

ON THE NOTION OF CLITICIZATION IN ROTUMAN

MARIT VAMARASI
Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago
m-vamarasi@neiu.edu

The earliest descriptions of the Rotuman language, such as Churchward (1940), make no mention of clitics; every grammatical unit falls into either the word or the affix category. In more recent descriptions of Rotuman morpho-syntax, the term ‘clitic’ has been applied to various units, though not consistently. Schmidt (2002), in his discussion of verbal derivation and inflection, says “Some verbal suffixes (the directional and pronominal suffixes, the transitive suffix *-a* and *-‘ia*) are more properly postclitics, since they can occur at the very end of the whole VP”. An example of the pronominal suffixes is *-atou*; it “normally” attaches to the end of an intransitive verb, but when a particular adverb follows the verb, it attaches to the end of that adverb. Schmidt’s list of postclitics includes almost all verbal “suffixes”, leaving only the nominalizer *-ga* and the causative/applicative *-‘aki* to be true suffixes. Den Dikken (2003) calls the directional and pronominal morphemes “suffixes”, but does use the term “clitic” in his description of the noun phrase. The morpheme *-t*, which occurs at the end of noun phrases, is “arguably a clitic”. It encliticizes to the complete/long phase of nouns to form indefinite phrases. The same morpheme, according to Den Dikken, procliticizes to the vowel a to form the free-standing definite article *ta*. In the volume *The Oceanic Languages* by Lynch, Ross, and Crowley, Chapter 3 is a ‘Typological Overview’ of the Oceanic languages. The authors mention the widespread occurrence of clitics, and seem to contrast clitics to both prefixes on the one hand, and free forms on the other, without giving the criteria by which they make such classifications. In this paper I will be examining the question of whether Rotuman indeed has clitics as distinct from affixes in either its noun phrases or its verb phrases. To help answer this question, I will be using Stephen Anderson and Arnold Zwicky’s (2003) and Zwicky’s (1985) list of criteria which can be used to distinguish clitics from affixes on the one hand and full words on the other. I will be looking particularly at stress, distribution, and stem effects.

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of clitics has received a great deal of attention in the linguistic literature in recent years. The kinds of questions being asked include: Does a clitic category exist cross-linguistically? If such clitics exist, do they attach to words or phrases? Are they base-generated or do they move into their positions? For a specific language, how does a clitic differ from a word on the one hand, and an affix on the other?

The earliest descriptions of the Rotuman language, such as Churchward (1940), make no mention of clitics; every grammatical unit falls into either the word or the affix category. This may be due to the era in which Churchward worked or possibly to his linguistic training. However, in more recent descriptions of Rotuman morpho-syntax, the term “clitic” has been applied to various units, though not consistently.

Hans Schmidt (2002), in his discussion of verbal derivation and inflection, says, “Some verbal suffixes (the directional and pronominal suffixes, the transitive suffix *-a* and *-‘ia*) are more

properly postclitics, since they can occur at the very end of the whole VP”. The sentences below, taken from Churchward, exemplify each of these four types. In each example the morpheme in question is underlined. To each b. example, which shows the “clitic” attached to a post-verbal element of the VP, I have added another example of the same morpheme affixed directly to the verb; each is ungrammatical.¹

- (1) a. *Gou joni-atou.*
I run-1SG
‘I ran.’
- b. *Gou jön väve-atou.* **Gou joni-atou väv(e).*
I run fast-1SG
‘I ran fast.’
- (2) a. *Iris suru-m.*
they enter-DIR
‘They entered.’
- b. *Iris sur miji-m.* **Iris suru-m mij(i).*
they enter prompt-DIR
‘They entered promptly.’
- (3) a. *Fā ta fek-ia.*
man the angry-ASP
‘The man became angry.’
- b. *Fā ta fek faka-pau-ia.* **Fā ta fek-ia fakapau(a).*
man the angry ADV-very-ASP
‘The man became very angry.’
- (4) a. *Fā ta futi-a lū ta.*
man the pull-TR rope the
‘The man pulled the rope.’
- b. *Fā ta füt hoi’aki-a lū ta.* **Fā ta futi-a hoi’åk lū ta.*
man the pull again-TR rope the
‘The man pulled the rope again.’

¹ The abbreviations used in this paper are: SG – singular; DIR – directional; ASP – aspectual; ADV – adverb; TR – transitive; REC – reciprocal; CAU – causative; NOM – nominalizer; DIM – diminutive; POS – possessive; OBL – oblique; RED – reduplication; 3S – third person singular; IRR – irrealis

What Schmidt fails to mention is that his list of “clitics” includes almost the entire set of what had previously been labeled as verbal suffixes, the only exceptions being the nominalizer *-ga* and the causative/applicative *-‘aki*.

Den Dikken (2003) apparently disagrees with Schmidt with regard to the directional and pronominal morphemes, calling them “suffixes”, though he elsewhere labels the Rotuman pronominal suffixes as “clitic pronouns”. He does, however, use the term “clitic” in his description of the noun phrase. He calls the indefinite singular article *-t* “arguably a clitic”.

- (5) *vaka-t*
 canoe-a
 ‘a canoe’

His reasoning here is that the *-t* is one of a handful of suffixes (that is, post-forms) which are lexically specified as attaching to complete² forms only. Kissock (2003) likewise refers to the “cliticized indefinite article *-t*”. This morpheme also shares the feature, exemplified in (1-4) above, of being attachable to the end of the phrase:

- (6) *vak ti‘u-t*
 canoe big-a
 ‘a big canoe’

The same morpheme *-t*, according to Den Dikken, procliticizes to the vowel “a” to form the free-standing definite article *ta*, which follows the incomplete phase of a noun or the incomplete phase of a following adjective.

- (7) a. *vak ta*
 canoe the
 ‘the canoe’
 b. *vak ti‘ ta*
 canoe big the
 ‘the big canoe’

I would dispute Den Dikken’s claim that the same morpheme *-t* occurs in both the indefinite and definite articles. This is because there is no morpheme *-a* to host the *-t*. Also, there is a pre-nominal *ta* which indicates that the indefinite noun is nonspecific. It is difficult to see how the indefinite *-t* could be part of the definite *ta* without also being part of the indefinite *ta*. Therefore, I would consider these two articles to be morphologically distinct, though obviously phonologically similar. In the discussion that follows, I will be treating these as such.

² Rotuman lexical morphemes each have two forms or “phases”. The incomplete, or short, is derived from the complete, or long, by one of a set of phonological processes, including metathesis, vowel deletion, and umlauting. The short/incomplete is generally consonant-final with stress on the final syllable.

My purpose here is to examine these claims about the existence of clitics in Rotuman noun phrases and verb phrases, in order to determine whether the language does indeed have such a category separate from both words and affixes. Because of the ambiguous nature of clitics, it will not be surprising if the results here should be ambiguous—as, in fact, they turn out to be.

2. THE SEARCH FOR A “CANONICAL” SUFFIX IN ROTUMAN

Anderson and Zwicky (2003) lay out the phonological, morphological, and syntactic properties which distinguish words and affixes and Zwicky (1985) does the same for grammatical words and clitics. Since no grammatical morpheme is probably ever going to hold properties exclusively from any one of these classes, there will always be some fuzziness. However, these properties do offer a useful way to distinguish clitics from both words and affixes for those languages that do have clitics.

My approach here will be to identify at least one bound morpheme in Rotuman which is most affix-like, based on Anderson and Zwicky’s list of properties for affixes. I am assuming here that Rotuman has an affix category, though I am making no such assumption about clitics. As Zwicky (1985) notes, clitics are more marked cross-linguistically than are either words or affixes, so my assumption that Rotuman has at least one affix but may not have a clitic is a reasonable one. Once I have identified a “canonical affix”, I will compare its properties against the list of morphemes which have been labeled as clitics by the authors mentioned earlier. I will be looking only at post-posed morphemes, as no one has (yet) questioned the affixal status of Rotuman prefixes. This list is: pronominal suffixes³, directionals, aspectual –‘*ia*, transitive –‘*a*⁴, causative/applicative –‘*aki*/-‘*ek*, nominalizer –‘*ga*, and the articles –‘*t* and *ta*.

The properties of affixes mentioned in the two references includes some which are shared by all and some which are not shared by all the morphemes in question. I will look at each of these latter properties in turn.

Final Position. Clitics end a word, though affixes need not do so. The so-called “clitics” in Rotuman, when they occur, always close off a word; nothing can follow any of them. –‘*aki* is the only one of these morphemes which need not be final in a word. –‘*ga*, the directionals, and the transitive –‘*a* can all follow –‘*aki* within the word:

- (8) a. *hai-sok-‘aki-ga*
 REC-join-CAU-NOM
 ‘to join together’

³ Elsewhere (Vamarasi 2002a and 2002b) I call these suffixes “subject suffixes”; the term “pronominal suffixes” is from Churchward (1940).

⁴ In Vamarasi (1997) I provide evidence that this suffix is actually an intransitive marker, rather than a transitive marker, as Churchward (1940) calls it. Here I use his term, which is more widely known, and to avoid confusion.

- b. Short/incomplete stem: aspectual: *sun-‘ia*
 causative/applicative: *fäeg-‘aki*

To conclude this section, then, -‘aki appears to be the most affix-like of all post-stem morphemes. In addition to being acategorical and morphologically simple, as is true of all the morphemes being looked at here, it need not close a word, it is selective, and it triggers the short form of the stem. Its function is clearly a derivational one—to make a noun into a verb or to increase the valency of a verb. I therefore will henceforth refer to it as the “canonical suffix” in Rotuman.

3. HOW THE SO-CALLED “CLITICS” STACK UP AGAINST –‘AKI

Next I will compare features of the so-called “clitics” against those of the canonical suffix, -‘aki, with the purpose of trying to determine if affix and clitic are clearly distinct categories in Rotuman. One property which distinguishes them is accent. From the literature (Anderson and Zwicky 2003), it appears that a lack of independent accent is likely to characterize both affixes and clitics. None of the so-called “clitics” is stressed, and stress assignment in the stem is the same as for the stem alone. The citation form (i.e. the complete or long) of Rotuman words receives penultimate stress; the incomplete/short form is one syllable shorter and receives final stress. So the “clitics” are attached to the stem following stress assignment. –‘aki, on the other hand, is always stressed. This suffix has both a complete/long and an incomplete/short form, and both forms are stressed. Also, the stem is never stressed when this suffix is added. In other words, –‘aki is considered to be part of the phonological word for purposes of stress assignment. The nominalizer morpheme –ga behaves like –‘aki in that it is stressed in its incomplete/short form –ag and moves stress when it follows –‘aki, as it frequently does. It, therefore, also is part of the phonological word for purposes of stress assignment. Below is a summary of the stress data.

(11)		
	Morphemes which do not move stress; <u>are not part of the phonological word</u>	Morphemes which move stress; <u>are part of the phonological word</u>
	Pronominal suffixes: <i>jóni, jóni-eris</i>	Causative/Applicative: <i>‘imo,</i>
	Aspectual: <i>súnu, sún-‘ia</i>	<i>‘iom ‘áki/‘iom ‘ák</i>
	Directional: <i>hanísi, hanísi-of</i>	Nominalizer: <i>léu, leu-ág</i>
	Transitive: <i>‘iom ‘ímo, ‘iom ‘ímo-a</i>	

Another feature which distinguishes these morphemes is orthography. Stebbins (2003) points out that ambiguous words (that is, clitics) may show up in native-speaker writing as sometimes written joined to a word and sometimes written separately. In Rotuman, which by now has been written for over 60 years, none of the morphemes we have been looking at here is written separately; all are written joined to the stem. However, there is an interesting case of this sort of ambiguity with the diminutive *he*. It follows a singular noun and can itself be followed by the indefinite –*t* or the definite *ta*. *He* + *-t* is always written *het*, but *he* + *ta* is sometimes written as *he ta*, sometimes as *heta*.

- (12) *Le' mea'-mea' he-ta mose-an.*
Le' mea'-mea' he ta mose-a.n
 child RED-small DIM(-)the sleep-3S
 'The young child is sleeping.'

However the two morphemes are written, there is no stress on the form. That is, it is not pronounced [héta] but [heta]. Both the orthographical ambiguity as well as the lack of stress suggest that both *he* and *ta* are clitics, and that together they constitute a clitic cluster.

Another bit of orthographical ambiguity suggests another clitic that has so far been overlooked in the literature. Churchward described the oblique marker *e* as a “quasi-suffix” which was sometimes written by natives on the preceding verb:

- (13) *e te' ne terân ne 'on ö'-rua la la'o e se ufa*
 all of day that POS parent-two IRR go OBL to inland
 'every day when his parents would go to work'

If *e* is a separate grammatical word, then it has the very unusual property in Rotuman of requiring the preceding verb to be in the long/complete form (e.g., *la'o* rather than *la'*). Virtually all other verb words, whether monomorphemic or polymorphemic, are in the short/incomplete. But if it is instead a clitic or a suffix rather than an independent word, then it shares this property with several other morphemes or morpheme sets. Is *e* more clitic-like or more affix-like? The properties we have looked at thus far suggest it is more clitic-like: it is always final, it is selective (it never follows or attaches to an adverb), it attaches to the long/complete stem, and it is unstressed, .

4. CONCLUSION: DOES ROTUMAN HAVE CLITICS?

Zwicky and others have proposed doing away with the category of clitic altogether. But Stebbins (2003) points out that simplicity in one area of language description (such as the number of grammatical word classes) means complexity in other areas (such as how each is defined).

Is the category of ‘clitic’ warranted for Rotuman? It is difficult to say. There is clearly a scale between –‘*aki*’ on the one end (most affix-like) and directionals, the article *-t*, the transitive *-a*, and the pronominal suffixes (most clitic-like) on the other with respect to several phonological, morphological and syntactic properties that we have looked at here. The properties that the morphemes on the most clitic-like end share are lack of stress, failure to trigger the short stem, and lack of selectivity. Taken together, these properties point to morphemes that are, literally, not affixed to their heads. They seem to be true “phrasal affixes”, as Anderson (1992) describes clitics. They lack the cohesiveness with the preceding stem that true affixes, such as –‘*aki*’, have. For that reason alone, my personal preference is to make a distinction between affixes and clitics,

while recognizing that some morphemes seem to fall in the middle. Below I present a table which shows the cline of cliticity in Rotuman.

Table 1. Summary of Rotuman Affix/Clitic Properties

Most affix-like ←-----→					-----→ Most clitic-like
<u>Property/Morpheme</u> ↓ ⇒	- 'aki	-ga	e	- 'ia ta	Directionals Pronominal suffixes -t -a
Selective	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Stressed	Y	Y	N	N	N
Short Stem	Y	N	N	Y	N

Clearly more work needs to be done on this topic. In particular, the pre-nominal morpheme *ta*, which appears to share phonological, semantic, and syntactic properties with both of the post-nominal articles, *-t* and *ta*, ought to be looked at further. If it turns out to have some clitic properties, then perhaps Rotuman has proclitics as well as enclitics. In addition, there are other “particles” (that is, short, simple grammatical morphemes) which may also exhibit clitic properties. For example, the negative circumfix *kat/kal...ra*, which surrounds the negated element, possibly ought to be included in the class of units we are calling clitics, because it is unstressed, and can negate words of different lexical classes.

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