NASAL-GRADE *ŋg- for their plural show the same initial for their dual: *ŋgarua > VLW /ŋgɔjɔ/, LYP /kɛjɔ/... As for MRL /karar/, it reflects *ŋgaráru, the result of a local reanalysis.

Finally, the two Torres languages point to an initial *s also found in their 3pl. As we saw in §5.4.2, this sibilant may ultimately reflect a prenasalised trill *nr: hence *(i)ra-rua → *nrarúa > *sarúa > *sə̀rɔ > HIW /sə̀lɔ/. As for LTG /hor/, it reflects later truncation.

6.4.2. Summary: We can list the innovations affecting the 3du pronoun *irarua.

- (i33) *(i)rarua → *(i)raru
- (i34) *(i)rarua → *n(ir)arua
- (i35) *(i)rarua → *ndarua

- (i36) *(i)rarua → *karua
 (i37) *(i)rarua → *ɣgarua
 (i38) *(i)rarua → *ⁿrarua > *sarua

<i>i</i>	HIW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	VRA	VRS	MSN	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i33)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
(i34)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
(i35)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i36)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
(i37)	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
(i38)	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

7. TRIAL FORMS

Our detailed examination of northern Vanuatu pronouns will end with the trial forms. This section will be shorter, because most of the processes involved in the morphological history of trial forms are similar to those we have seen for other numbers.

7.1. General comments on trials

7.1.1. *Introduction:* Trials – a number referring strictly to three referents – are quite rare typologically (Corbett 2000), but relatively common within the Oceanic family. One first observation is that not all languages in our sample have a trial: the two Torres languages, as well as Mwerlap in the south, have only three numbers (singular–dual–plural). Because trials are common in Oceanic languages, and can probably be reconstructed for POc, a likely interpretation is that the NV languages with a trial are here conservative, while the ones that lack it are innovative.

As we saw for dual, trial pronouns originate in what was initially a transparent compound {plural pronoun + ‘three’}: e.g. *kita + tolu > *kita=tolu ‘1inc:trial’. Yet these compounds have become progressively opaque, and have taken up a life of their own. The data set in (13) shows the form of the numeral ‘three’ in NV languages. While these numerals take different prefixes (not shown here), their radicals are all regular reflexes of POc *tolu ‘three’:

- (13) Reflexes of the numeral ‘three’:
 POc *tolu > HIW -toj; LTG -təl; LHI -til; LYP -fjəl; VLW -til; MTP -til; LMG -ɔəl;
 VRA -ɔəl; VRS -təl; MSN -təl; MTA -tol; NUM -tol; DRG -tol; KRO -tol; OLR -til;
 LKN -til; MRL -tol.

7.1.2. *The trial metathesis:* The etymological order {plural pronoun + ‘three’} is preserved in most modern languages of North Vanuatu: thus VLW /^gemtil/

‘1exc:tri’ clearly reflects *^gami + tolu, in this order. But a conspicuous innovation is found in the languages of Gaua, in the form of a morphological metathesis.

This metathesis inverted the order of the two elements, so that {pronoun + *tolu} was reshaped to {*tolu + pronoun}. This metathesis affected trial pronouns in all Gaua languages except Nume, that is: Dorig, Koro, Olat and Lakon. Thus ‘1inc:trial’ in Nume is /ⁿdotəl/ < *ⁿdatolu < *kiⁿda=tolu, but Dorig has /tolɣn/ < *tolu=kiⁿda. In the four languages concerned, metathesis affected all four persons; it will therefore be mentioned in each of the sections below, but counted only once when we list innovations.

7.2. First inclusive trial

All languages ultimately point to an etymon *kiⁿda=tolu – itself from POc *kita ‘1inc:pl’ and *tolu ‘three’.

This form has followed different paths of evolution, usually in a way parallel to its dual counterpart *kiⁿda=rúa [§6.1]. The analogy in their evolution is obvious, for example in Lemerig, if we compare the inclusive dual /^ɣætru/ and the trial /^ɣæɬəl/; or in Mwesen with, respectively, /ninro/ and /nintol/; in Mota with /nara/ and /natol/; or in Nume between /ⁿduru/ and /ⁿdotəl/.

Several languages reflect the apocope of the first syllable: *kiⁿdatolu > *ⁿdatolu > VLW-MTP /ⁿdɪtəl/, VRA /^(y)ⁿdoʔəl/, MTA /natol/, NUM /ⁿdotəl/.

The Gaua languages that went through trial metathesis reflect a form *tolu=kiⁿda. This is transparent in Dorig /tolɣn/, but slightly more hidden in the other three languages, because they evidently went through an intermediate form *tolⁿda: e.g. *tolu=kiⁿda → *tolⁿda > *tilⁿd > KRO /tiln/.

Olat and Lakon have gone even further in their evolution. The affricate /tʃ/, which is the regular reflex of *ⁿd, has shown interference with the word-initial *t, sometimes resulting in another metathesis, this time phonological. Thus, *tolⁿda is regularly reflected in Lakon as /tiltʃ/, but other variants are also common in the same language, including /tʃilitʃ/, /tʃilit/ and /tʃilis/. For these two languages, we thus have a sequence *tolu=kiⁿda → *tolⁿda > *tilⁿd > /tiltʃ/ → /tʃilitʃ/.

In sum, a form like LKN /tʃilit/ shows two layers of metathesis: one morphological (*kiⁿda=tolu > *tolu=kiⁿda...), one phonological (*tilⁿd > /tiltʃ/ → /tʃilit/). Forms like LKN /tʃilit/ or VRA /ⁿdoʔəl/ ultimately reflect POc *kita – a connection which is far from obvious at first glance.

7.3. First exclusive trial

Modern languages point to a set of protoforms *^gami-tolu (> VLW /^gemtil/), *^gamai-tolu (> NUM /kamətəl/), *^gamami-tolu (> LMG /kœmœmʔəl/, LYP /momʃəl/). Their distribution is generally consistent with the dual and plural forms of the same languages.

Among metathesising languages, DRG /təl-kma/ is transparent. Koro and Olat show the assimilation of the initial *t to /k/: *tolu-^gamái > *ul-kama > /kilkama/.

As for Lakon /tɪlmæ/, it reflects the loss of the velar consonant: *tolu-yamai > *tɪlymæ > /tɪlmæ/.

7.4. Second trial

Trial pronouns of the 2nd person point sometimes to a protoform *gámu-tólu (> VLW /^hgəmtɪl/), sometimes to a longer variant *gamíu-tólu (> VRS /kɪmítɔl/).

All the developments of the second trial pronoun are parallel with the first exclusive trial we just saw. This is also true of the languages showing metathesis: the only difference between DRG /tɔlkma/ and /tɔlkmi/, or LKN /tɪlmæ/ and /tɪlmu/, is in the nature of the vowels.

7.5. Third trial

For the third dual pronoun, we had reconstructed a likely etymon *ira-rua; it is likely that the trial equivalent was simply *ira-tolu, as witnessed by MTA /ratol/ and NUM /rotol/.

This pronoun later went through the same morphological changes as the third person pronouns of other numbers [§5.4, 6.4.1]. Thus most languages reflect a pronoun *Cira-tolu, with a different consonant: *ndira-tolu (> LMG /tærʔəl/), *gira-tolu (> LYP /kjejʃəl/), *nira-tolu (> VRS /nørtəl/)...

Among the metathesising languages of Gaua, three reflect a form *tolira > KRO /tɪlr/, OLR /tɪlj/, LKN /tɪlɪ/. It is difficult to know if this *tolira form results directly from the metathesis of *ira-tolu; or if these languages' ancestor once went through a longer form *tolu-nira. DRG /tɔlnɪr/ apparently supports that latter hypothesis, but it might as well reflect a more recent recreation of a regular trial paradigm in that language, based on plural forms. Conversely, Lakon shows no evidence of any 3rd person pronoun beginning in /n-/ anywhere in its paradigm, so it would be costly to reconstruct an intermediate phase *tolu-nira (introducing an /n/) before *tolira (showing subsequent deletion of that /n/). Following Occam's razor, it is more economical to propose that *ira-tolu metathesised directly to *tolira, a form which is reflected in all modern languages except Dorig (the latter having gone through analogy with its plural forms). That trisyllabic pronoun *tolira would then have become a model which attracted the irregular change of linc:trial *tolu-kíⁿda → *tolíⁿda [§7.2].

7.5. Summary

The table below lists the principal innovations affecting the trial pronouns.

(i39)	loss of trial number	
(i40)	Plur. + *tolu	→ *tolu + Plur. (metathesis)
(i41)	*toluki ⁿ da	→ *tolí ⁿ da
(i42)	*ki ⁿ datolu	→ *ndatolu
(i43)	*(i)ratolu	→ *gíratolu
(i44)	*(i)ratolu	→ *ndíratolu

- (i45) *(i)ratolu → *nirratolu
- (i46) *(i)ra-tolu → *tolira
- (i47) *tolu-Kamai → *Kolu-Kamai

i	HW	LO	TGA	LHI	LYP	VLW	MTP	LMG	TRA	VRS	MSN	MTA	NUM	DRG	KRO	OLR	LKN	MRL
(i39)	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
(i40)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-
(i41)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-
(i42)	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
(i43)	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i44)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(i45)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
(i46)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-
(i47)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-

8. DISCUSSION: TREE OR LINKAGE?

8.1. Comparative Method and family structure

The previous sections reconstructed the history of 15 independent personal pronouns in the 17 languages of north Vanuatu. Including variant forms, we discussed 260 pronominal forms in total. For each pronoun form or subparadigm, I reconstructed one or more individual innovations, and identified which languages took part in them.

Every step of the demonstration has been faithful to the tenets of the Comparative Method. One important principle – first formulated by Leskien (1876) – was to distinguish shared retentions from *shared innovations*, as only the latter can tell us anything about the genealogical history of a linguistic family. In doing so, I took as my reference the reconstructions proposed for Proto Oceanic, which scholars have established based on a large number of Oceanic languages, also following the Comparative Method. As I reconstructed these innovations, another important rule of thumb was to adhere to the principle of regular sound change within each language – what Neo-Grammarians called *sound laws*. Throughout this study, I thus endeavoured to apply the Comparative Method with utmost rigour.

The question that was raised in the introduction concerned the next step, namely the best way to interpret the distribution of innovations in terms of a family structure. The Comparative Method tends to be associated with the tree model, but is this a legitimate view? Specifically, does the genealogical history of northern Vanuatu languages fit a tree structure?

In other publications (François 2014, *f/c*; Kalyan & François *f/c*), I discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the tree model, and highlighted its inability to deal with intersecting isoglosses, though these are common in dialect networks and linkages [see §1.1]. I illustrated this principle with the 17 languages of northern Vanuatu, for which I reconstructed 474 innovations of various natures: regular or irregular sound change, morphology, syntax, lexicon.

The resulting matrix (with a structure analogous to the tables in §4.1.2 sqq. in this study) was then analysed using an approach called *Historical Glottometry*, the purpose of which is to identify genealogical subgroups and quantify their level of support.

One possible way to represent the results of that study took the form of a “glottometric diagram” (Figure 2). This diagram shows the best supported subgroups, using line thickness to visually reflect their respective strength. The family shows various cases of intersecting subgroups: for example, the Lemerig language (LMG) belongs to a subgroup LMG–VRA, but also to a larger Northern-Banks subgroup LHI–LYP–VLW–MTP–LMG which crosscuts it. Likewise, the bottom of the diagram shows how the languages of Southern Banks form a perfect dialect chain (François 2014:182). That 2014 glottometric study thus demonstrated that the Northern Vanuatu family cannot be appropriately rendered using the tree model, which would have assumed that all subgroups must be discrete and embedded.

8.2. The intersecting isoglosses of pronoun morphology

As for the present study, its purpose was to focus on one particular domain of historical evidence, the morphology of personal pronouns. I identified a total of 47 innovations – several of which also featured among the 474 that were used in the 2014 glottometric study underlying Figure 2. While there are sometimes debates on the diagnostic value, for subgrouping purposes, of processes such as lexical replacement, the idea in studying pronoun morphology was that the sort of innovations it defines are not easily borrowable across separate languages, and should thus be viewed as uncontroversially solid evidence for grouping languages together in a genealogical sense [§1.2].

At this point of our discussion, the question that arises is the following. Are the morphological innovations concerning pronouns distributed along a tree structure, or do they form entangled isoglosses?

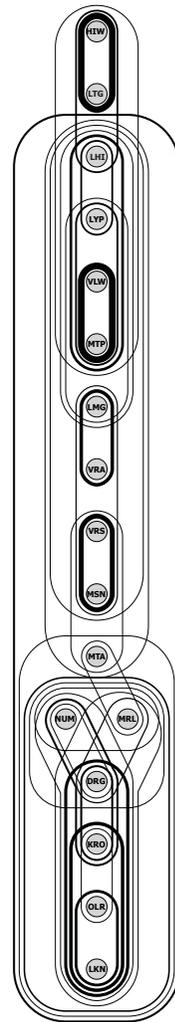


Figure 2 – A glottometric diagram of Northern Vanuatu languages (from François 2014)

A first examination of the pronominal data suggests that a tree-like representation of the Northern Vanuatu family should not, in fact, be ruled out completely. The tree given in Figure 3, based on the pronoun data presented here, is the most parsimonious tree possible, i.e. the one capable of accommodating most of the isoglosses we have identified, and assign shared innovations to nodes in the most economical way. Those innovations which fit the tree have their number code indicated on the relevant node: for instance, the subgroup/node VRS–MSN–MTA is captured by two innovations, (i4) and (i13).¹⁵

If the genealogy of Northern Vanuatu languages had to be forced into a tree structure, then it would likely be very similar to Figure 3.¹⁶ However, the trouble with such a tree is that it only accommodates a portion of the empirical evidence we have. Among the 47 innovations related to pronouns, six took place in just a single language (e.g. (i11, 22) for Hiw, (i33) for Dorig...): they can be disregarded here, because they are obviously compatible with any representation, and cannot help us determine whether a family is treelike or not. Among the 41 remaining isoglosses, only 24 are compatible with the tree in Figure 3: the other 17 are not, as they straddle across branches.¹⁷ Thus, (i43) includes LHI–LYP–VLW–MTP, but (i42) has VLW–MTP–VRA–MTA–NUM. Likewise, Dorig takes part in an isogloss (i40) DRG–KRO–OLR–LKN, but also in another isogloss (i45) that includes VRS–MSN–DRG.

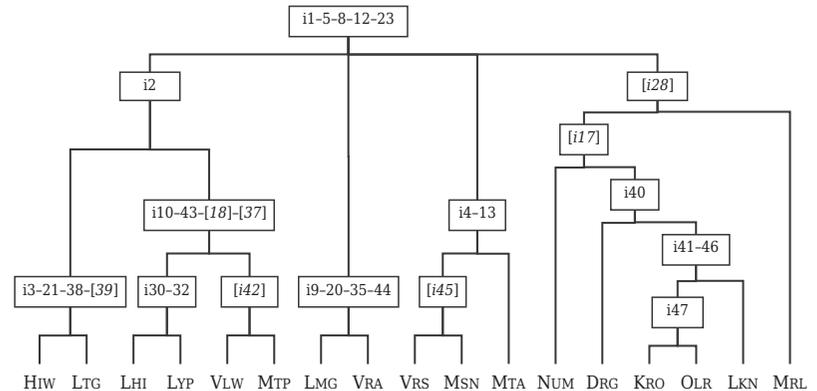


Figure 3 – A plausible (though imperfect) tree of North Vanuatu languages, based on the historical morphology of pronouns

¹⁵ In Figure 3, the numbers in square brackets correspond to cases when a given node is targeted by an isogloss that also includes an external branch. For example, (i17) targets the whole subgroup NUM–DRG–KRO–OLR–LKN, but also includes HIW (possibly reflecting a case of parallel innovation).

¹⁶ Note, in passing, that every node in this tree corresponds to a subgroup in my glottometric diagram. This confirms my intuition that pronominal morphology does indeed constitute a microcosm of the area’s linguistic history more generally [§1.2].

¹⁷ The 17 innovations incompatible with this tree structure are: (i6)–(i7), (i16)–(i19), (i24)–(i26), (i28)–(i29), (i31), (i34), (i37), (i39), (i42), (i45). See also fn.15.

The same conclusion would be reached if we brought in other evidence outside pronoun morphology – such as the patterns of regular sound change discussed in §2 above, or any other linguistic features. While some innovations – perhaps the majority – might confirm the tree structure given in *Figure 3*, several others would provide conflicting evidence. In order to save the tree, the only solution would be to eliminate these problematic isoglosses, a decision which is often ad hoc and illegitimate.

In sum, if we take into account all the evidence available – and not just that which is compatible with a tree – then the observable pattern is one where subgroups intersect. The chain-like distribution defined by the shared innovations relating to pronouns is consistent with the overall genealogical structure of the northern Vanuatu linkage, which is best represented in a glottometric diagram (*Figure 2*).

9. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at more than one goal.

One prime objective was to document for the first time the pronominal systems of the 17 languages of the Banks and Torres Is. in northern Vanuatu. Given that many of these languages are endangered or even moribund (François 2012), publishing this set of firsthand data is valuable in itself.

A second purpose was to show that, in spite of the apparent diversity of these pronouns' modern forms, knowledge of the area's linguistic history makes it possible to uncover their former unity, and reconstruct a common protoform for each pronoun. For example, 1st inclusive dual pronouns in the region include such forms as /tor/, /ɣætru/, /nara/, /ɣinjɔ/, /ⁿda:r/ and /wɔŋɔ/; as heterogeneous as these pronouns may sound, they can all safely be shown to derive from a single etymon **kiⁿdarua* [§6.1]. The path leading from that etymon to modern forms is a combination of (regular) sound change and (irregular) morphological innovations, whose history can be unravelled thanks to the powerful principles of the Comparative Method.

These principles enabled us to reconstruct systematically, step by step, the whole set of innovations that have affected the rich morphology of pronouns in the area, taking Proto Oceanic as a point of departure. The 47 innovations identified for Northern Vanuatu were sufficient in number to be taken as an illustration of the area's linguistic history more generally.

Finally, the morphology of independent personal pronouns in Northern Vanuatu was used as a test case for tackling a theoretical issue of broader significance: namely, the question whether the Comparative Method should be viewed as inseparable from the tree model – as is usually assumed – or if its results can also be compatible with non-cladistic approaches. I showed that the Comparative Method's high-precision tools, if applied rigorously, can be used to assess whether the genealogical structure of a family is tree-like or not. Taking the morphological history of pronouns, it was first possible to propose a tree for northern Vanuatu languages, as a rough approximation of their history [§8.2]; but such a cladistic

representation forced me to leave out a large amount of data which did not fit its nested structure.

As an alternative, I proposed that this language family – like most in the world, in fact – constitutes a *linkage*, that is, a set of related languages in which internal subgroups intersect. In order to represent the history of a linkage without distorting or arbitrarily selecting our data, it is safer to forsake the assumptions of the Tree model, and adopt the more encompassing Wave model – or a model derived from it – following common practice in dialectology and sociolinguistic studies (Heggarty *et al.* 2010; François 2014).

Unusual though it may seem at first glance, a genealogical structure made of entangled subgroups simply reflects the fact that a linkage originates in a former dialect network. In the earlier times of mutual intelligibility, each dialect would typically share innovations now with one neighbour, now with another [§1.1]. Such a situation is certainly more common in the world than is usually assumed among historical linguists. Hopefully, this study will inspire readers to develop non-cladistic approaches to language genealogy, while still remaining faithful to the powerful insights of the Comparative Method.

LANGUAGE ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations for language names appear on *Map 1*, and are repeated below.

DRG	Dorig	LTG	Lo-Toga	OLR	Oirat
HIW	Hiw	LYP	Löyöp	POc	Proto Oceanic
KRO	Koro	MRL	Mwerlap	PTB	Proto Torres–Banks
LHI	Lehali	MTA	Mota	TGA	Toga (dialect of LTG)
LKN	Lakon	MTP	Mwotlap	VLW	Volow
LMG	Lemerig	MSN	Mwesen	VRA	Vera'a
LO	Lo (dialect of LTG)	NUM	Nume	VRS	Vurës

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