

# TEHIT

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Tehit is spoken by approximately 12,000 people, who live mainly in the subdistricts of Teminabuan and Sawiat, about 100 kilometers southeast of the district capital, Sorong, in the western part of the Bird's Head peninsula of Papua (Irian Jaya). Tehit, together with Kalabra to the west and Moraid to the north, form the West Bird's Head Stock, which when combined with Seget and Moi further to the west and north, comprise the West Bird's Head Family, also known as the Toror language group (Voorhoeve 1975, Wurm and Hattori 1981, Silzer and Heikkinen 1984, Flassy 1991). Tehit is composed of eight major dialects: Jit, Mbol Fle, Saifi, Imian, Sfa Riere, Fkar, Sawiat, and Salmeit (Flassy and Stokhof 1979), which exhibit extensive geographic lexical chaining. (This analysis for the Tehit general language group is mainly based on the Imyan Tehit dialect.)

The inventory of Tehit phonemes includes nineteen consonants and four vowels. The stops include voiced and voiceless bilabial /p, b/, alveolar /t, d/, and back /q, g/ stops, along with their prenasalized counterparts. Continuants include bilabial and alveolar fricatives /f, s/, and the laryngeal /h/. The sonorants consist of the bilabial and alveolar nasals /m, n/, and two liquids, the lateral /l/ and flap /r/. Tehit vowel phonemes are /i, e, a, o/. Orthographically, semivowels 'y' and 'w' are derived from corresponding high vowel phonemes /i, o/ depending on syllable structure.

Tehit has a maximal syllable template of CCVVC, but the majority of syllables are CV, followed in frequency by CVC. Onsets are obligatory everywhere except word-initially (e.g. *o.mos* 'vine'). Complex onsets may only consist of a voiced stop (b, d, g) followed by a liquid (l, r), e.g. *ta.bra* 'forest'. If a nucleus is complex, it takes the form of a rising diphthong iV, e.g. *dlien* 'ironwood', or rarely the falling diphthong /au/, *saun* 'mist'. Codas are restricted to liquids (l, r) word-internally, e.g. *fol.ti* 'overgrowth'. Word-finally, however, simple codas may consist of any non-laryngeal consonant (i.e. voiced stops and /h/ are excluded). Word-final complex codas take the form yC, e.g. *hnait* 'worm'. Consonant clusters not conforming to the above rules are broken up phonetically into short degenerate CV syllables with epenthesis of non-phonemic schwa, e.g. *krmok* (k.r.mok) 'moss'. See for a more detailed phonological description, Hesse (1995).

All Tehit words have lexical stress. Stress in polysyllabic non-compound words is relegated to a single syllable, usually the penultimate, but word-ultimate stress is not uncommon. If a word contains a syllable having complex structure, whether due to a complex onset, nucleus or coda, then that syllable always carries the word stress. Degenerate syllables never carry stress and are restricted to pretonic position. Consequently, they are not found word-finally or in monosyllabic words.

Tehit is a SVO language with relatively simple morphology, almost entirely dedicated to the tracking of person-number-gender of referent nominals. This pronominal agreement is marked on a wide variety of word classes, including verbs, adjectives, possessives, quantifiers, inalienable nouns (partitives and kin terms), prepositions, relativizers, and even conjunctions. The agreement prefixes, made up of an efficient set of single-consonant phonetic signals, are invariant regardless of word class usage or referent case role:

- (1) 1SG *t-*
- 1INC *f-*
- 1EXC *m-*
- 2 *n-*
- 3SF *m-*

3SM *w-*  
 3PL *y-*

As seen above, gender is manifest only in third person singular forms. First person plural explicitly includes or excludes the hearer. Ambiguity that results from homophonous forms, *m-* for both '1EXC' and '3SF' and under-differentiation of number in the second person, is most often resolved either by the number of a suppletive root, or by anaphoric context. Plural is usually indicated by increased height in a suppletive root's first vowel, see (2) and (3).

(2) *Om m-ase m-ak biele*  
 3SF 3SF-sleep:SG 3SF-at:SG garden

*om m-a.*  
 3SF 3SF-POS:SG

She lives at her garden.

(3) *Mam m-ese m-ik biele*  
 We:EXC 1EXC-sleep:PL 1EXC-at:PL garden

*mam m-i.*  
 1EXC 1EXC-POS:PL

We live at our garden.

Occasionally, a noun phrase will be marked with an agreement enclitic that draws from the same set given in (1). If the last word of a noun phrase ends in a vowel, that word may include an enclitic denoting the gender and number of the third person head noun, as in (4), (5) and (6).

(4) *wi hra Nago w-ase-m*  
 place REL God 3SM-sleep-3SF  
 where God lives

(5) *T-nok dait na trar o-u w-kedi-m.*  
 1SG-know NEG person old DET-3SM 3SM-name-3SF

I don't know the parent's name.

(6) *Korik bol oko-m w-natehla kat / m-aheit.*  
 pig house DEM-3SF 3SM-leave.behind INT 3SF-stay

The domestic pig he left behind, it stayed.

Also, if a transitive verb phrase ends in a vowel and no nominal object is expressed, the verb phrase may include the enclitic, denoting the number and gender of the fronted, missing, or understood object, as in (7).

(7) *Wa-wet o-u w-lok oli m-aka / w-hitung oli-m.*  
 3SM-child DET-3SM 3SM-pick.up again 3SF-come 3SM-count again-3SF

His child again picked up another (grub) and again distributed (it).

## Origin of the Se Bra River

Max Saflembolo, March 1995

- (1) *T-rana fe se-kmas / se-kmas hra w-athri se bra-u #*  
 1SG-tell about water-flood water-flood REL 3SM-cause river blue-3SM

I will tell about the flood outbreak, the flood outbreak that caused Blue River.

- (2) *Tet t-to t-adien Srer / la mam m-kain se oko / ha #*  
 I 1SG-say 1SG-with Srer DU 1EXC 1EXC-own river DEM but

I say that I (my clan) along with the Srer (clan), we both own this river, however.

- (3) *Tet t-kain w-ahin wa-sa ago / t-ahin Katrik / m-hok*  
 I 1SG-own 3SM-from 3SM-head above 1SG-from Katrik 3SF-come.out

*m-ak... kla m-kdein m-ak... kni Natak #*  
 3SF-at river 3SF-boundary 3SF-at log.bridge ko.tree

I own (the area) from the headwaters, from Katrik, it comes out at...the river boundary is at... 'Natak' Log Bridge.

- (4) *W-ali aidi ou w-a le ou w-a se-kmas oko #*  
 3SM-to down.there 3SM 3SM-POS COP 3SM 3SM-POS water-flood DEM

*ha tet t-a le-u se wa-sa ago #*  
 but 1SG 1SG-POS COP-3SM river 3SM-head above

The lower part of the flood is his, but mine is the upper headwaters.

- (5) **Kejadian** *se-kmas oko / w-adien wa-wet /*  
 origin water-flood DEM 3SM-with 3SM-child

*w-kafe wet wa-dla-u /*  
 3SM-carry.on.shoulders child 3SM-male-3SM

*t-nok dait na trar o-u w-kedi-m #*  
 1SG-know NEG person old DET-3SM 3SM-name-3SF

*w-adien mkan / y-ein y-thok afan nak /*  
 3SM-with dog 3PL-go 3PL-split.out grub breadfruit

*m-ak le kni Far #*  
 3SF-at be log.bridge ko.tree

The origin of this flood: he and his young child, he was carrying his son on his shoulders, I forget the father's name, along with the dog, they went to split out breadfruit tree grubs near 'Far' log bridge.

- (6) *W-thok w-ak aidi m-fot / wa-wet o-u w-dik #*  
 3SM-split.out 3SM-at down.there 3SF-finish 3SM-child DET-3SM 3SM-put

*ou w-ak bet-alit #*  
 3SM 3SM-at mud-wallow

When he finished chopping out a grub, his child would set it down. He (the child) was by a boar mud wallow.

- (7) *W-leli w-ak bet-alit o-m ha / w-ono w-thok*  
 3SM-sit 3SM-at mud-wallow DET-3SF but 3SM-father 3SM-split.out  
*afan o-m #*  
*grub DET-3SF*

He was sitting near the mud wallow, but his father was chopping out grubs.

- (8) *W-thok afan o-m m-aka fo / ou w-na-ber #*  
 3SM-split-out grub DET-3SF 3SF-come then he 3SM-arm-toss.aside  
*w-dik m-ak bet-alit o-m #*  
 3SM-put 3SF-at mud-wallow DET-3SF

Splitting out a grub, he took it and tossed it aside, (and his child) set it down by the mud wallow.

- (9) *W-dik m-ak bet-alit de / w-sel kat #*  
 3SM-put 3SF-at mud-wallow then 3SM-toss.onto.pile INT  
*ma-fuon m-aka fo / w-sel kat m-ak*  
 3SF-seed 3SF-come then 3SM-toss.onto.pile INT 3SM-at

*bet-alit o-m # w-sel kat /*  
 mud-wallow DET-3SF 3SM-toss.onto.pile INT

*w-sel kat kayi de...*  
 3SM-toss.onto.pile INT CONT until

*wa-wet o-u w-lok oli m-aka / w-hitung oli-m.*  
 3SM-child DET-3SM 3SM-pick.up again 3SF-come 3SM-count again-3SF

He (the child) would set it down by the mud wallow; he (the father) would toss (another grub). As each grub became available he tossed it over near the boar wallow; he continued tossing (another one), tossing (another one)... and his son would pick it up and redistribute it.

- (10) *W-aher w-to / Fguo ko m-an t-eme-m #*  
 3SM-count 3SM-say this.one DEM 3SF-for 1SG-mother-3SF  
*W-sel kat / w-dik m-de-ke.*  
 3SM-toss.onto.pile INT 3SM-put 3SF-like-this

He counted saying: This one, this is for mother. (His father) tossed it over, and he set it down like that.

- (11) *W-lok oli m-an o m-ahin bet-alit m-aka*  
 3SM-pick.up again 3SF-REL DEM 3SF-from mud-wallow 3SF-come  
*fo / w-to / m-an ko m-an t-ate-u #*  
 then 3SM-say 3SF-REL DEM 3SF-for 1SG-grandparent-3SM  
*W-dik kat m-de-ke #*  
 3SM-put INT 3SF-like-this

He picked another one up from the boar wallow and said: This one is for grandpa. And he set it down like that.

- (12) *W-asen oli / w-lok kat / w-to / M-an ko*  
 3SM-stand.up again 3SM-pick.up INT 3SM-say 3SF-REL DEM  
*m-an korik bol # w-dik kat m-de-ke #*  
 3SF-for pig house 3SM-put INT 3SF-like-this

He stood up, got (another grub) and said: This one is for the domestic pig. He put it down like that.

- (13) *M-an ko t-lok kat m-an t-fe mkan ko-u #*  
 3SF-REL DEM 1SG-take INT 3SF-for 1SG-POS dog DEM-3SF

This one I'm taking for my dog here.

- (14) *M-an ko m-an tet #*  
 3SF-REL DEM 3SF-for 1SG  
*M-an ko m-an t-ono #*  
 3SF-REL DEM 3SF-for 1SG-father

This one is for me. This one is for father.

- (15) *Oko m-an t-eme m-kmat #*  
 DEM 3SF-for 1SG-mother 3SF-abdomen

This is for mother who's pregnant.

- (16) *W-leli w-an aidi w-sot fo afan hra w-ono*  
 3SM-sit 3SM-at<sup>1</sup> down.there 3SM-see and.then grub REL 3SM-father  
*w-kafla / wkoit o-m m-ba-roro / m-kaka m-ain #*  
 3SM-split log DET-3SF 3SF-strike-turn.around 3SF-tail.end 3SF-go

He was sitting there when he saw: the grub (tree) that his father was splitting, the log swung around, and the stump end began moving. \c water was already swirling up, carrying the log along

- (17) *M-ahin ma-sa m-ba-roro / ma-sa m-ali ago /*  
 3SF-from 3SF-head 3SF-strike-turn.around 3SF-head 3SF-to above and.then  
*ofo m-kaka o-m m-ak sa #*  
 and.then 3SF-tail.end DET-3SF 3SF-at head

From its top end (the log) was turning around, the top end pointing upstream, and then the trunk end pointing upstream.

- (18) *Bet-alit aidi m-asin / m-ska-hilis #*  
 mud-wallow down.there 3SF-rise 3SF-thrust-encircle  
*m-ska-hilis / m-ska-hilis / m-ska-hilis / m-aka/*  
 3SF-thrust-encircle 3SF-thrust-encircle 3SF-thrust-encircle 3SF-come  
*fo m-ba-roro m-alin #*  
 and.then 3SF-strike-turn.around 3SF-go.ahead

<sup>1</sup> The form *-an* is a prepositional verb, translatable as 'for, to, toward, at, in, on, etc.', it also occurs in (21), (25), (27) and (36).

The mud wallow down there rose up, and (the flood) began to swirl around. It swirled around and around and around, and (the log) swung around and headed off.

- (19) *W-ono w-asen w-lok kat wet o-u /*  
 3SM-father 3SM-stand.up 3SM-pick.up INT child DET-3SM  
*w-kafe w-ak ago #*  
 3SM-carry.on.shoulder 3SM-at above

His father stood up, snatched up his son, and set him up on his shoulders.

- (20) *W-to / Ahh n-siga / buon m-a n-sese korwain tet #*  
 3SM-say ahh 2-bad impossible 3SF-that 2-run follow me

He said: Hey you scuz, there's no way that you can run after me.<sup>2</sup>

- (21) *W-lok wet o-u w-an w-kafe-u /*  
 3SM-lift child DET-3SM 3SM-so.that 3SM-carry.on.shoulder-3SM  
*w-fe mkan o-u w-be-u #*  
 3SM-POS dog DET-3SM 3SM-call-3SM

He picked up his child to carry him on his shoulders, his dog he called.

- (22) *Ou w-sese / w-sese w-ak sa / w-ak sa w-ain #*  
 3SM 3SM-run 3SM-run 3SM-at head 3SM-at head 3SM-go

He ran, ran up the path, up the path going (home).

- (23) *W-kro w-ak aidi ha / se... w-to w-kro fo /*  
 3SM-stand 3SM-at down.there but water 3SM-say 3SM-stand then  
*se oko w-ska-hilis w-ak aidi / w-to w-dik-si*  
 water DEM 3SM-thrust-encircle 3SM-at down.there 3SM-say 3SM-put-sink  
*ou #*  
 3SM

He stood still down there but, the water... whenever he stopped, the water swirled around him there, wanting to drown him.

- (24) *W-asen w-ain sros #*  
 3SM-stand.up 3SM-go continue

He got up and kept on going.

- (25) *W-si m-an w-sibiele / w-sot fo ha /*  
 3SM-face 3SF-to 3SM-back 3SM-see then but  
*se oko w-sese korwain #*  
 water DEM 3SM-run follow

He faced around to his back and looked, but the water was rushing right after him!

- (26) *N-siga buon n-sese korwain tet #*  
 2-bad impossible 2-run follow 1SG

<sup>2</sup> He said this to the flood coming out.

You no-good, there's no way you can catch me.

- (27) *W-lok*      *w-an*      *w-kafe-u /*      *ou*    *w-ses /*    *w-ses /*  
 3SM-pick.up 3SM-so.that 3SM-carry.on.shoulder-3SM 3SM 3SM-run 3SM-run  
*w-ses /*    *w-ses /*    *w-ses*    *kawuak*    *de...*    *w-ak..*    *w-to*      *ah #*  
 3SM-run 3SM-run 3SM-run    CONT    until    3SM-at    3SM-say    Ah

He pickup up (his child) to carry him and ran, ran, ran, ran, ran on and on, until... he got (there) and he said: Ah! (he arrived home).

- (28) *Wa-wet*    *w-to /*      *La*    *f-sot*      *la #*  
 3SM-child 3SM-say    DU    1INC-see    please<sup>3</sup>  
*t-eme*      *le*      *y-ese*      *bol*      *angko-m #*  
 1SG-mother    COP    3PL-sleep    house    down.here-3SF

His child said: Please, let's see! Mother and the others are sleeping at the house down here.

- (29) *La*    *f-sese*      *kat /*    *f-hok*      *f-ek*      *fo /*      *f-lok*      *kat*  
 DU    1INC-run    INT    1INC-arrive 1INC-at    then    1INC-take    INT  
*korik bol*    *aidi /*      *ni*      *aidi /*      *se*      *f-ein #*  
 pig    house    down.there    thing    down.there    so.that    1INC-go

Let's run fast, get there, grab the pig and other stuff down below, so we can go!

- (30) *W-sese*    *w-ak*    *ra*      *fo /*    *umhh*    *w-sot*      *w-ak*      *w-eme*      *oko-m*  
 3SM-run 3SM-to    inside    then    umh    3SM-look    3SM-to    3SM-mother    DEM-3SF  
*m-a*      *m-kmat*      *oko-m /*    *mam*    *m-leli*    *m-ak*    *bol #*  
 3SF-REL    3SF-pregnant    DEM-3SF    3SF    3SF-sit    3SF-at    house

He ran on inside and then, oh no... he (the child) saw his mother, who was pregnant, she was sitting at home.

- (31) *W-smit*    *m-al*      *aidi*    *fo /*    *se*      *o-u*      *w-sese*      *korwain #*  
 3SM-look 3SF-to    below    then    water    DET-3SM    3SM-run    follow

When he looked down (he saw that) the water was flooding after them.

- (32) *Y-ek*      *ale*      *fo /*    *na*      *y-to*      *knwata-m /*    *w-sma*      *oko-m*  
 3PL-at    down.there    then    person    3PL-say    cave-3SF    3SM-spouse    DEM-3SF  
*w-natehla*    *kat*    *m-ak*    *oko #*    *korik*    *bol*    *oko-m /*  
 3SM-leave INT    3SF-at    DEM    pig    house    DEM-3SF  
*w-natehla*    *kat*    *wa-heit #*  
 3SM-leave    INT    3SM-remain

They were down there, people call it the cave, his wife, he left her behind there; and the domestic pig, he left that behind there.

- (33) *Ou*    *w-sese*      *sros #*  
 3SM    3SM-run    continue

He kept on running.

<sup>3</sup> *la* at the end of a command indicates respectful request.

- (34) *W-kafe* *wet* *w-an* *ago /* *w-de* *w-sese*  
 3SM-carry.on.shoulder child 3SM-at above 3SM-until 3SM-run  
*kawuak de... w-teit m-drik m-ak samkam m-taiyi #*  
 CONT until 3SM-leg 3SF-enter 3SF-in catfish 3SF-hole

He was carrying his kid on his shoulders and running on and on until... his leg entered a catfish hole (in the rock).

- (35) *W-teit o-m m-drik m-ak samkam m-taiyi /*  
 3SM-leg DET-3SF 3SF-enter 3SF-at catfish 3SF-hole  
*de w-kro kawuak #*  
 until 3SM-stand CONT

His leg entered a catfish hole, and so he kept on standing. (His leg was caught, and he couldn't get it out.)

- (36) *Tmak ou w-kafe m-an ago / wet ou*  
 axe 3SM 3SM-carry.on.shoulder 3SF-at above child 3SM  
*w-kafe w-an ago / w-kro kawuak w-ak ko #*  
 3SM-carry.on.shoulder 3SM-at above 3SM-stand CONT 3SM-at DEM

With his axe on his shoulders, his child on his shoulders, he continued to stand right there.

- (37) *W-owor wet w-ak w-amak ago / ou mmhh...*  
 3SM-carry.on.neck child 3SM-at 3SM-neck above 3SM mmhh  
*ou w-kein oli w-teit aidi-m mmhh m-hok dait #*  
 3SM 3SM-pull again 3SM-leg below-3SF mmhh 3SF-come.out NEG

He was carrying his child sitting around his neck, he, oh no... he pulled his leg again, oh no... it wouldn't come out.

- (38) *Se oko w-aka w-ska-hilis / kawuak de*  
 water DEM 3SM-come 3SM-thrust-encircle CONT until  
*te-te-te-te-te-te w-flie #*  
 until.. 3SM-cover

The water rushed around him, rising, rising, rising, until....it covered (them).

- (39) *W-kro kawuak w-ak oko ha / wi oko na*  
 3SM-stand CONT 3SM-at DEM but place DEM people  
*y-wit y-to / Na-u w-kro #*  
 3PL-name 3PL-say person-3SM 3SM-stand

He's still standing there, and the place is called, 'The Standing Man'.

- (40) *Hra w-agia bait le w-oko #*  
 REL 3SM-culprit self COP 3SM-DEM  
*Ou w-kro kayi de hrake ko / w-abe kawuak amak #*  
 3SM 3SM-stand CONT until present DEM 3SM-become CONT rock

He himself was the culprit. And he continues to stand to this day, turned into stone.



- (41) *M-de ni-rana m-afe Se Bra-u w-ak le oko #*  
 3SF-so NOM-tell 3SF-about river blue-3SM 3SM-at COP DEM  
*ou w-di w-ali sifie le w-ko #*  
 3SM 3SM-fall 3SM-to sea.shore COP 3SM-DEM

And that's the story of Blue River; it fell into the salt water shore right there.

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