



**Journal of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea**

**ISSN: 0023-1959**

**Vol. 31 No. 1, 2013**

## Adverbs in the Mussau-Emira Verb Phrase

John Brownie  
SIL-PNG

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In Brownie & Brownie (2007), adverbs in Mussau were classified as a closed word class, comprising temporal adverbs, locative adverbs, plus some other adverbs directly modifying a verb, such as diminutive and emphatic. Since that analysis, a further class of adverbs has been identified.

This is an open class, and consists of derived forms, with the adverbializer prefix /a-/ attached to a noun, which is typically one of those nouns more characteristically functioning as an adjective. For example, *korokorongana* ‘strong, strength’ becomes *akorokorongana* ‘strongly’. Some cases of the prefix /a-/ attached to a verb can also be analysed as adverbs rather than causative constructions. For example, *toka* ‘sit, live’ can become *atoka* ‘enduringly’ or *atoka* ‘cause to sit’.

These derived adverbs appear to function as modifiers within the verb phrase rather than at the clause or higher level. Those higher level functions are filled by the temporal, locative and other non-derived adverbs. It is not certain that derived adverbs cannot function at higher levels, but the lack of data showing them doing so is suggestive that they only function within the verb phrase.

### 2 DERIVED ADVERBS

It is very common to find derived adverbs, though the form can be mistaken for a causative verb in a serial verb construction. This is because the shape of the adverbializer prefix is the same as the causative prefix, /a-, or /e-/ after a high vowel, and the fact that the words to which it can be attached include both verbs and nouns that have established verbal meanings. However, the analysis as an adverb seems to be preferable in some cases, as the causative meaning does not seem to fit the context.

With the data at hand, we have three verbs which appear to take the adverbializer prefix: *kapa* ‘complete’, *tingina* ‘stand’ and *toka* ‘sit, live’. However, it would not be possible to state that this is the complete set of verbs that can do so.

Given that the prefix /a-/ can occur with both nouns and verbs, in both cases resulting in a derived adverb, the most economical analysis would be that it is a single prefix which can convert both nouns and verbs into adverbs.

Other cases where there is a decision to be made between the adverbial and causative meanings involve nouns which have well-established verbal uses, such as *namuu* ‘big, large, old’ (as a noun) and ‘grow, increase’ (as a verb). In these cases, we generally interpret these as nouns with the adverbializer prefix.

A second cause of confusion is that, when the verb preceding the derived adverb ends with /a/, the lengthened /a/ sound can be hard to hear, making the derived adverb appear to be the base form from which it was derived. For example, the phrase *tara a-masina* ‘look carefully’ can sound like *tara masina*.

Some examples of derived adverbs are listed in Table 1.

Stem	Class	Gloss	Adverb	Gloss
<i>korokorongana</i>	noun	‘strong, strength’	<i>akorokorongana</i>	‘strongly’
<i>koronna</i>	noun	‘true’	<i>akoronna</i>	‘truly’
<i>masalika</i>	noun	‘clear’	<i>amasalika</i>	‘clearly’
<i>masina</i>	noun	‘good’	<i>amasina</i>	‘well’
<i>namuu</i>	noun	‘big, large, old’	<i>anamuu</i>	‘greatly’
<i>kapa</i>	verb	‘complete’	<i>akapa</i>	‘completely’
<i>tingina</i>	verb	‘stand’	<i>atingina</i>	‘to a great extent’
<i>toka</i>	verb	‘sit, live’	<i>atoka</i>	‘enduringly’

Table 1 Sample derived adverbs

Some examples of usage are:

- (1) *La=ghe aulia ng=a-korokorongana eta=ghi*  
 3PL=PAST tell LIG=ADVZ-strong PREP=1SG.POSS  
 ‘They warned me.’  
 Lit. ‘They told me strongly.’

- (2) *Ang=u=aulia ng=a-koronna=la.*  
 TAM<sup>1</sup>=2SG=tel LIG=ADVZ=true=PFV  
 I  
 ‘You answered correctly.’  
 Lit. ‘You told truly.’
- (3) *Spiriti eteva ghe apasunga ng=a-masalika=la va*  
 spirit SG.I PAST show LIG=ADVZ-clear=PFV COMP  
*Natu-na-i=a God.*  
 child-3SG.POSS-TR=3SG.OBJ God  
 ‘The Spirit clearly showed that he was the Son of God.’
- (4) *A=ghe kila ng=a-masina=aili=la ia o voto ateva.*  
 1SG=PAST know LIG=ADVZ-good=EMPH=PFV 3SG that thing SG.I  
 ‘I knew that place very well.’
- (5) *La=ghe sama a-namuu=la.*  
 3PL=PAST speak ADVZ-big=PFV  
 ‘They spoke loudly.’

The number of examples of such adverbs is fairly large, but the variety of stems is not. In a corpus of 1653 verb phrases, 83 contained adverbs, of which 32 were derived adverbs, representing 16 stems.

There are some conventional uses, most often with verbs of speaking: *aippoaa* ‘converse’, *ppooa* ‘speak, preach’, *aulia* ‘say’, *apasunga* ‘show, teach’, *sama* ‘talk, speak’, *kiukiu* ‘tell a story’. Verbs of thinking can also be used: *nannaa* ‘think’, *annaa* ‘think, consider’, and the verb *toka* ‘sit, stay, dwell’ is often present in the form *toka ng=a-masina* ‘live well’.

In *Mussau Grammar Essentials*, the construction *ami ghe masi~masi e-tingina* ‘we really enjoy’ was interpreted as being a causative serial verb construction (2007:136–7). However, it could also be interpreted as an adverbial construction, as long as we can consider that the /a-/ prefix can be attached to verb stems as well as noun stems. Either way, this particular construction is highly idiomatic, with neither ‘cause to stand’ or ‘uprightly’ being the meaning in the phrase. A reasonable interpretation of *a-tingina* as an adverb is ‘to a great extent’.

### 3 DISTRIBUTION OF ADVERBS

Adverbs can be found either as part of the verb phrase structure or as part of the clause structure, as peripheral elements. Clause functions are adequately handled in section 6.4 of

*Mussau Grammar Essentials*. This paper supplies a revised analysis of the function and distribution of adverbs within the verb phrase.

Derived adverbs always follow a verb and function as part of the head of the verb phrase. One way to approach this is to consider the adverb as a verb, so that the verb phrase is an adverbial serial verb construction. This is how it was analysed in Brownie & Brownie (2007:115).

An alternative is to posit a different structure for the verb phrase:

(TAM<sub>1</sub>) [(Subject) (TAM<sub>2</sub>) (Negative) (Adverb<sub>1</sub>)<sup>0-2</sup> Head (Object) (Adverb<sub>2</sub>)]<sup>n</sup> (TAM<sub>3</sub>)

In this analysis, the Adverb<sub>2</sub> slot can be filled by a derived adverb, certain non-derived adverbs, or one of the other adverbs which were previously analysed as restricted verbs: *aitaua* ‘together’, *longoti* ‘across’, *kasina* ‘first’ and *parasi* ‘quickly’. The temporal adverb *mua* ‘first’ also goes in this slot. Note that *kasina* has since been reanalysed as *akasina* ‘first’ rather than being a homophone of *kasina* ‘some’.

The Adverb<sub>1</sub> slot is unusual in that it can take a variable number of adverbs. It can take one of a small class of adverbs as listed in Table 2. None of these are derived adverbs.

Adverb <sub>1</sub>	Gloss
<i>mala</i>	‘diminutive’
<i>mene</i>	‘again’
<i>mina</i>	‘finally’
<i>nim</i>	‘just’
<i>tani</i>	‘necessary, must, greatly’
<i>vira</i>	‘only now, and then’

Table 2 Pre-verbal adverbs

Normally only one of these adverbs occurs, but on occasion two of them may occur, as in example (13) below.

- (6) *La=ghe mene sae~sae=la.*  
 3PL=PAST again IPFV~go\_up=PFV  
 ‘They went up again.’

- (7) *U=rou mene matauta.*  
 1SG=NEG again fear  
 ‘Do not be afraid.’

- (8) *Ang=e=mala masina=la.*  
TAM=3SG=DIM good=PFV  
'He has become a little better.'
- (9) *Me ghe mina su-eini-lalue=la.*  
and PAST finally send-TR-3DU.OBJ=PFV  
'And finally he sent them away.'
- (10) *Ghe nim too~toonga Voi Masiki.*  
PAST just IPFV~test Voi Masiki  
'He was just testing Voi Masiki.'
- (11) *U=tani tara usi~usi=a.*  
2SG=must look IPFV~follow=3SG.OBJ  
'You must watch him carefully.'  
Lit. 'You must watch follow him.'
- (12) *U=vira taa~tara.*  
2SG=only\_now IPFV~look  
'Only then may you look.'
- (13) *Ami ghe nim mene matuaa vukala=la.*  
1EX.PL PAST just again be\_quiet hang=PFV  
'We just drifted quietly again.'

Adverbs in the Adverb<sub>2</sub> slot form a much wider and potentially open class, including several non-derived adverbs as well as all the derived adverbs. The observed adverbs are listed in Tables 3 and 4.

Adverb <sub>2</sub>	Gloss
<i>aitaua</i>	'together'
<i>akasina</i>	'first'
<i>longoti</i>	'across'
<i>mua</i>	'first'
<i>nonga</i>	'only'
<i>parasi</i>	'quickly'
<i>poi</i>	'emphatic, frustrated'
<i>see</i>	'undirected'
<i>tee</i>	'with'

Table 3 Non-derived post-verbal adverbs

The adverb *see* is used when the action of the main verb is not directed to a particular goal, such as *kasu see* ‘walk aimlessly’ or *nama see* ‘eat something unspecified’. The emphatic adverb *poi* can either be an intensifier, as in the phrase *karika poi* ‘definitely not’ or denote that the action of the main verb is unfulfilled or frustrated, as in *ghe pae~pae poi* ‘he was searching unsuccessfully’.

Adverb <sub>2</sub>	Gloss
<i>a-kalakala</i>	‘near’
<i>a-kapa</i>	‘completely’
<i>a-korokorongana</i>	‘strongly’
<i>a-koronna</i>	‘truly’
<i>a-masalika</i>	‘clearly’
<i>a-masau</i>	‘distantly’
<i>a-masina</i>	‘well’
<i>a-namuu</i>	‘greatly’
<i>a-pisike</i>	‘a little’
<i>a-raarangisana</i>	‘cleanly’
<i>a-tingina</i>	‘to a great extent’
<i>a-toka</i>	‘enduringly’

Table 4 Derived post-verbal adverbs

Accompaniment is unusual in that the adverb *tee* can be used on its own, or can be inflected with the transitive suffix *-i/* and an object pronoun, thus appearing to be a verb with a limited distribution. It never appears as a verb on its own, but only as the final verb in a serial verb construction, as in example (14). Again, it can appear as an adverb without being part of a verb phrase, such as in example (15).

(14) *E=ghe toka tee-i=ta=la.*  
 3SG=PAST sit with-TR=1IN.PL=PFV  
 ‘He was staying with us.’

(15) *Aghi tee a=ghe kasu=la.*  
 1SG with 1SG=PAST walk=PFV  
 ‘I too left.’

Below are some examples of adverbs in the Adverb<sub>2</sub> slot. The first set show non-derived adverbs.

- (16) *Ami ghe taa~tara see=la.*  
 1EX.PL PAST IPFV~look undirected=PFV  
 ‘We looked around.’
- (17) *Lalu ghe a-mee~meti nonga mosu eteva.*  
 3DU PAST ADVZ-IPFV~chase only pig SG.I  
 ‘They were only chasing the pig.’
- (18) *Italu nama~nama mua.*  
 1IN.DU IPFV~eat first  
 ‘Let’s eat first.’
- (19) *La=ghe toka aitaau=la tani aipooa.*  
 3PL=PAST sit together=PFV COMP converse  
 ‘They sat down together to discuss.’
- (20) *Angalua me nenga-ghi karika ngalu ghe tani ghaa*  
 1IN.DU and younger\_sibling-1SG.POSS NEG 1IN.DU PAST must get  
*a-masina=la.*  
 ADVZ-good=PFV  
 ‘My sister and I really did not receive it well.’
- (21) *A=ghe alousiusi tee=la tama-ghi.*  
 1SG=PAST weep with=PFV father-1SG.POSS  
 ‘I wept with my father.’
- The next set of examples show the use of derived adverbs.
- (22) *Nau u=lao a-kalakala, karika va rao-i=a.*  
 time 2SG=go ADVZ-near NEG COMP whale-TR=3SG.OBJ  
 ‘When you come near, it’s not a whale.’
- (23) *Ang=e=ranga a-tingina=la.*  
 TAM=3SG=stick ADVZ-stand=PFV  
 ‘He became stuck hard.’
- (24) *Ami ghe malolo a-toka=la.*  
 1IN.PL PAST rest ADVZ-sit=PFV  
 ‘We rested a long time.’
- (25) *Ami ghe i~ilou e-masau=eili.*  
 1IN.PL PAST IPFV~run ADVZ-far=EMPH  
 ‘We were running a very long way.’
- (26) *Manu eteva ang=ghe sae~sae a-namuu tale olimo ateva.*  
 water SG.I TAM=PAST IPFV~go\_up ADVZ-big PREP canoe SG.I  
 ‘The water had been rising greatly in the canoe.’

- (27) *La=ghe ruu~ruu e-kapa=la.*  
 3PL=PAST IPFV~finish ADVZ-complete=PFV  
 ‘They completely finished.’

When the verb phrase contains a serial verb construction, adverbs tend to be after the final verb root. Adverbs do come in the middle of serial verb constructions on occasion. The first set of examples show the adverb as the last element of the core of the verb phrase.

- (28) *E=ghe tingina laa arau e=lae.*  
 3SG=PAST stand go EMPH LOC=shore  
 ‘He stood right on the shore.’

- (29) *Noonoo ghe lao sio emua.*  
 Noonoo PAST go go\_down in\_front  
 ‘Noonoo went forward.’

- (30) *Vause namuu ng=ateva ghe vati runga~runga ng=a-kapa*  
 woman big LIG=SG.I PAST weave IPFV~close LIG=CAUS-complete  
*see=la lutu marekate.*  
 undirected=PFV piece hole  
 ‘The old woman was weaving completely closed the hole.’

- (31) *La=ghoa suu~suu=e nonga e=Mananusa.*  
 3PL=go\_out IPFV~bathe=3SG.OBJ only LOC=Mananusa  
 ‘They only go out to swim there at Mananusa.’

- (32) *Ghe paru~paru velu poi paua atoa.*  
 PAST IPFV~beat drop EMPH dog PL  
 ‘He was beating the dogs away in vain.’

- (33) *U=rou mene taa~tara lao poi emuli.*  
 2SG=NEG again IPFV~look go EMPH behind  
 ‘You must not look back.’

- (34) *Lalu ghe laa suu~suu eitaua.*  
 2DU PAST go IPFV~bathe together  
 ‘They went to swim together.’

The next set of examples show adverbs in the Adverb<sub>2</sub> slot of a non-final verb in a serial verb construction.

- (35) *Saalimalima karika ghe lao a-masau sio.*  
 Saalimalima NEG PAST go ADVZ-far go\_down  
 ‘Saalimalima did not go very far away.’

- (36) *La=ghe mae a-kalakala sio.*  
 3PL=PAST come ADVZ-near go\_down

‘They came close.’

- (37) *La=ghe naa~namuu ng=a-tingina sae.*  
 3PL=PAST IPFV~big LIG=ADVZ-stand go\_up  
 ‘They grew up (to be adults).’

The fact that each of these examples has a directional verb after the adverb may be significant. More data is needed to be sure whether only directional verbs can occur in this setting.

#### 4 VARIATIONS

There are some verb phrases in the data which do not fit into the pattern described above. The most common of these are cases where an object enclitic follows the adverb. Some examples of this follow:

- (38) *Taita atoa la=ghe aloanna poi=a.*  
 man PL 3PL=PAST want EMPH=3SG.OBJ  
 ‘The men loved her in vain.’
- (39) *La=ghe tara oroi=e=la taumattu ng=atoa.*  
 3PL=PAST look many=3SG.OBJ=PFV person LIG=PL  
 ‘They saw that there were many people.’
- (40) *La=ghe toka karasa ng=a-masina=aili=a.*  
 3PL=PAST sit sharpen LIG=ADVZ-good=EMPH=3SG.OBJ  
 ‘They sat sharpening it well.’
- (41) *U=mene mai tue~tue poi=a!*  
 2SG=again come IPFV~chop EMPH=3SG.OBJ  
 ‘Come again and cut it properly!’

This type of construction also occurs as a rule with the adverb *tee* ‘with’ when it occurs with a pronominal argument, in which case it functions like a verb, taking the transitive suffix */-i/* plus an object enclitic. This was discussed in Brownie & Brownie (2007:143).

The apparent treatment of some adverbs as verbs that can occur at the end of serial verb constructions suggests that at least some adverbs have developed from verbs, but it is hard to prove in a synchronic study like the present one.

Another variation is in imperative clauses, where the adverb *mua* ‘first’ may come after the perfective marker */=la/* which always otherwise occurs verb phrase-final. This could be a

back-formation from the Tok Pisin *pastaim* ‘first’, which is often added to an imperative. An example from our data is:

- (42) *Rei=la mua uru-ghu.*  
 scratch=PFV first head-1SG.POSS  
 ‘Scratch my head first.’

A further variation is that in some cases, the derived adverb appears to be missing the adverbializing prefix /a-/, which was the source of some of the confusion in the previous analysis.

- (43) *Taa~tara masina!*  
 IPFV~look good  
 ‘Look carefully!’
- (44) *Katoa la=ghe pasi kasina=la.*  
 some 3PL=PAST plant first=PFV  
 ‘Some planted first.’

Note that example (43) was recorded in a written text. Since identical vowels across a word boundary within a phrase are realised as a lengthened vowel, most Mussau people who have not been taught how to write their language tend to leave out the second vowel. Hence this is quite likely meant to represent *Taa~tara a-masina!* with the adverbializing prefix omitted. However, example (44) cannot be reinterpreted this way, as the preceding vowel is different, and one would expect to see *Katoa la=ghe pasi e-kasina=la.*

## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations generally follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules. The following abbreviations are used in this paper:

- 1 = first person  
 1EX = first person exclusive  
 1IN = first person inclusive  
 2 = second person  
 3 = third person  
 ADVZ = adverbializer  
 CAUS = causative  
 COMP = complementizer  
 DIM = diminutive  
 DU = dual  
 EMPH = emphasis

I	=	class I
IPFV	=	imperfective
LIG	=	ligature
LOC	=	locative
NEG	=	negation, negative
OBJ	=	object
PAST	=	past tense
PFV	=	perfective
PL	=	plural
POSS	=	possessive
PREP	=	preposition
SG	=	singular
TAM	=	tense-aspect-mood marker (meaning comes from context)
TR	=	transitive

## REFERENCES

Brownie, John & Marjo Brownie. 2007. *Mussau Grammar Essentials*. Data Papers on PNG Languages 52. Ukarumpa: SIL.

---

<sup>1</sup> The morpheme which is glossed TAM takes its meaning from context, based on the presence or absence of other tense, aspect and mood markers. For details, see Brownie & Brownie (2007:121-3).