The road to opacity:
Reflexes of Proto-Oceanic *-*akin* in northern Vanuatu

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This paper provides a systematic overview of the modern reflexes of the Proto-Oceanic applicative suffix *-*akin* in the languages of northern Vanuatu. Our three focal languages are Hiw, Vurës, and Mwotlap, but data from neighboring languages are also used to demonstrate the historical development of *-*akin* in the area. We describe five different development paths of *-*akin*, namely (1) as a (semi-)productive applicative suffix; (2) as a non-productive suffix attaching to a verb, with recognizable yet irregular semantics; (3) as a non-productive suffix potentially linked to another root, yet with opaque semantics; (4) as a vestigial syllable in certain words, with no language-internal evidence of any suffixation process; and (5) as a preposition, through a process of degrammaticalization or debonding.

1. Introduction: Was POc *-akin preserved in northern Vanuatu?

1.1 A well-known applicative suffix

A well-known morpheme of Proto-Oceanic (POc) is the verbal suffix *-*akin*. It was initially reconstructed as *-*aki[ni]* by Pawley (1973:120–131), who glossed it as 'remote transitive' (Pawley 1973:128).[1] Ross (1998:27) terms this suffix an 'applicative'. Ross et al. (2016:23) propose to transcribe it as *-*akin*, a convention we will follow throughout this paper.

Among the major works that have been specifically dedicated to reflexes of *-*akin* in various Oceanic languages (e.g., Clark 1973, Harrison 1982, Ball 2008:318–377, Kikusawa 2012, Naitoro 2018), Evans' (2003) monograph stands out, as she examines the whole Oceanic family and proposes a reconstruction for its shared ancestor Proto-Oceanic. Fine-tuning the earlier syntheses by Pawley or Harrison, Evans shows that this suffix, which she reconstructs as *-*akin[i]*, had two sets of functions, namely causative and applicative; and that, when used as an applicative, *-*akin[i]* would mark – depending on the verb's meaning – such semantic roles as concomitant (e.g., 'walk with ‹s.o., s.th.›'), stimulus (e.g., 'cry for ‹s.o., s.th.›'), instrument (e.g., 'chop with ‹s.th.›'), beneficiary (e.g., 'cook for ‹s.o.›'), content (e.g., 'speak about ‹s.o., s.th.›') and product (e.g., 'spit ‹s.th.›') (Evans 2003:191–205).

The sort of derivation allowed by reflexes of *-*akin* is illustrated in examples (1–3), in Manam (Western Oceanic), Kosraean (Micronesian) and Bauan Fijian (Central Pacific):

[1] The notation *-*aki[ni]* captures the fact that the suffix must have taken the form *-*aki* on intransitive verbs, but *-*akini* on transitive ones (Clark 1973:565), the latter reflecting the combination of *-*akin* with the transitivizer *-*i*.

KRAUßE, Daniel and Alexandre FRANÇOIS, 2023. 'The road to opacity: Reflexes of Proto-Oceanic *-*akin* in northern Vanuatu'. In Jocelyn AZNAR, Christian DÖHLER, and Jozina VANDER KLOK, eds. *Applicatives in Austronesian languages*. NUSA 74: 41–82. Permanent URL: http://repository.tufs.ac.jp/handle/10108/0002000018 doi: 10.15026/0002000018

(1) Manam (Lichtenberk 1983:230)

wanana	→	*wanan-**aʔ**-*
'wait'		'wait **for** ‹s.th., s.o.›'

(2) Kosraean (Harrison 1982:190)

pwacr	→	*pwacr-**kihn***
'be happy'		'be happy **with** ‹s.th., s.o.›'

(3) Bauan Fijian (Pawley 1973:120)

vana-i	→	*vana-**taki***
'shoot ‹s.th., s.o.›'		'shoot **with** ‹s.th.›'

In (1) and (2), the reflex of **-akin* (Manam *-aʔ*, Kosraean *-kihn*) adds an argument to an intransitive verb, making it transitive. In (3), the cognate suffix *-taki* demotes the verb's initial object and promotes instead a peripheral argument to the object position. In both cases, the suffix has a valency-altering function, whether to increase or to reshape it. This function is typical of applicatives cross-linguistically (Dixon & Aikhenvald 2000:13).

In addition to the applicative suffix proper, several works mention a preposition **(a)kini* of the same origin, and with similar functions (Pawley 1973:145–147, Evans 2003:205, Ross 2004:508, Naitoro 2018:172–184, 215–250).

The publications cited above tend to cite reflexes of **-akin* in various parts of the Oceanic family; but except for occasional mentions of Mota, NE Ambae or Tamambo, the languages of Vanuatu are seldom represented in these syntheses. The main reason is that, at the time of these early surveys, few languages of Vanuatu had yet been described in any depth. Sound change, which can be drastic in parts of Vanuatu, may also have made certain reflexes of **-akin* more difficult to detect than in more conservative areas of the Pacific. However, as more grammatical descriptions of Vanuatu languages have been published in the last decades, it has become evident that **-akin* has left traces in the archipelago, if only in the form of semi-productive morphemes. Several authors have explicitly pointed out that certain grammatical devices, either verbal suffixes or prepositions, were likely reflexes of the POc applicative **-akin*:[2]

- the causative suffix *-tagi(ni)* of NE Ambae (Hyslop 2001:333),
- the transitive suffix *-ni* of Lewo (Early 2016:344),
- the inanimate transitive suffix *-ñ* of Anejom̃ (Lynch 2000:85),
- the applicative suffix *-hən-i* of Maskelynes (Healey 2013:229–232),
- the applicative suffix *-ikh* of Neverver (Barbour 2012:178),
- the suffix and preposition *ka* of Bierebo (Budd 2015),
- the preposition *hina ~ hini* of Tamambo (Jauncey 2011:235),
- the preposition *hini ~ (i)n(i)* of Araki (François 2002:159),
- the preposition *ki* of South Efate (Thieberger 2006: 217–220),

[2] This list only includes authors who explicitly point to **-akin*. It does not feature other authors who, like Crowley (2006:124, 158) for Naman, or Lacrampe (2014:309–310) for Lelepa, describe morphemes that are probably derived from **-akin*, but do not propose that link themselves. Note that Touati's master's thesis (2010) draws an explicit connection between POc **-akin[i]* and certain morphemes described by Crowley.

- ➢ the preposition *gin* of Sunwadia (Henri 2011:100),
- ➢ the oblique preposition *xini* of Tirax (Brotchie 2009:180).

In most cases, however, the connection between *-*akin* and its modern reflexes is merely mentioned marginally in the context of larger grammatical descriptions. To our knowledge, no publications have yet been dedicated specifically to reflexes of *-*akin* in Vanuatu.

1.2 The present study

1.2.1 The languages of northern Vanuatu

The aim of the present study is to investigate the development of *-*akin* in the languages of northern Vanuatu, precisely in the 17 languages spoken in the Torres–Banks province (Figure 1). While the presence of modern reflexes of *-*akin* in the area has been acknowledged in earlier works (François 2005a:482–483, 2019:350; Malau 2016:113, 156; Kraußе 2021:239), it can be useful to survey the various grammatical functions they play, and their different degrees of productivity.

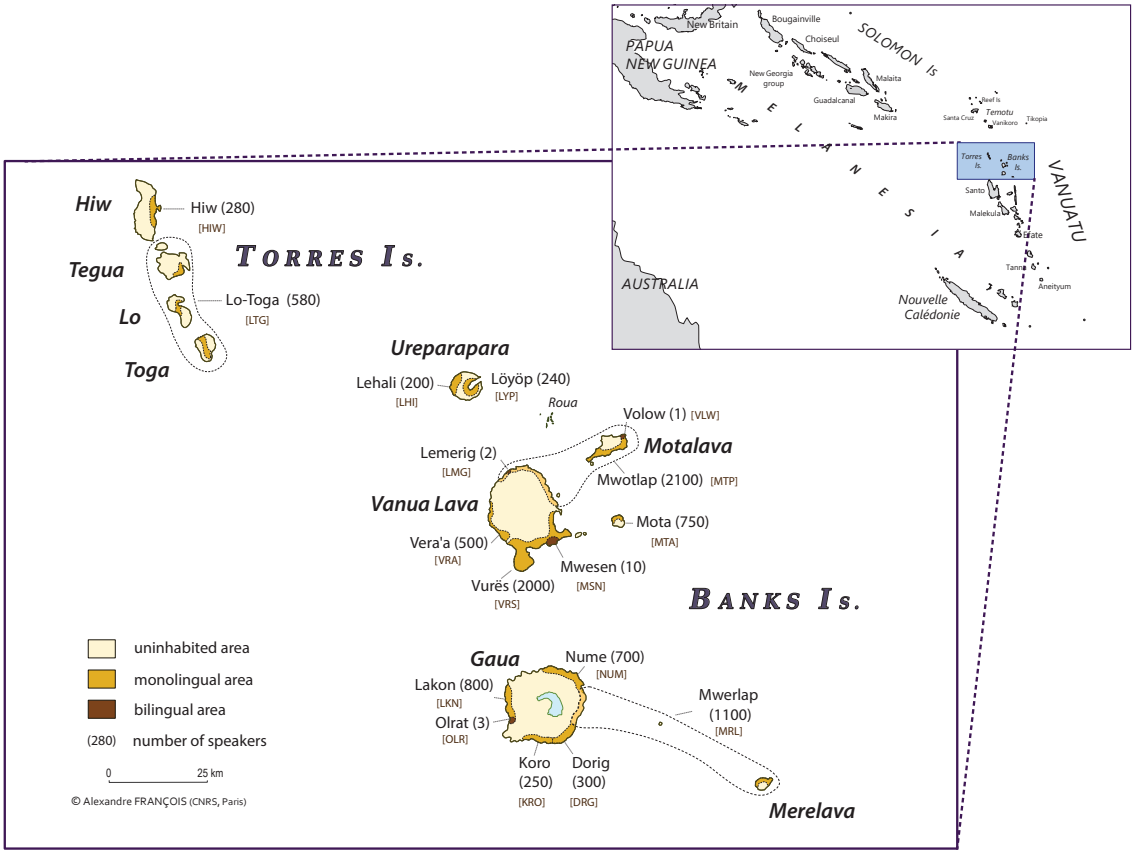

Figure 1. The languages of the Torres and Banks Islands, in northern Vanuatu (from François 2022)

This study encompasses the 17 languages spoken in the Torres-Banks province of Vanuatu. Together, these languages form the "Torres–Banks linkage" (François 2011b),[3]

[3] For the internal genetic subgrouping of these languages, see François (2014, 2016).

itself a subset of the broader North–Central Vanuatu linkage (Clark 2009) within the Oceanic branch of the Austronesian language family. Publications on the area include the grammars of Mwotlap (François 2001), of Vera'a (Schnell 2011), of Vurës (Malau 2016); dictionaries of Mota (Codrington & Palmer 1896), Vurës (Malau 2021), Mwotlap (François 2023a); and numerous publications dedicated to various languages of the area, either in a descriptive, typological or historical perspective.

Unless otherwise specified, we mainly draw on our own text corpora for the languages described in this study. We use 'corpus' here in the traditional sense referring to the entire collection of written and spoken material that we have had access to for this study. François' total corpus consists of 4156 pages of handwritten notes, featuring 22 different languages. These field notes include: data elicited using a conversational questionnaire (François 2019); snippets of daily conversation heard during participant-observer immersion in each community; and finally, a corpus of texts – mostly narratives and sung poems – taken from 962 audio recordings (François 2023b, 104 hours in total), transcribed and annotated with the help of native speakers. Among these, 168 narratives were typed, resulting in an electronic text corpus of 250,000 words, with the largest corpora being in Mwotlap (99,300 words), Lo-Toga (21,300), Hiw (20,600) and Dorig (14,500). Most of those text corpora are freely accessible on the CNRS archive *Pangloss*.[4] Whenever we cite a sentence from our online audio corpus, we will provide permanent links (DOI) to sentences in their original context.

The Vurës material mainly comes from fieldwork material (Krauße 2018) and consists of 37 hours of speech with a total of 52,000 words, transcribed and annotated with the help of native speakers. Of these, elicitation targeted for verb constructions amounts to 24 hours, naturalistic data (stories, narratives, conversation) comprises four hours, and other recordings (prayers, songs) comprise nine. The entire corpus is accessible via the archive PARADISEC in the KD1 collection.[5] Whenever we cite a sentence from this corpus, the item name is provided alongside. The present study has also benefited from examples with *-Ceg* in the Vurës grammar and dictionary by Malau (2016, 2021).

Regular sound correspondences for northern Vanuatu languages are exposed in François (2005a) for vowels, and François (2016:31) for consonants. When a linguistic innovation is shared by Torres and Banks languages together, it can be captured by positing an intermediate common ancestor called PTB "Proto-Torres–Banks" (François 2011b, 2016) – itself a descendant of Proto-Oceanic. Lists of PTB lexical reconstructions appear in François (2005a, 2013, 2016). When a reconstruction does not exist in our sources, we will occasionally propose a new PTB protoform, based on known regular correspondences.

1.2.2 In search of applicatives in northern Vanuatu

For a preliminary view of the reflexes of **-akin* in the Torres–Banks languages, consider examples (4a) and (4b) from Vurës. In (4a), the predicate of the clause is the intransitive (unergative) verb *bōr* 'laugh', which cannot take a direct object:

[4] François' audio recordings are freely accessible at http://tiny.cc/Francois-archives. For the languages Hiw and Mwotlap, mentioned more specifically in this study, see http://tiny.cc/AF-ark_Hiw and http://tiny.cc/AF-ark_Mwotlap.

[5] Krauße's corpus is accessible via https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1.

(4a) Vurës[6]

Iñko *rōrō* *a=bōr.*
now 3DU NSG:AOR=laugh

'Now the two of them are laughing.'

By contrast, the suffix *-seg* /-sɛɣ/ in (4b) permits the addition of the direct object *nē* 'he' ('laugh at'):

(4b) Vurës[7]

Rege *bul-rō* *a=bōr-**seg*** *nē.*
people GROUP-two NSG:AOR=laugh-**APPL** 3SG

'Those two are laughing **at** him.' [*function*: cause/stimulus]

A similar contrast can be found in Mwotlap (5a–b), this time with a suffix *-veg* /-βɛɣ/. Just like in Vurës, the suffix works like an applicative, with the effect of making an intransitive verb transitive:

(5a) Mwotlap[8]

Tō *kēy* *me-mtiy.*
then 3PL PRF-sleep

'So they went to sleep.'

(5b) Mwotlap[9]

Kē *me-mtiy-**veg*** *ēgnō-n.*
3SG PRF-sleep-**APPL** spouse-3SG.P

'She was sleeping **beside** her husband.' [*function*: concomitant/comitative]

Judging by these two examples, it does appear that *-*akin* has indeed survived in northern Vanuatu, with functions similar to its POc ancestor. But is it really the case that this applicative is still synchronically a suffix? Can it be added productively to various verbs to alter their valency? Or is it merely a vestigial element, which might have been a suffix historically, yet has become part of the verb's radical?

As we will see, the answer to this question depends on the language, and on the lexical verbs under consideration. On the one hand, the two Torres languages (Hiw, Lo-Toga) still have (semi-) productive reflexes of *-*akin*, both as a suffix and as a preposition; on the other hand, the typical configuration across northern Vanuatu is to find vestigial traces of *-*akin* that have been incorporated into the verb root. While all the languages in this study retain a reflex of *-*akin* of some kind, the original applicative function has almost completely vanished in most languages. In fact, despite the impression given by the Vurës and Mwotlap examples (4) and (5) above, the ability to identify a suffix with an applicative function is really – at least for these languages – the exception rather than the rule. In the overwhelming majority of all corpus occurrences with a reflex of the suffix

[6] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20180811MOV (04:115)

[7] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20180811MOV (01:59)

[8] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0007414#S100.

[9] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0002298#S54.

*-*akin*, no clear function or semantics of this reflex can be established, even when there is a clear etymological relation between the suffixed and unsuffixed verb forms.

In sum, this study will highlight a cline of morphological erosion, from a productive suffix with a clear applicative function to becoming a residual part of lexical verbs. In other words, we will show how the former applicative *-*akin* in northern Vanuatu has followed a road towards opacity.

The present study unfolds as follows. Section 2 will show how regular sound correspondences make it possible to establish with certainty the historical link between POc *-*akin* and certain modern verbal endings. Section 3 will examine closely the reflexes of the verbal suffix *-*akin* in three selected languages – Hiw, Vurës and Mwotlap – and classify their functions; in doing so, we will identify four different outcomes of the former applicative. Finally, section 4 will describe some prepositions descended from **akin*, both conservative and innovative ones.

2. Insights from historical phonology

The antecedent of POc **akɨn[i]* was the Proto-Austronesian (PAN) applicative **akən* with an irregular sound change (Evans 2003:203). In principle, the second vowel of POc *-*akin* poses a problem for a direct succession of PAN **akən* as POc **akin*, since *-*akən* would yield POc **-*akon* (PAN **ə* regular developed into POc **o*). Pawley & Reid (1979:125, fn. 15) provide a hypothetical explanation of how to arrive at *-*akin* from *-*akən* via pronominal suffixes. It has also been argued that **akən* was present in PAN as a preposition, from which /-akan/ in the languages of Indonesia and /-akin/ in Proto-Oceanic developed (Pawley & Reid 1979:124–125, Starosta *et al*. 1981:402, Adelaar 1984:410).[10]

When it comes to the descendants of POc *-*akin*, Evans (2003:231, 2010:181) has shown how the form had split early on – perhaps as early as POc – into two morphemes: a verbal suffix, and a preposition. This split is indeed confirmed in northern Vanuatu: knowledge of regular sound correspondences allows us to reconstruct, at the level of their shared ancestor Proto-Torres–Banks (PTB), two distinct proto-forms: an oblique preposition **ɣíni*, and a verbal suffix *-*áɣi*. Both protoforms showed penultimate stress, which was the rule in PTB.

On the one hand, modern prepositions of the form /ɣin/ in a few languages [cf. §4.1] point to a PTB reconstruction **ɣíni*, stressed on the penultimate syllable; this form **ɣíni* is a regular reflex of POc **kini*, which is also reconstructable as a preposition at the level of POc (Pawley 1973:145). That form **kini*, in turn, results from the apheresis of POc **akin-i* – that is, the free form **akɨn* suffixed with the transitivizer suffix *-*i* (Clark 1973, Evans 2003:190).

On the other hand, Torres–Banks languages point to a verb-final form PTB *-*áɣi*, stressed on /a/: this is the regular reflex of POc *-*akin*, with expected loss of the word-final consonant (François 2005a:479).[11] The first column of Table 1 shows the regular reflexes of *-*akin* in the area's 17 languages, ranked geographically, from northwest to southeast (cf. map in §1.2.1). The middle column illustrates the reflexes of *-*akin* with the verb

[10] For a more detailed discussion on the development and the different semantics of POc **akin* (and its predecessor *-*akən*), cf. Kikusawa (2012); for discussions on *-*akən* in other Malayo-Polynesian languages, cf. Adelaar (1992:147–148, 2011:347–348) and Zobel (2002:425).

[11] Northern Vanuatu languages do show sporadic reflexes of POc *-*i* (François 2005a:479–481); but none reflects the combination of *-*akin* with -*i*, namely *-*akin-i*.

'listen', for which most languages in the area reflect a local etymon **roŋotáɣi* (François 2005a:482) – itself a reflex of POc **roŋo(R)* 'hear, feel' suffixed with **-akin*.[12] Finally, the last column shows the regular outcome of sound change in a similar phonological environment: we choose the verb 'marry, be married', which reconstructs as PTB **láɣi* < POc **laki* (a form which does not involve the applicative suffix **-akin*).

Table 1. Reflexes of *-*akin* in the Torres and Banks languages, compared with sound change in similar environments

	POc **-akin* > PTB **-áɣi*		POc **roŋoR* 'hear' + **-akin* > PTB **roŋotáɣi* 'listen'		'marry' PTB **láɣi*
Hiw	/-ɔɣ/	*-og*	g͡ʟoŋt**ɔɣ**	*rōñtog*	jɔɣ
Lo-Toga	/-ɛ/	*-ë*	roŋt**ɛ**	*rōñtë*	lɛɣ
Lehali	/-æ/	*-ä*	jeŋt**æ**	*yēñtä*	lɛ
Löyöp	/-ɪ/	*-ē*	jɔŋʧ**ɪ**	*yoñjē*	lɪ
Volow	/-ɛɣ/	*-eg*	jɔŋt**ɛɣ**	*yoñteg*	lɛɣ
Mwotlap	/-ɛɣ/	*-eg*	jɔŋt**ɛɣ**	*yoñteg*	lɛɣ
Lemerig	/-ɛɣ/, /-ɪ/	*-eg*, *-ē*	(mœps**ɪ**)	(*mëpsē*)	lɛɣ
Vera'a	/-a/, /-ɛ/	*-a*, *-e*	rɔŋⁿd**a**	*roñda*	lɛɣ
Vurës	/-ɛɣ/	*-eg*	roŋt**ɛɣ**	*rōñteg*	lɛɣ
Mwesen	/-ɛ/	*-e*	rɔŋt**ɛ**	*roñte*	lɛɣ
Mota	/-aɣ/	*-ag*	roŋot**aɣ**	*roñotag*	laɣ
Nume	/-ɛ/	*-e*	rɔŋɔt**ɛ**	*roñote*	lɛɣ
Dorig	/-aːɣ/, /-ɪɣ/	*-āg*, *-ēg*	(maːᵐbs**ɪɣ**)	(*mābsēg*)	laːɣ
Koro	/-ɛa͡ɣ/	*-äg*	(mɛms**ɛaɣ**)	(*memsäg*)	lɛa͡ɣ
Olrat	/-aː/	*-aa*	rɔŋt**a**ː	*roñtaa*	laː
Lakon	/-æɣ/	*-äg*	rɔŋt**æɣ**	*roñtäg*	læɣ
Mwerlap	/-a/	*-a*	rɔŋt**a**	*roñta*	lɛɣ

A major sound change in the area (François 2005a) was a process of syllabic reduction, whereby all sequences of two open syllables **'CVCV* (with penultimate stress) were regularly reduced to a closed syllable **CVC*. That reduction was accompanied by a regular process of umlaut or metaphony, which was different across languages but mostly regular within each language: e.g., **-áCi* regularly became /-ɛC/ in Lo-Toga, Mwesen and Mwotlap, but it is reflected as **-ɔC* in Hiw, as **-aːC* (with long /a/) in Dorig, etc. Some languages show more than one regular reflex for **-áCi*: e.g., in Vera'a it is /a/ or /ɛ/; in Vurës /ɛ/ or /œ/.[13]

[12] When a reflex of **roŋotaɣi* is missing, we provide in brackets a reflex of another **-akin* reflex, namely **m$^{[w]}$a^{m}b$^{[w]}$u-sáɣi* 'breathe, rest' (after François 2005a:482). For a more detailed discussion of the Vurës reflex of **m$^{[w]}$a^{m}b$^{[w]}$u-saɣi*, cf. §3.3.3.

[13] In Lehali, the regular outcome of **-áCi* is /æ/ (François 2005a:490): e.g., POc **kani* > 'eat' /ɣæn/, **taŋi* > /tæŋ/ 'cry', **api* > /æp/ 'fire'. The verb 'marry' (**laki* > /lɛ/) is one of the rare exceptions to this rule.

Besides the change to the stressed vowel, all languages show a regular change POc **k* > **ɣ*. In word-final contexts, this velar constrictive /ɣ/ optionally devoices to [x] in Mota or Lemerig, and regularly lenites to an approximant [ɯ] in other languages: e.g., Hiw *yog* 'marry', phonologically /jɔɣ/, usually surfaces as [jɔɯ] (François 2010b:396). This lenition of /ɣ/ has gone further in certain languages, as it was regularly lost in word-final position in languages such as Lehali or Löyöp (François 2016:31) – with compensatory lengthening in the case of Olrat (François 2005a:462). As the comparison with **láɣi* shows, the deletion of /ɣ/ has been even more frequent in the case of the applicative **-áCi*. In sum, the proto-suffix **-akin* has been reduced to a sequence -VC in some languages (> **-áɣi* > -ɔɣ, -ɛɣ, -ɪɣ, -æɣ, -aɣ), and to a mere vowel -V in others (> **-áɣi* > -a, -aː, -æ, -ɛ, -ɪ).[14]

Modern reflexes of the suffix **-akin* are preceded by a consonant C, which is known as the thematic consonant (Evans 2003:207–230, 2010:185–190). In some cases, the consonant reflects the etymon's final consonant, which was exceptionally preserved thanks to the suffix's vowel. For example, the POc root **si[n,ŋ]aR* 'shine' (Osmond 2003:163) preserved its final **R* when followed by a suffix, whether it was the transitivizer **-i* or the applicative **-akin* (François 2011a:151):

(6a) POc **si[n,ŋ]aR* 'shine' + **-i* > **siŋár-i*
> MTA *siña**r***, VRS *siñe**r*** 'illuminate'

(6b) POc **si[n,ŋ]aR* 'shine' + **-akin* > **siŋar-áɣi*
> MTA *siña**r**ag*, MTP *hiñ**y**eg* 'illuminate'

Yet in many cases, the thematic consonant is non-etymological. For example, even though the POc root **roŋoR* 'hear, feel' is reconstructed with a final **R*, the suffixed form **roŋotáɣi* shows a thematic consonant /t/, of unknown origin. Non-etymological thematic consonants are not specific to northern Vanuatu and have been discussed for various parts of the Oceanic family (Evans 2003:213–216, 2010:186; Naitoro 2018:251–286): see, for example, (3) in §1.1, where **-akin* was reflected as /-**t**aki/ with a non-etymological consonant. Ross (1998:27) observes that the thematic consonant in Boumaa Fijian is "apparently a lexically determined choice between *-t-* and *-v-*". For the languages of northern Vanuatu, no such preference for one or another thematic consonant can be established;[15] that said, we'll see that Hiw tends to choose /ŋ/ or /β/ for its most productive suffix [§3.2], and that Mota and Mwotlap generalized /β/ as they developed new prepositions [§4.2].

The following sections will focus on the semantics rather than the morphology. Occasionally, when discussing the etymology of certain forms, we will point to reconstructions in Proto-Torres–Banks (cf. François 2005a:492–502), Proto-North–Central–Vanuatu (Clark 2009), or Proto-Oceanic (Ross, Pawley & Osmond 1998, 2003, 2011, 2016).

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[14] From now on, all forms will be presented in the languages' orthographies: e.g., MTP *mōkheg* for /ŋm͡ʷʊkhɛɣ/ 'breathe'. An appendix provides notes on the orthographies of Torres–Banks languages.

[15] Our pool of 102 lexemes with *-Ceg* in Mwotlap shows the following sounds as thematic consonants, here indicated with the number of occurrences: *-t-* (21), *-y-* (19), *-v-* (17), *-l-* (10), *-h-* (9), *-m̄-* (9), *-g-* (6), *-s-* (3), *-b-* (2), *-n̄-* (2), *-w-* (2), *-d-* (1), and *-n-* (1). The distribution of the thematic consonant in the 63 Vurës lexemes with *-Ceg* is different: *-s-* (18), *-r-* (14), *-v-* (6), *-l-* (6), *-g-* (5), *-m̄-* (4), *-t-* (4), *-n-* (3), *-n̄-* (2) and *-w-* (1). For the 47 Hiw lexemes with *-Cog*, the thematic consonants are distributed as follows: *-v-* (15), *-r̄-* (12), *-n̄-* (9), *-t-* (7), *-n-* (2), *-s-* (1) and *-y-* (1). Note that Mwotlap *-y-* reflects POc **r/R*, whereas Hiw *-y-* reflects POc **l*.

3. The different outcomes of the former applicative

3.1 Four different scenarios

All Torres–Banks languages have preserved reflexes of PTB *-*áɣi*, in the form of a verb-final syllable that is recurrent in our corpora. Many verbs of Mota end in /-aɣ/, many verbs of Mwotlap or Vurës end in /-ɛɣ/, and so on and so forth; but what is the exact status of those verb-final syllables? Can they still be analyzed as suffixes everywhere?

This question cannot be answered easily and needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis: language after language, and (for each language) verb after verb. Ultimately, we identify four different types of configurations across modern Torres–Banks languages:

1. The reflex of *-*akin* is a (semi-) productive applicative suffix, with a transparent function and regular semantics.
2. The reflex of *-*akin* is a non-productive suffix attached to an existing verb in the language, with a semantic function that is transparent yet irregular.
3. The reflex of *-*akin* is a syllable (a former suffix) attached to an existing verb in the language, with a semantic function that is now opaque.
4. The reflex of *-*akin* is a vestigial syllable petrified on a verb, with no corresponding simple verb in synchrony. (The underlying verb root can sometimes be reconstructed through language comparison, but not always.)

Scenario 1 is very rare: it happens only in a few languages and does not even cover all reflexes of *-*akin* in those languages. Scenarios 2 and 3 require careful analysis to determine whether a verb with and without the suffix *-*akin* is attested, as they rarely – if ever – occur together in spontaneous speech; yet, these two scenarios are relatively frequent. While #2 is still compatible with an analysis in terms of suffixation, this is much more challenging for #3. The most common scenario is #4: these are all the cases where we can presume the presence of former *-*akin* due to the shape of a modern reflex, yet there is no language-internal argument to identify any verb-final suffix.

For every language, the typical case is to have verbs that illustrate several of these outcomes: that is, even a language with some (semi-) productive use of *-*akin* reflexes (Scenario 1) will also have a number of verbs that pertain to scenarios 2, 3 or 4.

The next subsections discuss the detailed development of *-*akin* in three focal languages, namely Hiw, Vurës and Mwotlap.

3.2 *-Cog* in Hiw

Hiw, the northernmost language of Vanuatu, reflects *-*akin* as a verb-final syllable *-(C)og*. If we exclude nouns – which are not concerned by *-*akin* reflexes – our corpus includes a total of 47 lexemes showing that ending.

3.2.1 Scenario #1: A semi-productive applicative

At one end of the spectrum, Hiw has many verbs ending in *-(C)og*, which not only exist alongside their shorter counterpart, but involve a regular semantic contribution with respect to that plain verb. This *-(C)og* element, which can combine with different sorts of verbs, therefore still qualifies as a productive suffix. It surfaces as *-n̄og* for certain verbs, but most frequently as *-vog*; we will use the latter as its citation form.

The main functions of the *-vog* suffix are typical of an applicative. When *-vog* is suffixed to an intransitive verb, it makes it transitive. For example, a motion verb (e.g., *nwuye* 'return') can combine with *-vog* to encode *caused accompanied motion*[16] (e.g., 'return with ‹s.th.›; bring ‹s.th.› on the way back'):

(7) Hiw[17]

Oye	*ne*	*pëy'*	*i*	*gengon,*	*ne*	*nwuye-**vog***.
take	ART	basket	of	food	3SG	return-APPL

'He seized the food basket and **brought** it back. [*liter.* 'return-with (it)]'

(8) Hiw[18]

Sise	*yop*	*ne*	*wët*	*alë*	*ike*	*sawe-**vog***	*ne*	*temët.*
3PL	pound	ART	(music)	then	2SG	dance-APPL	ART	headdress

'They will play the *newët* drums, and you will dance **with** your headdress on.'

(9) Hiw[19]

Sōgë	*voyi-**vog***	*nwuy'*	*ye*	*me,*	***tevog***	*nwuy'*	*ye*	*wuyog*
pig	run:PL-APPL	return	DOM:3SG	HITH	carry	return	DOM:3SG	again

me.
HITH

'The pigs would **carry** him back, **take** him back to his place.'
[*liter.* 'run-with back him']

Note that the suffixed form *voyi-vog* 'run-with' behaves like any transitive verb, including in its ability to be followed by a serialized verb (*nwuye* 'return'); the pronoun *ye*[20] – syntactically the object of the first verb *voyi-vog* – follows the whole serial construction, in the same way as in the second clause, *tevog nwuy' ye* (liter. 'carry back him').[21]

In fact, this verb *tevog*, glossed 'carry ‹s.th.›' in (11), is also a case of the applicative *-vog*, suffixed to the verb *tō* 'goSG, walk (singular or dual subject)'.[22] Its peculiarity is to be the only case in Hiw of an applicative where the verb radical has altered its phonological shape: compare *tō* /to/ <**toa* with *tevog* /təβɔɣ/ < **toa-βáɣi*. Despite its non-predictable phonological shape, *tevog* still behaves synchronically like an applicativized form of *tō*, insofar as it inherits from it the property of being exclusively used with

[16] For a typological survey of *caused accompanied motion* events such as 'bring' or 'take', see Margetts *et al.* (2022).

[17] Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003266#S42.

[18] Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003252#S62.

[19] Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003252#S94.

[20] The form *ye* /jə/ of Hiw results from the coalescence of an accusative marker *i* glossed DOM ('differential object marking'), used only with human objects (François 2019:343), and a 3SG object suffix *-e* /ə/: *i* + *-e* → *ye*.

[21] For an overview of verb serialization in Hiw, see François (2010a:511, 2017:311).

[22] Together with its neighbor Lo-Toga, Hiw has developed a rich system of "verbal number" encoded by suppletion (François 2019). It has 33 pairs of lexical verbs, which contrast in the number of their subject or their object. Even though the contrast is between "non-plural" (singular, dual) and "plural", for the sake of simplicity we gloss these verbs as "SG" vs. "PL". For example, *vëyag* 'run:SG', used with a singular or dual subject, contrasts with *voyi* 'run:PL' for more than two participants – cf. ex. (9) and Table 2.

singular (or dual) subjects. Just like *tō* 'goSG' contrasts with *vën* 'goPL', *tevog* contrasts with *vënn̄og*:

➢ *tevog* 'goSG with' = [1 or 2 agents] 'carry ‹s.th.›'
➢ *vënn̄og* 'goPL with' = [≥3 agents] 'carry ‹s.th.›'

(10) Hiw[23]

Tom	*ike*	*peon*	*at*	*wr̄og,*	*sise*	*vën-**n̄og***	*i-ke*	*iy.*
if	2SG	FUT	live	through	3PL	go:PL-APPL	DOM-2SG	inside

'If you manage to survive (the ordeal), they will **carry** you inside (your house).'

Verbal number in Hiw normally works on an absolutive basis, i.e., indexes the number of the object of transitive verbs. However, applicatives are an exception to this rule: they keep indexing the number of their subject, in line with the simple (intransitive) verbs they are derived from (François 2019:350). This is evidence that the process of applicative suffixation is still perceived, in synchrony, as a morphological operation, which inherits the semantic properties of its underlying verb. The applicative here is not petrified or vestigial, it is quite transparent in its mechanism.

While the applicative *-vog* is frequently suffixed to motion verbs to encode events of *caused accompanied motion* such as (7)–(10), it can also attach to static verbs:

(11) Hiw[24]

Se	*toge-**vog***	*tan̄wöy*	*ne*	*togekëse.*
3PL	stay:PL-APPL	just	ART	game

'They were just playing their games.' [*lit.* 'staying **with** their games']

Rather than *caused accompanied motion* (CAM) of the type 'go with', such cases are better described in terms of *stative accompaniment*, of the type 'be with' (cf. Schnell 2022).

When the plain (unsuffixed) verb is already transitive, the applicative can modify the verb's object, effectively promoting an oblique participant into the object slot. Thus, in a way reminiscent of the Fijian example (3) [§1.1], Hiw contrasts *kar̄e* 'shoot ‹s.o.›' with *kar̄e-n̄og* 'shoot ‹an arrow›':

(12) Hiw[25]

Mer̄avtit	*kar̄e*	*ne*	*qur̄ot*	*tan̄wuy.*
(hero)	shoot	ART	flying.fox	ten

'Megravtit shot ten flying-foxes.'

(13) Hiw[26]

Noke	*nëne*	*on*	*kar̄e-**n̄og***	*ten̄wog*	*ne*	*mesor̄=ekye!*
1SG	DEM	SBJV	shoot-APPL	first	ART	arrow=1SG.P

'Let me be the first to shoot (with) my arrow!'

[23] Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003252#S62.

[24] Reference in Hiw corpus: Hiw.Coconut.09.

[25] Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003258#S3.

[26] Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003256#S198.

Table 2 recapitulates the most prominent cases, in our Hiw corpus, of the *-vog* applicative, when it involves a semantic derivation that is regular and predictable. Note that *caused motion* is here short for *caused accompanied motion* (Margetts *et al.* 2022).

Table 2. Hiw verbs showing the applicative suffix *-Cog*, with regular semantics

plain V		suffixed V		semantic type
tō	'go$_{SG}$'	***tevog***	'go$_{SG}$ with, carry'	caused motion
vën	'go$_{PL}$'	*vën-**n̄og***	'go$_{PL}$ with, carry'	caused motion
vëyag	'run$_{SG}$'	*vëyag-**vog***	'run$_{SG}$ with ‹s.th.›'	caused motion
voyi	'run$_{PL}$'	*voyi-**vog***	'run$_{PL}$ with ‹s.th.›'	caused motion
n̄wuye	'return'	*n̄wuye-**vog***	'return with, bring back'	caused motion
vēn	'climb'	*vēn-**n̄og***	'climb with, carry up'	caused motion
ōy	'slide'	*ōy-**vog***	'surf ‹the waves›'	caused motion
yöy	'stay$_{SG}$'	*yöy-**vog***	'stay$_{SG}$ with, have ‹s.th.›'	static accompaniment
toge	'stay$_{PL}$'	*toge-**vog***	'stay$_{PL}$ with, have ‹s.th.›'	static accompaniment
sesu	'bathe'	*sesu-**vog***	'bathe with ‹clothes+› on'	static accompaniment
sawe	'dance'	*sawe-**vog***	'dance with ‹s.th.› on'	static accompaniment
kërr̄ë	'shout (deep)'	*kërr̄ë-**vog***	'send signal for ‹dance›'	purposive
eye	'shout (high)'	*eye-**vog***	'send signal for ‹dance›'	purposive
kar̄e	'shoot ‹s.th., s.o.›'	*kar̄e-**n̄og***	'shoot ‹arrow›'	instrumental
sor̄	'spear, poke ‹s.th.›'	*sor̄-**n̄og***	'poke with ‹finger›'	instrumental

Hiw's neighbor Lo-Toga has also preserved the **-akin* applicative in similar contexts, in the form of a suffix *-gë* /-ɣɛ/ or *-vë* /-βɛ/: e.g., *vēn* 'go' → *vēn-**gë*** 'go with, take away'; *toge* 'stay' → *toge-**vë*** 'stay with' (François 2005a:482–3).

(14) Lo-Toga[27]

Nihe	*ge*	*vin.*	*ni*	*vin-**gë***	*ne*	*megole.*
3PL	PL:AOR	climb	3SG:AOR	climb-APPL	ART	child

'They all began climbing; she was climbing **with** her baby.'

[27] Link to Lo-Toga corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003291#S34.

(15) Lo-Toga[28]

Hōr	*qihe*	*ne*	*lite,*	*ōr*	*si-**vë***	*ne*	*lite*	*me.*
3DU	break	ART	firewood	3DU:AOR	walk-APPL	ART	firewood	HITH

'They went to cut firewood and **brought** it home.' [*liter.* 'walk-with']

3.2.2 Scenario #2: Transparent yet irregular semantics

While the verbs listed in Table 2 illustrate the most transparent uses of the applicative, it is important to note that many verbs are more difficult to analyze semantically. These verbs can still be seen, in modern Hiw, as bearing a suffix *-(C)og*; except, the semantic contribution of that suffix is less predictable. Table 3 cites several verb pairs involving such "irregular semantics".

Table 3. Hiw: Verbs suffixed with the applicative suffix *-(C)og*, with irregular semantics

plain V		suffixed V		
tō	'goSG'	***terōg***	'goSG away from ‹s.o.›'	abitive
vën	'goPL'	*vën**rōg***	'goPL away from ‹s.o.›'	abitive
giy	'dig out ‹s.th.›'	*giy**n̄og***	'dig ‹hole›'	diathetic change
sorō	'poke ‹s.th.›'	*sorō**n̄og***	'poke ‹fingers› somewhere'	diathetic change
yan̄we	'hit ‹s.th.› with stick'	*yan̄we**tog***	'smash ‹s.th.› on ground'	diathetic change
qēt	[SBJ:PL] 'die'	*qēt**n̄og***	[OBJ:PL] 'kill'	causative
rōte	[OBJ:PL] 'beat'	*rōte**vog***	[OBJ:PL] 'beat'	(no change)
rōn̄	'hear, feel'	*rōn̄**tog***	'listen, attend to'	intentionality
yë	'see, look'	*yë**vog***	'watch, observe'	intentionality

Table 3 suggests several semantic subregularities:

➢ *terōg* and *vënrōg* are clearly derived from the motion verbs *tō* and *vën* we discussed earlier (respectively, singular vs. plural subject). Here, the meaning of the former applicative, which we propose to call 'abitive' (Lat. *ab-īre* 'move away'), does correspond to some sort of oblique relation ('walk away from ‹s.o.›, leave ‹s.o.›'); yet this appears to be an isolated sense taken here by the *-(C)og* suffix (François 2019:350);[29]

[28] Link to Lo-Toga corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003285#S13.

[29] Naitoro (2018:170–171) identifies several languages from the Makira subgroup (Solomon Islands) where reflexes of *-*akin* encode exactly the meaning '(go…) away from'. But while that meaning seems to be areally frequent in the Makira area, in Hiw it survives only in this pair of verbs *terōg*, *vënrōg*, and nowhere else – to our knowledge – in the Torres–Banks languages. Mwotlap, for example, encodes the abitive meaning using a serial construction: see (38) in §3.4.1 below.

- *qēt-n̄og* ‘kill ‹many people›, massacre’ is the causative counterpart of *qēt* ‘‹many people› die’;[30]
- three verbs (*giyn̄og*, *sorr̄n̄og* and *yan̄wetog*) illustrate a semantic shift which we’ll propose to describe as a change in (secondary) diathesis of certain action verbs [see §3.4.2 for Mwotlap]; but the exact meaning here is difficult to predict;[31]
- *r̄ōn̄-tog* and *yë-vog* involve agentivity and intentionality of their subject (‘listen’; ‘observe’), compared with the non-agentive simple verbs *r̄ōn̄* (‘hear’) and *yë* (‘see, look’);
- Some pairs appear to be synonymous, with no clear change in meaning or in valency: e.g., *r̄ote* = *r̄otevog* ‘beat ‹plural object›’; *giy* = *giyn̄og* ‘dig’.

Transparent as they may be, these subregularities are often confined to just one or two verbal pairs and can hardly be generalized to the applicative suffix as a whole. All these examples pertain to our scenario #2: these are cases when the reflex of **-akin* does attach to an existing verb, yet involves an ad hoc semantic contribution, which couldn’t really be attributed to a regular morpheme. If it is still to be analyzed as a suffix, it is one whose semantic contribution is not productive anymore, but vestigial.

Incidentally, it may not be a coincidence that the vestigial suffixes involve thematic consonants (/ŋ, β, ᵑl, t/) that are more diverse than the two (/ŋ, β/) associated with the more productive occurrences of the applicative suffix [Table 2].

3.2.3 Scenario #3: Opaque semantics

Table 4 illustrates some pairs that truly are semantically opaque – to such an extent that it is even doubtful whether the two phonologically similar verbs are in fact related at all. For example, *oye**tog*** ‘await ‹s.th., s.o.›’ could possibly result – phonologically speaking – from an extension of *oye* ‘take ‹s.th.›’, but the meaning is unclear.

Table 4. Hiw: Potential verb pairs involving a former applicative, with dubious semantic link

plain V		suffixed V	
ta	‘do, make’	*ta**vog***	‘rock ‹a baby›’
oye	‘take ‹s.th.›’	*oye**tog***	‘await ‹s.th., s.o.›’
mok	‘put down ‹s.th.›’	*moke**tog***	‘let go, give up ‹s.th.›’

If it is the case that *tavog* ‘rock ‹a baby›’ is in fact unrelated to the verb *ta* ‘do, make’, then this *tavog* could well fall in the Scenario #4 – namely, verbs that end in *-(C)og*, but which might not even include a reflex of **-akin* after all.

[30] While the causative function of **-akin* has been identified in several Oceanic languages (Evans 2003:201–202), this meaning is only vestigial in Hiw, being unique to the pair *qēt–qētn̄og*.

[31] For a presentation of “secondary diathesis” of bivalent verbs, cf. Lemaréchal (1989:199–241).

3.2.4 Scenario #4: A vestigial syllable

As a matter of fact, many verbs ending in *-(C)og* really pertain to scenario 4. Their *-(C)og* syllable has become simply part of a modern lexeme, with no corresponding shorter verb in the language, and no clear etymology:

(16) Hiw: verbs ending in *-(C)og* with no language-internal etymology

rēptog 'near, close'; *sanog* 'give birth to'; *tegtegagnog* 'lie, tell lies'; *prōg* 'stow ‹many things›'; *wötog* 'throw away ‹one thing›', *trōg* 'throw away ‹many things›'; *tōwrōg* 'char ‹s.th.› on fire'; *vëyeñog* 'mix, blend [intr.]'; *vitrōg* 'cover with ‹leaves›'; *wsog* 'pull, pull off ‹s.th.›'; *wunog* 'carry ‹s.th.› on head'; *yañevog* 'hide ‹s.th.›'; *yiñetog* 'not know'; *yiqerōg* 'pour out, throw away'.

To these verbs, one may add a list of postverbs – i.e., postverbal modifiers, which commonly originate in former (serialized) verbs (François 2017:317):

(17) Hiw: postverbs (possibly from earlier verbs) ending in *-(C)og* with no language-internal etymology

teñwog '(do) first'; *terōg*$_1$ '(do) firmly'; *terōg*$_2$ '(do) tentatively'; *verōg* '(do) also'; *ptog* '(take) off, away'; *weyog* '(do) again'; *wrōg* 'through'; *wurōg* '(do) well'.

The words in (16–17) may or may not contain a reflex of *-*akin*: this cannot be assessed, at least not language-internally. However, language comparison can sometimes help us identify the lost root and ascertain that we are well dealing with a former applicative – cf. Table 5.

Table 5. Hiw: Vestigial reflexes of the former applicative, revealed by language comparison

plain V		etymology	cognates
*yiñe**tog***	'not know'	< **liŋataɣi*	MTA *liña ~ luña* 'be out of sight' cf. MTP *lēñteg* 'not know'
*yañe**vog***	'hide ‹s.th.›'	< **l[u^{ʔ}]ŋa-βaɣi* (irregular V)	MTA *liña ~ luña* 'be out of sight' cf. MTA *luñavag*, MTP *lōñveg* 'hide'
*yiqe**rōg***	'pour out ‹s.th.›'	< **li[w^{ʔ}]o-raɣi* (irregular C)	MTA *liwo* 'pour out', *liworag* 'pour out quickly' cf. MTP *luwyeg*, LYP *lyewyē* 'pour out'
*vëye**ñog***	'mix, blend'	< **βalo-ŋaɣi*	MTA *valorlor* 'be mixed' < *va-* + *lor*
*wöt**og***	'throw away'	< **wut-aɣi*	VRS *wöt* 'throw', cf. LTG *wutë* 'throw away'
*rēpt**og***	'near, close'	< **riβit-aɣi*	LTG *revtë*, VRS *rivteg*, MTA *rivtag* < PNCV **rivita* 'near'
*tegtegagn**og***	'lie, tell lies'	< **[ta]ɣaɣan-aɣi*	cf. MTA *gaganag* 'show, tell', VRS *gagneg* 'tell'
*te**rōg***	'(do) firmly'	< **taur-aɣi*	MTA *taur*, MTP *tēy* 'hold' < PTB **tauri* 'hold in o.'s hands'

3.3 *-Ceg* in Vurës

The modern reflex of the suffix *-*akin* in Vurës is *-Ceg* /Cɛɣ/. Unlike Hiw, Vurës does not have a productive applicative suffix by which a common verb like *tog* 'stay' could be augmented as **togveg* with the intended meaning 'stay with': there is no such verb in Vurës. In some cases, we may find a pair of a base verb and a verb suffixed in *-Ceg*, but cases of a transparent semantic relation (Scenario #1) – e.g., *ōn* 'lie' vs. *ōnveg* 'lie near' – are the exception rather than the rule. In a few cases, we can establish a connection between a base verb and a verb suffixed with *-Ceg*, but the effect of the suffix *-Ceg* is irregular or unexpected (Scenario #2), e.g., *var* 'step on ‹s.th., s.o.›' vs. *varseg* 'stand firmly on ‹s.th., s.o.›'. Most often, the relationship between the suffixed and the unsuffixed form is rather opaque (Scenario #3), e.g., *van* 'go' vs. *vangeg* 'put ‹s.th., s.o.› in line' (likely to originate from the idea of 'cause to go'). In the majority of all occurrences with *-Ceg*, no base verb is attested in the contemporary language (Scenario #4).

In her grammar of Vurës, Malau (2016:113) only lists 15 verb forms ending in *-Ceg*, along with their identifiable bare root. While she terms this an "applicative suffix", she explains having found "no consistency in the semantic role of the object of the derived transitive"; she concludes by claiming that "it is not possible to generalize about the semantic role of the introduced O argument as it differs for each verb" (Malau 2016:156). She further explains that the suffix also occurs on a small number of transitive verbs, which have no underived intransitive counterpart (Malau 2016:113).

The verbal system of Vurës is also discussed in Krauße (2021:239). He also treats *-Ceg* in Vurës as an applicative suffix, "which increases the valency [of the verb root] by one" and "permits the addition of another core argument"; this description fits the majority of the cases in his list.

Malau's (2016) dictionary of Vurës always treats verbs ending in *-Ceg* as root forms and never as derivatives of another verb root: i.e., *gilgeg* 'stand up ‹post›' and *gil* 'dig' are listed as separate entries. Out of 3,500 headwords, approximately 1,050 lemmas are verbs. Of these, we have identified a number of instances which contain a possible continuation of the suffix *-*akin*. By conducting a careful search through all the available material in Malau's and Krauße's corpora, we have arrived at a list of 63 Vurës lexemes containing a final syllable *-Ceg*. While looking for these examples, we decided to include only lexemes that are synchronically verbs; we thus excluded postverbs such as *wareg* 'well' or *viteg* 'away', even though they may originate in verbs.[32] We also excluded verbs ending in *-ëg* such as *tutrëg* 'trip over',[33] as well as verbs ending in *-ēg* (e.g., *qētēg* 'start') because Vurës ‹ē› /ɪ/ does not originate in POc **a_i* (cf. François 2005a:491). Unlike Hiw [§3.2], all verbs with the suffix *-Ceg* in Vurës are polysyllabic, i.e., verbs like *leg* 'marry' (< POc **laki*) cannot contain a reflex of *-*akin*.

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[32] See our comment above on Hiw postverbs, in §3.2.4. The Vurës postverb *viteg* 'away' is cognate with a form *veteg* in Mwotlap (see (38) in §3.4.1), which can be used as a verb meaning 'put down' – suggesting a possible verbal origin of that lexeme. For the sake of consistency, we include Mwotlap *veteg* in our lists (since it exists as a verb), but we exclude Vurës *viteg*.

[33] Theoretically, verbs ending in *-ëg* /-œɣ/ could also be derived from *-*akin*, because /ɛ/ and /œ/ are both regularly found as reflexes of *-*áCi* in Vurës [see §2]: e.g., POc ***kani*** > VRS ***gen*** /ɣɛn/ 'eat', but POc ***paRi*** > VRS ***vër*** /βœr/ 'stingray' (François 2005a: 447–448). However, we have not been able to identify a clear example of a verb ending in *-ëg* that can really be traced back to *-*akin*, and the default hypothesis is that a single suffix should evolve identically for all forms in the same language, namely as *-eg* /-ɛɣ/.

3.3.1 Scenario #1: A semi-productive applicative

Of all the 63 attested cases with -*Ceg* in Vurës, only 20 have an unsuffixed equivalent in the contemporary language. That said, we must distinguish between at least two cases, in line with our earlier observations on Hiw [§3.2], namely those with regular semantics and those with irregular semantics. Out of these 20 verb pairs, the expected valency increase with regular semantics can only be observed in 5 cases: these are pairs which are clearly linked semantically, and where the syllable -*Ceg* can be analyzed as a semi-productive applicative suffix. These pairs are listed in Table 6, along with the semantic effect of -*Ceg*.

Table 6. Vurës verbs suffixed with the applicative suffix -*Ceg*, with regular semantics

plain V		suffixed V		semantic type
bōr	'laugh'	*bōr-**seg***	'laugh at ‹s.o.›'	stimulus
teñ	'cry'	*teñ-**seg***	'cry for ‹a dead person›'	stimulus
ōn	'lie down'	*ōn-**veg***	'lie near ‹s.th.›'	location
dor[dor]	'make noise'	*dor-**seg***	'beat on ‹s.th.›'	location
laṁ	'beat ‹s.o.›, bash ‹s.th.›'	*laṁ-**seg***	'bash against ‹s.th.›'	location

An example of a verb pair with regular, applicative-like semantics is *ōn* 'be lying down' (intransitive) vs. *ōn**veg*** 'be lying near' (transitive). This difference is illustrated in examples (18) and (19). The unsuffixed (intransitive) verb *ōn* requires a locative preposition on the peripheral object *totonon* 'his seat', whereas the suffixed (transitive) verb *ōnveg* promotes the peripheral object *ev* 'fire' to the direct object position. In most cases, it is possible to replace *ōnveg* with *ōn* + preposition, as shown in (20), however the reverse is not necessarily the case, as the use of *ōnveg* is rather idiomatic.

(18) Vurës[34]

O	*nötu*	*mīrmīar*	*gō=**ōn***	*lo*	*totono-n.*
ART	small	child	PRS=lie.down	LOC	place-3SG.P

'The small child is lying **in** his seat.'

(19) Vurës (Malau 2016:158)

*Ni=ōn-**veg***	*o*	*ev.*
3SG:AOR=lie.down-**APPL**	ART	fire

'He lay **by** the fire.'

(20) Vurës (constructed)

Ni=ōn	*rivteg*	*o*	*ev.*
3SG:AOR=lie.down	near	ART	fire

'He lay by the fire.'

[34] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20180818ELI (02:02)

The origin of *ōn-veg* can be very well reconstructed, as we know that the base verb *ōn* originates from the POc root ***qenop* ‘lie down’ (Malau 2016:157; Ross et al. 2016:378), with a metathesis of the root’s vowels (**qenop* > PTB **eno* > pre-Vurës **one* > VRS /ʊn/ *ōn*, cf. François 2014:178). As for *ōn-veg*, it shows a thematic consonant *-v-* which arguably reflects the root’s final consonant **p*: ***qenop* + ***-akin* > PTB ***enoβ-aɣi* > ***oneβ-aɣi* > /ʊnβɛɣ/ *ōn**v**eg*.

The case of *lam̄* ‘beat ‹s.o, s.th.›’ and its applicativized counterpart *lam̄-seg* ‘bash against ‹s.th.›’ is different. While the suffix *-Ceg* in *ōn-veg* described above displays a valency increase, this is not the case for *lam̄seg*, as both the simple and the suffixed forms are transitive. Rather than alter the valency, the effect of *-Ceg* here is to change the verb semantics to focus on a different target; this can be compared with the Mwotlap pair *lam̄* vs. *lam̄-heg*, which we’ll analyze in §3.4.1.2.

3.3.2 Scenario #2: Transparent yet irregular semantics

An applicative suffix may not only be suffixed to intransitive verbs, making them transitive, but in principle, it could also affect verbs that are already bivalent; this typically results in the promotion of a peripheral object to the (direct) object position – as we saw earlier for other languages [cf. (3) for Fijian in §1.1, and (13) for Hiw]. However, no such cases are exactly attested in Vurës. Instead, when the basic verb is transitive, the suffixed form usually exhibits semantic narrowing – e.g., *var* ‘step on ‹s.th.›’ vs. *var**seg*** ‘stand firm on ‹s.th.›’. Sometimes, the suffix *-Ceg* may even have a detransitivizing function, e.g., *mem* ‘put down’ vs. *memseg* ‘breathe, rest’. These cases are discussed further below. Table 7 provides a list of verb pairs where the suffixed variant displays irregular semantics.

Table 7. Scenario 2 in Vurës: Verbs with the applicative suffix *-(C)eg*, with irregular semantics

plain V		suffixed V	
bēm	‘carry ‹s.th.› on back’	*bēm**n̄eg***	‘carry ‹s.th.› on shoulder’
dor	‘make noise’	*dor**veg***	‘bang ‹s.th.› together’
gōq	‘dig hole to plant ‹s.th›’	*gōk**leg***	‘dig ‹s.th.› out’
sus	‘poke ‹s.th.›, push ‹s.th.› in’	*sus**geg***	‘push ‹stake› into hole’
sus	‘poke ‹s.th.›, push ‹s.th.› in’	*sus**n̄eg***	‘push ‹s.th.›’
var	‘stomp, step on ‹s.th., s.o.›’	*var**seg***	‘stand firm on ‹s.th.›’
vēl	‘divide ‹s.th.›’	*vēle**reg***	‘divide ‹s.th.› & put together’
wur	‘sweep ‹s.th›’	*wur**veg***	‘to clean ‹s.th.›’

The verb pairs in Table 7 permit a closer examination of the suffix’s effect on the verb meaning and the valency. If *-Ceg* was still a productive applicative in Vurës in those cases, the expected effect on intransitive verbs would be a valency increase by one for all verbs with this suffix, and the applicative suffix on transitive verbs should routinely promote a peripheral argument to the object position. However, this is not the case for the verbs listed in Table 7: even though the simple and the suffixed verbs are undoubtedly cognate, synchronically it is difficult to assess the function of the suffix *-Ceg*. Even if we

established a function of the suffix for individual pairs, the same function would not be found with other verb pairs. In some cases of the pairs listed in Table 7, we can also observe semantic narrowing from the plain verb to the suffixed one, again with no change in valency. For example, while *sus* has the general meaning 'poke', the attested form *susgeg* specifically describes an action of pushing something into a tight space, e.g., a stake into the ground. As far as we know, this semantic narrowing is atypical of applicatives.

The opposite effect, namely semantic broadening, can be seen in another case, namely *wur* 'sweep' and *wurveg* 'clean'. While *wurveg* is a very common verb referring to cleaning in general (21), *wur* is only attested once in our corpus (22), used in a resultative serial verb construction with *winiwin* 'be clean', and describing the specific action of using a broom.

(21) Vurës[35]

I	*no*	*mö=**wurveg***	*na*	*gëvrō-n̄.*
HUM.ART	1SG	PRF=clean	P.ART	house-2SG.P

'I **cleaned up** your house.'

(22) Vurës[36]

Wur	*winiwin*	*o*	*gövur.*
sweep	be.clean	ART	house

'**Sweep** the house clean.'

3.3.3 Scenario #3: Opaque semantics

Several occurrences with a potential reflex of **-akin* in Vurës can be linked to a bare form in the contemporary language, yet the meanings of the two forms are so distant that one may even doubt whether there exists any connection between the two at all, or whether they are pure coincidences in the modern languages. These pairs are listed in Table 8.

Table 8. Vurës: Potential verb pairs involving a former applicative, with dubious semantic link

plain V		suffixed V	
gar	'bite ‹s.th, s.o.›'	*gar**veg***	'cuddle ‹s.o.›'
gil	'dig ‹s.th.› (up)'	*gil**geg***	'stand up ‹post›'
mamar	'implore ‹s.o.›, plead'	*mamar**seg***	'be sorry (for ‹s.o.›)'
mem	'put ‹s.th.› down'	*mem**seg***	'breathe, rest'
quq	'rinse mouth [intr.]'	*quq**seg***	'spit out ‹liquid›'
tur	'stand'	*tu**reg***	'give ‹s.th.› to many people'
van	'go'	*van**geg***	'put ‹s.th., s.o.› in line'

[35] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20180803ELI (01:32)

[36] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20191019ELI (01:81)

Let us first observe the couple *gar* ‘bite’ vs. *garveg* ‘cuddle’. From a strict synchronic, language-internal point of view, these are the sort of words that young language learners are exposed to, and for which they may try to figure out a possible semantic link; in this particular case, the meaning is too distant to make this attempt successful. Interestingly, language comparison allows us to unravel this conundrum, and show that *gar* and *garveg* are in fact from two separate roots. Indeed, Codrington & Palmer’s (1896) dictionary cites two lexical sets in Mota:

- MTA *gara* ‘clench the teeth, bite’ → *garavag* ‘hold ‹s.th.› in mouth’
- MTA *garo* ‘bend the arms’ → *garovag* ‘throw the arms round ‹s.th.›’

Evidently, the phenomenon of syllabic reduction, which has taken place in Vurës but not in Mota (François 2005a), has resulted in the deceptive similarity between two verbs that had in fact separate origins: *gar* ‘bite’ < PTB **ɣara* (< POc **kaRat* ‘bite’) vs. *garveg* ‘cuddle’ < PTB **ɣaro-βaɣi*, from a root **ɣaro* (‘bend the arms’?) which has left no other trace in modern Vurës.[37] This shows how certain apparent verbal pairs pertaining to our Scenario #3 can in fact be shown, at least sometimes, to result effectively from a historical coincidence.

Consider now the pair *mamar* ‘implore ‹s.o.›, plead’ and *mamarseg* ‘be sorry for ‹s.o.›’: these are two verbs which are likely to be cognate, yet whose exact semantic relation is difficult to pinpoint. While *mamar* is a rare verb that is only attested twice in our corpus (23), its equivalent *mamarseg* occurs several dozen times, exemplified in (24).[38] The latter word is also frequently used as an intransitive, stative predicate (‘be sorry’) and as an interjection (*Mamarseg!* ‘Alas!’).[39]

(23) Vurës[40]

Kemem	*ga=**mamar***	*nēk*	*tabo*	*nēk*	*i=mölumlum*	*vitia*	*aē*
1PL.EX	PRS=implore	2SG	PURP	2SG	2SG:AOR=be.slow	IAM	ANA

lö	*qön̄*	*rōrō.*
LOC	day	two

‘We’re **asking** you to be slow with it in the next two days.’

(24) Vurës[41]

No	*gō=rōn̄teg*	*vita*	*no*	*ga=**mamarseg***	*o*	*tañsar*	*ga=qag*	*ine.*
1SG	PRS=feel	COMP	1SG	PRS=pity	ART	person	PRS=be.white	DEM

‘I feel **sorry for** that white man.’

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[37] As we will see in Table 15 [§3.4.4], Mwotlap has the form *gayveg* ‘hold in mouth’, pertaining to Scenario #4, because it lacks any simple reflex of **ɣara* ‘bite’. Because Mwotlap has lost any reflex of **ɣaro(βaɣi)*, and Vurës has lost **ɣaraβaɣi*, modern speakers of these two languages – many of whom are bilingual – are left with a confusing pair of false friends, namely MTP *gayveg* ‘hold in mouth’ vs. VRS *garveg* ‘cuddle’.

[38] François (2005a:496) cites PTB **mamarosáɣi* as the form ancestral to VRS *mamarseg*, alongside a shorter etymon **mamarósa* (> Lakon *mamroh* ‘sad, sorry’) – among other variants. The unsuffixed verb *mamar* of Vurës could reflect an even shorter protoform **mamáro(s)*.

[39] In religious contexts, the meaning of *mamarseg* is usually ‘have mercy on’.

[40] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20180807ANT (02:47)

[41] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20180803ELI (01:19)

The transitive verb *mamar* is always followed by a direct object as in (23), or by a complement clause. In light of its transitive counterpart *mamarseg* (24), it appears that the suffix *-Ceg* here does not modify the valency; rather, it results in a semantic change of the verb.

An even more remarkable case of such a scenario is the connection between the transitive verb *mem* 'put down ‹s.th.›' and the intransitive (unaccusative) verb *memseg* 'breathe, rest'. As explained in §1.1, the primary function of an applicative cross-linguistically is to increase the verb's valency, yet the applicative suffix *-Ceg* here seems to have brought about, paradoxically, a case of valency decrease.[42] Compare the transitive clause (25) and the intransitive clause (26).

(25) Vurës[43]

O	*reqe*	*me=**mem***	*o*	*plēt*	*la*	*tan*.
ART	woman	PRF=put	ART	plate	LOC	ground

'The woman **put** the plate on the ground.'

(26) Vurës[44]

Manene	*nē*	*ma=gav*	*me*	*arës,*	*nē*	*gete=**memseg***.
reason	3SG	PRF=fly	HITH	far	3SG	NEG=breathe

'Because he had flown so far, he was short of **breath**.' [*lit. 'he didn't breathe'*]

The semantic connection between *mem* and *memseg* appears opaque at first sight, but the various meanings of the Mota cognate *map* help us see the missing semantic link. Codrington & Palmer (1896:72) list a total of six glosses for *map*, namely 'put, place, set; (of a blow or arrow) hit; appoint; leave off'. One could therefore reconstruct a mediopassive meaning of *memseg* in the sense 'put oneself down to rest'. In fact, this verb pair is not unique to Vurës, as nearly all 17 languages of northern Vanuatu present the same outcome (François 2005a:482):

- a transitive verb meaning 'put down ‹s.th.›', reflecting an unsuffixed etymon PTB **m$^{[w]}$a^{m}b$^{[w]}$u* < PNCV **mabu(s)* (Clark 2009)
- an intransitive verb meaning 'take rest, breathe', which reconstructs as **m$^{[w]}$a^{m}b$^{[w]}$u-**say**i*, derived from **m$^{[w]}$a^{m}b$^{[w]}$u* via the applicative (PTB **-áɣi* < POc **-akin*).

It may be a matter of debate whether it is possible to identify an uncontroversial semantic link between *mamar* and *mamarseg*, or between *mem* and *memseg*. If our hypothesis is correct, then *mamarseg* and *memseg* do include a reflex of **-akin*. Otherwise, the verb pairs in Table 8 above may all constitute mere coincidences – in a way similar to what we showed for *gar* vs. *garveg*; as such, they come close to our scenario #4.

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[42] This unusual detransitivizing function of the applicative suffix *-akin* has also been reported for Buru (Indonesia), Kara (Papua New-Guinea), Wayan Fijian (Fiji) and Micronesian languages like Mokilese (Evans 2003:192).

[43] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20180806ELI (02:55)

[44] Link to Vurës corpus: https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/KD1/items/VU20180805ALI (01:38)

3.3.4. Scenario #4: A vestigial syllable

The largest proportion of verbs ending in *-Ceg* belong to scenario #4. For these, we can only conjecture that they indeed reflect former **-akin*, on the basis of regular sound correspondences, of their phonological shape, and by comparison with neighboring languages. However, in most cases, no clear etymology can be presented.

The list in (27) includes 24 verbs ending in *-Ceg* with no clear etymology. Some of these verbs have highly specific meanings.

(27) Vurës verbs ending in *-(C)eg*, with no clear etymology:

anm̄eg 'bother ‹s.o.›', *dasimreg* 'hate ‹s.th., s.o.›', *dōleg* 'mix ‹breadfruit dough› after pounding', *gañveg* 'lead ‹s.o.›', *gasm̄eg* 'insert ‹s.th.›', *gasreg* 'push ‹s.th.› into narrow gap', *gogoreg* 'sweep ‹s.th.› away', *irseg* 'stare at ‹s.o.›', *liseg* 'disobey ‹s.o.›', *ñōlseg* 'chew ‹s.th.› without teeth', *qeneg* 'be afraid of ‹s.th., s.o.›', *qereg* 'flatten ‹breadfruit dish›', *rōweg* 'tie ‹s.th.› long', *seleg* 'lay ‹s.th.› down crosswise', *sergeg* 'lay ‹plaiting sections› down', *sugneg* '(pigs, cows) headbutt ‹s.o.›', *titreg* 'jump repeatedly', *tōwereg* 'give name to ‹s.o.›', *ununseg* 'bequeath ‹land› after father's death', *vawseg* 'clean around', *veleg* 'beat with/on ‹s.th.› to make music', *wereg* 'put and spread multiple things›', *weteg* 'crack ‹s.th.› open', *wilikseg* 'look through ‹s.th.›, skim ‹s.th.›'

In some cases, comparison with neighbouring languages allows us to ascertain the origin of certain verbs ending in *-(C)eg*. Table 9 cites several forms with cognates in the neighbouring languages – notably Mota. The upper section of the table shows the cases where it is possible to confirm the existence of an unsuffixed etymon, and thus confirm that the Vurës verb does indeed contain a reflex of **-akin*. The middle section has similar proposals, but with less certainty on the correspondences. Finally, the bottom section of the table provides links to cognate forms in other languages; but because these cognates do not include any short (unsuffixed) form, we cannot be certain, strictly speaking, whether or not these verbs (in Vurës and other languages) really contain a vestigial reflex of **-akin*.

Table 9. Vurës: Vestigial reflexes of the former applicative, revealed by language comparison

suffixed V		cognates and possible etymology
*bōge**reg***	'feed ‹s.o.›'	MTA *puga*, MTP *bōg* 'feed and bring up'
*gar**veg***	'cuddle ‹s.o.›'	MTA *garovag* 'throw the arms round s.th.' < *garo* 'bend the arm'
*kōk**m̄eg***	'look after ‹s.o.›, guide ‹s.o.›'	MTA *kokom̄ag* 'keep carefully' < *koko* 'keep close', MTP *kokm̄eg* 'give refuge, comfort'
*liñe**reg***	'hide ‹s.th.›'	MTA *liñarag* 'hide' < *liña* ~ *luña* 'be out of sight' MTP *lōñveg* 'hide, conceal'
*mañ**seg***	'show ‹s.th.›'	MTA *mañasag* 'declare' < *maña* 'open, gape' < POc **maŋa(p)* 'gape' < PMP **qaŋa[p,b]* 'gape'
*riv**teg***	'be near ‹s.th.›, approach ‹s.th.›'	HIW *r̄ēptog*, LTG *revtë*, MTP *yipteg*, MTA *rivtag* < PTB **riβitaɣi* 'near, close'; PNCV **rivita*

suffixed V		cognates and possible etymology
*rōn̄**teg***	‘hear ‹s.th., s.o.›, feel ‹s.th.›’	cf. Table 1 in §2 < POc ***roŋo(R)*** ‘hear, feel’
*sak**reg***	‘take off’	MTA *sakarag* ‘cast’ < *saka* ‘let go from hand’
*taw**seg***	‘be clear, be obvious’	MTA *tawasa* ‘clear’
*bēr**seg***	‘wring ‹s.th.› out’	?MTA *virsag* ‘wring out’ < *vir* ‘twist, wring’ [but irregular C]
*sōwe**reg***	‘plant ‹yam, taro›’	MTA *siworag* ‘plant (yam) again’ ?< *siwo* ‘down’
*ti**veg***	‘pay ‹s.o.›’	MTA *tuvag* ‘buy or sell with/for money’ MTP *teveg* ‘consecrate land with shell money’ cf. ? MTA *tun* ‘buy at a great price’, LTG *tun* ‘buy, pay’
*un**m̄eg***	‘work constantly’	?MTP *inm̄eg* ‘harass’ ?MTA *um̄a* ‘clear away growth from garden’ ?< POc. ***qum^{w}a*** ‘work, clear land’
*vu**teg***	‘plant ‹yam›’	?MTA *vituag* 'plant high' < *vut* 'dig'
*gabe**leg***	‘work’	MTA *gapalag* ‘do, act, work’
*gag**neg***	‘tell ‹s.th.›’	MTA *gaganag* ‘show, tell’
*n̄e**reg***	‘sell ‹s.th.›’	MTA *n̄arag* ‘hawk about’
*qe**leg***	‘plait ‹s.th.› together’	MTP *qeleg* ‘plait together’
*rōn̄li**seg***	‘disobey ‹s.o.›’	MTA *roñ̄o leasag* ‘suffer contentious treatment’ cf. *liseg* in the list (27)
*si**geg***	‘proffer ‹s.th.›’	MTA *sigag* ‘stretch the arm’

The listing of *rōn̄teg* ‘hear, feel’ in Table 9 is unclear: there exists no contemporary form ***rōn̄*** per se, yet there are traces of this root in the compound *rōn̄liseg* ‘disobey’ and in the obsolete phrase *rōn̄ gë=mëmës* ‘suffer’ (literally: ‘feel hurt’). Krauße (2021:239) lists *rōn̄* as an independent root in Vurës, but Malau (2021) provides no such root in her Vurës dictionary. This case may be one of the few examples where the cline of morphological erosion is directly visible in the contemporary language.[45]

3.4 *-Ceg* in Mwotlap

Compared to a language like Hiw [cf. §3.2], Mwotlap has also gone down the road to opacity, much like Vurës. Except for a handful of semi-transparent verbal pairs, the vast majority of words ending in *-(C)eg* are now vestigial, with virtually no way to identify a suffix with any coherent meaning. And indeed, François’ (2001) synchronic grammar of Mwotlap does not cite any reflex of *-*akin*; his work does mention “applicatives”, but

[45] The same reasoning could be held for the cognate form **yoñ̄* in Mwotlap. Indeed, that form does not exist any longer in synchrony, but it is found in a couple of compounds – e.g., *yoñ̄-vavaleh* ‘disobey’ [etym. ‘hear and dispute’]; *yoñ̄-eh* [etym. ‘hear the song’] ‘during the inauguration of a song of praise, give a sign that one has heard one’s own name, by giving money to the poet’.

only when discussing more recent cases of grammaticalization based on serial constructions,[46] which have taken up certain functions that were once played by *-*akin* [see §3.4.1.3 below]. In fact, the only fully productive reflex of POc **akin* in Mwotlap is not an applicative suffix, but a preposition *veg* [cf. §4.2].

Our Mwotlap corpus includes a total of 102 lexical forms ending in *-(C)eg* – including 92 verbs and 10 postverbs. Just like we discussed earlier for Hiw or Vurës, not all of these forms can be unambiguously traced back to *-*akin*: rather, what we see is a continuous slope, going from more transparent to more opaque functions of that syllable.

3.4.1 Scenario #1: A semi-productive applicative

3.4.1.1 A transparent applicative?

Table 10 lists the verb pairs that show the highest semantic transparency in Mwotlap and would be worthy of being assigned to our Scenario #1. Out of 102 lexemes in *-Ceg*, only a handful qualify as a transparent case of applicative.

Table 10. Mwotlap intransitive verbs suffixable with -(C)eg, with regular semantics

plain V		suffixed V		semantic type
mitiy	'sleep'	*mitiy-**veg***	'sleep with ‹s.o.›'	comitative
muwumwu	'work'	*muwumwu-**teg***	'work with ‹s.o.›'	comitative
yēyē	'laugh'	*yēyē-**heg***	'laugh at ‹s.o.›'	stimulus
ōy	'be full'	*ōy-**heg***	'be full of ‹s.th.›'	content

Among these, the verb pair *mitiy* → *mitiy-**veg*** 'sleep with' was illustrated in (5a–b) [cf. §1.2.2]. Likewise, (28–29) and (30–31) exhibit the sort of semantic relations typically encoded by an applicative. It would be tempting, for such cases, to use a gloss "APPL", at least tentatively:

(28) Mwotlap[47]

Kēy	*yēyē*	*tō*	*gōskē*	*qeleave?*
3PL	laugh	PRSV	DEIC	how

'How come they are laughing like this?'

(29) Mwotlap[48] (François 2023a)

Nok	*yēyē-**heg***	*ige*	*tekel-mayam.*
1SG:AOR	laugh-**APPL**	people	other.side-world

'I'm laughing **at** the people in the Other World.'

[46] Candidates for the status of (quasi) applicatives in Mwotlap are a number of bivalent postverbs, distinct from prepositions, that have the property of increasing the valency of their verbal head. These include *day* '(do V) waiting for ‹s.o.›', *sas* '(come) across ‹s.th.›', *tēy* 'hold → with', *veteg* 'put down → away from' (François 2004:141), or *goy* 'over, against, for+' (François 2000, 2005b:139). But while François does contemplate the applicative analysis, he concludes that none of these morphemes has really become a productive applicative, precisely due to the abundance of candidates, and to their semantic specificity.

[47] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0007408#S144.

[48] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0002515#S91.

(30) Mwotlap (François 2023a)

N-ēm̄yoñ *n-ōy.*
ART-church STAT-be.full

'The church is full (crowded).'

(31) Mwotlap (François 2023a)

Ige *to-M̄otlap* *e,* *na-lo* *taqa-y* *n-ōy-**heg***
HUM:PL ORIG-Motalava TOP ART-inside belly-3PL STAT-be.full-APPL

tamtam.
affection

'Motalava people have their hearts filled **with** love.'

When the plain verb is intransitive, the reflex of **-akin* has the effect of making it transitive, by promoting a peripheral argument to object position: this is a classic effect of an applicative.

3.4.1.2 Searching for semantic regularities

Mwotlap has other pairs of verbs that clearly reflect the former applicative, but for which the suffix's semantic contribution is more difficult to pinpoint. Certain semantic regularities can however be identified. For some pairs, the sense is virtually identical between the two verbs, and the contribution of the suffix is difficult to assess (Table 11).

Table 11. Mwotlap verbs suffixable with *-(C)eg*, involving little semantic change

plain V		suffixed V		semantic type
bah	'end, finish' [intr]	*bah**eg***	'end, finish' [intr]	(no change)
lēn̄	'not know'	*lēn̄**teg***	'not know'	(no change)
lok	'fold ‹s.th.›'	*lok**veg***	'fold up ‹s.th.›'	(no change)

But another type of (sub)regularity involves a semantic shift we propose to call "diathetic change". Table 12 shows those transitive verbs of Mwotlap for which the applicative suffix appears to bring a regular, or at least semi-regular, semantic contribution – namely, a change in (secondary) diathesis [cf. §3.2.2 for Hiw].

Table 12. Mwotlap transitive verbs suffixable with *-(C)eg*, involving semi-regular semantics

plain V		suffixed V		semantic type
bus	'splatter ‹s.o.›'	*bus-**geg***	'spit out ‹s.th.›'	diathetic change
lam̄	'beat ‹s.o.› w/ stick'	*lam̄-**heg***	'wave, waggle ‹rod+›'	diathetic change
woh	'slap ‹s.o.›'	*woh-**yeg***	'smash ‹s.th.› on s.o.'	diathetic change
wuh	'hit ‹s.th., s.o.›'	*wuh-**geg***	'tattoo ‹body›'	diathetic change

Indeed, when the simple verb is already transitive, the *-(C)eg* suffix can have an effect on the verb's diathesis, as it directs the verb towards a different argument. For example, the

verb *bus* ‘splatter ‹s.o.› by squirting water from o.’s mouth’ takes as its object the person who is splattered:

(32) Mwotlap (François 2023a)

Tog	*busbus*	*no!*
PROH	splatter	1SG

‘Stop splattering me (squirting water from your mouth)!’

Its applicative counterpart *busgeg* takes as its object the content of the splattering (water, blood,…). A story thus tells how a spellbound shark was spitting red flowers instead of blood:

(33) Mwotlap[49]

Na-bago	*e*	*kē*	*ni=bus-**geg***	*ne-geg.*
ART-shark	DEF	3SG	3SG:AOR=splatter-APPL	ART-amaranth

‘(The shark) was spitting **out** red amaranths.’

This use of **-akin* corresponds to the function identified as ‘product’ (Pawley & Reid 1979, Evans 2003:197): compare, for Bauan Fijian, *kasivi-ti* ‘spit on ‹s.th.›’ with *kasivi-taki* ‘spit ‹s.th.› out’.

Likewise, while a simple verb describes an action that is directed to an external target, the suffixed form describes a similar action or gesture, but this time focusing on its “internal” effect. For example, *lam̄* means ‘beat ‹s.o., s.th.› with a stick or a rod’, where the affected object is, for example, a drum:

(34) Mwotlap (François 2023a)

Ige	*be-wha*	*e*	*kēy*	*lam̄~lam̄*	*nē-vētōy.*
HUM:PL	for-music	TOP	3PL	IPFV~beat	ART-drum

‘The musicians are beating the drums.’

The applicativized form *lam̄heg* ‘wave ‹rod+›, waggle ‹rope+›’ describes a similar gesture of the body, but instead of focusing on an external target (like a drum), *lam̄heg* describes the effect of the same gesture on the very object one is holding (a rod), or even on the body itself (the arm). Thus, the verb *lam̄heg* is used for ‘cast ‹a fishing rod›’, ‘stretch out ‹o.’s arms›’; ‘wag ‹one’s tail›’. It also describes the gesture of kicking out one’s legs in the water while swimming:

(35) Mwotlap (François 2023a)

Kēy	*lam̄-**heg***	*na-yn̄o-y*	*lē-bē.*
3PL	beat-APPL	ART-leg-3PL	LOC-water

(description of swimming) ‘They kick their legs out in the water.’

While both *lam̄* and *lam̄heg* are bivalent verbs, they differ in their *secondary diathesis*, i.e., the exact semantic role of their object [cf. §3.2.2 for Hiw, and fn. 31]. In fact, this type of semantic shift is also typical of applicatives: recall the examples we saw earlier, for Fijian [§1.1] or for Hiw [§3.2], of a plain verb ‘shoot ‹s.o.›’ (oriented towards an external target) vs. its suffixed counterpart ‘shoot ‹an arrow›’ (oriented towards the shooting object itself). English is generally ambiguous on its secondary diathesis, as it doesn’t distinguish between these two uses of *shoot*. Likewise, English uses the same

[49] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0007414#S16.

verb form for *poke a hole with my finger* and *poke my finger into the hole*; or for *spray the wall with paint* and *spray paint on the wall* (Levin 1993:49). The difference in secondary diathesis is not always encoded formally in English, but some Oceanic languages may encode this using a reflex of *-*akin*.

3.4.1.3 Does Mwotlap have an applicative suffix?

These observations raise the question whether we should identify an applicative suffix in Mwotlap, at all. The last section listed cases of (semi-) regular transparency in the use of *-*akin* reflexes; and yet, one cannot help but notice how few and far-between such examples are in Mwotlap. While the (putative) applicative can turn 'laugh' into 'laugh at ‹s.o.›', it cannot be used routinely to create transitive verbs like 'be angry at ‹s.o.›', or 'dream of ‹s.o.›'. Clearly, if Mwotlap has a suffix *-Ceg*, it is not productive at all, and is only transparent in a very small number of cases.

In this respect, Mwotlap differs from Hiw. We saw how Hiw has kept a productive reflex of *-*akin* at least for caused accompanied motion [§3.2.1]; but the equivalent meanings would be encoded by different strategies in modern Mwotlap. The most common construction would involve verb serialization (François 2006:234), e.g., with the verb *tēy* 'hold' in the postverbal position:

(36) Mwotlap[50]

Nok	*so*	*kalō*	***tēy***	*kē*	*me*	*hiy*	*kōmyō.*
1SG:AOR	IRR	exit	hold	3SG	HITH	DAT	2DU

'Let me **bring** her out to you.' [compare with Hiw (10)]

(37) Mwotlap (François 2001:672)

No	*ta-lak*	***tēy***	*qiyig*	*na-savat.*
1SG	FUT-dance	hold	today	ART-sandal

'I'll be dancing **with** my shoes on.' [compare with Hiw (8)]

The fact that (37) means 'dance with my shoes on (my feet)' – rather than literally 'dance holding my shoes (in my hand)' – is evidence that *tēy* has already grammaticalized into some sort of applicative postverb, at least for encoding caused accompanied motion.

Likewise, the semantic function we call "abitive", namely '(move) away from ‹s.o.›', is still encoded with a reflex of *-*akin* in Hiw [Table 3, §3.2.2], but Mwotlap has relexified it using a bivalent form *veteg* (a verb 'put down, leave', grammaticalized into an abitive postverb 'away from'):

(38) Mwotlap[51]

Wun	*sisqet*	*nok*	*mat*	***veteg***	*nēk.*
maybe	near	1SG:AOR	die	leave	2SG

'I'm afraid I will soon die **on** you.' [*abitive sense* 'away from']

In sum, Mwotlap has developed new productive strategies to encode most of the meanings that used to be encoded by *-*akin*. As for the direct reflex of that former suffix – the verbal ending *-(C)eg* – it is now merely vestigial in Mwotlap.

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[50] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0002300#S91.

[51] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003310#S15.

Another clue that *-(C)eg* is vestigial is the extreme instability when it comes to the nature of the thematic consonant (C). Just in the examples we've seen so far, we found cases of /β, t, h, j, ɣ/. This rather confirms that no single phonological form has emerged as the default form of a (putative) applicative suffix. Again, this contrasts with Hiw, which has virtually generalized the form *-vog* as the default for its productive suffix.[52]

In sum, positing an applicative suffix *-(C)eg* would not be economical in the case of Mwotlap, as it would only be supported by a handful of verb pairs – and contradicted by many more.

3.4.2 Scenario #2: Transparent yet irregular semantics

Many verb pairs exist, whose semantic relation can be identified, yet lacks regularity in the language. This corresponds to our scenario #2.

For example, *et* 'see, look' contrasts with *etveg* 'watch, observe', but this semantic shift is isolated in Mwotlap.[53] The verb *ak* means 'do, make', and *akteg* is an interrogative verb 'do what?'; yet this is the only example we know in Vanuatu, where a (putative) applicative would turn a verb into its interrogative equivalent. Table 13 lists all the pairs where the verb ending in *-Ceg* is clearly cognate with a simple verb, but where the semantic relation is ad hoc and non-predictable.

Table 13. Mwotlap: Verbs reflecting the former suffix *-(C)eg*, with irregular semantics

plain V		suffixed V	
ak	'do, make ‹s.th.›'	*ak**teg***	'do what?'
et	'see, look ‹s.th.›'	*et**veg***	'watch, observe ‹s.th.›'
oy	'wear around neck'	*oy**veg***	'carry in o.'s arms'
siy	'peel ‹s.th.›'	*siy**veg***	'scrape ‹s.th.› with blade'
gil	'dig, dig out ‹s.th.›'	*gil**geg***	'plant ‹house› in ground'
den꞊	'bang ‹gong›'	*den꞊**eg***	'knock loudly ‹s.th., s.o.›'
plain V		suffixed V	
man	'intoxicate; bewitch'	*man**heg***	'cast a spell on ‹s.o.›'
gengen	'eat'	*gengen**yeg***	'commit a sin'
luw	'pour ‹sand+›'	*luw**yeg***	'shed, get rid of ‹s.th.›'
yak	'pick up ‹s.th.›'	*yak**seg***	'rake up ‹dead leaves›'
goy	'(sea) sweep in'	*goy**veg***	'clean up ‹s.th.›'
taq	'stoop, bend over'	*taq**yeg***	'carry out ‹work›'
tēm	'push ‹s.th., s.o.›'	*tēn**geg***	'prop up, support ‹s.th.›'
vah	'plant, stick in ground'	*vah**yeg***	'lay ‹mat› on ground'

[52] We will see later that Mwotlap did select /β/ as the default consonant when it degrammaticalized the applicative into a preposition *veg* /βɛɣ/ [cf. §4.2].

[53] Compare Hiw *yëvog* and *r̄ōn̄tog* in Table 3 [§3.2.2].

Today, each pair has been split across two separate lexemes, with no way of identifying any stable "applicative suffix" in synchrony. Even if we can make hypotheses on what semantic path was followed in certain cases, the words have now been disconnected for such a long time that the language's "lexical tectonics" (François 2022) led them to drift apart across the conceptual space.

3.4.3 Scenario #3: Opaque semantics

As for the verb pairs in Table 14, they are so odd that one can legitimately doubt whether the two verbs are even related at all. They either reflect drastic semantic change, or accidental resemblance between two unrelated roots.

Table 14. Mwotlap: Potential verb pairs involving a former applicative, with dubious semantic link

plain V		suffixed V	
gam	'sail on ocean'	*gam**teg***	'lead, walk ‹s.o.›'
yow	'leap, fly away'	*yow**eg***	'stretch ‹rope+›'
yow	'leap, fly away'	*yowyow**veg***	'serve, assist ‹s.o.›'
mōl	'return'	*mōl**eg***	'be clear; clarify ‹s.th.›'
mōk	'put ‹s.th.› s.where'	*mōk**heg***	'take rest, breathe'
suw	'anoint with liquid'	*suw**yeg***	'throw away ‹s.th.›'
tit	'punch ‹s.o.›'	*tit**eg***	'stumble' [intr.]
won	'complete ‹s.th.›'	*won**yeg***	'take care of; destroy ‹s.th.›'
won	'complete ‹s.th.›'	*won**n̄eg***	'release, abandon ‹s.th.›'
yap	'pull ‹s.th.›'	*ya**veg***	'push ‹s.th. long› in hole'

3.4.4 Scenario #4: A vestigial syllable

A final configuration is when Mwotlap has only retained the form ending in *-(C)eg*, and lost the corresponding plain verb. For example, *tamyeg* 'release', *lōnveg* 'hide', or *hiñyeg* 'illuminate', lack any corresponding short verb. This configuration holds for 55 lexemes among the 102 forms in our inventory. A full list of these 55 words would go beyond this study, but a sample is provided in (39):

(39) Mwotlap: sample of verbs ending in *-(C)eg* with no corresponding simple verb

akmēhteg 'be angry'; *akvisileg* 'reject ‹s.o.›'; *beheg* 'carry ‹s.th.› on side'; *dalmeg* 'cast ‹net, lasso›'; *ēpgeg* 'cast ‹net›'; *mōgteg* 'clean up ‹s.th.›', *hēgeg* 'start singing ‹song›'; *kokmeg* 'give comfort to ‹s.o.›'; *alveg* 'beckon ‹s.o.›'; *kekeheg* 'move, wiggle'; *sēmteg* 'push ‹s.th.› with one's foot'; *vēhbeg* 'hang ‹s.th.›'; *vētleg* 'send ‹s.th.›'; *hiñyeg* 'shine on ‹s.th.›, illuminate'; *yoñteg* 'hear, feel, listen'; [*mētēgteg* 'be afraid, fear ‹s.o., s.th.›'] …

Just like we saw for Hiw, Mwotlap also has a number of postverbs which may quite possibly originate in former verbs. Some of these also end in *-(C)eg*:

(40) Mwotlap: postverbs (possibly from earlier verbs) ending in *-(C)eg* with no clear etymology:

totogyeg '(do) for the first time'; *yosveg* '(do) abundantly'; *vasawyeg* '(talk+) carelessly'; *heleg* '(do) only'; *tokosm̄eg* '(eat) exceedingly'; *tatamyeg* '(do) in sequence'; *soloteg* '(do) haphazardly ~ abundantly'; *kokoym̄eg* '(desire) intensely'.

And again, comparative linguistics can be of help in reconstructing some of these words. Sometimes, it proves helpful in ruling out certain candidates. For example, the list (39), which was constructed with a structural and synchronic criterion, includes a verb *mētēgteg* 'be afraid, fear ‹s.o., s.th.›': strictly speaking, this form ending in *-teg* looks like it could perfectly incorporate the former applicative suffix *-*akin*. However, comparison with other languages (e.g., Lo-Toga /mətəɣtɔɣ/, Lemerig /mœʔœɣʔœɣ/) shows that the last syllable results not from a sequence *-*táɣi*, but *-*táɣu* – two contexts which have been regularly merged in Mwotlap, but not in other languages. In fact, MTP *mētēgteg* reflects a protoform **matàɣutáɣu* (François 2005a:437), which is simply the reduplication of POc **matakut* 'be afraid'. For this reason, the form *mētēgteg* in (39) is enclosed in brackets: while it fits the structural definition of that list, historical linguistics can show that it does not, in fact, reflect the former applicative.

Conversely, many forms in *-eg* can be shown to involve the former suffix, even when the corresponding plain verb has been lost in the language – just like we showed for Hiw [§3.2.4] and for Vurës [§3.3.4]. Thus, although **yoñ* does not exist in Mwotlap, it is not difficult to recognize that *yoñteg* 'hear, feel, listen' reflects the PTB etymon **roŋotaɣi* found in most Torres–Banks languages [Table 1, §2]. Likewise, Mwotlap *alveg* 'beckon ‹s.o.›' has a cognate in Hawaiian *aloha*, going back to a POc root **qalop* 'greet, beckon'; this shows that the *-v-* in *alveg* is conservative of the original consonant, followed by the former suffix: **qalop* + *-akin* > **ʔaloβ-aɣi* > MTP /alβeɣ/ *alveg*. Table 15 brings together all cases where the presence of the former *-*akin* suffix can be confirmed by language comparison, based on regular sound correspondences.

Table 15. Mwotlap: Vestigial reflexes of the former applicative, revealed by language comparison

plain V		protoform	cognates
*hiñ**yeg***	'illuminate'	< **siŋa-raɣi*	MTA *siñar* 'shine', *siñar-ag* 'illuminate' [(6b), §2] cf. DRG *snār* 'moon' (François 2022:112)
*yoñ**teg***	'hear, feel, listen'	< **roŋo-taɣi*	[cf. Table 1 §2]. POc *roŋoR 'hear, feel'
*lōñ**veg***	'hide ‹s.th.›'	< **luŋa-βaɣi*	MTA *liña ~ luña* 'be out of sight' cf. MTA *luñavag*
*luw**yeg***	'pour out ‹s.th.›'	< **liwo-raɣi*	MTA *liwo* 'pour out', *liworag* 'pour out quickly' cf. LYP *lyewyē* 'pour out', HIW *yiqērog*
*al**veg***	'beckon ‹s.o.›'	< **ʔalo-βaɣi*	MTA *alovag*; POc **qalop*: HAW *aloha*
*gay**veg***	'hold ‹s.th.› in mouth'	< **ɣara-βaɣi*	MTA *garavag* 'have in mouth', POc **kaRat* 'bite'
*hay**veg***	'enter'	< **saro-βaɣi*	MTA *sarovag* 'enter', *saro* 'draw into'

plain V		protoform	cognates
*kok**m̄eg***	'give comfort'	< **ᵑgoᵑgo-mʷaɣi*	MTA *koko* 'keep close', cf. MTA *kokom̄ag* 'keep carefully'
*sō**n̄teg***	'stow, pack up'	< **soŋo-taɣi*	MTA *sogo* 'give, bring', *sogon* ' stow' < PNCV **soko* 'add, join'
*sos**m̄eg***	'shove ‹s.th.›'	< **soso-mʷaɣi*	cf. MTA *sosomag* 'stuff', *soso* 'stuff, be stuffed'
*sēm**teg***	'push with toe'	< **siᵐbe-taɣi*	MTA *sipe* 'pick with finger or toes' cf. MTA *siperag* 'pick out with finger, toe, stick'

4. The emergence of prepositions

The previous sections showed how the applicative function of *-*akin* has been somewhat preserved in the languages of northern Vanuatu, but in a very sporadic way. In some languages, like Vurës or Mwotlap, we can only identify a handful of verb pairs where that applicative function can still be detected, but the vast majority of words have lost that connection. Even the Torres languages (Hiw, Lo-Toga), where a reflex of *-*akin* can still be synchronically analyzed as an applicative suffix, have a wealth of verbal forms where that same reflex has lost any motivation, and has followed the road down all the way to opacity.

That said, there is still one type of reflex which has kept some level of productivity in some languages of this area: these are prepositions. Two types of prepositions can be identified, that ultimately go back to **akin*:

- ➢ Conservative prepositions, reflecting an ancient prepositional use that dates back to early stages of Proto-Oceanic (< PTB **ɣíni* < POc **kini*);
- ➢ Innovative prepositions, which appear to have emerged more recently, via a reanalysis of the verb-final applicative (< PTB **-(C)áɣi*)

Neither of these types of prepositions is widespread in the Torres–Banks area: whether we look for the conservative or the innovative type, these are distributed patchily, and found in no more than 2 or 3 languages out of the 17 spoken in the area.

4.1 Conservative prepositions

As hinted earlier in §2, **akin[i]* must have split early on – perhaps as early as POc itself – into two outcomes: a verbal suffix **-akin[i]*, and a free preposition **(a)kin[i]*. This development has been described for other Oceanic languages (cf. Evans 2003:205–206, 2010:181, Ross 2004:508, Naitoro 2018:172–184, 215–250), and is reflected in northern Vanuatu in the form of **ɣíni*, which can be reconstructed as an oblique preposition in Proto-Torres–Banks.

Every language of north Vanuatu has a variety of prepositions, but only a minority kept reflexes of PTB **ɣíni*, in the form of *gin* /ɣin/. In the Torres & Banks area, these languages are Hiw, Dorig and Mwerlap. Hiw *gin* is only used as a locative preposition, or rather a formative for locative adverbs, in combination with demonstratives: e.g., *gin* + proximal deictic *ëne* → *gin-ëne* 'here'. Mwerlap has a suffixable preposition *gin* (François 2005a:484), which commonly combines with personal suffixes:

(41) Mwerlap [gq.AF:V12:50.Mrl]

Në *nu-vvorop* ***gin****-eak.*
1SG STAT-thank OBL-2SG

"I am grateful **to** you."

In Dorig, *gin* is a productive preposition used mostly for locative relations:

(42) Dorig[54]

Tuar *m-tur* ***gin*** *o* *kēr-in,* *tuar* *m-tur* ***gin*** *o*
one PRF-stand OBL ART end-3SG.P one PRF-stand OBL ART

qāt-in.
head-3SG.P

"One of them stood **at** the bow, the other **at** the stern."

(43) Dorig[55]

Wrisris *so-ttanī* ***gin*** *sē* *nenī,* *i* *tma-n̄* *gēn*
(Spirit) IRR-touch OBL someone TOP HUM.ART father-2SG.P FOC1

sa *le.*
this FOC2

"If Wrisris lays his hand **on** someone, that will be your father."

Dorig *gin* also encodes some more abstract oblique relations:

(44) Dorig[56]

O *sav* *gongon* *m-la* ***gin*** *nēk,* *kmār* *so-briñ* *lala* *nēk.*
ART which problem PFT-take OBL 2SG 1EX:DU POT1-help POT2 2SG

"Whatever trouble may happen **to** you, we'll be able to help you."

Related prepositions are reported for other Vanuatu languages. Thus, *gin* in Suñwadia (Maewo I.) serves both as an instrumental and oblique preposition (Henri 2011:100). Further south, Araki has an oblique preposition *hini*, with variants *hin ~ ini ~ in ~ ni ~ n*, which is also from **akin[i]* (François 2002:159, fn.):

(45) Araki (François 2012:113)

O=slei-á ***ini****-a!*
2S:IRR=give-OBJ:1SG OBL-3S

"Give it to me!" [liter. *Provide me* ***with*** *it!*]

Finally, as he analyzes the Bierebo language of Epi, Budd (2009:189, 199) draws a connection between **-akin* and the morpheme *ka*, which he discusses further in Budd (2015). This form is used as an applicative (*-ka*) with valency-increasing properties, but also as an oblique preposition (*ka*).

[54] Link to Dorig corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0002306#S23.

[55] Link to Dorig corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003197#S17.

[56] Link to Dorig corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0002306#S41.

In sum, several languages of Vanuatu have kept reflexes of POc **akin*, not just as a verbal suffix, but also as a preposition **[a]kini* (> PTB **ɣíni*). It is likely that these two morphemes were already separate at the time of the early settlement of Vanuatu.

4.2 Innovative prepositions, resulting from degrammaticalization

Some languages of north Vanuatu have also developed prepositions that are ultimately rooted in POc **akin*, but instead of evolving through the PTB preposition **ɣíni*, they result from a more recent reanalysis of the verbal suffix as a free form. The reanalysis or degrammaticalization of a bound morpheme, such as a suffix into a free particle, has been labelled *debonding* (cf. Norde 2009:5, 186–227, Willis 2017:33).[57] The languages with the clearest examples of debonding affecting reflexes of **akin* are Mwotlap, Mota and Hiw. Section 3.4 showed how frequent it is for Mwotlap verbs to end with a syllable *-(C)eg*, whether that form is synchronically analyzable or not. While the thematic consonant varies a lot, it is commonly /v/, resulting in a frequent final syllable *-veg*: e.g., (5b) *me-mtiy-**veg*** 'sleep with' [§1.2.2] illustrated one of the few examples of a transparent applicative function. In parallel, Mwotlap has degrammaticalized that syllable *veg* /βɛɣ/, i.e., reanalyzed it into a free word.

One common use of *veg* is as a preposition taking a human object and encoding the *content* after a verb of speech ('about s.o.'), or the *stimulus* after a verb of thought or emotion ('for, about s.o.'):

(46) Mwotlap[58]

Mey	*na-tm̄an*	*en*	*kē*	*ni=lololwon*	***veg***	*kē.*
REL	ART-man	DEF	3SG	3SG:AOR=sorrowful	OBL	3SG

(after her death) "Her husband was devastated **about** her."

(47) Mwotlap[59]

Kēy	*malaklak*	*tō*	***veg***	*tita*	*nōnōm*	*en.*
3PL	rejoice	PROG	OBL	mother	2SG.P	DEF

"They were rejoicing **about** your mother."

The status of *veg* as a morphologically independent word is shown by the ability to pause before it, and to have TAM particles separating it from the verb – like the progressive particle *tō* in (47). One further step in the evolution of **-akin* in Mwotlap has been its further reanalysis into a conjunction *veg*, used as a clausal linker 'because':

(48) Mwotlap[60]

Nēk	*tit-van*	*vēhte,*	***veg***	*mahē*	*mal*	*qōn̄!*
2SG	NEG:POT$_1$-go	NEG:POT$_2$	because	place	IAM	night

"You can't go there, **because** it's already dark!"

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[57] This development is the exact opposite of what happened in Malay, where the applicative suffix *-kan* has developed from the preposition *akan* (Harrison 1982:188, Adelaar 1984:410, 1992:149), ultimately being from **akən* (Adelaar 2011:348, Ross 2002).

[58] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003310#S16.

[59] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0002300#S175.

[60] Link to Mwotlap corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0002300#S36.

Even though *veg* originates in the **-akin* suffix, it has clearly gained morphosyntactic autonomy. The conjunction can even head a predicate by itself, as in this negative statement:

(49) Mwotlap (François 2005b:129)

Et=	***veg***	*te*	*so*	*n-eh*	*itōk.*
NEG1=	because	NEG2	COMP	ART-song	good

"It is not **because** the song is nice."

The neighboring language Mota has also innovated a preposition *vag*, which Codrington & Palmer (1896:238) label "a separable suffix, equivalent in meaning to 'with'". This can be, again, formulated as a case of degrammaticalization, as the former suffix was reanalyzed as a comitative preposition:

(50) Mota[61]

Nira	*me*	*tog~toga,*	*o*	*tavne*	*i*	*tuwale,*	***vag***	*rasoa-na.*
3PL	PFT	DUR~stay	ART	woman	NUM	one	COMIT	sister-3SG

"Once upon a time, there was a woman, **with** her sister."

Finally, we saw how Hiw has different reflexes of **-akin*, including a productive applicative suffix *-n̄og ~ -vog* [§3.2.1]. In addition, our Hiw corpus shows the existence of two rare prepositions: *og* /ɔɣ/ and *tog* /tɔɣ/; both reflect a process of degrammaticalization from the verbal suffix. The first of these prepositions, namely *og*, encodes the stimulus or cause of certain states:

(51) Hiw[62]

Tomn̄wëtom	*noke*	*mēr̄*	***og***	*i-ke,*	*pa*	*noke*
if	1SG	be.angry	OBL	DOM-2SG	but	1SG

tat	*not*	*mati-ke.*
NEG:IRR	hit:SG	to.death:SG-2SG

"Even if I'm furious **at** you, I won't kill you."

In principle, examples like (51) are ambiguous, due to the morphological proximity with the verb: are we dealing with a free preposition, or with an applicative suffix *mēr̄-og* ('be angry at')? Unfortunately, the test of the TAM morphology, which was useful in the Mwotlap example (47), is not available, because in Hiw postverbal TAM morphology always follows the object (François 2017:306). That said, the same morpheme *og* is found with other verbs, which suggests it may indeed have been reanalyzed into a preposition:

(52) Hiw[63]

Tekn̄wa	*n̄wati-ne*	*ve*	*toge*	*momerōg*	***og***	*ye*	*pe.*
HUM:PL	brother-3SG	IPFV	AUX:PROG	be.enraged	OBL	DOM:3SG	now

"His brothers were now enraged **at** him."

[61]Link to Mota corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003249#S2.

[62]Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003252#S137.

[63]Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003256#S58.

(53) Hiw [gq.AF:V08:15.Hiw]

Tom	*nine*	*ti*	*not*	*ne*	*meta-ne*	*ti,*
if	3SG	CTRF1	hit:SG	ART	eye-3SG	CTRF2

woteye	*ne*	*meta-ne*	*ta*	*pō*	***og-Ø.***
maybe	ART	eye-3SG	POT	blind	OBL-it

"If he had hit her eyes, she could have become blind **because of** it."

The second preposition has the form *tog*. It occurs after certain experiencer predicates (e.g., 'easy', 'difficult', 'pleasant'…), and introduces the participant for whom this predicate holds true – a semantic relation which many languages encode using an experiencer dative (Haspelmath 2001:66). Being normally followed by a human object, the Hiw preposition *tog* governs the special accusative for humans, glossed DOM 'Differential object marking' [cf. fn.17, §3.2.1]:

(54) Hiw[64]

Tamerēn	*tō*	*ñwuye*	*wuyog*	*vën,*	*terōñye*	***tog***	*ye*	*pe.*
when	go:SG	return	again	thither	easy	OBL	DOM:3SG	now

"When he reached [the Underworld] again, it was now much easier **for** him."

(55) Hiw[65]

Wye	***tog***	*i*	*teknwa*	*ti*	*ye,*	*Pupu*	*Samuel*
good	OBL	DOM	HUM:PL	PAST	ADV:INAN	grandpa	S.

ve	*vegevage*	*vati*	*teknwa*	*ti*	*ye.*
IPFV	talk	show	HUM:PL	PAST	ADV:INAN

"Luckily **for** us [*liter.* good for people], Grandpa Samuel told us about it all."

In sum, Hiw has followed the same sort of debonding process as the cognate morphemes *vag* in Mota, or *veg* in Mwotlap; except, it innovated not one but two oblique prepositions – both descendants from POc **akin*.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to examine the modern reflexes of the Proto-Oceanic applicative suffix **-akin* in the languages spoken in northern Vanuatu, building upon earlier work by Pawley (1973), Clark (1973) and Evans (2003) on valency-changing devices in Proto-Oceanic. In light of the numerous grammatical descriptions of languages spoken in Vanuatu published in the last decades, it has become increasingly apparent that reflexes of this suffix are still present throughout the archipelago – yet with diverse functions, and with different degrees of productivity. The northernmost region, namely the Torres and Banks islands, are no exception to this.

Through the analysis of our corpora – with a particular focus on Hiw, Mwotlap and Vurës – we identified four distinct outcomes of the suffix **-akin*. We ranked these pathways in a logical order, from the most productive and transparent uses to the most opaque and vestigial cases. These four outcomes are illustrated in Table 16, for our three focal languages, citing examples from our previous sections.

[64]Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003257#S40.

[65]Link to Hiw corpus: https://doi.org/10.24397/pangloss-0003257#S50.

Table 16. Recapitulation of the four distinct outcomes observed for reflexes of **-akin*

	Outcome	Hiw	Vurës	Mwotlap
#1	***semi-productive applicative suffix***	*vëyag* ‘run’ → *vëyag-**vog*** ‘run with’ [§3.2.1]	*teñ* ‘cry’ → *teñ-**seg*** ‘cry for’ [§3.3.1]	*ōy* ‘be full’ → *ōy-**heg*** ‘be full of’ [§3.4.1]
#2	***suffix with transparent yet irregular semantics***	*giy* ‘dig out’ → *giy-**ñog*** ‘dig ‹hole›’ [§3.2.2]	*wur* ‘sweep’ → *wur-**veg*** ‘clean’ [§3.3.2]	*ak* ‘do, make’ → *ak-**teg*** ‘do what?’ [§3.4.2]
#3	***possible former suffix, with opaque semantics***	*oye* ‘take’ →[???] *oye**tog*** ‘await’ [§3.2.3]	*mem* ‘put down’ →[???] *mem**seg*** ‘breathe’ [§3.3.3]	*mōl* ‘return’ →[???] *mōl**eg*** ‘clarify’ [§3.4.3]
#4	***vestigial word-final syllable***	??? → *wö**tog*** ‘throw’ [§3.2.4]	??? → *liñe**reg*** ‘hide’ [§3.3.4]	??? → *hay**veg*** ‘enter’ [§3.4.4]

The development of **-akin* evidently went down a continuum of increasing arbitrariness, as reflexes of the original applicative suffix ended up their route in the form of a petrified, desemanticized, opaque syllable at the end of many words. But while the word-final reflexes of **-akin* followed this road towards opacity, some languages found a way to revive it, so to speak, by reanalyzing it as a free preposition. Such is the fifth outcome we identified, in addition to the four listed in Table 16 below [§4.2].

This is how the same linguistic area witnessed both the demise of a former morpheme and its resurrection in a new shape, with new functions.

List of abbreviations

List of glossing abbreviations

APPL applicative; COMIT commitative; COMP complementizer; CTRF counterfactual; DEF definite; DEM demonstrative; DOM differential object marker; DU dual; DUR durative; EX exclusive; FOC focus; FUT future; GROUP group of people; HITH hither; HUM human; IAM iamitive; IPFV imperfective; IRR irrealis; LOC locative; NEG negator; NMZ nominalizer; NSG non singular; NUM numeral; OBJ object; OBL oblique; ORIG origin; P possessive; POT potential; PROG progressive; PROH prohibitive; PRST present; PRSV presentative; PRT preterite; REL relativizer; s.o. someone; s.th. something; SBJV subjunctive; SG singular; STAT stative; TOP topic.

NB: In glosses, ‹…› indicates the typical object of a transitive verb: e.g., MTP *ha* ‘draw ‹water›’, ‘HIW *qēt-ñog* ‘kill ‹many people›’.

Language names

DRG Dorig; HAW Hawaiian; HIW Hiw; KRO Koro; LHI Lehali; LKN Lakon; LMG Lemerig; LTG Lo-Toga; LYP Löyöp; MRL Mwerlap; MTA Mota; MTP Mwotlap; MSN Mwesen; NUM Nume; OLR Olrat; VRA Vera’a; VRS Vurës; POc Proto Oceanic; PNCV Proto North Central Vanuatu; PTB Proto Torres-Banks.

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APPENDIX

Orthography of the 17 Torres-Banks languages

Forms in this study are given using the practical orthographies adopted for northern Vanuatu languages. Many conventions are unproblematic, and reflect their expected phonetic value: this is the case of *p, t, k, l, r, m, n, s, h, w*, as well as *a* and *i.* Some conventions are specific to some languages; we only indicate here those in use in this paper.

- *b, d, ḡ* represent prenasalised stops [ᵐb], [ⁿd], [ᵑg];
- *g* is a voiced velar fricative [ɣ], sometimes realised as approximant [ɯ] syllable-finally
- *n̄* is [ŋ]; m̄ is [ŋ͡mʷ]; j is [ɟ]; *y* is [j]
- *q* is [kʷ] in Hiw, Lo-Toga, Lehali, Mwerlap; [k͡pʷ] elsewhere
- *r̄* in Hiw is [g͡ʟ]
- *v* is [v]~[f] in Vera'a, Mota, Mwerlap; [v]~[β] elsewhere
- in the Torres (Hiw and Lo-Toga), *e* is [ə]; ë is [ɛ] in Lo-Toga, [e] in Hiw
- in the Banks (all other languages), *e* is [ɛ]; *ë* is [œ]
- *ē* is [ɪ]; *ō* [ʊ] contrasts everywhere with *o* [ɔ]; *ö* is [ø]
- *ā* is [aː] in Dorig; *ä* is [ɛ͡a] in Koro, [æ] elsewhere
- *u* is [y] in Vurës, [u] elsewhere