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Accretion of *na* prefix in the language of Banam Bay, SE Malekula:
A preliminary study

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In the literature on Vanuatu languages, there is considerable interest in forming family groups and historical links between languages based on common innovations or remnants of parent languages. On the island of Malekula it has been suggested that there is a division between North and South languages, and more recently, one between Eastern and Western languages. This paper uses the grammatical feature of the accretion of the Proto-Oceanic nominalizing prefix *na*, to compare Banam Bay language to the other Eastern languages with which it has been grouped to support this Eastern linkage.

Keywords: Malekula languages, Banam Bay, Vanuatu, linguistic historical links, *na* accretion

In assessing historical linkages of languages within Vanuatu, a comparison of the languages of Malekula allows us to determine possible sub-groups or divisions. One such language under comparison is Banam Bay Area Language. Banam Bay was formerly classified as Burmbar/Repaxivir/Fartavo by Tryon (1976) and later joined under the title of Banam Bay Area Language by Crowley (2000). It is been documented in wordlists but is considered "not well known" because it lacks any phonological or structural documentation (Lynch and Crowley 2001:17). Yet, despite its relatively limited documentation, Banam Bay wordlists have been used to categorize it as an Eastern language and to provide support for the hypothesis of an East/West divide within Malekula Island. While it can be useful to compare vocabulary lists, new descriptions of these Malekula languages make it possible to establish comparisons using grammatical features. Using the corpus of both grammar and vocabulary data I have collected on Banam Bay language (2016-2018), I will examine the historical feature of *na* accretion in noun forms. This provides further evidence on where Banam Bay converges or diverges in its proposed historical origins from its neighboring languages.

Within the archipelago country of Vanuatu, there are at least 138 different languages (François, et al. 2015). It has been posited that Malekula's estimated 33 languages fall into the

Northern Central Vanuatu (NCV) subgroup of Vanuatu languages (Clark 2009). The NCV languages are considered to have a place within the Central/Eastern Oceanic Linkage on a branch securely within the Austronesian family of languages (Clark 2009). Other languages in this linkage include "Southeast Solomonic, Utupua-Vanikoro, Southern Vanuatu, New Caledonia-Loyalties, Central Pacific (Fijian-Rotuman-Polynesian) and Micronesian" (Clark 2009:3). The three outliers, (Emae, Imere-Ifira and Futuna-Aniwa) are linked to the Polynesian subgroup of Oceanic languages (Clark 2009, Lynch and Crowley 2001).

Based on linguistic analysis of Tryon's wordlists and other grammar descriptions of Vanuatu languages, Clark (2009) concludes that the NCV subgroup has "achieved consensual status" and thus, these groupings can be evaluated in the reconstructions of the "putative ancestral language, Proto North and Central Vanuatu (PNCV), from which the attested NCV languages may be derived" (Clark 2009:3). Examining the current Vanuatu languages against this putative ancestral language can help to identify links between languages by identifying co-innovation or similar patterns of historical remnants maintained in the grammar of the language (Tryon 1996).

On the island of Malekula, specifically, there has been an attempt to connect the data from the different documented languages to identify regional groupings. In her grammar of the Unua language, Pearce (2015) echoes the placement of Malekula's languages into the Central Eastern Oceanic sub-group, and gives examples of the language groupings within Malekula. She notes that the classification of Lynch (2007) divides the island into Eastern and Western divisions, but also cautions that there needs to be more input from the languages that fall into these categories. Lynch (2016) reiterates the linkage between the eastern languages, but splits the island's languages into three subgroups; a Northern group, an Eastern group and a Western group.

In this current categorization of the Eastern Malekula language group, Lynch (2016) excludes some of the languages currently spoken on the Northeast coast. He explains that some of these languages were initially inland, then migrated down to the eastern coast, and that they retain more similarities to the Western linkage than to the Eastern languages and therefore they may be more closely related to the Northern and Western language subgroups. This has been consistent with their oral histories of a migration from the West towards the East and with shared characteristics with the Northern and Western language subgroups (Barbour 2012, Lynch 2016).

Thus, he categorizes Vao into northern subgroup, and categorizes Avava, Neverver, and Tirax as part of the Western subgroup.

As a result, the Eastern Malekula linkage, as proposed by Lynch (2016), consists of Uripiv, Unua, Aulua, Banam Bay, with a Southeastern sister branch consisting of the languages of Bwenelang, Nasvang, Port Sandwich, Avok, Axamb and Maskelynes. It is interesting to note that through all the iterations of Malekula subgroupings, Aulua, Unua, Uripiv and Banam Bay have remained grouped together (Tryon 1976, Lynch 2006, 2007, 2016, Pearce 2015).

In firmly establishing subgroups, a number of features should be shared across languages to indicate a shared parent language. In the case of Malekula, there are many languages that share the accretion of the historical prefix *na to lexical nouns, yet there are different and quite specific conditions when this accretion undergoes phonological changes or is absent. As Lynch (2006) states, "Retention of *na- irrespective of the number of morae...is not an innovation and thus not grounds for subgrouping" (2006:16). However, if there is similar conditioning of *na accretion based on the number of morae in the stem, such as Pearce (2015) identifies for Unua *na accretion, this could be indicative of a shared innovation.

In this paper I will re-examine a portion of the Eastern language subgroup put forth by Lynch (2016) by comparing the accretion of the nominalizing prefix *na in specific contexts as an additional criterion for grammatical convergence. I will use the PNCV *na nominalizing prefix contexts highlighted by Pearce (2015) in her grammar of Unua. I will examine comparable data from Banam Bay and juxtapose this with data from Unua, and a sampling of other languages within Lynch's Eastern subgroup, such as Aulua, Uripiv, Port Sandwich, Axamb, and Maskelynes to compare and contrast the distribution of *na accretion in these specific contexts.

*NA ACCRETION CONDITIONS FOR UNUA

In analyzing the Unua language in the context of its historical roots, Pearce (2015) describes the "phonologically conditioned process of accretion of the POc article *na" into the current Unua noun forms (Pearce 2015:49). She shows that similar Unua type *na accretion occurs in some other Malekula languages such as Avava, Tirax, Port Sandwich, Aulua, Uripiv, Vao and Larëvat. Pearce suggests this feature might possibly also be seen in Banam Bay. However, at time of publication of her grammar, no description suitable for testing this hypothesis had been conducted on Banam Bay language.

After reviewing the data on *na accretion in Unua in this section, I will use recently collected data on Banam Bay to establish whether Banam Bay accretion operates in similar fashion. I will also compare *na accretion and Pearce's phonological criteria to compare Banam Bay against the Eastern subgrouping suggested by Lynch (2016) which includes Banam Bay, Unua, Uripiv, and Aulua, including a sampling of the Southeastern Malekula languages of Port Sandwhich, Axamb and Maskelynes.

In the evolution from PNCV, the Vanuatu languages are thought to have undergone low vowel dissimilation, and then an unconditioned loss of the final vowel or vowel preceding the lost final consonant (Lynch 2003, 2016, Pearce 2015). According to Lynch (2006, 2007) and Pearce (2015), the "*na accretion process is likely to have applied after the final vowel loss" (Pearce 2015:51). Pearce also states that, similar to other languages within Malekula, historically kinship person nouns were not prefixed by *na, therefore it is unlikely to find kinship term nouns, with a *na accretion (Pearce 2015, Lynch 2001, 2006).

Pearce (2015) gives three contexts in which the *na article has become accreted in Unua nouns. In the first context, synchronically monomoraic nouns have undergone the conditioned process of accretion in the form of nV +root (Pearce 2015:49).

(1) Monomoraic Unua roots have form of nV+root:

PNCV *na+ bue to Unua /naʙu/ 'bamboo'

PNCV *na+ bore to Unua /naboɾ/ 'dream'

PNCV *na+ bulu to Unua /naʙuɾ/ 'hole' (Pearce 2015:50)

Pearce's second condition focuses on nouns that historically had *t-initial roots of two or more morae. In Unua, she suggests these multimoraic *t-initial roots manifest the reflex of *na in the synchronic form of nouns which are /d/- initial (/d-/ being understood as /ⁿd-/ following Crowley (2006)), therefore, */na +t/ > /d-/ (Pearce 2015:49).

(2) */na +t/ >/ d-/in roots with two or more morae and nV+root in monomoraic *t-initial forms:

PNCV *na + talai to Unua /deɾe/ 'clam'

PNCV *na + tabwa-i + -na(3sg) to Unua /daboŋon/ 'his/her belly'

This is in contrast to single morae *t-initial roots such as:

PNCV *na + tano to Unua /natan/ 'ground, soil'

PNCV *na + tovu to Unua /natoβ/ 'sugar cane'

PNCV *na + tasi to Unua /netes/ 'sea' (Pearce 2015:50)

Lastly, Pearce states that noun roots which synchronically have more than one mora do not bear an initial reflex of *na (2015:49).

(3) Nouns with synchronically more than one mora roots (and not *t-initial) do not display *na accretion:

PNCV *busa (-na) to Unua /bison/ 'foam'

PNCV *labwe (-na) to Unua /ɾabʷen/ 'root'

PNCV * rau (-na) to Unua /ɾaun/ 'leaf' (Pearce 2015:51)

Pearce (2015) shows that many of these conditions are consistent with Crowley's (2006) analysis of Naman on the east coast of Malekula, but contrast with the patterns in Neve'ei, a language from the west coast of Malekula. In the following section I will examine the distribution of *na accretion in Banam Bay to see how it fits with the patterns of Unua and the other Eastern Malekula languages.

EXAMINING *NA ACCRETION WITHIN BANAM BAY

Using wordlist data I have collected in Banam Bay, I will compare and contrast my data, the data from Unua, and available data from Uripiv, Aulua, Port Sandwich, Axamb and Maskelynes with the proto-language PNCV to further the discussion of these Eastern Malekula languages and their chronological evolution. The data reviewed in this sketch was collected in wordlists and narratives recorded with native speakers ranging from 31 years old to 65 years old, including two females and two males.[i] For my examples I am using a phonetic based preliminary orthography of Banam Bay. Community discussions to determine a preferred orthography are still underway as part of our language project. To aid in comparison across languages, I am using orthographic forms similar to Lynch (2016) as much as possible. Therefore the velar fricative is indicated as *x*. Voiced stops, such as *b*, *g*, and *d*, are prenasalized, thus the orthographic *b* represents /ᵐb/. In Banam Bay there are the basic five vowels /i e a o u/. There is still some

discussion on the voicing of the labiodental fricative in Banam Bay. However, for ease of comparison, here I have written it orthographically as *v* as opposed to /β/ or /f/. I have placed lexical items which do not correspond to the conditional change or which may be a lexical item given, but is not derived from the same root, in parentheses in the tables below.

This analysis will utilize the reconstructed PNCV forms in Clark (2009) as the root onto which it is hypothesised *na* accretion may have occurred. I will start by looking at the conditions of *na* accretion laid out by Pearce (2015:49), to see how much Banam Bay patterns like Unua. The initial focus will be on:

- Synchronically single mora noun roots.
- *t*-initial roots of nouns with two or more morae.
- Noun roots which synchronically have more than one mora

MONOMORAIC ROOTS

Synchronically monomoraic roots in Banam Bay consistently take the form *nV*+root. In these examples, the *V* indicates an underspecified vowel. (The conditioning factors influencing the quality of this vowel are the subject of ongoing data collection and analysis.) These accretions have similar patterns across all of the Eastern languages examined in Table 1, therefore they are a possible marker of relatedness for Lynch's (2016) Eastern linkage.

Table 1: PNCV *na* accretion as *nV* +root in synchronically monomoraic noun roots in Banam Bay compared to similar patterns in the Eastern Subgrouping.

PNCV	Banam Bay	Unua	Aulua	Uripiv	Port Sandwich	Maskelynes	Axamb	Gloss
na + wai	/nuai/	/nue/	/nave/	/nuwi/	/noai/	/noai/	/nuoi/	'water'
na + boŋi	/naboŋ/	/naboŋ/	/naboŋ/	/naboŋ/	/naboŋ/	/neboŋ/	/naboŋ/	'day'
na + ika	/naix/	/naix/	/nixa/	/nai/	/naix/	/naiex/	/naix/	'fish'
na + mwata	/namat/	/namat/	/namat/	/numet/	/namar/	/nemat/	/namwer/	'snake'
na + ʔusa	/naus/	/naus/	/nosa/	/naus/	/naus/	/naus/	/naus/	'rain'
na + ʔuta	/naut/	/naut/	/nota/	/naut/	/naur/	/naut/	/naur/	'place'
na + kutu	/naxut/	/naxut/	/naxut/	_	/naxur/	/naxut/	/naxur/	'louse'
na + vose	/nevos/	/nevos/	/nevos/	/niwos/	/nivos/	/nevos/	/navos/	'paddle'
na + kabu	/naxam^p/	/noxobb/	/nasob/	/n/abb/	/naxab/	/naxab/	/naxab/	'fire'

*na + damu	/nandram/	/norom/	/nendem/	/(dram)/	/nandram/	/nendam/	/nendram/	'yam' 'year'
*na + ʔavua	/nevu/	/nevu/	/nevia/	/nevae/	/nivü/	/nivü/	/nivü/	'turtle'
*na + bulu	/nambur/	/nabbur/	/nambul/	/(bulwil)/	/nabur/	/nambur/	/nambur/	'hole'
*na + yumwa	/naim/	/neim/	/nema/	/naim/	/naim/	/naim/	/naim/	'house'
*na + bue	/nambu/	/nambu/	/nelimb/	_	/nambu/	/nambu/	/nambu/	'bamboo'
*na + rau	/narao/	/noro/	/naro/	/(raunai)/	/nuxer/	/nalu/	/noro/	'leaf'
*na + muki	/namu/	/namwi/	/namu/	/namwi/	/nakü/	/nandu/	/nandru/	'earthquake'

(Data for Unua from Pearce 2015:50, data from Uripiv from Lynch 2016 and Tryon 1976, data for Aulua, Port Sandwich, Maskelynes and Axamb from Charpentier 1982, PNCV reconstructions from Clark 2009)

*T- INITIAL NOUN ROOTS OF TWO OR MORE MORAE

In the second context, *t- initial noun roots of two or more morae as */na+ t/> prenasalized /d/ we see that there are some similar patterns and some contrasts among the subgrouped languages in Table 2.

Table 2: PNCV *na accretion of bimoraic *t-initial words in Banam Bay and neighboring Eastern Malekula languages. In Banam Bay, as in Unua, voiced plosive dental-alveolar is pre-nasalized word initially, thus in the table /d/ is representative of the allophone [ⁿd]

PNCV	Banam Bay	Unua	Aulua	Uripiv	Port Sandwich	Maskelynes	Axamb	Gloss
*talai	/dere/	/dere/	/dele/	/deli/	_	_	_	'clam' or 'axe'
*ʔatamate	/demet/	/demetʃ/	/temes/	_	/(ramač)/	/natamat/	/(naremač)/	'devil'
* tabwa-i	/daban/	/daboŋon/	/tamben/	/depain/	/(baxavun)/	/(nabaxavun)/	/(nabaxavun)/	'belly' (his/her)
*ta-lawa	/drumarao/	/(romro)/	/teblongangu/	/(ni-la)/	/drumeao/	/(liŋesŋes)/	/naŋaŋgao/	'spider'
*tavaral	/davar/	/(naror)/	tevar/	/dapdap/	/(rave)/	_	/naror/	'wave' (n)

(Data for Unua from Pearce 2015:50, data from Uripiv from Lynch 2016 and Tryon 1976, data for Aulua, Port Sandwich, Maskelynes and Axamb from Charpentier 1982, PNCV from Clark 2009)

In this second context, it appears that Banam Bay and Unua and Uripiv undergo a similar phonological change. The rest of the subgroup is a little more variable. Aulua seems to retain the *t initial but does not undergo the *na accretion. Port Sandwich has a reflex of PNCV *t realized as /r/, so it may pattern with Aulua's in dropping the *na prefix (Lynch 2006). Maskelynes and Axamb in this data do not correspond with the phonological change from *t initial to prenasalized /d/. Instead they have straight forward *na accretion.

MONOMORAIC *T- INITIAL ROOTS

The exceptions to the */na+t-/>/d/, in Banam Bay, just as in Unua, occur when the roots become monomoraic following final vowel deletion. In this case, Table 3 shows that Banam Bay patterns with the monomoraic /*nV-/ along with the major languages in this Eastern subgrouping. Note that Port Sandwich and Axamb have a further shared realization of *t- /r/ (Lynch 2006).

Table 3: Exceptions to the */na+t-/>/d/ rule when *t- initial roots are synchronically monomoraic in Banam Bay and therefore accrete *na as /nV-/

PNCV	Banam Bay	Unua	Aulua	Uripiv	Port Sandwich	Maskelynes	Axamb	Gloss
*na + tasi	/netes/	/netes/	/netes/	/(dis)/	/naras/	/netas/	/nears/	'sea'
*na + tovu	/netiv/	/natov/	/netiv/	/nativ/	/narov/	/netev/	/narov/	'sugarcane'
*na + tano	/neten/	/natan/	/neten/	/(dan)/	/naran/	/netan/	/neran/	'ground, soil'
*na + turu	/natur/	/natur/	/indur/	_	/natü/	/natür/	/natür/	'drop'

(Data for Unua from Pearce 2015, data from Uripiv from Lynch 2016 and Tryon 1976, data for Aulua, Port Sandwich, Maskelynes and Axamb from Charpentier 1982, PNCV from Clark 2009)

NON-MONOMORAIC ROOTS

The last condition I examine is the condition in which non-monomoraic roots do not display *na accretion. Here we find that Banam Bay, Aulua, Unua, and Port Sandwich correspond in some of the cases, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Non-monomoraic roots in Banam Bay showing absence of *na accretion
(Data for Unua from Pearce 2015, data from Uripiv from Lynch 2016 and Tryon 1976, data for Aulua, Port

PNCV	Banam Bay	Unua	Aulua	Uripiv	Port Sandwich	Maskelynes	Axamb	Gloss
*bani, kabu-a	/xavi-n/	/xabe-n/	/xauna/	/(namben)/	/kombvea-n/	/(naxambela-n)/	/(naxambe-n)/	'wing' or 'shoulder'
*bakewa	/baxre/	/baxe/	/baxe/	_	/baxö/	/(nabexi)/	/baxo-ber/	'shark'
*batavu	/betiv/	/betov/	/betev/	/betiv/	/barav/	/beta/	/(naberav)/	'breadfruit'
*maraya	/marit/	/marit/	/marta/	_	/marir/	____	____	'eel'
*makobu	/maxob/	/maxebb/	/maxomb/	_	/mexömb/	/(namexemb)/	/(nemaxomb)/	'lizard'

Sandwich, Maskelynes and Axamb from Charpentier 1982, PNCV from Clark 2009)

However, in Table 5, under the same non-monomoraic conditions, Banam Bay reflects a pattern more in line with Maskelynes and Axamb, which seem to retain the *na* accretion more regularly regardless of the number of mora.

Table 5: Non-monomoraic roots in Banam Bay showing reflex of PNCV *na* accretion as *nV+* root (Data for Unua from Pearce 2015:51)

PNCV	Banam Bay	Unua	Aulua	Uripiv	Port Sandwich	Maskelynes	Axamb	Gloss
labwe	/nebraxte/	/ɾabʷen/	/bweli/	/lapenai/	/(ciri)/	/naxarxet/	/naxrece/	'root'
sala	/napesar/	/neser/	/(xavila)/	/sel/	/nasepuse/	/nametpisal/	/naser/	'road'
buaqa	/nubuang/	/ʙuag/	/buang/	/nabet/	/buang/	/nambuang/	/nambuang/	'taro'
boe	/nubuai/	/ʙue/	/nabwi/	--	/nabuas/	/nabuaj/	/nabuas/	'pig'

(Data for Unua from Pearce 2015, data from Uripiv from Lynch 2016 and Tryon 1976, data for Aulua, Port Sandwich, Maskelynes and Axamb from Charpentier 1982, PNCV from Clark 2009)

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS DATA

On the first three contexts of *na* accretion, Banam Bay patterns closely with Unua and seems to fit well into the sisterly relationship of Lynch's Eastern subgroup of Unua, Uripiv, Aulua, and Banam Bay. On this finial context however, in which we see Banam Bay adhering to this subgroup in some cases, but contrasting in certain forms, we can say that Banam Bay is patterning more closely with the Southeastern language branch, including Port Sandwich, Maskelynes and Axamb. Perhaps Banam Bay falls somewhere in between the two groups, the straight Eastern languages on one side, and Banam Bay coming off a branch slightly closer to the Southeastern languages on the other side, such as had been originally proposed by Lynch (2006).

Another way to analyze this data could be by invoking Tryon's (1996) chain networks, which allow for overlap on all geographically contiguous languages rather than placement of each language specifically in one or another subgrouping. He proposes that rather than just discussing language family groups, linguists should begin to think of the Vanuatu languages as a group of linkages, based on "innovations shared by all members of the group" and "innovations which link communalects in a chain or network" (1996:176). He defines chains as running along coastal lines, and networks as traversing over land mass. He notes that a communalect chain or network can consist of two adjacent languages which share some innovation, then the next neighboring language, which may share a different innovation with only one of the first

languages, and so on. Furthermore, the "geographical domains of various innovations may overlap" (1996:176). So while it may be that there is good evidence to maintain the Western/Eastern Malekula division, in the case of Banam Bay, it may also be part of a communalect chain including more of the languages to the South.

There is also the possibility that Banam Bay could have been influenced from contact with other languages through trade routes of historical exchange. Huffman's (1996) map of Northern Central Vanuatu trade routes provides evidence that there were clearly defined trade routes between the most western corner of Ambrym and its closest landfall, directly in the Banam Bay area of Malekula. Links between West Ambrym and East Malekula were based on the exchange of pigs from Ambrym and food from Malekula, and direct links have been found between Craig Cove, Ambrym and Banam Bay, Malekula (Huffman 1996). Thus it may be the case that Western Ambrym language features may have also influenced the Banam Bay language. This suggests another point for further study into the Malekula language groupings.

By looking at the grammatical features of the Malekula languages beyond just the collected vocabulary lists, linguists in Vanuatu are able to confirm or reassess the family links between languages on Malekula Island. This is a process that must take into consideration similar innovations in creating family groups. Information on trade routes and possible language contact/sharing between outside languages may also inform linkages between different language groups. In the case of Banam Bay, the reflexes of *na* accretion are sufficiently similar to the observed patterns in Unua, Uripiv, and Aulua as to link these languages as part of one language family or linkage, but as shown, Banam Bay may also share a linkage with its Southern neighboring languages. This last context of *na* accretion as evidence for Banam Bay's closer link to the southeastern languages is just a postulation based on one conditioning factor at this time. This paper provides a preliminary analysis that can be tested in the future as more grammatical features are compared. Ongoing data collection in Banam Bay will give further insight in comparing its placement among Malekula languages and in comparison to Western Ambrym for potential language influences. In addition, as grammatical descriptions of more of the languages of Malekula come to publication, future comparisons will further clarify these emerging historical language groups. Until then, in the words of Terry Crowley, "Happy cognate hunting!" (Lynch 2006).

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[i] A grammar sketch of Banam Bay based on multiple speakers in different villages is the subject of my ongoing PhD.