

## OUTLINE OF CUNA GRAMMAR

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0. The following outline of Cuna grammar is meant to give the outstanding features of this language, which is spoken on the San Blas coast, Panama, according to notes and records taken by and under the auspices of the late Baron E. Nordenskiöld (1927-32). The Cuna language has previously been described by J. Dyneley Prince, in articles in the *American Anthropologist* (vols. 14, 15). For details of new materials, I must refer the reader to a work that will be printed for the Ethnographical Museum, Gothenburg, Sweden, under the title: *A Critical and Comparative Grammar of the Cuna Language*.

The Cuna language<sup>1</sup> has been classified with the so-called Chibcha languages. If we mean by this that it is derived from the

<sup>1</sup> The origin of the word Cuna is not ascertainable. The designation kuna or kuna-kuna is being replaced by tula *man*. It seems, however, to enter into the name of the Cuna mythical hero Ipeorkun (commonly written Ibeorgun), "The Shining Gold Cuna" (?). Kuna as a common appellative means *long* or *length* (either of time or place).

same direct source as the Chibcha (or Muisca) of Colombia, we may become guilty of a misstatement. All we can say is that Cuna contains a large number of Chibcha word stems, among which figure many primitive nouns and verbs. Even though the case may not be quite comparable to that of Kechua and Aymara, there is much to be said in favor of the view that the Chibcha analogies in Cuna depend on a relatively late wave of influence from the south.

### 1. Phonology.

1.1. The sounds of the Cuna language are the following: (vowels) a, e, i, o, u, all of which have in the main their Spanish values;<sup>2</sup> (consonants) ch, k, kw, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, among which we may include the semivowels w and y. There are two main categories of consonants: plain consonant sounds, with the approximate value of the corresponding sounds in Spanish (cf. below),<sup>3</sup> and gemi-

<sup>2</sup> The following phonetic details are quite audible in the phonographic records: long a is clear as in French *part*, e and o often very open (the latter approaching English a in *fall*), long u shows no tendency to become narrow (cf. below). The short a (for instance in *ampa still*, *tarpa between*) approaches the English short u, the short i (*kinki bow*) is occasionally like French e in *le*, the short u (in *purpa soul*) is often like the same neutral sound pronounced with rounded lips (cf. note 3).

<sup>3</sup> We may add that Cuna s and ch are pronounced with the tongue pressed at the same time against the front teeth and the alveolar ridge, the only difference being that the former is a plain spirant, the latter an affricate. Cuna r is in most positions strongly trilled (in the word *purpa soul*, it is almost vocalic: *prba*; hence *purwa wind* may occasionally become *prwa*, *prua*). Initial vowels are pronounced without glottal occlusion; a weak aspirate may be heard.

nated sounds, consisting of an implosive and explosive element and (as in the case of stop consonants) having a longer duration: the geminates are only found in intervocalic position. All stops are unaspirated and semivoiced, and the latter statement is true of the s-sound also; sonority is liable to arise especially between vowels (in the plain consonant series), and the soft Spanish pronunciation of intervocalic b, d, g is also possible as a phonetic variant. The other consonants (except ch) are fully voiced.

**1.2.** The geminated stops (and medial ch, which is of the geminate type) are always voiceless: apart from medial ch, they are kk, kkw, pp, tt. The other geminates, which are ll, mm, nn, and r(r), and in which there is no implosive nor explosive element, are all voiced. The plain consonants and the geminates correspond to each other as follows: k, kk; kw, kkw; l, ll (r); m, mm; n, nn; p, pp; s, ch; t, tt. There hardly exists a non-geminated ch (an exception is *chichitti black*, usually *sichitti*), and the same is true of r, which does not have to be written double between vowels. In borrowings from Spanish and English consonants are as a rule rendered by Cuna equivalents of the plain series (notice especially *sisá chicha* and *sikalí*, from *cigarrillo*).

**1.3.** In syllable-final position there are no geminates. These are changed into implosives, by loss of the explosive element, or otherwise reduced in sound.<sup>4</sup> The plain consonants are either turned into the corresponding implosives or left (practically) unmodified: plain or geminated ch appears as s in syllable-final; k, kk appear as k (implosive); kw, kkw appear as k (implosive); l, ll appear as l (r); m, mm as m; n, nn, as n; p, pp as p (implosive); r as r; s as s; t, tt as t (implosive). The syllable-final sounds (except l, m, n, r) are all voiceless. For l we often find r, which is more or less trilled, like the geminated (intervocalic) sound. The

<sup>4</sup> That is, -k, -p, -t are articulated, but the explosive element is delayed, or not forthcoming, whereby these sounds become almost inaudible.

implosives are sounded approximately as in Spanish (*respecto*, *apto*); implosive k is usually changed into the vowel i in common speech (cf. Spanish *delectable*, from *delectabilis*). The semivowels (w, y) neither occur geminated nor as syllable finals.

**1.4.** Initially we find the following plain consonants only: k, kw, m, n, p, s, and t, which are either voiceless or semivoiced. Initial ch is rare (cf. above), and the same is true of initial l, which has practically always been changed into n (hence these sounds often interchange); initial r is non-existent (Spanish *Rubén* is pronounced *Uruben* in Cuna). Of consonant clusters there are rare examples of kr and pr, which depend on a special form of vowel syncope (cf. footnote 3).

**1.5.** Vowel quantity is dependent on the nature of the following consonant, so that vowels are slightly shorter before syllable-ending consonants and geminates than in other positions (cf. footnote 2). Cuna also has geminated vowels, properly counting as two syllables, but sometimes reduced to single superlong vowels (muu *grandmother*): most of the originally monosyllabic nouns get the expanded vowel. Conversely, all word-final unstressed vowels tend to become superbreve and obscure; these are the vowels which are ultimately syncopated (see 2.1.). Sound reduction may take place in compounds as well, in which the components are independent stress units (*ani-puna my sister*, where i and the last a are both superbreve and liable to become syncopated). Diphthongs are phonologically not distinguishable from disyllabic vowel complexes.

**1.6.** Syllable stress is regulated by the duration of vowels and consonants. It is even on all syllables, except those containing superbreve vowels. The latter occur (as we have already seen) in the last syllable of every stress unit of more than one syllable. There is also a tendency to shorten two contiguous vowels at the end of a unit of more than two syllables, in which case a geminated vowel may be contracted to a single long

vowel. The last vowel is thus short and unstressed in takke *see*, kwilet *dancing*; the last two vowels, in takkoe *will see*, mos-kua *when he arrived*; for me(e)rpaa *many* we may also find me(e)rpā (with no particular stress on the last syllable).

1.7. Of special interest is the emphatic (or expressive) prolongation of consonants, as of r in purrikwat *very small*, or pp, in pippikwat, *idem*. The prolonged sounds have no phonological function in the ordinary sense. Phonetically they may equal the emphatics of certain Pacific coast languages, but they are not glottalized (as in Çoos or Kwakiutl). The principle of using an emphatic sound (also called *fortis*) to express diminution has been studied by Edward Sapir in the Wishram dialect of Chinook.<sup>5</sup> In Cuna we find a similar tendency, for instance in tottokwa (emphatic form of totokwa) *small, very small*, but such forms are not limited to the diminutive sense only.

## 2. Syncope.

2.1. Vowel syncope plays an important part in Cuna grammar. It consists in the total suppression of a superbreve vowel (see 1.5.). It is hard to say whether it is a phonetical or grammatical process. Non-syncope forms are often used in songs, where the spoken language would never use them. On the other hand, syncope is more or less the rule in certain grammatical forms, and we may also find that certain other forms are never, or quite exceptionally, syncope. As a general rule we find that words of originally more than two syllables syncope the last vowel (temar = temala *sea*), and that in compounds dissyllabic components syncope their last vowel (Nus-tup, from nusa *rat* and tuppū *island*). Notice also e-pun *his sister* (from puna *sister*), an-takke *I see* (from ani-, an-, possessive prefix), in which both principles are applied.<sup>6</sup> Ex-

<sup>5</sup> See Handbook of American Indian Languages, Part 1, pp. 639 sqq.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nahuatl nemi *he lives* and ò-nen *he lived*, where the loss of the final vowel may originally be due to the addition of a syllable.

panded vowels (see 1.5) reappear in their original form in the same cases (muu *grand-mother*, interchanging with mu). Some suffixes are never (or seldom) syncope, others usually appear in their syncope form (4.2).

3. Reduplication may affect the whole word or its first syllable. There are three main types to be distinguished.

Reduplication of the whole word: kila-kila *scratching and scratching, scratching repeatedly*, kwa-kwa (two stress units) *nuts (here and there)*.

Reduplication of the first syllable, without any other modification: ma-mai *they are (here and there)*, na-nai *they go about (in different places)*, na-nae *they go*, pi-pioke *beat (and beat)*.

Reduplication of the first syllable, with gemination of the following consonant: memmermakke *flutter* mu-mmut *drunk, drunkard*. The latter type is interesting as it is probably historically identical with the current form of reduplication in Nahuatl and Pipil (Nahuatl pì-pi *pick here and there*, cuiculia *take a thing here and there*, Pipil kux-kuyamet *hogs (here and there)*); the Nahuatl *saltillo* (marked by the grave accent), the Pipil x, and the Cuna gemination all indicate the loss of an implosive consonant.

Reduplication in Cuna expresses *stray occurrence*, either in time or place.

## 4. Nouns.

4.1. The Cuna noun neither distinguishes between different genders, nor between animate and inanimate categories. Person is not expressed so precisely as for instance in Algonquian, but there seem to be traces of a similar distinction in the use of the possessive prefixes (4.8). In the numerals there are often class marks (6.2). Person may sometimes be indicated by the use of auxiliaries (9.3).

4.2. There are plain nouns, such as tule *man*, ome *woman*, neka *house*, which may again form endless compounds, and nouns

derived by means of nominal suffixes. Of the latter the most common are -kwa, -yo, -pa, -la.

-kwa has actually such a wide range of meanings that we may consider it as a general formative of concrete nouns. Originally it was (as in the related languages of the Talamanca group) restricted to nouns of a certain class of small objects, which often are found to have related or identical names in the different languages of the Indians, such as *stone, egg, nut, bud, flower, star* (cf. Nahuatl *tetl stone, egg*, Dakota *itká, witka egg, flower, seed, testicle*, and related words in the Siouan languages). In this function it is still found in the Cuna words *ak-kwa stone, tala-kwa eye, niis-kwa, iis-kwa star*, etc. But it is used in personal designations as well (*ope-kwa bather*) where perhaps it originally expressed diminution or depreciation (*-kala bone*, in such derivations as *wie-kala lazy, tope-kala timid*, originally used as nouns).

-yo is especially common with the totality form of the noun (4.6). From its being employed in this construction it may be concluded that it expresses the idea of *oneness*, being also the grammatical expression of a distinctive class or type (much like English -hood or -head). It is of interest to notice an analogous function in the Nahuatl suffix -yō-tl.

-pa(-p) is no doubt originally a collective suffix, as it serves to form the plural in some of the related languages (cf. also the tribe names *Terra-ba, Kaga-ba*). In Cuna this suffix is common in names of plants and animals: *make-p(a) jagua* (which yields a red dyestuff: cf. *maka-paint*), *sulu-p(a) eagle*, but also in other words, such as *ukku-p(a) sand*; cf. *-(r)pa(a) many, much* (4.7).

-la (-r) is evidently related to the passive formative (-le-, see 8.15).<sup>7</sup> Where the meaning of Cuna -la is clear, it expresses the

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the relation between the Nahuatl passive in -lo and the noun suffix -l-: in *tla-tō-l-li a word (what is said)*.

result of a verbal action, as in *ima-la thing*, from *ima-make, do*.<sup>8</sup>

4.3. The Cuna noun has no special case forms. Thus the word *tule man, Cuna Indian*, may be used as nominative (*tule e-taisa the Indian saw him*), as accusative (*an-tule-taisa I saw an Indian*), as possessive case (*tule talakwa a man's eye*: we find in the same sense *tule e-talakwa man, his eye*; cf. under the possessive prefixes 4.8). The local cases (including the dative) are formed by means of postpositions: *tule se, tule ka to the Indian* (the former more local, the latter more closely corresponding to the dative case). The vocative has no special characteristic: *tule (O) Indian*.

There are three special forms to express number (apart from the common nominative singular form): two plural forms (in -kana and -mala, respectively) and a totality form (in -pi, -pii).

4.4. Plural in -kana. By this suffix an individual plural is expressed, that is, *various of different kinds*: *tule-kana various or different people, sipu-kana white stones or pebbles, niis-kana stars*; even in cases where the sense appears to be collective we must assume that -kana denotes rather a loose conglomeration than a natural group or class. It is remarkable that this suffix shows phonetical affinities with the Carib suffix -con as well as the Kechua suffix -cuna, used in an identical sense (Kechua *yana-cuna servants = Cuna mai-kana*).<sup>9</sup>

4.5. Plural in -mala. This plural suffix expresses *natural relationship* or *fellowship* of various kinds, as well as *functional unity*: *kilu-mala uncles, amma-mala aunts, ua-mala fish* (lit., *the fish nation*), *ipya-mala the eyes* (as a functional unit). It is probably originally a word denoting *kindred*, as seen in the

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Nahuatl *tla-chihua-l-li creation, work*, from *chihua make, do*.

<sup>9</sup> The Cuna vowel *a* in many cases probably represents an original reduced vowel (cf. Cuna *apakana body = Chibcha ybaquyn*, where *y* is described as a vowel between *e* and *i*); in Kechua the same vowel probably appears as *u*.

personal pronouns (an-mala *my kindred*), i.e., *we*, pe-mala *your kindred*, i.e., *you*, etc.). Otherwise it is not found as an independent word.

**4.6.** The totality form expresses the sense of *nothing more and nothing less* with the suffix -pi or -pii: san-pi(i) *all meat* or *only meat*, ka-pi(i) *all herbs* or *herbs only*. It is particularly frequent in combination with the noun formative -yo (**4.2**), with which it forms the very productive suffix -yopi. This compound suffix renders the idea of *like*: olo-yopi *like gold*, mani-yopi *like silver*, which constructions might be literally rendered by *all one gold* (i.e., *the same as gold*), etc. We also find such constructions as pe-yopi *like you*, in which -yo is more of an independent noun (cf. Nahuatl *yô*, *iyô* *alone*).

**4.7.** The suffix -(r)pa(a) *many, much*. This variant of the noun suffix -pa (**4.2**) is not a real plural suffix. Added to nouns it usually expresses *many*, otherwise *much* or *very*: pukki-pa(a) *many*, uee-pa(a) *very hot*, *it is very hot*, nue-rpa(a) (*it is*) *very good*. In this form -r- is the nominal suffix -la (**4.2**).

**4.8.** Possessive pronouns prefixed in Cuna: an(i)- *my*; pe *your*; e-, a-, na- (for the distinction, see below) *his, her, its*. Thus, for the word *papa father*: an(i)-pap *my father*, pe-pap *your father*, e-pap (a-pap, na-pap) *his, her father*. There are no plural forms in common use, whence *our, your* (pl.), and *their* must be expressed by personal pronouns, according to the construction mentioned in **4.3**: anmal pap *our father*, pemal pap *your father*.

In the third person we find three different forms, of which the last (na-) appears to be reflexive (na-pap *his own father*). Of the others, a- appears chiefly at the beginning of a sentence, while e- is preferentially used after a preceding noun in the possessive construction (cf. the examples in **4.3**). On the other hand, a- seems to refer to the main third person, while e- (except in the above-mentioned construction) rather refers to the fourth person (to use Algonquian terminology), thus corresponding to *the other's*. But

the problem requires further investigation. It should be added that na-, in the reflexive sense, may be used of the first and second persons as well.

**5.** Adjectives. Originally no distinction existed between nouns and adjectives. Thus nele (lele)<sup>10</sup> *sacred* is used both in the sense of *one who has supernatural power* (especially of *vision*) and in the adjective sense of *wise, sacred*. All adjectives, unless derived from verbs, are probably nouns in their origin: sipukwat *white* (originally (*white*) *pebble*). The attributive adjective follows the noun (akkwa-lele *sacred stone*); for the attributive suffix -ti, see **8.13**. The predicative adjective is equal to the attributive adjective; copula is not expressed: nueti *it is good*, uee(r)paa *it is very hot*.

Comparison is expressed by various circumlocutions, as in Nahuatl: *more* is rendered by the adverb pule, pur: pur nueti *better*.

## 6. Numerals.

**6.1.** The cardinal numbers from 1 to 10 (in their plainest form) are as follows: kwena *one*, po(o) *two*, pa(a) *three*, pakke *four*, attale *five*, nerkwa (< \*lel-kwa) *six*, kukle *seven*, paapakka *eight*, pakkepakka *nine*, ampeki *ten*. These forms are often used with the suffix -kwa (**4.2**): ila poo-kwa *two times, twice*, tule pakkekwa *four Indians*. Exceptions are attale, nerkwa (in which -kwa has become part of the stem), and kukle.

The ordinals (except *the first*, which is expressed by special words, (kepe, kepet; cp. 11) have the same form as the cardinal numbers: ila paa *the third time*, pilli pakke *the fourth stratum* (of the earth). The suffix -kwa may be added, as in the cardinal numbers, and finally also the attributive suffix -ti (see **8.13**): attale-t(i) *the fifth*, kukle-t(i) *the seventh*.

**6.2.** The numeral classifiers are placed

<sup>10</sup> In Cuna initial \*l- becomes n-; hence we often find alternation between these sounds, as in nele: akkwa-lele (*sacred stone*).

between the noun and the numeral (whether of the cardinal or ordinal description). The classifiers are in great number, the most common one being *kwa*, evidently of the same origin as the nominal suffix (4.2) and doubtless originally used of the same class of nouns. Others are *war* (*wala trunk, branch*) used of *persons*; *sar*, used of *trees*; *tar*, of *spaces*; *kuna* (*length*), of for instance *days* or *time*. As the numerals usually follow the nouns in Cuna, we get the following constructions: *tule war-kwena one man*, *one war-pockwa two women*, *ipekala kun-pákke four days* (or *four times*), *neka tar-pookwat the second house* (*place*). Sometimes no noun is used, as in *kwa-po two nuts* (*kwa-kwa nut, nuts*); cf. 3, first type.

### 7. Pronouns.

7.1. The personal pronouns in Cuna are made up from a nucleus *-ti* (*-tti*) and the possessive prefixes, mentioned in 4.8; the forms thus obtained are used in the singular only: *ani-tti* (*an-ti*) *I*, *pe-ti* *you* (in the third person, the forms are the same as those of the demonstrative pronouns: see 7.2). To make plural forms, the formative *-mala* (see 4.5) is used, likewise with possessive prefixes: *an-mal(a)* *we*, *pe-mal(a)* *you*, *a-mal(a)* or *e-mal(a)* *they* (the latter often means *the others*). Syntactically the personal pronouns are construed as nouns; by using them instead of a personal prefix (see 8.5), emphasis is given to a pronominal subject or object: *anti soke I say* (pronoun stressed) or *it is I who say*, as against *an(i)-soke I say* (verb stressed). The plural forms are used to supply the missing possessive prefixes (see 4.8).

7.2. The formation of demonstrative pronouns includes demonstrative elements, of which the most common are: *i-* *this*, *a-* *that*, *te-* *this*, (*the same*), *we-* *that* (more distant); to these are adjoined the elements *-ti* or *-tti* (known from the personal pronouns), whence we got: *itti this*, *ati that*, *weti that* (*yonder*). These are used as substantives or adjectives: in the latter sense they precede the noun,

e.g., *itti tule this man*, *ati ome that woman*. The demonstrative *a-* may directly precede the noun, as in *a- tule that man*, in which case it is formally, at least, the same as the possessive prefix (see 4.8). *Ati* may also be considered as a personal pronoun *he, she, it* (or *it is he, she*).

7.3. The following interrogative pronouns are most common: *toa who?* *ipi what?* *pitti which?* We may here also mention the general interrogatives *iki how?* *inkua when?* (of past time), *sana when?* (of future time), *pia where?* *pikwa how many?* which are partly used as adverbs. All (or most) of these forms may be used in a triple sense: in direct interrogation; in indirect interrogation; in an indefinite sense. *Ipi* thus means either *what* or *something* (it may also be used as a noun, in the sense of *a thing*). In the above pronouns and adverbs we may discern the following interrogative elements: *i-* (cf. Kechua *i-ma what?* Nahuatl *i-c where? when?*), *pi-* (cf. Chibcha *fi-cua how many?*), and *sa-* (the latter perhaps from original \**éa-*).

7.4. Among indefinite pronouns we may include *pela all*, *kwena some, any* (also plural), *paitti other*, which are used as nouns or adjectives (in the latter case placed either before or after the governed word). The following may be termed pronominal adjectives (they are also used as nouns): *toka much*, *me(e)rpa(a) many*, *ichakkwakwa (a) few*, *pukkipa many, enough*.

### 8. Verbs.

8.1. Like the nouns, the verbs are either simple or compound, primitive or derived. The simple verbs have all become dissyllabic (5),<sup>11</sup> their stem ending either in *-a* or *-i* (*soka- say*, *takka- see*, *tani- come*, *noni- arrive*, *wisi- know*, *naa- go* (originally *na-*, \**la-*), *sii- sit* (originally *si-*). Verbs may be composed with each other, forming lengthy compounds, but usually the last component

<sup>11</sup> That is, when fully stressed; when used as auxiliaries after a main verb, the shorter stem often remains.

is an auxiliary (for which see 9.1, 9.2). Verbs may be derived by prefixes and suffixes; of the latter the most common are -kua- and \*-wa-, to which may be added the adverbial -mo- and -pala-. Verbal prefixes are very common; we may mention: a',<sup>12</sup> ai-, ap-, apin-, ar-, in-, mai-, nai-, par-, pen-, pur-, tar-, tur-, wis-. These prefixes are often adverbs in their origin, but in many cases their precise function is not apparent.

Apart from the regular prefixes, there are initial vocalic elements (a-, e-, i-, o-), with which we shall deal separately (8.4).

**8.2.** Derivation by means of suffixes. By -kua- inchoative verbs are expressed: si-kua- *sit down, come into a sitting position* (cf. sii- *sit*, sika- *sit down*), tun-kua- *become big, grow up* (from tumma- *great, big*), nu-kua- *become well, recover* (cf. nueti *good*). By -wa- both inchoative and causative verbs are formed; according to a Cuna phonetic law, aw is changed into o, whence these verbs practically always end in -oa: tummoa- *grow big* (from \*tumma-wa-), kannoa- *grow strong, make strong* (from kanna- *strong*).

The other two have adverbial functions: -moa-, -moka- renders *also*, -pala- *again*: itto-moe *hears too*, na-mokoe *will go too*, tanipaloe *will come again, will return*. These elements are rather to be considered as adverbs incorporated into the verbal form (cf. moka *also, too, pali again*; see 11).

**8.3.** Verbal prefixes. The meanings of the verbal prefixes, as far as they can be ascertained, appear from the examples given below: a' has at least two different functions: to express reflexive forms: an-nukka- *wash oneself* (e-nukka- *wash another*); as a privative or negative prefix: an-nira- *loosen, untie* (e-nira- *stick, fasten*).

ai- (originally ak-, cf. 1.3) appears to denote *motion through space*, and actually renders both *up* and *down*: ai-nakkwa- *rise*, ai-tika- *descend*.

ap- (originally api-) and apin- (originally

<sup>12</sup> By the apostrophe (') we denote a lost (implosive) consonant, which causes gemination of a following consonant.

apinni-, cf. in-, below) correspond approximately to English *against*: ap-soka- *converse, answer*, apin-kua- *come against, i.e., meet*.

ar- often denotes *down*, as in ar-kwana- *fall*, but has other meanings as well, as in ar-kaa- *open, discover*, etc.<sup>13</sup>

in (originally inni-) probably originally means *in front*, but has also other meanings: in-saa- *think, presume* (from saa- *make*).

mai- (originally maka-, mak-, cf. 1.3) expresses among other ideas that of possibility: mak-ittoa- *be able to hear*.

nai- (originally naka-, nak-, cf. 1.3) probably denotes vicinity: nai-sikka- *put near* or *at*.

par- (originally pali-: cf. the homophonous postposition, 12) often seems to denote completion; par-takka- *examine* (from takka- *see*).

pen- (originally penne-) occurs for instance in pen-takka- *help, aid*.

pur- (originally pule- *more?*) occurs in pur-takka- *reflect, mirror*.

tar- (originally tale- or talle-: cf. the adverb talle *together*) means perhaps *between*: tar-kwiskua- *come (and stand) inside*.

tur- (originally tuli-?) occurs in tur-takka- *learn*, and perhaps in at-tur-saa- *steal, rob*.

wis- expresses either a *wish* or the idea of *a little* (whence we may perhaps suppose that it originally served to render a modest or polite request): an-wis-takke *I desire to see (a little)*.

**8.4.** The prefixes a-, e-, i-, o- differ from those already mentioned by their shorter form and by the absence of a consonantal characteristic. The fact that these prefixes consist of single vowels, while grammatical functions as well as concrete meanings are usually expressed by at least one consonant element, lets us suspect that they are historically of a different type.<sup>14</sup> It would be

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that the Cuna adverbs (as well as the post-positions) do not properly express any special direction, but merely various kinds of locality.

<sup>14</sup> There hardly exists in Cuna a single noun or verb stem consisting of vowels only. It must then be remembered that forms such as ai *friend, ua*

interesting if it could be definitely proved that these vowels in Cuna are of the same nature as the "vocalic element" or "vocalic character" found in Iroquoian, as well as in many other American languages.<sup>15</sup> I have suggested the term prefix vowel for a formative of this kind, implying by this designation that the vowel often forms an essential part of a personal or other prefix, in which it may express the syntactical relation between the pronoun and the verbal action. The latter function is not found in Cuna, but a-, e-, i- and o- in all probability originally modified the verbal action in reference to the agent.

In Cuna e- and o- only are productive. Of the others a-, for instance, is found in a-pea- *love, desire* (cf. pea- *wish, want*), and i- (perhaps originally instrumental) in i-makka- *make* (cf. -makka-, *idem*, in compounds), but their precise function is not apparent in Cuna. By e- the verbal action is expressed as directly depending on the subject of the verb and exerted on an object, as in an(i)-e-nukke *I wash (someone)*, whereas by o- it is expressed as transferred from the subject to the object, as in an(i)-o-nukke *I let or make (someone) wash*. By the latter prefix vowel *causative* verbs are formed. In both constructions three operating factors are discernible: the subject or agent; the first (indirect) object (in this case a person); the second (implied or direct) object (in this case the thing washed off). When there is only one object of a verb, no prefix vowel is used: an-takke *I see (him, her, it)* or (*he, she*) *sees me*.

**8.5.** A pronominal subject or object is expressed by personal prefixes, which are historically the same as the possessive prefixes (see 4.8). Consequently singular forms only can be expressed in this mode.

*fish* originally had (or may have had) a semivowel; cf. the older or alternative forms *aya, uwa*.

<sup>15</sup> The former is used by Barbeau, the latter by Boas (see C. M. Barbeau, *Classification of Iroquoian radicals*, in *Canadian Department of Mines, memoir 46, No. 7* (Anthropological series).

In intransitive verbs the prefix refers to the subject of the verb (an(i)-nae *I go*, pe-nae *you go*, a-nae *he goes*) whereas in transitive verbs it may refer either to the subject or the object (an(i)-takke *I see him* or *he sees me*, pe-takke *you see him* or *he sees you*, a-takke *he sees (him)*,<sup>16</sup> e-takke (*he*) *sees him*<sup>16</sup>).

To express the plural, the suffix -mala (see 4.5) is added (the preceding vowel of the verbal stem being currently syncopated): an(i)-na-mala *we go*, pe-na-mala *you (pl.) go*, a-na-mala *they go*.

In transitive verbs -mala pluralizes the object only<sup>17</sup> (an(i)-tai-mala *he sees us*, pe-tai-mala *he sees you (pl.)*, e-tai-mala *he sees them*) whereas a plural subject must be expressed by a plural personal pronoun: annal takke *we see (him, her)*, pemal takke *you (pl.) see him*. The use of -mala is conditioned by the capacity of this element to express functional unity or joint action (see 4.5), on the basis of the supposition that a plural subject or object presupposes unity of action.

**8.6.** We may distinguish between the following tense and mode forms in the simple verbal inflection in Cuna: (1) present (also used as imperative), (2) future (also used as imperative), (3) narrative preterit, (4) completive preterit, (5) resultative preterit, to which come (6) the gerund, (7) the active participle, and (8) the passive participle. In all of these tense and mode forms (except perhaps the participles) a pronominal subject or object may be expressed according to the same principles as we have stated in the preceding paragraphs. The present form in particular may also serve as verb noun, especially with a postposition: takke kala *in order to see*; otherwise the verb noun is identical in form with the active participle (see 8.13).

<sup>16</sup> The difference between the last two constructions seems to be that the former requires a nominal object, the latter a nominal subject.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the same rule in Mataco; see R. J. Hunt, *Mataco-English and English-Mataco Dictionary*, in *Ethnological Studies 5* (Göteborg, 1937).



**8.7.** Present. From verbs in -a, this tense is formed by changing the final vowel into -e (from \*a-i); stems in -i remain unchanged: *soka* (syncopated *soi-*) *say* (from *soka-*), *takke* (syncopated *tai-*) *see* (from *takka-*), *tani* *come*, *wisi* *know*; in a limited number of verbs the final -a is not changed into -e: *nikka* *have, be*, *tula* *be alive*.

In a certain number of verbs, the present is formed by an extension, chiefly by means of any of the formatives -ka-, -na-, -la- or -ya-: *si-ke* *sit down* (cf. *sii* *sit*), *me-ke* *lie down* (cf. *mai* *lie*), *arkwa-ne* *fall* (original stem *arkwa-*), *ko-le* *call* (original stem *ko-*), *tip-ye* *roast* (original stem *tippi-*). A larger number of verbs (to which probably belong *soka-say* and *takka-see*) originally contain petrified presentic formatives (-ka- and -kka-).

**8.8.** Future. The future tense is always formed from the present stem, by changing the original terminating -a into -oa- (from \*a-wa; see **8.2**), whence ultimately we obtain a form in -oe (or syncopated -o; cf. the present, **8.7**); the future is thus formally (and historically) identical with the inchoative stem in -oa- (see **8.2**), although functionally quite different (as the verbs in -oa- may again form a future in this way; cf. below): *sokoe* *will say*, *takkoe* *will see*, *sikoe* *will sit down*, *mekoe* *will lie down*; verbs in -i usually form the future in -ioe (*noni-oe* *will arrive*), but sometimes in -oe (*wis-oe* *will know*). Since *kw* does not occur in front of *o* and *u* in Cuna, the future of *nakkwa- rise* is regularly *nakkoe will rise*. From verbs in -oa- (cf. above), we regularly get future forms in -ooe (*tummooe will grow big*).

**8.9.** Narrative preterit. This tense is similarly formed from the present stem, by addition of -na (sometimes syncopated -n) to the terminals -e, -i, or -a: *takke-na* *he saw* (as *he went*), *mai-na* *he was* (*lived*), *nikka-na* *he had*. The suffix -na is probably a form of the verb *na(a)- go* (cf. **8.1**), and the original meaning may have been *went about* (*doing*, etc.).

**8.10.** Completive preterit. By this term

I designate a preterit that stresses the completion of a verbal action. It is chiefly formed from transitive verbs in -a, which is either changed into -i or syncopated before the tense characteristic -sa (syncopated -s): *kopi-sa* (or *kop-sa*) *drank* (from *kopa-*), *topi-sa* *feared* (from *topa-*), *soi-sa* *said*, *tai-sa* *saw* (from *soka-*, *takka-*, respectively). The tense suffix is probably a form of the verb *sa(a)- do, make* (*tai-sa* thus means *did see*).

**8.11.** Resultative preterit. The resultative preterit is formed, chiefly from (original) intransitive verbs, by means of the tense characteristic -ta-, -te (syncopated -t): *na-te* *is gone, has gone, went* (from *naa-*), *ku-te* *has come, is* (*there*), *ko-te* *has called* (probably originally *is heard*). From the preterit stem in -ta- there are derived forms in -tte (*ko-tte* *has called*) and -cha (from \*t-sa: *ko-cha* *has called, called*); of special importance is further the (originally) participial form in -ta-ppi (cf. **4.6**): *na-tappi* *all gone, is off* (from \*na-ta-t-pi; cf. the participle *na-te-t(i)* *who has gone*). As to meaning the resultative preterit differs little from the completive preterit; if the latter denotes the direct completion of an action by the subject, the former may rather denote the result of an action as performed by the subject, and is thus in a way to be considered as a passive form. But this distinction is at most an historical one.

**8.12.** Gerund. The form which I call gerund is a semi-finite form, denoting a parenthetical verbal action, which sometimes seems clearly subordinate to that of a purely finite form (cf. the example in **13.2**). Formally it is derived (usually from the present stem of the verb) by addition of the syllable -li, so that verbs whose stem ends in -a usually forms the gerund in -ali; the few verbs in -i, which form a gerund, add -ali (the gerund thus ending in -iali), and some verbs in -a likewise form the gerund in -iali (by changing the stem-final -a into -i, as in the preterit; cf. **8.10**). If a consonant precedes the stem-terminal vowel, it is geminated: *sokka-li* *saying, as* (*he*) *said, or*

simply, *says, said* (from soka-), *ekicha-li asking* (from ekisa-; cf. 1.2), *kolla-li calling* (from ko-la-; cf. 8.7), but *ittoa-li hearing* (from ittoa-), *patti-ali falling* (from patta-): *marli-ali breaking* (from mara-).<sup>18</sup>

**8.13.** Active participle. The active participle is formed from the present or preterit by addition of the suffix -ti (syncopated -t) or -tti (the former is more often used after e, the latter after -a or -i): *soke-t(i) saying*, *takke-t(i) seeing*, *nikka-tti having*, *nate-t(i) having gone*, *kocha-tti having called*. The form thus arising expresses a true active participle, a relative form (there is no relative pronoun in Cuna), or a verb noun (*soke-ti* = the *action of saying*).

The same suffix is frequently added to nouns and adjectives as well (cf. -ti, -tu in Arawak), originally perhaps as a distinctive noun element: *neu-ti good* (here perhaps added to a verb stem *nua-be good*), *sipukwa-t white* (cf. 5), *inatule-ti medicine man* (cf. *ina medicine*, *tule man*), etc.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes its use appears to be quite arbitrary.

**8.14.** Passive participle. The passive participle ends in -le, added to the verbal stem: *soka-le said*, *takka-le seen*, *ittoa-le heard*, *tippi-le roasted*. To it may be added (especially in attributive construction) the participial -ti, -t (see the preceding section). The element -le- itself is related to the nominal suffix -la (see 4.2) on one hand and to the passive formative -lea- (see 8.15) on the other.

**8.15.** The Cuna passive is rather an impersonal form. Its characteristic is the formative -lea-, which is evidently related to the similar element described in the preceding section. The passive formative is (unlike the participial -le) added to the syncopated verbal stem: *tai-lea- be seen, visible* (from

<sup>18</sup> It is doubtful whether -rl- is phonologically distinct from -r(r)-, which latter appears a more recent simplified form; cf. the popular personal name *Chiari Charlie*.

<sup>19</sup> Although the meaning and usage of this -ti is sometimes very different from that of the active participle, I have found it difficult to draw a sharp line of distinction between either.

*takka-*; cf. *takka-le seen*), *ittoa-lea- be heard, audible* (from *ittoa-*; cf. *ittoa-le heard*). The passive form can be made for practically all tenses and modes (the present and future being usually formed by -ka-; cf. 8.7): *tail-ke* (or *taile*) *is seen*, *tailekoe will be seen*, *tailesa appeared*, *taileali appearing* (gerund), *tailesat(ti) which appeared*. Some verbs, which were originally passive (*ko-la-call*, lit. *be heard*; cf. 8.7, 8.11), although otherwise construed as active, do not seem to form a passive in -lea-.

## 9. Auxiliary verbs.

**9.1.** The auxiliary verbs are usually added to the present form of the main verb, with or without syncopation of its last vowel. There are two classes of auxiliaries, which we may term respectively coordinative and subordinative, according to whether the verbal action of the main verb is coordinated (contemporary) with or subordinated to that of the auxiliary.

**9.2.** The coordinative auxiliaries are those expressing a particular position of the body while the action of the main verb is performed.

-mai originally expresses *lying* position: *kape-mai* (*kam-mai*) *lie asleep*, but it apparently also expresses continuation of a verbal action, as in *aparmai-mai run all the time*. As an independent verb, *mai* also means *live, dwell*.

-nai probably originally expresses performance of a verbal action while *walking* or *in motion* (cf. *naa-go*), but this concrete sense is seldom clearly visible.

-sii (also -si; cf. 8.1) expresses *sitting* position: *arpa-si sit working*, *kape-si sit sleeping*.

-kwichi is used to express the performance of a verbal action either *standing* or *walking*: *arpa-kwichi stand working*, *noe-kwichi go out, leave walking* (or *on foot*).

-yola or -yolaki (which appear to be related to the passive stem *yo-lea- be found*, from *yoa- put, place*) express situation in general (as Spanish *encontrarse*).

**9.3.** The use of the above auxiliaries in

Cuna is often important in order to make the meaning of a sentence clear. Thus, a man is often referred to by *-kwichi stand or walk*, a bird, by *-si(i) sit*, while most inanimate things, when subject of a verb, are expressed by *-yola* or *-yolaki (be found)*. Curiously, even personified dead objects seem to be referred to by the latter two auxiliaries.

**9.4.** In the subordinative group of auxiliaries we may mention *-nae*, *-pie*, *-pee*, *-tae*, *-take* and *-makka-*.

*-nae*, which is to be distinguished from *-nai* (see 9.2), means *go*, and subordinates the action of the main verb (as in English *go to see*). Thus while Cuna *an-takke-nai* means *I go about seeing* (or simply *I am seeing*), *an-takke-nae* closely corresponds to the Spanish *voy a ver*, or the English *I am going to see* (i.e., *I will see*).

*-kue* originally seems to express the idea of *coming*, but this sense is faded. It is often hard to distinguish between this auxiliary and the homophonous verbal suffix (see 8.2); cf. *an-top(e)-kue I begin to fear* (suffix) or *I come to fear* (Spanish *vengo a temer*; auxiliary). In its completive preterit form (*-kusa*), it merely expresses the completion of an action.<sup>20</sup>

*-pie* and *-pee* both express *will* or *desire*: *an-takke-pie I will see*. The latter is also used as an independent verb wish, *desire*, evidently related to the verb *apea- desire, love* (see 8.4).

*-tae* expresses habituality: *an-sappur-pa-na-tae I am in the habit of going to the woods (hunting, etc.)*; the auxiliary *-tae*, which is no doubt related to the resultative *-te* (see 8.11), probably expresses the idea of *being off on a certain course*.

*-take* (originally from *-ta- go, be off*, with presentic *-ka-*, see 8.7)<sup>21</sup> is the current auxiliary expressing *to come*: *soke-take come to say*; it is also used in the future, e.g., *soi-*

<sup>20</sup> It appears that in the forms *-ku-sa* and *-na-sa* (instead of the regular *-ku-te*, *-na-te*) the transitive preterit suffix *-sa* is used to comply with a preceding transitive main verb.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the same *-ta-* in *soi-ta-paloe will (go to) say again*.

*takoe will come to say* (Spanish *vendrá a decir, viene a decir*).

*-makka-* is inflected as the independent *i-makka- do, make something* (or with *something?*), with which it is related; it is always used in composition with a preceding noun or verb: *ko(o)r-makka- make a noise, shout* (from *ko-la, call*; see 8.7). In a similar way we also find the verb *saa- do, make* used.

**10.** The substantive verb is *nikka to be or to have* from which a future (*nikkuoe will be, have, get*), a narrative preterit (*nikkana there was, he had*) as well as an inchoative completive preterit (*nikkusa there came, he got*) are formed. The double use as a transitive as well as an intransitive verb is noteworthy: *an(i)-nikka* means both *I am* and *I have* (although the use of a personal subject naturally tends to eliminate the former meaning, so that the chances for ambiguity are practically none). The explanation of the double meaning is to be found in the possessive origin of the personal prefixes (cf. 8.5): *an(i)-nikka* properly meant *my being there*, in which *being there* could be construed so as to refer either to the owner or to the thing owned (in the same way we may explain the active construction of original passive verbs, see 8.15). The plural of *nikka* is sometimes expressed by a special verb, *pukkwa* (or *pui-mala*; cf. 1.3) *they are*, which in its origin is probably a noun (= *many*; cf. *pukki, pukkupa much, many*).

**11.** Adverbs. Any adjective may without change of form be used adverbially: *nue-takka- see well*, i.e., *care for, repair* (cf. *nue-ti good*).

Among the true adverbs we first of all have to mention the negations, of which there are three main types, represented by *suli* (*sul, sur*), *keke* (*kek*), and *melle* (*mel, mer*), respectively. Of these the first (*suli*), which follows the verb, is used to negate plain statements: *takke-suli not see*, *nikka-suli not be or have*. Of the others, which precede the verb, *keke* expresses impossi-

bility: kek-attakke *cannot see*, while melle expresses a negative wish or a prohibition: melle-nae *I do not wish that we go, let us not go, or simply, don't go.*<sup>22</sup>

There exists a great number of other adverbs, the most common being kepe *at first* (also *then*, Spanish *luego*), ye *already* (cf. the same form in Nahuatl), ampa *still, all the time*, pali *again*, moka *also* (cf. 8.2). A special class is formed by those derived from pronominal stems, such as itti-ki *here* (lit. *at this*), we-ki *so, thus* (cf. 7.2): also iki, inkua, pia (see 7.3). As we have already said (8.1), many of the verbal prefixes are originally adverbs.

12. Postpositions fall in three main categories: simple, compound, and verbal.

Among the former we notice especially ka *to* (mostly non-local); se *to* (mostly local); pa, pakka *with*; pali *by, through*; ki, kine *in, at, by*; seka *to, unto*; sikki *toward*. (Many of these forms occur in Nahuatl.) The postposition is placed after the noun, which often occurs in its syncopated form: neka se (nek se, nei se, cf. 1.3) *to the house*. With a preceding possessive prefix (see 4.8) we get, for instance, an-ka *to, for me* (chiefly dative sense), pe-se *to you* (chiefly local sense), e-ki *by means of it*, perfectly in analogy with the construction in Nahuatl. In the plural the construction is modified (cp. 4.8): annal pakka *with us*.

The compound postpositions are of the type pilli-ki(ne), pir-ki(ne) *on top of*, ulu-pali, ur-pali *below, under*, tale-pa, tar-pa *between*: they consist of a nominal part (pilli *superior*, ulu *inferior*, tale *space*) and a simple postposition. The syntactical construction is either with a noun (neka pilli-kine *above the house*) or with a possessive prefix (an-ur-pali *below me*).

Of the verbal postpositions we may especially mention -kua *in, at, to, like*: kas-kua *in the hammock* (kachi *hammock*). Origin-

<sup>22</sup> Notice that the form without any personal prefix is often used as an inclusive form, i.e., one expressing *you and I* or *we and you*.

ally a form of the verb kua- *come, be*, it evidently expresses the idea of *coming to* or *being at*.<sup>23</sup>

### 13. Conjunctions.

13.1. Apart from the adverbial teki, tekine *and* (lit. *at this*; cf. Nahuatl *i-huān with it*, i.e., *and*), patio, pat *but* (as adverb *already*), the Cuna conjunctions are typically of the subordinative kind. The oldest type of these conjunctions consists of certain enclitic particles, such as -le, -te, -na, -ti, -tina, which are affixed to verbal forms (often the present form) to express very different functions.

As most primitive we may perhaps accept the imperative-interrogative function, as in soke-le *say or shall we say?* (whether the request was originally a polite question or the question originally a request to tell, is impossible to decide). From this primitive meaning the conditional sense arose, as in soke-le *if we say* or simply *if* (cf. English *suppose = if we suppose*, i.e., *if*); further we may get a causal sense, a merely emphatic sense, etc. All meanings may not be found in every one of the mentioned particles, but it is usually difficult to fix any special sense as typical of or prevailing in any special particle.

In the emphatic sense some of these particles may be added to nouns and pronouns as well. This is especially true of -na, -ti and -tina, which are used to single out words as important in the sentence: anti-na *as for me* (lit. *if it is me*), emal-tine *as for the others*.

It is likely that these enclitics were originally introductory particles of the following main clause, as still appears in the use of the derived conjunctions ale (ar) and ate, which mean *therefore*: taisa-le an-wisi *because (I*

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps a form analogous to those in -e-le (see 13.1). Forms in -a and -e often interchange throughout the Cuna grammar, whether in the nouns or in the verbs. Although I have tried to give the normal forms in this grammatical sketch, it must be remembered that a great number of variants are possible and actually found.

saw, *I know* or an-taisa, ale (ar) an-wisi *I saw, therefore I know*.

Another type consists of postpositions added to verbal forms to express subordination: an-takke-kine *when I see or have seen*, literally, *at my seeing*; similarly takke-kuale *as if he saw*. This construction is conditioned by the nominal origin of every verbal form (cf. 1.9). In the same way postpositions may be added to participial and gerundial forms also: ainakkwe-ti-kine *where he (it) rises* (lit. *at his rising*).

13.2. A point of special interest is the existence of a conjunction ka in the sense of *and* or *then, when*, i.e., an original connective adverb with a tendency to become a subordinating conjunction in the enclitic construction (13.1). Such a form is found in the related Rama language (Costa Rica) and in some others, where it plays an important part. In Cuna the form ka often precedes forms of the verbs soka- *say* and ukka- *give*, and has therefore been considered as a dative mark (*say to, give to*; cf. 4.3). Should such

an expression as aparmaali neka seka . . . ka soisa be analyzed as *running home . . . , to (her) said* or as *running home . . . , then (he) said* (it may be remarked that *to her* normally corresponds to e-ka in Cuna)?<sup>24</sup>

1.4 Of the interjections we shall merely mention the articulate forms eye *yes* and etto *well*. The former doubtless contains the adverb ye *already* (see 11), and although de Puydt (cf. Prince's article in *Amer. Anthr.* vol. 15) gives a nasalized form ee, it is likely that Cuna eye has nothing to do with the widely distributed American Indian ãhã (which latter may occur as a variant even among Cuna speakers). The common words of salutation, naa *I have come* (cf. naa- go, 8.1) and tekimala *good-by* (perhaps = *so together*) may also be reckoned among the interjections.

<sup>24</sup> It might perhaps be worth while to point out that a similar conjunction (ka) is found in very similar constructions in the Polynesian languages, and even in Bantu.