

The 4306 forms of the Nimboran verbal paradigm

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1.1 By most linguists it is taken for granted that the linguistic situation in New Guinea and surrounding islands is the most complex in the world. For budgetary, political, and geophysical reasons, and because of the anti-descriptive trend in linguistics during the last thirty years, deplorably few linguists did work in New Guinea and/or in languages of New Guinea. This is especially true of the western half of the island, the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya.

One of the rare exceptions was Johannes Cornelis Anceaux (1920-1988), professor in Austronesian and Papuan linguistics at Leiden University (1971-1986), and a language officer of the Dutch colonial administration in New Guinea (1954-1962). One of his major studies is a detailed description of the morphologically highly complex Nimboran language. This language is spoken in the Jayapura district, Nimboran subdistrict, in an area west of Lake Sentani around the town of Nggeniém¹ by an estimated number of speakers of 3.000 (Anceaux 1965: xv and 1; Wurm & Hattori 1983: map 3)². The language belongs to the Trans New Guinea Phylum, Nimboran Stock-Level Family (Silzer & Heikkinen Clouse 1991: 29 and 69, Wurm & Hattori 1981: map 3).

Since Anceaux' study Nimboran has been the target of a SIL couple (May 1978, May 1981, May & May 1981), but their scope has so far been limited to phonology and anthropology. As far as I know, Anceaux' description of Nimboran morphology (which is practically exclusively verbal) remains therefore the latest account of that aspect of the language.

1.2 Anceaux' approach is basically didactic. Step by step the various morphological categories and classes of categories ("orders"), pertinent to the structure of the Nimboran verb, are introduced and discussed, culminating in the paradigm of 62 pages

of the verb *nggedóu-* 'to draw' (pp.185-246)³. The approach is typically word-based, with statements such as: "Opposed to the series: *suándu* - I will water (here), etc. etc. we find the following forms: *sáondáru*[⁴] - I will water them (here), *sáondáre* - you will water them here ... *saóindiarám* - you and I (you and we) will water them (here) ... All these new forms belong to a productive category whose members have in common the semantic element "the action is connected with a plural object". Formally, the members are characterized by an element *-de-* that immediately follows the root-morpheme and takes the form *-da-* whenever it is immediately followed by the Tense morpheme" (pp.105-106).

In this way Anceaux introduces in the fifty sections on "The Productive Categories of the Verb-system" (pp.56-122) the following categories (in this order):

- 1) singular actor categories: 1st person, 2d person, 3d person masculine and 3d person neutral (= non-masculine);
- 2) tense categories: future, present, past and recent past;
- 3) position categories, coined 1 to 5;
- 4) combinations of 2) and 3);
- 5) further position categories, coined 6 to 16;
- 6) further actor categories: 1st+2d person singular, 1st+2d person dual;
- 7) root-morpheme categories: singular, dual;
- 8) plural actor categories: 1st person exclusive, 1st person inclusive, 3d person;
- 9) the plural root-morpheme;
- 10) combinations of 5) and 8);
- 11) iterative vs. momentary categories;
- 12) object categories: masculine, plural;
- 13) the category of the durative;
- 14) combinations of 13) and 11), and of 13) and 2);
- 15) the "infinitive" and "final infinitive" categories;
- 16) The so called "secondary" verbal categories.

Subsequently (pp.123-164) "blockading" categories and words are discussed, which comprise recurrent and unique, lexically or phonemically conditioned, formal exceptions in the

expression of the categorial meaning of some of the productive morphological categories.

Finally, Anceaux introduces two additional verbal categories: feminine object and 2d person plural actor, which are relevant only for a (very) restricted number of stems (pp.165-166).⁵

1.3 Anceaux does not give an explicit systematic survey of the structure of the Nimboran verbal paradigm, but this can be derived from his combined statements and especially from the sample paradigm of *nggedóu-*. Below I will present a systematized overview of the Nimboran verbal system, based on a rearrangement and reinterpretation of Anceaux' data and comments.

The multidimensional character of the verbal paradigm makes that the possible combinations of categories can best be schematized in a series of charts. In section 2 of this paper I shall discuss the positional deictic categories expressed in the verb, and in section 3 the possible combinations of these categories with other categories. In section 4 the formal build up of the verbs will be discussed.

2 One of the most salient aspects of the Nimboran verbal paradigm is the elaborate system of what Anceaux calls position categories. In an earlier paper (Steinhauer, to appear) I have tried to systematize the oppositions between these categories, which by Anceaux are described in a rather impressionistic way. The result is illustrated in chart 1. In this chart the 16 position categories are divided into two groups: those which indicate the presence of a movement (of the agent and/or of the patient), and those which do not ([+move] and [-move] in the chart). The [+move] categories are not available for actions which do not involve a change of place. For verbs which do, the [-move] categories seem to express that the movement starts at the indicated position.⁶

Both [+move] and [-move] categories are subdivided into two sets: those which involve the position of the speaker ([+S]), and those which do not ([-S]). Relevant positions are further defined by elevational features: [+H], higher than the place of the

speaker; [+L], lower than the place of the speaker; [-H,-L], at the same level as the place of the speaker. All these positions are implicitly visible ([+vis]) and opposed to what is far away and not visible ([-vis]). It is understood that [-H] includes positions which are [+L] and [-H,-L], whereas [-L] includes [+H] and [-H,-L]. The numbers in the chart correspond with Anceaux' numbering of the positional categories.

	[+S]	[-S]
[-move]	(1)	(2) [+H] (3) [+L] (4) [-H,-L] (5) [-vis]
[+move]	from [+S] to ...	from ... to ...
	(6) [+H] (7) [-H,-L] (8) [+L] (9) [-vis]	(13) [-H]/[-vis] [+H] (14) [+L] [-H,-L]
	from ... to [+S]	(15) [+vis] [-vis]
	(10) [+H]/[-vis] (11) [+L] (12) [-H,-L]	(16) [-L]/[-vis] [-H]

Chart 1: The system of the 16 position categories.

3.1 The first major distinction to be made for the verbal paradigm as a whole is one between {+indicative}⁷ vs. {-indicative} forms. The latter comprise only two other categories, *viz.* what is called by Anceaux the "infinitive" and the "final infinitive". The "final infinitive" has the categorial meaning 'in order to ...'. The "infinitive" is used as an adjective (translated as a passive perfect participle), a coarse imperative, or indeed a kind of infinitive occurring in contexts such as *like to ---*, *refuse to ---*.