

## The verb ‘to give’ as a verbal extension in Uncunwee (Kordofan Nubian)

Jade Comfort & Angelika Jakobi

### Introduction

Uncunwee is part of the Kordofan Nubian language continuum which is part of the Nubian language family in the Eastern Sudanic branch of Nilo-Saharan. According to Jakobi (to appear), the Kordofan Nubian continuum can be divided into two groups: Abu Jinuk, Kasha, Kaakmbee (Karko), Kujurja, Fanda, Wali, Kwashi (Kudur), and Warkimbee (Dilling) where the vowel of a monosyllabic noun is long, and Uncunwee (Ghulfan), Dabri, Dabatna, Kadaru, Taglena (Kururu), and Dair where this vowel is short.

Uncunwee is spoken in a number of villages in the area between Dilling and Kadugli in the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan, Sudan. Uncunwee itself seems to have two major dialects which we refer to as *uncu vdiɸarɪnwɛɛ* ‘eastern Uncunwee’ (UUW) and *uncu tokɪnarɪnwɛɛ* ‘western Uncunwee’ (UTW). UUW is spoken in Nama, Ninya, Terda and Katang and UTW is spoken in Moriny, Sigida and Kurgul. The data for this paper was gathered from speakers of both dialects living in Sudan and in the refugee community in Cairo.

The aim of this paper is to describe the transfer verb ‘to give’ and how it is used as a verbal extension in Uncunwee.

### To Give

The verb ‘to give’ involves a bitransitive construction with three arguments: an Agent, a Theme (the transferred object), and a Recipient. The Agent role is aligned with the subject. Both the Theme and Recipient roles may be aligned with the object, i.e. the corresponding object noun phrases have the same morphological marker (none or the clitic =*gɪ*).

- | (1) | <b>Agent</b>   | <b>Theme</b>  | <b>Recipient</b> | <b>Give</b>   |        |
|-----|--|---------------|------------------|---------------|--------|
|     | ʃíkàtɛ́  | ʈwáŋ          | ð                | ʈíŋ           | (U UW) |
|     | Shikite  | bowl          | 1SG.OJ           | give.PAST.3SG |        |
|     | “Shikite gave me a bowl.”                            |               |                  |               |        |
| (2) | ʃíkàtɛ́  | ʈɔ́ = g       | ð                | ʈíŋ           | (U UW) |
|     | Shikite  | 3SG=OJ        | 1SG.OJ           | give.PAST.3SG |        |
|     | “Shikite gave it to me.”                             |               |                  |               |        |
| (3) | ʈð   | ʈɔ́ = g       | ð                | ʈíŋ           | (U UW) |
|     | 3SG.SJ   | 3SG=OJ        | 1SG.OJ           | give.PAST.3SG |        |
|     | “He gave it to me.” (U UW)                           |               |                  |               |        |
| (4) | ʃíkàtɛ́  | ð             | ʈíŋ              |               | (U UW) |
|     | Shikite  | 1SG.OJ        | give.PAST.3SG    |               |        |
|     | “Shikite gave me.” (Theme not explicitly stated)     |               |                  |               |        |
| (5) | ʃíkàtɛ́  | ʈíŋ           |                  |               | (U UW) |
|     | Shikite  | give.PAST.3SG |                  |               |        |
|     | “Shikite gave it.” (Recipient not explicitly stated) |               |                  |               |        |

The verb ‘to give’ in Uncunwee is unusual in several respects. First, it is difficult to determine whether the root of *ʈí* is *ʈi-* or *ʈ-* since the vowel in the imperative form *ʈí* could be the imperative morpheme *-i*, that is, the morpheme boundary would be between the consonant and the vowel, *ʈ-i*. Alternatively, the vowel could be considered to belong to the root as suggested by the plural addressee form *ʈí-é*. In addition to this in the imperative there are two roots rather than one, *ʈí* / *ʈí-é* ‘give to him/us/them (addressee sg/addressee pl)’ and *ʈíŋ* / *ʈín-é* ‘give to me (addressee sg/addressee pl)’. The falling tone on *ʈíŋ* probably results from a high tone on the root which has fused with the low tone of *-i* after this imperative singular suffix was deleted, *ʈíŋ* < \**ʈín-i*. The alternation of velar *ŋ* and alveolar *n* is due to fact that *n* is regularly replaced by *ŋ* in final position. Despite of the phonetic similarities between *ʈí* / *ʈí-é* and *ʈíŋ* / *ʈín-é* we are currently looking at *ʈíŋ* and *ʈín-é* as suppletive forms with a root ending in a nasal rather than analysing the nasal as a separate morpheme<sup>1</sup>. We chose this analysis because these forms are most likely remnants from the two different roots of ‘to give’ which are

<sup>1</sup> According to Veselinova’s cross-linguistic study *Suppletion in Verb Paradigms* (2006), the imperative form of ‘give’ is often expressed by a suppletive verb.

found in the Nile Nubian languages<sup>2</sup> and which seem to have merged in the Kordofan Nubian languages. The Table 1 below shows the imperative forms for ‘to give’ implying a single object and a single event.

**Table 1: Imperative forms of ‘to give’ (UTW & U UW)**

	<b>1sg recipient</b>	
addressee sg	ʃiŋ < *ʃin-i	‘give me’
addressee pl	ʃin-ê	
	<b>All other recipients</b>	
addressee sg	ʃi < *ʃi-i	‘give him/us/them’
addressee pl	ʃi-é	

The suppletive forms for 1sg recipients are only found in the imperative and do not appear in the present or past conjugation of the verb ‘to give’ as shown in the two examples below which have a 1sg and a 3sg recipient, respectively.

- (6) ák kākár = gê ð ʃirón (UTW)  
 2SG.SJ stone=OJ.FOC 1SG.OJ give.PRS.2SG  
 “You are giving me the stone.”

- (7) ák kākár = gî ʃilmà = â ʃirón (UTW)  
 2SG.SJ stone=OJ Shilma=OJ.FOC give.PRS.2SG  
 “You are giving Shilma the stone.”

Below is the conjugation for the verb ‘to give’ in the present and past tense. In Uncunwee the verb ‘to give’ remains the same for singular and plural objects (both themes and recipients). There is a different root, however, for the verb ‘to give’, *ak-*, which is used when giving many times but since this root is not used in forming a verbal extension we will not address it in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Nobiin and Kenzi-Dongolawi have two roots, *deen-* ‘give to speaker’ and *tir-* ‘give to person other than speaker’ (Armbruster 1960: §5534-5537, Massenbach 1933: 128, Werner 1987: 187).

**Table 2: Inflectional paradigm ‘to give’ (UTW & U UW)**

	Present	Past
1sg	ʈĩrɛ́	ʈĩɛ́bɛ́
2sg	ʈĩrɔ́ŋ	ʈĩɔ́bɔ́ŋ
3sg	ʈíŋ	ʈííŋ
1pl	ʈĩrɔ́	ʈĩɔ́bɔ́
2pl	ʈĩrúŋ	ʈĩɛ́búŋ
3pl	ʈíŋ	ʈĩámúŋ

**How ‘to give’ is used as a verbal extension**

The verb ‘to give’ can be attached to the root of a verb with the linker *-n-* which is also used to create noun compounds. The nasal *n* may trigger morphophonological changes affecting both the preceding root-final consonant and the following initial *ʈ* of the verb ‘to give’ which becomes voiced and sometimes nasalized as is common with these kinds of compounds. In addition to this the tone of the ‘give’ extension may change according to the tone class of the base verb. In this paper we are not concerned with these changes. The ‘give’ extension is shown below attached to the verb stem *martu-* ‘to cook asida (a porridge made from sorghum)’ (sg object).

**Table 3: The 'give' extension in UTW & U UW**

		'to give'	UTW	U UW
Imp	sg addressee, 1sg recipient	ʃîŋ	màrtù-nîŋ	màrtù-nîŋ
	sg addressee, 3sg 1pl 3pl recipient	ʃí	màrtù-ndʒí	màrtù-ní
	pl addressee, 1sg recipient	ʃîŋê	màrtù-nîŋê	màrtù-nîŋê
	pl addressee, 3sg 1pl 3pl recipient	ʃîé	màrtù-ndʒîé	màrtù-nîé
Prs	1sg, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîrê	màrtù-ndʒîrê	màrtù-nîrê
	2sg, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîrónŋ	màrtù-ndʒîrónŋ	màrtù-nîrónŋ
	3sg, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîŋ	màrtù-nîŋ	màrtù-nîŋ
	1pl, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîrós	màrtù-ndʒîrós	màrtù-nîrós
	2pl, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîrúnŋ	màrtù-ndʒîrúnŋ	màrtù-nîrúnŋ
	3pl, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîŋ	màrtù-nîŋ	màrtù-nîŋ
Past	1sg, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîēbé	màrtù-ndʒîēbé	màrtù-nîēbé
	2sg, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîōbónŋ	màrtù-ndʒîōbónŋ	màrtù-nîōbónŋ
	3sg, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîíŋ	màrtù-ndʒîíŋ	màrtù-nîíŋ
	1pl, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîōbós	màrtù-ndʒîōbós	màrtù-nîōbós
	2pl, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîēbúnŋ	màrtù-ndʒîēbúnŋ	màrtù- nîēbúnŋ
	3pl, ALL RECIPIENTS	ʃîāmúnŋ	màrtù-ndʒîāmúnŋ	màrtù- nîāmúnŋ



- (12) àkòdú = g ò kàṭò-ḡḡḡḡ (UTW)  
 seat=OJ 1SG.OJ push.SG.OJ-give.IMP.2SG  
 “Push the seat to me! / Push the seat for me!”
- (13) óṭì kòṭá-ndí (UTW)  
 water bring-give.IMP.2SG  
 “Bring him/us/them water! / Bring water for him/us/them!”
- (14) bàád = d ḡ = g òṭò-ndíé (UTW)  
 letter=OJ 1PL.OJ=OJ send.SG.OJ-give.IMP.2PL  
 “Send us the letter! / Send the letter for us!”
- (15) ié ḡirjùlú = ḡí ṡilmà = â ṡwàr-ndíṡṡé (UTW)  
 1SG.SJ money.PL=OJ Shilma=OJ.FOC take-give.PRS.1SG  
 “I am taking the money to Shilma. / I am taking the money for Shilma.”
- (16) tònú ṡántù = ḡì túr-níḡ (UUW)  
 baby Shantu=OJ crawl-give.PRS.3SG  
 “The baby is crawling to Shantu / The baby is crawling for Shantu.”
- (17) ṡṡ ṡḡód = dí ò ṡòrdò-níḡḡ (UUW)  
 3SG.SJgoat=OJ 1SG.OJ pull.SG.OJ-give.PAST.3SG  
 “He pulled the goat to me. / He pulled the goat for me.”

The goal oriented motion (as well as the motion for a beneficiary) is expressed when the base verb of the motion verb is extended by ‘give’. In every case the extended version of the verb can be used to express both motion towards and motion for the benefit of a person. Thus, according to the context, it assigns two different roles, beneficiary and goal.

### iii) The ‘give’ extension assigns a possessor role to the peripheral argument

If the Theme and the peripheral argument have a possessive relationship – the thing possessed (Possessum) representing the Theme and the Possessor represented by the peripheral argument – both will be affected by the event expressed by the verb. That is, they are coordinated objects of the verb. The ‘give’ extension will assign a Possessor role to the peripheral argument.

- (18) nò térdù = ḡ ṡṡí = ḡì bùlàn = kò ṡáág-ndí (UTW)  
 this girl=OJ hands=OJ soot=INSTR rub-give.IMP.2SG  
 “Rub this girl’s hands with soot! / Rub hands with soot for this girl!”

- (19) *ìé kɔl = g ɔrdɔ tɔ̀kù-ndjèbé (UTW)*  
 1SG.SJ house=OJ top.of.roof tie.SG.OJ-give.PAST.1SG  
 “I tied the rooftop of the house.”
- (20) *ìé jàmíl = lì gírjúlú = gí fwàr-nīēbé (UUW)*  
 1SG.SJ Jamil=OJ money=OJ take-give.PAST.1SG  
 “I took Jamil’s money. / I took the money for Jamil.”
- (21) *ìé ɔ̀gúd = dí īgīj = jí kɔ̀l-dīēbé (UUW)*  
 1SG.SJ goat=OJ liver=OJ eat-give.PAST.1SG  
 “I ate the goat’s liver.”
- (22) *ìé íd = dì t̥ìl = lì kā̀p-nīēbé (UUW)*  
 1SG.SJ person=OJ hair=OJ shave-give.PAST.1SG  
 “I shaved the person’s hair.”

If there is a possessor already introduced in a previous clause then it does not need to be explicitly repeated as shown in this example.

- (23) *ìé íd = dì kā̀p-í t̥ìl = gí bār-ndjēbé (UTW)*  
 1SG.SJ person=OJ shave-CNV hair=OJ not.find-give.PAST.1SG  
 “I shaved the man but didn’t find his hair.”

## Conclusions

The paper has shown that the transfer verb ‘give’ is used both as an independent verb and as a grammaticalized verbal extension attached to the root or stem by the linker *-n-*. The ‘give’ extension enlarges the argument frame of the verb to which it is attached. It increases the number of arguments by one making an intransitive verb transitive and a transitive verb ditransitive. Depending on the base verb, the ‘give’ extension assigns two different semantic roles to the peripheral argument. The most common one is the role of Beneficiary. With motion verbs, the ‘give’ extension assigns the role of Goal to the peripheral argument, in addition to its role as Beneficiary. Moreover, the ‘give’ extension may assign the role of Possessor but this is only possible when the Theme and the peripheral argument already have a semantically possessive relationship.



**Abbreviations**

1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
CNV	converb
FOC	focus
FUT	future
IMP	imperative
INSTR	instrumental
OJ	object
pl, PL	plural
POSS	possessive
PRS	present
Q	question
sg, SG	singular
SJ	subject
UTW	western Uncunwee
UW	eastern Uncunwee

**References**

- Armbruster, Charles Hubert. 1960. *Dongolese Nubian: A grammar*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jakobi, Angelika. (To appear). *Kordofan Nubian: A synchronic and diachronic study*.
- Massenbach, Gertrud von. 1933. Wörterbuch des nubischen Kunûzi-Dialektes mit einer grammatischen Einleitung, *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin* 36: 99-226.
- Veselinova, Ljuba N. 2006. *Suppletion in verb paradigms*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Werner, Roland. 1987. *Grammatik des Nobiin (Nilnubisch)*. Hamburg: Buske.

