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THE USE OF COMPLETIVE AND INCOMPLETIVE ASPECT
IN NAWDM NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

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In the Nawdm language, the completive aspect marks completed events (actions and speech events) on the main story line. Projected completed events and events accomplished anterior to current discourse time, are also marked with completive. The incompleted aspect, on the other hand, is used for backgrounded events on the story line, ongoing processes and projected ongoing events. Some explanatory information is also marked by incompleted. There are six types of two-verb complexes. Three of them are characterized by simultaneity, the other three by sequentiality. Each verb is marked for aspect either completive or incompleted, but the same aspect never occurs on both verbs. Furthermore, in each complex, one of the two verbs is marked as the subsidiary verb.

Dans la langue nawdm, l'aspect complétif marque les événements achevés (les actions et les paroles) qui forment la ligne principale du thème. Ces événements se divisent en deux groupes: Ceux qui sont achevés (ou ont été achevés) avant le temps actuel du discours, et ceux qui sont considérés comme achevés du point de vue du locuteur, bien qu'ils ne le sont pas en réalité. Par contre, l'aspect incomplétif sert à marquer les événements qui forment l'arrière-plan de la ligne du thème, les événements en cours, et ceux qui n'ont pas encore commencé. Quelques informations explicatives sont aussi marquées par l'incomplétif. Il y a six types d'ensembles de deux verbes. Trois d'entre eux sont caractérisés par la simultanéité, et les trois autres par la séquentialité. Chacun des deux verbes est marqué par un aspect, soit par le complétif, soit par l'incomplétif, mais les deux ne sont jamais marqués du même aspect. De plus, un des deux verbes est désigné comme verbe subordonné.

0. INTRODUCTION

The Nawdm¹ language has both aspect² and tense. The aspect system is of prime importance, whereas tense is somewhat secondary and has a different function³.

Every verb must take one of the two aspectual forms, completive or incompleted. This is the case not only for indicatives, but also for imperatives and participles. However, if the verb is negated, the aspect is carried by the negation particle, and the verb itself is unmarked for aspect.

As aspect cannot be equated with past, present or future tense, it is necessary to study its use; the purpose of this paper⁴ is to show how completive and incompleted aspects are used in narrative discourse.

The completive aspect will be treated in 1, the incomplete aspect in 2 and the use of completive and incomplete in two-verb complexes in 3.

The completive aspect marking means that an action is viewed in its totality, as a unit of which the two limits, beginning and end, are clearly set (Nicole, 1983).

On the other hand, the incomplete marking means that an action is not complete in itself, is not viewed as a unit, but rather as having component parts.

The incomplete is further subcategorised as follows. If we are looking at the beginning of an action, the verb is marked with the marker for incomplete with ingressive viewpoint. Similarly the incomplete with progressive viewpoint looks at the middle of an action, while the incomplete with terminative viewpoint looks at the end of an action. These three different viewpoints of the incomplete all have different surface markings.

Further details of the surface forms of the various aspect markings and of the semantics of the aspects at word level are found in another paper in preparation (also Nicole, 1983). This paper concentrates on the discourse functions of the aspects.

1. THE USE OF COMPLETIVE ASPECT IN NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

A narrative text illustrates the usages of this aspect.

1.1 THE TEXT UNDER REVIEW

The story is as follows: "The devil met a farmer tilling his land and challenged him over his (the farmer's) ownership of the land. They agreed on a compromise, to divide the harvest. The devil would take everything that grew under the ground, the farmer everything that grew above. The farmer was cunning and sowed millet so he got the full benefit of his crop which he sold at the market. The devil, however, harvesting what grew under the ground, got nothing."

Note that verbs in CAPITALS are in completive aspect, while underlined verbs are incomplete. Numbers mark clauses.

¹One day, a farmer
WENT and tilled the ground of his field. ²All of a sudden,
the devil came out upon him ³and
ASKED him: "What are you doing here?" ⁴He
REPLIED to the devil: ⁵"I prepare the ground
so that I can SOW." ⁶The devil
SAID to him: ⁷"This field is not yours. ⁸It is
mine as well as all the others. ⁹What
right is this (that you have) to cultivate it?"
¹⁰"EXCUSE me, ¹¹I want to CULTIVATE ¹²so that I can LIVE."
¹³"Listen well, ¹⁴I shall
FORGIVE you, ¹⁵but we have to DISCUSS something. ¹⁶We shall
DIVIDE the harvest between us. ¹⁷We shall
MAKE two heaps. ¹⁸I shall
KEEP the things ¹⁹that will

GROW under the ground. ²⁰You
 KEEP the things that are above. ²¹Because, really, it's me
 the devil, ²²and you are just a village man,
 ²³that's why I will
 CHOOSE first. ²⁴I choose the things that will be under the
 ground, ²⁵you keep the things that will be above."
²⁶The village man was intelligent and sowed millet.
²⁷When the time of the harvest
 ARRIVED, ²⁸the devil and his children
 CAME. ²⁹The farmer cut his millet, beat and sifted it, ³⁰and
 PUT it into baskets ³¹and
 WENT to the market selling it. ³²The devil tore up
 the things that REMAINED in the ground ³³and
 WENT to the market to SELL (them). ³⁴People
 LAUGHED at them.

In this text, the completive aspect is used to mark both completed events (1.2) and projected completed events (1.3), as well as explanatory information (1.4).

1.2 COMPLETED EVENTS

1.2.1 Actions on the main story line

The completive aspect marks actions on the main story line. These events constitute the backbone of the story and they move the plot forward. Such events are considered in their entirety, viewed as complete (i.e. seeing the beginning and the end at the same time). Usually, the event is already accomplished at the time of narration.

Main story line action verbs are shown in capitals and have always been put at the left margin of the text set out in 1.1.

In the sample text, the verbs WENT (clause 1), ARRIVED (27), CAME (28), PUT (30), WENT (31 and 33), LAUGHED (34) are completed events (physical actions) on the main story line of the text. The actions have already been achieved at the time the verb is mentioned.

1.2.2 Speech events on the main story line

The completive aspect also marks speech events that are on the main story line. These speech events can be reported in direct or indirect speech and are an important part of the interaction between the major participants; they thus also serve to move the story plot forward. If the speech quotes were omitted, the remaining events would not make sense.

In the text, the verbs ASKED (3), REPLIED (4), SAID (6), EXCUSE (10), FORGIVE (14) have to do with speech events.

The first three of these report speech-events are or form part of interactions in the plot of the story and so are part of the story line, along with the physical interactions of the verbs dealt with in 1.2.1. The last two, EXCUSE and FORGIVE are performative verbs, and by them definite social transactions are accomplished between the two main participants, the devil and the

farmer; and so these verbs, too, are on the main story line. Note that the two verbs, 'excuse' (10) and 'forgive' (14), both have homophonous forms in the completive and incompletive aspects. However, because the general view is that of projected completed events (see 1.3), I analyse them as completive.

1.3 PROJECTED COMPLETED EVENTS

Projected completed events are seen as complete, but not yet accomplished. Under projected completed events, we have definite purposes (1.3.1), definite plans to be executed in the future (1.3.2) and definite conditional events (1.3.3).

1.3.1 Definite purposes

Within a direct speech quote, the completive aspect on a verb can mark a definite purpose or goal that the speaker has at the time of speech. This may be the purpose of what the speaker is currently doing or of what he says he will do. The actual time that the purpose is achieved is not specifically stated and may be, though does not have to be, in the future (in contrast to the actions treated in 1.3.2). These definite purpose clauses are introduced by the subordination particle *na* 'so that' or 'purpose'.

In the text, the verbs SOW (5), CULTIVATE (11), LIVE (12), DISCUSS (15), and SELL (33) are all definite purposes.

(1) As an example⁵ of a surface form, clause 5 comes out as:

¹*mà máŋ -h-r -á tán -té*
 I prepare-h-rep.⁶-incompl. ground-n.cl.
²*ná mà bód-0*
 so that I sow-compl.dep.
¹'I am preparing the ground ²so that I can sow.'

This example is from quoted speech; the speaker is the farmer who is in process of preparing the ground while he is speaking. He states that the purpose of his preparing that ground is so that he can sow.

1.3.2 Definite plans to be executed in the future

Again within a direct speech quote, a combination of the completive aspect and a future tense particle (for example *daa*)⁷ on a verb can be used to mark an action which is part of a definite plan to be executed in the future. The essential property of the actions dealt with in this subsection is that they must be executed at a time after the current reference time (whereas for the definite purpose dealt with in 1.3.1, the time of execution is not explicitly given).

At the time of speech, a plan is conceived, and although the plan is not yet executed at that time, the whole thing is seen as a complete unit (rather than as fragmented or not yet achieved).

In the text, the verbs DIVIDE (16), MAKE (17), KEEP (18), GROW (19), CHOOSE (23) are all definite plans to be executed later. When the actions are first mentioned, they are not yet achieved, but are ultimately achieved as the story unfolds.

(2) As an example of the surface forms, clause 16 comes out as:

tè dáá tè rád -g tàá ðíkáq -té
 we future we divide-compl. among ourselves harvest-n.cl.
 'We shall divide the harvest between us.'

1.3.3 Definite conditional events

Events which are not yet accomplished, but which will definitely take place if a certain condition is fulfilled are marked by the completive. In a hypothetical world in which the condition is true, the event described in the main clause will also be true.

In the story entitled "The hare and the partridge", the hare played the cunning one and had his parents-in-law come and ask for the meat that the two were dividing up among themselves. So they came, one by one, and received some of the meat. Finally, there was not much left, and the hare and the partridge also wanted to eat some of it. So the partridge started to eat some but soon fell down on her back as if she were dead. In so feigning death, she deceived her partner, the hare, who became afraid that the meat had been poisoned and had killed his friend. Whereupon he ran back home to his parents-in-law and told them: "If you EAT of this meat, you will (surely) DIE, all of you." The second verb DIE is a definite warning of what would take place if the condition ever became true. Therefore, it is in the completive as the speaker sees the death already in its completeness.

It is interesting and a little surprising that verbs like 'eat' in conditional clauses are also marked with the completive aspect. One might object that the situation of the conditional clause has not yet been realised at the time of the speech event. In fact, the conditional clause describes a situation in a putative actual world, that is to say, in a world which the speaker and addressee at this point must assume to be true (or take for granted), in order for the ensuing discourse to make sense. And the Nawdm viewpoint sees a putative actual world in the same way as it sees an actual world, and different from a possible world. Note how this is corroborated by Haiman (1978) who says that conditionals are topics, and by Stalnaker (1972) who says that conditionals must be taken for granted if further linguistic business is to be transacted. Further support for this analysis comes from the Gangam language where Walker (1987) reports that verbs in hypothetical conditional clauses are marked with realis mode, the same mode that is used to mark events on the main event line (and thus in the actual world of the story).

In the "Kutunfa" story, the moral at the end says: "If you SEE somebody in such a state, do not LAUGH at him." Here the verb SEE in the conditional clause and the verb LAUGH in the main clause are both in the completive, for exactly the same reasons as in the hare and the partridge story.

1.4 EXPLANATORY INFORMATION⁸ WITH THE COMPLETIVE ASPECT - Events accomplished anterior to current discourse time

The completive aspect marks events that took place at a time anterior to current discourse time. Verbs reporting these events are preceded by the past tense particle *da*. In this way these flashback events are clearly distinguished from current events on the story line. They serve to explain the current events.

In the story "The cow that became the sun", the men finally decided to kill the cow even though it was still night. The text at this point says: "He (who) had *da* COME BACK with the cow, he ENTERED the cowshed and LOOSENED it..." In order to identify the man that went to get the cow to be killed, reference is made to what he had done prior to entering the cowshed and loosening the cow, hence what is underlined is explanatory information.

2. THE USE OF INCOMPLETIVE ASPECT IN NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

2.1 THE TEXTS UNDER REVIEW

For the study of the incompletive aspect, I shall use both the text already cited and the following text on "The cow that became the sun"..

"An old man left his field and came home at sunset. He noticed a cow eating grass. He said to himself: "This cow that is standing here, where does it come from?" He took the cow, put a cord around its neck and tied it up in his cow shed at home. Then he walked around the village asking who had lost a cow, but nobody had.

So he went to the chief and said to him: "As I have no one to look after this cow, let's get together and kill it." So they called everybody together and sat there waiting for dawn so they could kill it. It stayed dark for a long time so they got tired of sitting and they decided not to wait any longer for the light but to kill the cow immediately.

So the man who had brought back that cow, went into his cow shed and brought it out. In order to kill it, they took off the cord that was around its neck. At that moment, the cow became the sun, went off and fixed itself in the middle of the sky. It was exactly noontime.

The reason why this all happened is this: When the sun had finished her work (of shining), she changed into a red cow eating grass (=a red solar disk just before disappearing behind the horizon). On his way home, then, the farmer caught it and brought it home.

Now, since the cow had become the sun again, and there was no animal there to be killed any more, they all dispersed and went home."

In these texts, the incompletive aspect is used to describe backgrounded events on the story line (2.2), ongoing processes or current states (2.3), projected ongoing events (2.4), and also some kinds of explanatory information (2.5).

2.2 BACKGROUNDED EVENTS ON THE STORY LINE

The incomplete-terminative aspect is used to describe events on the story line that are terminated, but backgrounded. If we consider the time progression of events, there is only one story line, but some events on the line are foregrounded and marked by the completive (see 1.2), whereas other events on the line are backgrounded and these are the ones marked by the incomplete-terminative.

The use of this aspect is closely linked with the use of the discourse particle *te* 'change of participant attention' which tells the audience to focus attention on the referent of the nominal immediately preceding the *te*.

If the first verb after the *te* describes a foregrounded event, then that verb will be in the completive aspect (for example cl.1 of the first text: One day, a farmer *te* WENT and ...).

However, if after changing the participant attention, the narrator wishes to describe first a series of terminated but backgrounded events before he describes the next foregrounded event, then the only possible aspect marking on the backgrounded verbs of the series will be the incomplete-terminative. The incomplete aspect is necessary to show backgrounding and the terminative component must also be present to show that the event is terminated.

Thus the first text (given in 1.1) contains the following four verb sequences (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) which illustrate this.

- (i) ² All of a sudden the devil-*te* was intelligent and sowed millet. ³and ASKED...
- (ii) ²⁶The village man-*te* was intelligent and sowed millet. ²⁷When the time of the harvest ARRIVED...
- (iii) ²⁹The farmer-*te* cut his millet, beat and sifted it, ³⁰and PUT it into baskets.
- (iv) ³²The devil-*te* tore up the things that REMAINED and WENT to market...

In these examples the underlined verbs are in the incomplete-terminative while the verbs in capitals are in the perfective.

2.3 ONGOING PROCESSES OR CURRENT STATES

The incomplete aspect is used to describe actions that are in progress or states that are in effect at the point in the story where they are mentioned.

In the first text, the verbs doing (3), prepare (5), cultivate (9) and want (11) are all actions that are in progress or states that are in effect at the time of utterance. In this sample text, they all occur within a direct speech quote. However, these same forms can also occur outside a direct speech quote.

2.4 PROJECTED ONGOING EVENTS

2.4.1 Projected events viewed as if they were taking place at the time of speech

This phenomenon occurs in quotes of direct speech between the participants of a story. If the speaker is referring to an event to take place in the future but wants to describe it as if he were currently involved in the (projected) event, the corresponding verbs will be in the incompleted. The speaker is thus locating himself within the event as if it were a present ongoing process.

In the first text, the verbs choose (24) and keep (25) are in the incompleted, meaning 'I (the devil) am choosing the things that will be under the ground', and 'you (the farmer) are keeping the things that will be above'. However, at this point in discourse time, the farmer still has to sow, to attend to the crop and to harvest it. So there is a big time interval between this speech act and the realisation of the devil's words. However, by using the incompleted aspect, the devil is locating himself within the projected events as if they were present ongoing processes.

2.4.2 Occupational purpose

The incompleted aspect is used to mark a purposed habitual action, which I have called an occupational purpose. In contrast to a definite purpose which deals with a once-off event (1.2.1) and which is marked by the completive, the occupational purpose means a habitual action, i.e. an ongoing occupation and is therefore marked by the incompleted-terminative aspect.

In the "Kutunfa"-story, the dog advised his master Kutunfa to go to the other side of the river where nobody went and cultivate there so as to have a good crop. So "He CROSSED it and WENT cultivating alone". The cultivation was Kutunfa's occupation, his day-to-day job which lasted several months. Therefore, the verb 'cultivate' is in the incompleted-terminative form.

2.5 EXPLANATORY INFORMATION WITH THE INCOMPLETED ASPECT

2.5.1 Flashback information consisting of anterior ongoing processes

Sometimes explanatory information consists of a flashback of an anterior ongoing process. Clearly, the verb describing such an ongoing process must be marked by the incompleted aspect. To show that the flashback event is anterior to the current event, the past tense particle da precedes the verb (or the first verb if the flashback description involves a series of verbs).

In the story "The cow that became the sun", we have the following episode: Towards sundown, a farmer found a strange red cow in a field. He led it back to the village but was unable to identify its owner. So the village men decided to kill it and feast on it. In the meantime it became dark so they waited for dawn. However, after a long time, dawn still did not come, and the men decided to kill the cow. To do this they first loosened the cord that was around her neck and at that moment, the cow became the sun, went off and attached itself to the sky and there was light. At this

point in the story, the flashback information follows: "The sun DA (past tense) was doing the work (of shining). It (the shining) was FINISHED and she WENT and CHANGED into a red cow and was eating grass."

This flashback is explanatory information. It helps us understand why the farmer found the red cow eating grass that evening, and it does this by telling us what had happened before he had found it. Note the verbs doing and eating which are marked by the incompletive and describe anterior ongoing processes.

2.5.2 Explanation by citing a relevant attribute of a participant

The incompletive aspect is also used to give an explanation by citing a relevant attribute of a participant. Such attributes are part of a person's general knowledge. However, they are mentioned at the pertinent point in the story to remind the addressee.

In the story "The spider and the chameleon", we see the chameleon walking slowly and steadily. Each time he makes a step, he repeats the name of one of the chief's girls: Dindia, Anakursa, Dindia, Anakursa. And now follows the relevant attribute concerning the chameleon:

- (3) ¹Nii mamba ne mii -l ²na delaboontgun ba lee,
 you yourselves you know-INCOMPL that chameleon is such
³ku kpaa hila hɔntrbe.
 it is-not long-time-passing forgetfulness
 'You yourselves know ²that, the way the chameleon is, ³not
 much time will have passed and it will have forgotten.'

In other words: The chameleon's attribute of forgetfulness which is presupposed knowledge of everybody in the Nawdm culture⁹, is mentioned here in order to make sure that the chameleon's actions are understood. It is explanatory information.

3. THE USE OF COMPLETIVE AND INCOMPLETIVE ASPECT IN TWO-VERB COMPLEXES

3.1 SOME GENERALITIES ABOUT TWO-VERB COMPLEXES

In Nawdm there are six different sequences of two verbs which function as single units in discourse which I call two-verb complexes. The two verbs describe the same situation from different standpoints. Chart 1 summarises the properties of the different kinds of two-verb complexes. V₁ is the first and V₂ the second verb in the sequence in surface structure. The aspect of each verb is given in parentheses following the verb; thus, V₁(c) means that the first verb in the complex takes completive aspect; V₂(i) means that the second verb takes incompletive aspect.

The first column of the chart shows simultaneous complexes in which V₁ and V₂ report simultaneous features of the same situation. (The simultaneity follows from the fact that the particle n 'sequential' does not occur anywhere in the complex.) Note that the particle ka 'subsidiary' marks the verb it precedes as being the subsidiary verb of the complex.

Chart 1

Summary chart of two-verb complexes

	simultaneous	sequential
completive-incompletive	main action - secondary detail V ₁ (c) {ka V ₂ (i)} 3.2	main action - secondary phase V ₁ (c) n {ka V ₂ (i)} 3.3
incompletive - completive	main ongoing process different viewpoint V ₁ (i) {ka V ₂ (c)} 3.4	main event (motion verb) - result V ₁ (i) n {ka V ₂ (c)} 3.5
to be + complement - incompletive	attribute - extent {ka(be+comp)}V ₂ (i) 3.6	attribute - consequence {ka(be+comp)}nV ₂ (i) 3.7

The second column of the chart shows sequential complexes in which V₁ and V₂ report different "phases" of the same situation. These phases are in time sequence in the first two rows and in logical sequence in the third row; this sequentiality is always marked by the particle **n** 'sequential'. And, as before, the **ka** particle marks the verb it precedes as the subsidiary verb, so that the unmarked verb is the principal verb.

The first row enumerates the complexes for which V₁ is in the completive aspect and V₂ in the incompletive. The second enumerates the complexes for which the aspects are distributed in the reverse order. The third row enumerates complexes for which V₁ is the verb 'to be' with its complement while V₂ is a verb which will take the incompletive aspect if it takes any aspect at all (hence the **i** within the parentheses).

Note that the principal verb can be either the first or the second verb and that it can take either completive or incompletive aspect, depending on which complex is under consideration. (In particular note that in 3.4 and 3.5, the principal verb is in the incompletive.)

3.2 COMPLETIVE-INCOMPLETIVE COMPLEX - ADDING DETAIL TO A MAIN ACTION

In the V₁(completive) + **ka** + V₂(incompletive) complex, the first verb V₁ is the principal verb, and describes an accomplished action or an action seen in its totality. The verb V₂ adds some detail to the main action or gives an alternative description of it. What is described by the second verb takes place simultaneously with what is described by the first. The two verbs are joined by the particle **ka** meaning 'subsidiary'.

In the story "The cow that became the sun", we have an old man who, on his way back from the field, caught a cow and brought it home. He did not know to whom this cow belonged. So he wandered around the village "and ASKED the people ka saying..." The first verb ASK is the main action, (accomplished) and therefore takes the completive aspect. The second verb say which follows the ka gives an alternative description of the main action ASK and therefore takes the incompleted.

In "The spider and the chameleon", we have the following episode. There was a chief who had two daughters. "The spider and the chameleon WENT ka courting them." WENT is the main action (accomplished) and therefore in the completive. Courting (following ka) on the other hand, adds detail to the main action of going, namely that the spider and the chameleon visited the chief not just out of courtesy but with a particular purpose in mind.

3.3 COMPLETIVE-INCOMPLETIVE COMPLEX - COMPLEX ACTIONS IN TWO PHASES

The complex V_1 (completive) + n + ka + V_2 (incompleted) describes a complex action which is regarded as having two phases. The first verb V_1 describes the primary phase which is the main action and therefore takes the completive. The second verb V_2 describes the secondary phase, and is an ongoing process and therefore in the incompleted. The two verbs are separated by the particles n 'and' or 'sequential', and ka 'subsidiary'.

The ongoing process of the secondary phase often also serves as a point of departure for the next main action in the story.

In the story "The cow that became the sun", the first clause says: "An old man LEFT the field n ka was coming back. He NOTICED a cow..." LEFT the field is the main action, and therefore in the completive. Coming back is regarded as the second phase of the main action and as a continuation of it, and so is marked by the incompleted. The particle n 'sequential' between the two verbs shows the time sequence between the main action and the second phase. This secondary phase is an ongoing process which, in this example, also serves as a point of departure for the next main action NOTICED (again in the completive). The surface forms follow:

- (4) $^1kpalm-qii$ $roor-ra$ $kpam$ 2n ka
 old -someone leave-COMPL. field and subsid
 $kpen$ $-a$ $muun-u$ $l\text{oo}$...
 come back-INCOMPL. sun -n.cl. going down
 3Qa mid $-o$ $naag-be$ bii $-be$
 he notice -COMPL. cow-n.cl. certain -n.cl.
 '1An old man left the field 2and was coming back at
 sunset...3He noticed a certain cow.'

Again, in the first text of 1.1, cls. 1 and 31 are examples of the same kind of two phase complex actions. "A farmer WENT and was tilling the ground" (1), and while he was doing so, the next main action took place. The same is true for clause 31: "The

farmer WENT to the market and was selling." (Except that in the last example, the ongoing process does not serve as the point of departure for the next main action.)

3.4 INCOMPLETIVE-COMPLETIVE COMPLEX- DESCRIPTION OF A SITUATION FROM DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS

In the V_1 (incompletive) + ka + V_2 (completive) complex both verbs describe the same situation but from slightly different standpoints. The first verb V_1 is the principal verb because it has both communicative impact and a far reaching discourse function. The second verb V_2 is the subsidiary verb because the information that it conveys merely clarifies or supports the information given by the principal verb.

In the story "The cow that became the sun" (see 2.1), the men of the village had gathered together in order to kill a cow. Since it was night, they sat waiting for dawn so that they could kill the cow. Then the text says:

- (5) 1ba gii $-m$ 2ka kad -0
 they getting tired-INCOMPL. subsid. sit -COMPL.
 3toŋu kpa $ragda$
 sky not open
 'They were getting tired 2 of sitting, 3 the sky did not open (i.e. dawn did not come).'

In the sequence $giim$ ka kad 'they were getting tired of sitting', there are two verbs, $giim$ 'getting tired' and kad 'sitting'. Of these, I have analysed $giim$ 'were getting tired' as the principal verb of the two, for the following reasons:

- 1) $giim$ 'getting tired' is new information and is therefore what has the communicative impact at this point even though it is in the incompletive aspect, whereas kad 'sitting' is given information having been explicitly mentioned in the text before.
- 2) This verb is the one that immediately affects the way the plot goes. Specifically, in the very next clause, the chief says that everyone is 'getting tired' of just sitting around and proposes that they kill the cow before dawn.

On the other hand, I have analysed the verb kad 'sitting' as the subsidiary verb of the two, for the following reasons:

- 1) It is preceded by the particle ka meaning 'subsidiary'
- 2) It is given information.
- 3) It does not directly affect the way the plot goes. Its discourse function is merely to explain the process expressed by the principal verb - specifically, here to explain that it was the sitting that caused the men to be tired.

3.5 INCOMPLETIVE-COMPLETIVE COMPLEX - DESCRIPTION OF AN EVENT IN TWO SEQUENTIAL PHASES

In this kind of two-verb complex, V_1 (incompletive + n + ka + V_2 (completive), the first verb is a motion verb while the second describes the state which is the end result of that motion. Thus the situation is described in two phases in time sequence, and this sequence is marked explicitly by the particle n 'sequential' which occurs between the two verbs.

The second verb of the complex is marked for completive aspect and is also preceded by the particle ka 'subsidiary' which shows that it is the subsidiary phase of the situation. Thus the first verb of the complex is the principal verb, and it is this verb that is new information, that has the communicative impact and that directly affects the story plot, even though it is in the incompletive. All this will be illustrated in example (6).

- (6) ¹naag-benbina, be man -a n tee
 cow -this-one it comes-INCOMPL. from where
²n ka jeqr -0 nnaq
 seq subsid stand upright -COMPL. here
 'This cow ²that is standing here ¹where did it come from?'

Note that while in the free translation, clause 1 is discontinuous, it is continuous in Nawdm.

The sequential marker n at the beginning of clause 2 shows that in the speaker's mind the event mana 'come' in clause 1 took place before the event jeqr 'stand upright' of clause 2. In other words, the cow must first have come from somewhere in order to be standing there. The speaker asks where the cow came from by using the question word tee 'where'.

The particle ka 'subsidiary' precedes the verb jeqr 'stand upright' in clause 2 and makes this verb the subsidiary verb of the two-verb complex. Thus the verb mana 'come' is the principal verb of the complex. It is also new information, and it is the information in clause 1 where it occurs that immediately affects the way the plot will go. Specifically, it is because the farmer does not know where the cow comes from that he walks round the village, asking for the owner of the cow (the underlined verbs describe the next events in the story).

By contrast, the verb jeqr 'stand upright' of clause 2 is given information, easily recoverable from the preceeding linguistic context. And it does not directly affect the way the plot goes; its discourse function is simply to explain why the farmer asked the question of clause 1.

Note that in the free translation, I have rendered clause 2 as a relative clause in English. This seems to give the nearest approximation to the sense in Nawdm.

The incompletive aspect is used on the verb 'come', because the speaker has an incomplete picture of that action.

3.6 TO BE-INCOMPLETIVE COMPLEX - ATTRIBUTE AND EXTENT

In the ka + 'be' + complement +V₂ complex, the first verb is **ba** 'be' followed by a noun as complement which tells us that a participant has a certain attribute. The verb 'to be' is preceded by **ka** 'subsidiary' showing that the attribute is subsidiary to what is reported by the second verb.

The second verb is therefore the principal verb of the complex and tells us about the extent that the participant possesses the attribute already mentioned.

Example 7 is from a story about a certain man with a bruised head and only one ear. The second verb in the example, although negated, has the focus or communicative impact, and affirms that he had great riches. The next clause in the story, clause 3, confirms this affirmation.

- (7) ¹**qa** tob-re **ba** di -yen-de,
his ear-n.cl. is n.cl.-one-n.cl.
²**ka** **ba** kɛgd -m le kpaq jaq
subsid. is riches-n.cl. is not be little
'¹He had only one ear, ²but he was very rich indeed.
(³He also had a lot of harvested food and many animals).'

In this example the second verb is also the verb 'to be' and is not marked for aspect. Note that there is no sequential particle **n** between the two verbs.

3.7 TO BE-INCOMPLETIVE COMPLEX - ATTRIBUTE AND CONSEQUENT ACTION

In the ka + 'be' + complement + n + V₂(incompletive) two-verb complex, the first verb is again **ba** 'be' followed by a noun complement and thus states that a participant has a certain attribute. This verb 'to be' is preceded by **ka** 'subsidiary' showing that this attribute is subsidiary to what is reported by the second verb.

The particle **n** 'sequential' introduces the second verb and makes clear that this second verb reports the logical consequence of the attribute described by the first verb. Since the second verb is the principal verb of the complex (because the first is marked as subsidiary), it is this verb that advances the plot at this point.

- (8) ¹**kɔr** -gu -n ti -a **ka** **ba**
village-n.cl.-in man-n.cl. subsid. is
rar -m ²**n** buud-m **jowa**
intelligence-n.cl. seq. sow -INCOMP millet
'¹The village man being intelligent,
²sowed millet.'

Here clause 1 tells us that the village man has the attribute of intelligence, clause 2 tells us that as a consequence of this he sowed millet. (The story shows that the village man was intelligent enough to see that by sowing millet he could outwit his enemy the devil and he proceeded to do so.)

In this example, the principal verb **buudm** 'sow' is in the incomplete, because it describes a backgrounded action in relation to the other actions in the same part of the story, i.e. it prepares the ground for the next foregrounded action ARRIVED which is again in the complete. (see clause 27 of the text in 1.1).

NOTES

¹The Nawdm language is spoken by approximately 90,000 Nawdba people (singular: Nawda). Most of them live in Togo, some in neighbouring Ghana. The Nawdm language belongs to the Gur language family. A recent classification (J.T. Bendor-Samuel) puts Nawdm under the Moore-Gurma group, then in the northeastern sub-group, and then, together with Yom, in a separate category under this latter group. The segmental phonemes in Nawdm (Niamtougou dialect) are: /i, e, ɛ, a, ɔ, u/ and vowel length /:/, and /b, d, j, g, gb, t, k, kp, ʔ, m, n, ŋ, v, f, s, r, l, y, w, h/. For a phonological description, see Nicole (1980b). The practical orthography used in the data presented in this paper is identical with the above, except that q has been used to represent the glottal stop.

²According to Holt (1943:6), aspect is 'les manières diverses de concevoir l'écoulement du procès même', i.e. "aspects are different ways of viewing the FLOW (or UNFOLDING or DEVELOPMENT) of the action itself". In this, the term "action" has to be taken in a very general sense (comprising processes, events, states etc.).

³Tense in Nawdm is used to set the action so marked apart from some reference point defined with regard to the events in the story. This usage is called relative tense, see Comrie (1976).

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⁵The examples are written in the following way:

first line: vernacular morpheme by morpheme

second line: morpheme by morpheme gloss

third line: English translation, with clause by clause superscript indexing to the vernacular.

⁶The following is a list of abbreviations used in the examples:

comp	complement	n.cl.	noun class
compl/c	completive aspect	rep	repetitive (derivational suffix)
dep	dependent verb form	seq	sequential
incompl/i	incompletive aspect	subsid	subsidiary

⁷In Nawdm, there are six future tense particles (vowel length, **ba**, **qe**, **kee**, **daa**, **nan**), but only one past tense particle (**da**). This differs from Welmers (1973:350).

⁸I have used the term explanatory information to mean information that explains the current main line event. This was what Grimes (1976) originally called "background information" but I have avoided using the term "background" here because of possible confusion with the other and more common sense in which that term is currently used, viz as the opposite of foreground. In fact, it is in this latter sense, that I use the term backgrounded in section 2 of this paper.

⁹I am grateful to my language assistant, Mr. Budema, who informed me of this fact.

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