

AFLA XII ABSTRACT

ON THE NOTION OF CLITICIZATION IN ROTUMAN

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 even to his linguistic training. In more recent descriptions of Rotuman morpho-syntax, the term ‘clitic’ has been applied to various units, though not consistently. Schmidt, 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” (p. 826). As an example he gives:

- 1) Gou jōn vāve-a-tou.
I run fast-CV-I
‘I am running fast.’

The *-(a)tu* ending “normally” attaches to the verb, but here it follows the adverb. What Schmidt fails to mention is that his list of postclitics includes almost all verbal “suffixes”, leaving only the nominalizer *-ga* and the causative *-aki* to be true suffixes.

Den Dikken (2003) disagrees with Schmidt, in calling the directional and pronominal morphemes “suffixes”. However, he does use the term ‘clitic’ in his description of the noun phrase. He calls the morpheme *-t*, which occurs at the end of noun phrases, “arguably a clitic”. It encliticizes to the “complete phase” of nouns to form indefinite phrases:

- 2) vaka-t
canoe.COM-SG.INC
‘a canoe’ (indef. Singular)

It procliticizes to the vowel *a* to form the free-standing definite article *ta*, which follows the “incomplete phase” of a noun:

- 3) vak ta
canoe SG.COM
‘the canoe’ (def. singular)

Schmidt’s article is found in the volume *The Oceanic Languages* by Lynch, Ross, and Crowley. Chapter 3 of the book is a ‘Typological Overview’ of the Oceanic languages. They mention the widespread occurrence of clitics (such as, for example, those that indicate subject person and number), 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 has clitics in either its noun phrases or verb phrases. To help answer this question, I will be using Stephen Anderson and Arnold Zwicky’s list of 9 criteria which can be used to “distinguish affixes (determined, bound, reduced) from words [clitics] (undetermined, free, full).” I will be looking particularly at stress, distribution, and (in)dependence.