6

PHRASE-LEVEL SYNTAX

This chapter focuses on syntax at the level of the phrase, a set of one or more words functioning together as a syntactic unit (a unit which is taken to be the constituent of a clause, Chapter 7). Although phrases often consist of just a single word, the following sections focus on multi-word phrases, explaining how multiple words interact with one another within a single phrase. I begin with a discussion of noun phrases (§6.1) and verb phrases (§6.2), and then briefly discuss adpositional phrases (§6.3).

6.1 Noun phrases

A noun phrase (NP) consists minimally of a noun (common or proper) or a pronoun (personal or demonstrative). A phrase that has a noun (as opposed to a pronoun) as its head may also contain a determiner (subject marker, object marker, or demonstrative determiner, §5.3), which always comes last in the NP. An NP headed by a pronoun does not permit subject markers or object markers. Adjectives, if present, follow the head and precede determiners. Numerals, like nominal modifiers, follow the head noun and precede determiners such as subject markers or object markers. The only element in an NP that precedes the noun is the possessive pronoun, which indicates the possessor of the referent of the head noun (although it may be preferable to analyse this possessor as a separate NP within which the following NP is embedded). Thus, the canonical order of elements in a Pondi NP is as presented in (6.01).

(6.01) The Pondi NP
[possessor][noun][adjective][numeral][determiner]

NPs may function as subjects (whether the sole argument of an intransitive clause or the more agentive argument of a transitive clause). They may also serve as direct objects of transitive clauses, and as the objects of postpositions. When serving functions other than subject, direct object, or object of a postposition, NPs may (depending on their structure) be marked with the oblique-marking enclitic *=n* (§7.3).

In the following sections I discuss nominal number (§6.1.1) and possession (§6.1.2).

6.1.1 Nominal number

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the number distinction found among Pondi nominals is two-way—between 'one or two' (or 'non-plural') and 'more than two' (or 'plural'). This distinction differs from number distinctions found elsewhere in the grammar, indeed elsewhere within NPs, as determiners exhibit a three-way number distinction—'one' (i.e. singular) vs 'two' (i.e. dual) vs 'more than two' (i.e. plural). When there is an overt indication of nominal number greater than two (i.e. the presence of the quantifier *andeyal* 'many' or a numeral such as *naniinge* 'four' following the noun), it is not necessary for the noun to be marked as 'plural' (§5.9). Thus, the contrast found among nouns may be considered one of 'unmarked with respect to number' vs 'marked as referring to more than two referents'.

The different number marking schemes for nouns and determiners can interact within a single NP. Basically, there need not be agreement between the two: the presence or absence of, say, a subject marker, has no effect on the marking of the head noun of the determiner's NP. Thus, the presence of, say, the 3SG.SUBJ marker *mï* indicates that a 'non-plural'-marked (or 'unmarked') noun refers to exactly one referent (6.02); the presence of the 3DU subject marker *min*, on the other hand, indicates that the 'non-plural'-marked noun refers to exactly two referents (6.03); when the 3PL.SUBJ marker *ndïn* is used, however, then there is 'agreement' within the NP, since the noun will also be marked as 'plural' (6.04).

(6.02) kulam mï
kulam mï
boy 3SG.SUBJ
'the boy'

(6.03) kulam min
kulam min
boy 3DU
'the (two) boys'

(6.04) kulawi ndïn
kulawi ndïn
boy.PL 3PL.SUBJ
'the (more than two) boys'

The 'unmarked' nature of the 'non-plural' noun form is illustrated by phrases such as the following (6.05), in which the presence of the numeral *yawle* 'three' obviates the need to mark the noun as plural.

(6.05) kulam yawle ndïn
kulam yawle ndïn
boy three 3PLSUBJ
'the three boys'

The same interaction of number categories can be seen in object NPs, even as the object-marker determiner cliticises to the verb. In (6.06), the object ('pig') is marked as non-plural (to refer to a dual referent), while the object marker is *min*= '3DU', referring to the same dual referent. Example (6.07) is ungrammatical, because the object ('pig') is marked as plural despite referring to a dual referent. In (6.08), the object ('pig') is marked as plural (to refer to a referent of three or more) and the object marker is *ndïn*= '3PL.SUBJ', referring to the same plural referent. Example (6.09), on the other hand, is ungrammatical, because the non-plural form *namal* 'pig' is used despite referring to a referent of three or more (as indicated by the 3PL.OBJ marker *ndi*).

(6.06) tatï alel **namal minasiyï**
tatï alel **namal** **min**=asi-ï
papa spear pig 3DU=hit-IPFV
'Papa killed two pigs with a spear.'

(6.07) *tatï alel **name minasiyï**
tatï alel ***name** **min**=asi-ï
papa spear *pig.PL 3DU=hit-IPFV
*'Papa killed two pigs with a spear.'

(6.08) tatï alel **name ndasiyï**

tatï	alel	**name**	**ndï**=asi-ï
papa	spear	pig.PL	3PL.OBJ=hit-IPFV

'Papa killed (more than two) pigs with a spear.'

(6.09) *tatï alel **namal ndasiyï**

tatï	alel	***namal**	**ndï**=asi-ï
papa	spear	pig	3PL.OBJ=hit-IPFV

*'Papa killed (more than two) pigs with a spear.'

6.1.2 Possession

To indicate possession, the possessor immediately precedes the possessum. When the possessor constitutes a single possessive pronoun (e.g. *ninjin* 'my' or *ndinjin* 'their'), we may wish, simply, to treat this element as a determiner (or 'possessive pronoun', §5.2.3). If it is indeed a determiner, then it is the only dependent element in an NP permitted to precede the head noun. When the possessor is expressed not by a pronoun, but rather by a full NP (whether a common noun or a proper noun), then the possessor NP is marked by the free element *njin* 'POSS.NPL' or *is* 'POSS.PL' (the number distinction reflects the number of referents encoded in the possessum NP, not in the possessor NP). The following examples illustrate the use of the free possessive marker *njin* 'POSS.NPL' with a common noun (6.10) and a proper noun (6.11).

(6.10) tatï **njin** kapï

tatï	**njin**	kapï
papa	POSS.NPL	house

'papa's house'

(6.11) David **njin** kapï

David	**njin**	kapï
[name]	POSS.NPL	house

'David's house'

There is no verb in Pondi like the English verb 'have' to indicate possession or ownership. Rather, to express that someone 'has' something, a possessive NP is used, as in the following examples (note that this predicative structure does not differ in any way from the one used for attributive possessive constructions, as in 6.10 and 6.11).

(6.12) tatï **is** kame

tatï	**is**	kame
papa	POSS.PL	betel.nut.PL

'Papa has betel nuts.' (literally 'papa's betel nuts')

(6.13) **mays** imunjï andeyal

ma-is	imunjï	andeyal
3SG-POSS.PL	betel.pepper	many

'It has many betel peppers.' (literally 'its many betel peppers'; 'it' refers here to a string bag)

6.2 Verb phrases

A verb phrase (VP) consists minimally of a verb (which itself contains a stem plus maximally one prefix and maximally one suffix). The verb is always the final element in the VP. If the verb is transitive (and contains an overt object), then the VP contains within it an NP (the direct object of the verb). This NP may be marked with (or indexed by) an object marker, which cliticises to the verb. I do not know whether it is better to analyse these object markers as argument-indexing prefixes (and thus belonging syntactically to the verb) or as belonging syntactically to the object NP—but in either case, they are constituents of VPs. Postpositional phrases (PPs) may also be considered constituents of VPs. When present, they always occur before the verb (and before the direct object, if the verb is transitive). If an auxiliary verb is present, it always immediately follows the main verb. Thus, the canonical order of elements in a Pondi VP is as presented in (6.14).

(6.14) The Pondi VP
[PP][NP][main verb][auxiliary verb]

In the following sections I discuss auxiliary verbs (§6.2.1), compound verbs (§6.2.2), and equational constructions (§6.2.3).

6.2.1 Auxiliary verbs

There is a small, closed set of auxiliary verbs in Pondi. These are the only words permitted to follow finite verb forms within a given clause. The immediately preceding main verb is always inflected for irrealis mood. The auxiliary verb is thus always the absolute last element in any clause

where it is found. At least one auxiliary verb (*w-* 'want, will') is capable of inflecting for (two) TAM distinctions. I have identified the following auxiliary verbs in Pondi (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. Auxiliary verbs.

Verb	Function	Gloss
w- (wapï, wï)	volitive/conative	'want, will, try' ('VOL')
te	immediate future	'be about to' ('FUT')
ola	prohibitive	'don't!' ('PROH')

Of these, only *w-* 'want, will, try' inflects for TAM—either perfective *wapï* or imperfective *wï* (the latter, due to rounding caused by the preceding labial-velar glide, may be rendered [wo]; I have no evidence of an irrealis form of this auxiliary verb). I take as the basic meaning of *w-* the expression of want, desire, or attempt. Although volition can be encoded by an irrealis verb alone, it can also be encoded by a combination of an irrealis verb with the auxiliary verb *w-*, as in the following examples.

(6.15) meyamba nyï kisïm mïla **wapï**

meyamba	nyï	kisïm	mal-la	**w-apï**
yesterday	1SG	jungle	go-IRR	want-PFV

'I wanted to go the jungle yesterday.'

(6.16) nyï meyamba kapï usïla **wapï** nyï ambo mosapï

nyï	meyamba	kapï	us-la	**w-apï**	nyï	ambo	ma=us-apï
1SG	yesterday	house	build-IRR	want-PFV	1SG	NEG	3SG.OBJ=build-IRR

'Yesterday I wanted to build the house, [but] I didn't build it.'

(6.17) Peter anto minjamo nda **wï**

Peter	an=to	minjamo	n-nda	**w-ï**
[name]	1PL=from	banana	take-IRR	want-IPFV

'Peter wants to take a banana from us.'

(6.18) John kapï usïla **wï**

John	kapï	us-la	**wï**
[name]	house	build-IRR	want-IPFV

'John wants to build a house.'

Although we could posit an irrealis form */wla/ ([wïla]), it seems that no such form is used; rather, simply an irrealis verb form (without any auxiliary verb) is used to express such notions as 'would want' or 'will desire'.

This same verb is used to encode conative modality—that is, attempts (usually failed)—and may, as such, be translated as 'try', as in the following examples.

(6.19) kanam an kapï usïla **wï**

kanam	an	kapï	us-la	**w-ï**
now	1PL	house	build-IRR	want-IPFV

'Now we are trying to build a house.'

(6.20) tatï alel ningasila **wapï**

tatï	alel	ningasi-la	**w-apï**
papa	spear	throw-IRR	want-PFV

'Papa tried to throw the spear.'

(6.21) meyamba nyï namal asinda **wapï** mwa

meyamba	nyï	namal	asi-nda	**w-apï**	mwa
yesterday	1SG	pig	hit-IRR	want-PFV	nothing

'Yesterday I tried to kill a pig, but I was unsuccessful.'

This final example (6.21) illustrates the frustrative use of *mwa* 'no, nothing', whereby the single word is used to encode the entire clausal meaning of 'but this was to no avail' or 'but this did not work'. (The Tok Pisin word *nogat* 'no' may be used in a similar way.)

The volitional notion of *w-* 'want' seems to have been extended to encode futurity (which, also, can be encoded simply with a single irrealis-marked verb). This may be the result of a well-attested grammaticalisation process (cf. English *will* 'want' > 'future marker'). Alternatively, it may be the result of calquing from Tok Pisin (which has experienced this very grammaticalisation process, such that the verb *laik* 'want' has come to be used also as a future marker). Examples of this immediate future usage of *w-* 'want' include the following.

(6.22) katïl mï kïlïya **wï**

katïl	mï	kïlï-ya	**w-ï**
old.man	3SG.SUBJ	die-IRR	want-IPFV

'The old man is about to die.'

(6.23) kinyï kït oliya **wï**

kinyï	kït	oli-ya	**w-ï**
coconut	bottom	cut-IRR	want-IPFV

'The coconut is about to fall down.' (literally 'cut bottom')

(6.24) popo nja mïnala **wï**

popo	nja	mïna-la	**w-ï**
papaya	this	rot-IRR	want-IPFV

'This papaya is about to rot.' (*popo* < Tok Pisin)

Another function of the auxiliary verb *w-* 'want' is to encode progressive (imperfective) aspect. Although there exists in Pondi an imperfective suffix *-ï* to achieve this same purpose, there are a number of verbs that do not make any morphological distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect. Thus, the addition of the verb *w-* 'want' may help clarify that a progressive or continuous event is being described, as in the following examples.

(6.25) mï sinangala **wï**

mï	sinanga-la	**w-ï**
3SG.SUBJ	stand-IRR	want-IPFV

'He is (in the process of) standing up.'

(6.26) ndïn nïm asïliya **wï**

ndïn	nïm	asïli-ya	**w-ï**
3PL.SUBJ	canoe	push-IRR	want-IPFV

'They are (in the process of) pushing the canoe.'

(6.27) kanam iye kinyï kulam anda **wï**

kanam	iye	kinyï	kulam	an-nda	**w-ï**
now	girl	coconut	boy	give-IRR	want-IPFV

'The girl is now (in the process of) giving the coconut to the boy.'

It may be pointed out here, that—as an alternative to using the auxiliary verb *w-* 'want'—wishes and desires can be expressed with an irrealis verb form alone (§4.4), as in the following examples.

(6.28) nyï ke **amnda**

nyï	ke	am-**nda**
1SG	sago	eat-IRR

'I want to eat.' (literally 'eat sago')

(6.29) kïman nyun **ila**

kïman	nyï=un	i-**la**
who	1SG=with	come-IRR

'Who wants to come with me?'

Unlike the auxiliary verb *w-*, the auxiliary verb *te* 'be about to' does not seem to inflect for any TAM distinctions. Although it is likely cognate with the Ulwa speculative suffix *-t* (which encodes epistemic possibility in that language), it seems rather in Pondi to encode immediate futurity, as in the following examples.

(6.30) ndindi nja wamnda **te**

ndindi	nja	u=am-nda	**te**
dog	this	2SG.OBJ=eat-IRR	be.about.to

'This dog is about to bite you!'

(6.31) nyï sila **te**

nyï	si-la	**te**
1SG	sit-IRR	be.about.to

'I'm about to sit down.'

(6.32) kapatupa ndïn alasïla **te**

kapatupa	ndïn	alas-la	**te**
hawk	3PL.SUBJ	fly-IRR	be.about.to

'The hawks are about to fly.'

Although this verb generally encodes 'immediate' future time, it may also be used to refer to future time more broadly—or, at least, it is capable of referring to events of the following day, as in example (6.33).

(6.33) tatï kïmbïlo kisïm mïla **te**

tatï	kïmbïlo	kisïm	mal-la	**te**
papa	tomorrow	jungle	go-IRR	be.about.to

'Papa will go to the jungle tomorrow.' (perhaps with the sense 'Papa is ready to go to the jungle tomorrow.')

Also, the immediate future auxiliary verb *te* 'be about to' can be used in exhortations (cf. §8.3), as in the following example.

(6.34) an mïla **te**

an	mal-la	**te**
1PL	go-IRR	be.about.to

'Let's go (now)!'

The last auxiliary verb to be considered, *ola* 'don't!', is used in negative commands (i.e. prohibitions). It, too, must follow irrealis-marked verbs, as seen in the following examples.

(6.35) o nyinjin minjamo amnda **ola**

o	nyi-njin	minjamo	am-nda	ola
2SG.SUBJ	1SG-POSS.NPL	banana	at-IRR	don't

'Don't eat my banana!'

(6.36) mïla **ola**

mal-la	**ola**
go-IRR	don't

'Don't go!'

The form *ola* 'don't!' is homophonous with the base form (and imperative) of the verb *ola-* 'perceive, hear'. Indeed, it is most likely a grammaticalisation of this verb. Several languages of the region seem to have derived prohibitive markers from verbs of perception or cognition, for example Ulwa *wana-* 'feel' and *wana* 'PROH', and Ambakich *kanak-* 'hear' and *anak* 'PROH'. We can imagine the grammaticalisation process underlying this: at some point there must have been a biclausal construction, the first clause containing an irrealis-marked verb indicating the (hoped) counterfactual event to be prohibited, and the second clause containing an imperative form of a verb of perception (and, by extension, reasoning). Thus, sentences like the one seen in example (6.35) could have originated from biclausal sentences of the form 'before you eat my banana, think!' or 'lest you eat my banana, hark!'. In Ulwa, the grammaticalisation process has gone one step further: the prohibitive marker *wana* has moved from the clause-final verbal position to the canonical negator position (following the subject and preceding the object). More examples of prohibitive constructions are provided in §8.3.

There is no evidence of multiple auxiliary verbs co-occurring in the same VP.

6.2.2 Compound verbs

Compared to some Papuan languages, Pondi does not make frequent use of serial verb constructions (SVCs)—especially not if we take a stricter definition of SVCs that demands that the multiple verbs in a given clause all match in terms of TAM marking. There are, however, a number of compound verb constructions, in which a nominal element is used idiomatically to give a particular meaning to the verb.

In such constructions, a non-referential nominal expression (sometimes referred to as an 'adjunct nominal', Foley 1986:117–128) combines with a verb of rather general meaning to make the meaning of the verb more specific. For example, the verb *ola-* 'perceive' can combine with a number of nouns to refer to different types of sensory perception, such as 'smell', 'taste', or 'feel' (unmodified, the verb *ola-* often has the basic meaning 'hear'). Thus, there are compounds like those in (6.37).

(6.37) nambisola- 'smell' (literally 'odour-perceive')
imbïnola- 'feel, taste' (literally 'feeling/flavour-perceive')

The following examples illustrate how these compound verbs function in sentences. If an object-marker proclitic is present, it immediately precedes the nominal element (6.40).

(6.38) meyanga nyï ke alwe **nambisole**

meyanga	nyï	ke	alwe	**nambis-ola**-ï
yesterday	1SG	sago	good.PL	odour-perceive-IPFV

'Yesterday I smelled some good food.'

(6.39) nyï ipï **imbïnole**

nyï	ipï	**imbïn-ola**-ï
1SG	arm	feeling-perceive-IPFV

'I'm feeling (my) arm.'

(6.40) meyanga nyï ke ateyamate **ndimbïnole**

meyanga	nyï	ke	ateyamate	ndï=**imbïn-ola**-ï
yesterday	1SG	sago	bad.PL	3PL.OBJ=feeling-perceive-IPFV

'Yesterday I tasted some bad food.'

Another verb commonly used in forming compounds is *numla-* 'throw'. In (6.41), this verb is functioning without any adjunct nominal.

(6.41) alkï alel **ndïnumle**

alkï	alel	ndï=**numla**-ï
person	spear	3PL.OBJ=throw-IPFV

'The person is throwing spears.'

It is possible, however, for this verb stem to combine with various nouns to create a variety of meanings, such as seen in the following compound constructions (6.42).

(6.42) suwate numla- 'spit' (literally 'saliva-throw')
walwal numla- 'breathe, blow' (literally 'lung-throw')
pis numla- 'dance' (literally 'leg-throw')

These forms can be seen in the following sentences.

(6.43) kulam **suwate numle**

kulam	**suwate**	**numla**-ï
boy	saliva	throw-IPFV

'The boy spits.'

(6.44) katïl **walwal numle**

katïl	**walwal**	**numla**-ï
old.man	lung	throw-IPFV

'The old man was breathing.'

(6.45) kïmbïlo angwalise **pis numlala**

kïmbïlo	angwalise	**pis**	**numla**-la
tomorrow	woman.PL	leg	throw-IRR

'The women will dance tomorrow.'

In fact, this putative verb stem, *numla-* 'throw', may itself contain an adjunct nominal, in this case *num* '(a) throw', combining with the generic verb *la-* 'put'. Examples of compound verbs formed with *la-* 'put', include the following.

(6.46) kulal la- 'vomit' (literally 'vomitus-put')
katal la- 'laugh' (literally 'laughter-put')
kis la- 'mash' (this one is uncertain, since the element *kis* is otherwise unknown)

One particularly interesting compound construction involves the (otherwise unknown) element *pu-* 'bathe'. Although glossed alone as 'bathe', it always occurs with *nambi* 'water'. Simply juxtaposed, the adjunct and verb stem have an intransitive (or reflexive) sense ('bathe [oneself]'), as in (6.47).

(6.47) meyamba kulam **nambi pwapï**

meyamba	kulam	**nambi**	**pu**-apï
yesterday	boy	water	bathe-PFV

'The boy bathed (himself) yesterday.'

When employed for encoding a transitive meaning, however, the verb behaves rather more like verbs of 'putting' in Pondi, which take a goal argument as (obligatory) direct object argument and a theme argument as (optional) oblique. The following sentence (6.48) illustrates this use for *pu-* 'bathe'.

(6.48) tatï komblam man **nambi mapwapï**

tatï	komblam	ma=n	**nambi**	ma=**pu**-apï
papa	child	3SG.OBJ=OBL	water	3SG.OBJ=bathe-PFV

'Papa bathed the child.' (perhaps literally 'Papa put the child in water.')

If in fact the verb *pu-* has the meaning 'put' (along with the typical Pondi argument structure associated with verbs of such meaning), then the intransitive sentence (6.48) would literally mean something like 'the boy put (himself) in water yesterday', with the (reflexive) theme argument being simply implied.

6.2.3 Equational constructions

Pondi has no discrete copular verb. Equative sentences (i.e. sentences containing a predicate complement) are formed without any overt verb. That is, the subject (always first in the clause) may be juxtaposed with whatever is predicated of it (always last in the clause). In each of the following equative sentences (6.49–50), the two NPs have the same referent. Two NPs are simply juxtaposed; there is no indication of tense, aspect, or mood (aside from any lexical clues provided in the form of, say, adverbs). The second NP is taken to be the complement.

(6.49) John mï **nïman**

John	mï	**nïman**
[name]	3SG.SUBJ	man

'John is a man.'

(6.50) mï **ambo angwaliyï**

mï	ambo	angwaliyï
3SG.SUBJ	NEG	woman

'He is not a woman.'

The predicates in such equational constructions can be adjectives, as in examples (6.51) and (6.52).

(6.51) njimoka nja **kataplam**

njimoka	nja	**kataplam**
tree	this	dry

'This tree is dry.'

(6.52) meyamba kusam **almwan**

meyamba	kusam	**almwan**
yesterday	yam	good

'The yam was tasty yesterday.'

6.3 Adpositional phrases

The only adpositional phrases in Pondi are postpositional phrases (PP)—that is, the adposition always immediately follows its object. A PP consists of an NP and a postposition. The NP may consist entirely of a pronoun, in which case the pronoun is of the non-subject variety (if, say, it is a personal pronoun, §5.2.1) and it cliticises to the postposition. When the object is a full NP, it may but need not end with an object marker; when it does, this object marker cliticises to the following postposition.

The following sentences provide examples of a postposition with just a pronoun (6.53), a postposition with a full NP and an object marker (6.54), and a postposition with a full NP but no object marker (6.55).

(6.53) nyï ambo **un** mïla

nyï	ambo	**u-un**	mal-la
1SG	NEG	2SG.OBJ=with	go-IRR

'I won't go with you.'

(6.54) John **alkï ndun** malï

John	**alkï**	**ndï=un**	mal-ï
[name]	person	3PL.OBJ=with	go-IPFV

'John is going with the people.'

(6.55) nyï ambinjin **tatï un** name lak sangoyï

nyï	ambi-njin	**tatï**	**un**	name	lak	sango-ï
1SG	NPL.REFL-POSS.NPL	papa	with	pig.PL	for	walk-IPFV

'I used to go hunting for pig with my papa.' (literally 'I used to walk with my papa for the sake of pigs.')

This last example (6.55) additionally illustrates how two PPs can function within the same clause: here, we see the comitative postposition *un* 'with', indicating the person with whom the subject acted, as well as the purpose postposition *lak* 'for the sake of', indicating the reason for the action.

It is also possible for two postpositions to combine within a single PP. In all instances, the second postposition is the rather generic word *kï* 'at, in, on', which can follow certain other postpositions, such as *imbam* 'under, below', *at* 'atop, above', or *un* 'in, within, inside' (§5.4). This may reflect the fact that these postpositions have derived from nouns (e.g. in forms such as *at-kï*, the initial *at*—originally 'top'—would have been the object of the postposition *kï* 'at, in, on' (i.e. 'at the top [of]'). Indeed, the form *imbam* 'under, below' seems to retain its nominal nature in exhibiting an alternation between non-plural and plural forms (§5.4). In the synchronic grammar, however, forms like *at* 'atop, above' and *un* 'in, within, inside' may be used as postpositions on their own. The following sentences illustrate how, for example, *at* 'atop, above' can function alone as the head of a PP (6.56); that it is not itself a noun is indicated by the fact that the object marker cliticises to it and not to the following verb (6.57) (i.e. it is not part of compound noun meaning 'the top of the house').

(6.56) kolwal **kapï at** pï

kolwal	**kapï**	**at**	p-ï
rat.sp	house	atop	be-IPFV

'The rat is on the house.'

(6.57) kolwal **kapï mat** pï

kolwal	**kapï**	**ma=at**	p-ï
rat.sp	house	3SG.OBJ=atop	be-IPFV

'The rat is on the house.'

Alternatively, a postposition like *at* 'atop, above' can be part of a larger PP headed by *kï* 'at, in, on', as in (6.58) and (6.59).

(6.58) nyï **mel atkï** sïsuki akalala

nyï	**mel**	**at-kï**	sïsuki	akala-la
1SG	palm.sp	atop-at	rubbish	wipe-IRR

'I will clean up the rubbish on the floor.'

(6.59) sewawi **njimoka matkï** alawe

sewawi	**njimoka**	**ma=at-kï**	alawa-ï
bird.PL	tree	3SG.OBJ=atop-at	flock-IPFV

'The birds are flying above the tree.'[1]

Finally, sentence (6.60) illustrates how *kï* 'at, in, on' can function alone—without a word like *at* 'atop, above'—as the head of a PP.

(6.60) kanam ndïn **kapï kï** ke amï

kanam	ndïn	**kapï**	**kï**	ke	am-ï
now	3PL.SUBJ	house	at	sago	eat-IPFV

'Now they are eating at home.' (literally 'eating sago')

1 The verb glossed here (and in the similar sentence in example 5.37) as 'flock' may actually be indicative of a very limited system of verbal number in Pondi. That is, Pondi distinguishes between *alas-* 'fly [NPL]' and *alawa-* 'fly [PL]'. The exact semantic distinction between the two is unclear—the difference could lie simply in the number of participants, but could, alternatively, depend on whether the event itself is plural, in other words, distributive or iterative (in which case 'flock' is not a great translation, although it still captures something of the plurality of the verb). Pondi's sister language Mwakai has the forms *wura-* 'fly [SG]' and *wurura-* 'fly [PL]'. Indeed, verbal number seems to be a common, though lexically very restricted, feature of Keram languages: Ambakich has *klip-* 'fall [SG]' vs *kanop-* 'fall [PL]'; and Ulwa has *ni-* 'die [SG]' vs *nipunpu-* 'die [PL]'. In all of these pairs, there is a distinct phonological similarity, but no clear derivational process (although some—and especially the Mwakai forms—seem to involve reduplication). With so few attested instances of verbal number in Keram languages, it is difficult to say whether verbal number involves derivation or is merely a lexical distinction (as in *fly* and *flock* in English).

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