

ABUN

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The Abun language is spoken in the subdistricts of Sausapor and Mega, in the northern area of the Bird's Head peninsula. It is bordered by several other languages: to the east, Amberbaken (also known as Mpur or Kebar); to the south, Karon Dori (also known as Mare, a dialect of Maybrat) and Moraid; and to the west, Moi.

There are approximately 3,500 Abun speakers who live in eighteen villages, eight on the coast and ten interior. The Abun language is spoken in the northern area of the Bird's Head, as well as in isolated hamlets. There are four identifiable dialects all of which are mutually intelligible, although intelligibility decreases when greater geographic distance is involved. The names given to the dialects are those used by the speakers themselves and concern the variation in terms for the first person singular pronoun. So the dialects are referred to as Abun Tat (eastern), Abun Ye, Abun Ji, and Abun Tat (western).

Abun is the name given to the language by the people themselves, *a* means 'language', and *bun* means 'bush, jungle'. They call themselves the **Yenden** people, *ye* 'person' and *nden* 'interior, land'. Sometimes they refer to the name of their language as *Anden*, but more commonly *Abun*. Rarely do they call themselves the **Yembun** people; rather they say that they, the Yenden people, speak the Abun language. The Abun language has been known by various names including Karon Pantai, Madik and Yimbun. The name Karon Pantai, as it is listed in Voorhoeve (1975:48), is the name given to the Abun speaking people by the Biak people. The Moi people to the west call them Madik, the meaning of which is uncertain. Voorhoeve (1975:48) listed the name Madik as a separate language for what has since been analysed as the Abun Ji dialect (Berry and Berry 1987). The Amberbaken to the east call them the Yimbun, or Yembun, a name which they obviously acquired from the Yenden themselves. The name Abun has now been introduced into linguistic literature by Silzer and Clouse 1991, Grimes 1992 and Berry and Berry 1999. Technically, it should be referred to as the Bun language, or Abun, but the people themselves insist that the Indonesian translation is *bahasa Abun*, not *bahasa Bun*.

The sound system of Abun is relatively simple and consists of 20 consonants, 5 simple vowels and seven diphthongs. Also there are three distinct tones, high/rising, low and falling. The inventory of phonemic consonants comprises plosives, including prenasalised voiced plosives at four points of articulation (with the exception of *c*, which is used in free variation with the palatal fricative *sy*), and nasals, fricatives and glides at three points of articulation. Voicing contrast for plosives is only found in the onset of stressed syllables. Thus, Abun has 20 consonants: *p, b, t, d, j, k, g, mb, nd, nj, ngg, m, n, ny, f, s, sy, w, r, and y*; five phonemic vowels, *i, e, a, o, u*, and seven complex syllable peaks (diphthongs): *ai, au, ei, eu, oi, ou* and *ui*.

Tone in Abun has a low functional load and may be disappearing as a useful contrastive feature. There are very few minimal pairs in the same word class. Tone is used to indicate unspecified number plurality, for example, tone is used to differ between the singular and plural forms of the third person pronoun, in which '3PL' is /*án*/ with a rising tone, while '3SG' is /*an*/ with a low tone. It also distinguishes *ré* 'this, here' with a high pitch from the perfective marker (PERF) *re*, which has a low pitch.

Abun has a basically monosyllabic word structure. A sampling of a typical story reveals that about 80% of the words are monosyllabic, about 15% have two syllables and only 5% have three or more.

Abun is an isolating language which makes little use of affixation in its grammatical system. Affixation is frequently a means whereby other languages indicate such things as tense, aspect and mood. Also affixation is often present to signify grammatical relations such as Subject, Object, Indirect Object etc. However, all affixation in Abun is derivational in nature and is mainly concerned with class changes. Therefore when it comes to grammatical relations or the variations of tense, aspect and mood to be found in Abun there are two key strategies which express these concepts: *word order* and *particles*.

The Abun language, like all languages of the West-Papuan Phylum has SUBJECT VERB OBJECT word order. This word order is inflexible, insofar as the position of an entity in relation to the verb will encode what its grammatical relation is. The grammatical relations of subject and object are encoded by word order alone, with the subject always that constituent which immediately precedes the verb, and if there is an object it will immediately follow the verb.

In Abun the constituent termed 'mood' is unmarked for the indicative and marked for other types. It is indicated by means of a clause final particle. One interesting feature of the mood particles is that in two instances, that of interrogative and indicative negative **two** particles may be used to indicate these moods. In Abun, the strategy of using **two** particles (as opposed to one) is mainly for the purpose of delineating the scope of the mood. Thus, in negated sentences the clause-final *nde* is always present, while the negation may be emphasized or focussed on a particular predicate by the particle *yo*, which is placed immediately preceding the predicate.

In Abun, concepts concerned with tense are carried by time words or phrases and sequential conjunctions. In the case of complex sentences there are two subordinate conjunctions which convey tense concepts. These two conjunctions are described as being 'realis', where a preceding clause refers to events already past, or 'irrealis', where a preceding clause refers to events that have not actually occurred, being either in future time or hypothetical.

Abun distinguishes between alienable and inalienable possession. Inalienable possession is used when referring to parts of the body, 'whole-part' relationships (such as 'tree-leaf', 'bird-feathers'), but not when referring to kinship terms. Inalienable possession is unmarked. The word order of the phrase is: POSSESSOR + POSSESSED. No form of marking whatever marks either possessor or possessed. When the possessor is indicated by a pronoun no distinctive possessive pronouns are used. Juxtaposition is sufficient to indicate the possessive relationship.

Alienable possession is used to describe all other possessive relationships. In these cases Abun uses the possessive word *bi*. It is not possible to say that *bi* marks either the possessor or the possessed in the possessive phrase. *Bi* joins the two as a linker (Croft 1990:28-32). Thus, the alienable possessive phrase has the order of POSSESSOR + *bi* + POSSESSED.

The Abun language is classified as a Papuan language by Wurm (1982:206). It belongs to the small West Papuan Phylum. Wurm's classification of Abun as a language of Papuan type seems to be based mainly on its lexical inventory, with special reference to its set of personal pronouns, belonging to Wurm's set III (Wurm 1982:40). However, Abun has a number of Austronesian features. Most notable is the rigid word order of SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT (SVO) as distinct from the Papuan SOV word order (Wurm 1982:64). Other significant Austronesian features include: a very simple derivational morphology; with very little inflectional affixation; the common use of particles where verb affixation would be used in Papuan languages; the use of prepositions instead of postpositions; no special sentence medial verbs; a decimal numbering system as compared to the Papuan binary, trinary or quinary systems, and the existence of reduplicated adverbs.

For a fuller description of Abun refer to Berry and Berry (1999).

Pa Gu Ndam Syor

told by Yemina Yesawen in 1997

- (1) *Ndam syor gato ketke pe yetu wis mwa ne.*
bird cassowary REL first give.birth.to people tribe many DET

(About) the cassowary that in the beginning gave birth to the many tribes/kinds of people.

- (2) *Ndam syor ré ku bi pa yebris dik.*
bird cassowary this get POSS child male one

This cassowary had one male child.

- (3) *Or pa ne kem sor, pa ne sye.*
finish child the live continually child the big

Then the child lived (there) until he grew up.

- (4) *Pa sye, or-ge pa ki do,*
child big finish-that child say QUOT

Bot wa an kon suk et
fire for 3SG cook thing HORT(M)

The child grew and asked for fire to cook on.

- (5) *Ndam syor nyak su bot, bot sit*
bird cassowary defecate with fire fire coals

or-o pa kon suk mo.
finish-also child cook thing on

The cassowary defecated fire, and coals. Then the child cooked food on it.

- (6) *Pa ki do, nyom wa an ben suk et,*
child say COM machete for 3SG do thing HORT(M)

sane ndam syor nyak su nyom su mbam,
so bird cassowary defecate with machete with axe

suk mwa, ndam syor nyak su suk mwane sino.
thing many bird cassowary defecate with thing many DET all

The child asked for a bush knife/machete to work with, so the cassowary defecated with a machete and an axe and many things. The cassowary defecated with all these many things.

- (7) *Or pa ré sye.*
finish child this big

The child grew up.

- (8) *Pa ré sye or sa, ndam syor ki nai pa*
child this big finish when.RE bird cassowary say IO child

do Nan kem more yo, nan go nu, nan
 COM 2SG stay here when.IRR 2SG build house 2SG

gwa nggwe, nan gwa nggwe sye.
 fell garden 2SG fell garden big

When the child had grown up, the cassowary said to the child: If you stay here, build a house, make a garden, a big garden.

- (9) *Nan go nu sye.*
 2SG build house big

Build a big house.

- (10) *Nu ne nggumwak munggwó.*
 house the room eight

The house (is to have) eight rooms.

- (11) *Nan ben suk mwa ne or yo, nan syeret ji.*
 2SG do thing many those finish when.IRR 2SG look.for 1SG

When you have finished doing all of these many things, look for me.

- (12) *Sane ndam syor ré mu re.*
 so bird cassowary this go PERF

So this cassowary went away.

- (13) *Ndam syor mu nde tó an ki nai*
 bird cassowary go NEG yet 3SG say IO

pa ré do, Nan meret ji mó pe
 child this COM 2SG look.for 1SG at place

ga ji ón mó subere nan ku ji.
 REL 1SG defecate at so.that 2SG meet 1SG

Before the cassowary went she said to this child: Look for me following the places where I defecate so that you will find me.

- (14) *Sane pa ben suk mwa ne.*
 so child do thing many those

So the child did everything.

- (15) *Pa syeret sa, pa ku ndam syor*
 child look.for when.RE child found bird cassowary

nyak su bei nggwe gro.
 stools with sago garden seeds

When the child was looking for the cassowary, he found the cassowary's stools with sago palm seeds in it.

- (16) *Pa ku bei ne yo, kom syu re.*
 child find sago that when.IRR grow long PERF

When the child found the sago, it had grown tall.

- (17) *Or-o pa mu, pa mu ne, pa ku do-gato*
 finish-also child go child go DET child find that-REL
nat gon sa-re ne.
 leaf short like-this DET

Then the child moved on again, and on further, and the child found (sago) which had small leaves like this.

- (18) *Or-o pa ku do-ga be ne, ón ga kam tó,*
 finish-also child find that-REL new DET stools REL hot yet
ón sim.
 stools recent

Then the child found stools which were new, the stools which were still hot, recent stools.

- (19) *Pa ké it ne, "Boo o o o o o ..."*
 child call COMP DET Booooo

The child called out, "Boo o o o o o ..."

- (20) *Pa ké, pa ké ne sa, ndam syor jam,*
 child call child call DET when.RE bird cassowary hear
or-ge ndam syor kas ma.
 finish-that bird casso wary run DIR

The child called and called, and the cassowary heard then it came running towards (the child).

- (21) *Ndam syor do ma ge, pa nyu.*
 bird cassowary PRED come that child fear

And when the cassowary got there the child became scared.

- (22) *Pa it kwe kadit.*
 child climb tree from

The child climbed a tree to get away from the cassowary.

- (23) *Pa it kwe kadit or an ki do,*
 child climb tree from finish 3SG say COM

Nan nyu nde.
 2SG fear NEG

The child climbed the tree to get away from (the cassowary) and then it said: Do not be afraid.

- (24) *Nan bi im ko.*
 2SG POSS mother only
 I am only your mother!
- (25) *Nan ma sor.*
 2SG come just
 Just come to me!
- (26) *Sane pa si ndam syor ne mu-kom mo nu.*
 so child and bird cassowary DET go-until at house
 So the child went with the cassowary to the house.
- (27) *An ki nai pa do, Nan gu ji.*
 3SG say IO child COM 2SG hit 1SG
 She said to the child: Hit me.
- (28) *Nan gu ji kwop.*
 2SG hit 1SG die
 Kill me.
- (29) *Nan mit wa nan ku yetu mwa it yo*
 2SG want for 2SG find people many COMP when.IRR
nan gu ji kwop et.
 2SG hit 1SG die HORT(M)
 If you want to meet many people, then you must kill me.”
- (30) *Pa ki do, Ji yo gu nan nde.*
 child say COM 1SG NEG hit 2SG NEG
 The child said: I will not kill you.
- (31) *Ndam syor ki do, Nde.*
 bird cassowary say QUOT NEG
 The cassowary said: No.
- (32) *Nan gu ji sor, be nan ku ye mwa.*
 2SG hit 1SG just then.IRR 2SG meet people many
 Just kill me and then you will meet many people.
- (33) *Sane kom mo rut sa, pa gu ndam syor kwop.*
 so until to end when.RE child hit bird cassowary die
 So in the end, the child killed the cassowary.

- (34) *Tep-su gato ndam syor yo kwop nde tó, an ki do,*
 equal-with REL bird cassowary NEG die NEG yet 3SG say COM
Pa grem ji umsu mbrak ré dik yo mo
 child put 1SG knee cap this one INDEF in
nggumwak dik yo, o-ro pa grem dik yo o
 room one INDEF then-also child put one INDEF also
mo nggumwak dik yo.
 in room one INDEF

Before the cassowary had died, she had said: Child, put one of my knee caps in one room, and the other in another room.

- (35) *Or, pa grem ji gro dik yo mo*
 finish child put 1SG eye one INDEF in
nggumwak yo, or-o, ji gro dik yo o mo
 room INDEF finish-also 1SG eye one INDEF also in
nggumwak yo.
 room INDEF

After that, the child put one eye in one room, and then the other eye in another room.

- (36) *Or-ete pa go an ku ne, an ku e,*
 finish-then child cut 3SG flesh DET 3SG flesh and
an go ne pa bare daret mo nu mit neya.
 3SG hair DET child throw.away random in house inside around

Then the child cut her flesh, her flesh and her hair (= skin) (and) threw it all around inside the house.

- (37) *Or pa am an go gato mo an su ré*
 finish child throw 3SG feather REL on 3SG head this
mo de gato kam dum tak.
 on side REL sun light.up side

Then the child threw her feathers from her head into the (room) on the side where the sun rises.

- (38) *Or yo, an ki do, Pa, nan mu sane*
 finish when.IRR 3SG say COM child 2SG go like.that
wade kre et.
 until afternoon HORT(M)

After that, she had said: Child, go away until the afternoon.

- (39) *Kre kam kem ya sare ete pa ma.*
 afternoon sun stay level like.this then child come

In the afternoon, when the sun is level (with the horizon) come back.

- (40) *Pa do mu ne sa, kre, pa ma ge,*
 child PRED go DET when.RE afternoon child come that
yetu mo pe ré ge wis yo, wis yo,
 mankind at place this CL clan INDEF clan INDEF
wis yo, wis yo mo bur ré iwedewe mone sino.
 clan INDEF clan INDEF on earth this all.over there all

The child went, when it was afternoon he came back. Then he saw all the many different tribes of peoples from all over the world in that place.

- (41) *Pa ma pa ki suk sú.*
 child come child say thing with

The child came and spoke with (them).

- (42) *Pa ki a-Dagam, pa ki a-Bun, pa ki*
 child say language-Indonesian child say language-Bun child say
a-Kron pa ki a-Re, pa ki a-Ra,
 language-Kron child say language-Re child say language-Ra
pa ki a-Bijat, pa ki a yo a yo.
 child say language-Biak child say language INDEF language INDEF

The child spoke Indonesian, Bun, Kron, Re, Ra, Biak and lots of other languages.

- (43) *A-Cina ré, pa yo nggi mo nde it.*
 language-Cina this child NEG able exist NEG COMP

The child was not able to speak Chinese at all.

- (44) *Sane pa nai bukor bado suk gane-yo grem wa*
 so child take bowl or thing ANA-INDEF put for
nogi mó, ete pa syogat ye ne si-bot nogi
 rain in then child command person that follow-along rain
gwa bukor ne ba.
 hit bowl the noise

So the child got a bowl or something like it and put it down for rain to fall into. Then he told that person to make noises just like to rain hitting the bowl.

- (45) *Wo su ketke pa ma ne, or, pa ti*
 but with beginning child come DET finish child stood
mo nden, pa nyu.
 at outside child afraid

But in the beginning after the child got there, he stood outside, he was afraid.

- (46) *Pa nyu, pa ti mo nden sane, pa bi om*
 child afraid child stand at outside like.that child POSS auntie
an ké do, an umsu mbrak we ré ne,
 3SG call COM 3SG knee cap two these DET
tapsu pa bi nyam we, an gro we ne
 like child POS uncle two 3SG eye two DET
tapsu pa bi om we.
 like child POS auntie two

While the child was afraid and standing outside like that, the child's auntie called out that the two knee caps are like the child's two uncles, and the two eyes are like the child's aunties.

- (47) *Sane an ki do, Nan nyu nde, nan ma sor.*
 so 3SG say COM 2SG afraid NEG 2SG come just

So she said: Don't be afraid, just come in.

- (48) *Nan ma we nan bi om anare re, nan*
 2SG come because 2SG POSS auntie is.here PERF 2SG
ma we nan bi nyam anare re.
 come because 2SG POS uncle is.here PERF

Come because it is your aunties, and your uncles who are already here.

- (49) *Nan ma sor.*
 2SG come just

Just come.

- (50) *Sane pa ma ku mo-ne, ete, pa ki suk su*
 so child come meet at-there then child say thing with
ye mwa ne.
 people many DET

So the child went and met the many people there, and talked with them.

- (51) *Sane anato ye ki do men ye-nden ré*
 so CAUSE people say COM 1PL people-interior here
yo, go ga mo gurit mo i-su ré.
 INDEF hair REL on neck on its-head this

So as a result people say that we 'Yenden' (interior people tribe) here, well we are the hair which was on its neck and head.

- (52) *Go miten mo ndam syor muk gwar miten ne*
 hair middle on bird cassowary trunk chest middle DET

anato ye-bijat ne.
 FOC people-bijat DET

The hair in the middle of the cassowary, on the middle of its chest are the Biak people.

- (53) *Go ga mo i-sum ne anato ye-su-go-far e,*
 hair REL on its-bottom DET FOC people-head-hair-curly and
ye-kwo e ne su-go-i syu ne.
 people-white and DET head-hair-POS long/straight DET

The hair that is on its bottom are the Indonesians (curly hair) and the white people whose hair is straight.

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