A grammar of Komnzo

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For Nakre and Tayafe

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6.1 Introduction

Tense, aspect and mood is the most complex set of grammatical categories in the verb inflection, both in the way the categories are encoded and in the number of distinctions that can be expressed. Morphologically, there are 18 categories, which may be additionally supplemented by a set of TAM particles. There are four morphological tense values (non-past, immediate past, recent past and past), four aspect values (perfective, imperfective, durative and iterative) and three mood values (indicative, imperative and irrealis).

I will begin this section with an overview of the morphological material that is involved in TAM inflection. Most of these building blocks and the idiosyncrasies in their behaviour have been addressed in the preceding chapter and I will refer to these sections where appropriate. In the following, I will focus on the combinatorics of the morphemes and stems (§6.2), the impact of clitics and particles (§6.3) and the semantics of the resulting TAM categories (§6.4). Aspect in Komnzo can at best be somewhat misleadingly captured with the traditional definition of perfective versus imperfective which is often based on the completion of an event. Although I employ these labels, note that the perfective focusses more on the left edge of the event (inceptive) or expresses a momentaneous quality (punctual). With that in mind, I defer the discussion of the semantics of TAM to the end of this chapter (§6.4).

6.2 The combinatorics of TAM

The most basic element of TAM inflection is the distinction between an extended (EXT) and a restricted stem (RS). Both types are attested for almost every verb lexeme (§5.3). EXT and RS stems differ in their templates with respect to dual marking (§5.3.2) and in the possible combinations with the five prefix series α, β, β_1, β_2 and γ (§5.3.3). In addition to the five series, the irrealis prefix *ra-* and the immediate past proclitic *n=* are involved in TAM marking. The suffixal material includes a past suffix (*-a*) and a durative suffix (*-m*) and a special actor suffix series for the imperatives. Table 6.1 gives a full overview of the TAM categories and the way these are built up from the listed morphological material. An important distinction in the verb template, not expressed in Table 6.1, is the difference between post-stem dual marking with EXT stems and pre-stem dual marking with RS stems. This was described in detail in §5.5.3.

The combinations in Table 6.1 illustrate a feature of Komnzo morphology that reverberates throughout the verb inflection: the distribution of exponents. In other words,

a grammatical category is encoded and manipulated by morphemes that are scattered across the verb template. On the flip side of this phenomenon, most formatives lack a clear grammatical meaning or have multiple grammatical functions depending on their context. Thus, they have to be glossed in an abstract manner. However, there are degrees of morpheme underspecification. For example, two morphemes in Table 6.1 can be assigned an unambiguous grammatical meaning. These are the irrealis prefix *ra-* and the past suffix *-a*. The *-a* formative only occurs in past tense inflections. Hence, the label 'past' is a sufficient description of the *-a* suffix, but the suffix is insufficient for the grammatical category 'past tense' because other morphemes like the prefix series are required to form a past tense. A second group of morphemes is underspecified in the following way: they fulfill several functions, either simultaneously or in different morphological contexts. For example, the durative suffix *-m* encodes durative aspect, but it also 'pushes back' the tense value. Thus, when suffixed to a non-past (imperfective), it will produce a recent past (durative) and when it is suffixed to a recent past (imperfective), it will produce a past (durative). Thus, we could label it durative/backshifting suffix. However, the *-m* suffix also 'pushes forward' the tense value in the imperatives, where it produces a delayed imperative ('do X a little later') and duration is not part of its meaning. Furthermore, the *-m* suffix may occur with perfectives as a means of backgrounding an event, again without encoding duration. Thus, the choice of the glossing label 'durative' (DUR) for the *-m* suffix is somewhat arbitrary and we could equally label it 'tense shifting' or 'background' morpheme. For a third group of morphemes, especially the five prefix series, all attempts to assign them a grammatical meaning is rendered futile and we have to draw on abstract labels like α, β and γ.

Table 6.1: The combinatorics TAM marking

TAM value			clitic *n=*	prefix series *α*, *β*, *β*1, *β*2, *γ*	IRR prefix *ra-*	stem type EXT RS	TAM suffix PST (*-a*) DUR (*-m*)	IMPERATIVE suffix IMP/2SG(*-é*) 2NSG-*e*
non-past	imperfective	indicative		*α*		EXT		
immediate-past	imperfective	indicative	*n=*	*α*		EXT		
immediate-past	durative	indicative	*n=*	*α*		EXT	*-m*	
recent-past	imperfective	indicative		*β*1 or *β*2		EXT		
recent-past	durative	indicative		*α*		EXT	*-m*	
recent-past	perfective	indicative		*γ*		RS		
past	imperfective	indicative		*α*		EXT	*-a*	
past	durative	indicative		*β*1 or *β*2		EXT	*-m*	
past	perfective	indicative		*γ*		RS	*-a*	
past	iterative	indicative		*β*1 or *β*2		RS		
past	iterative/durative	indicative		*β*1 or *β*2		RS	*-m*	
n/a	imperfective	irrealis		*β*	*ra-*	EXT		
n/a	durative	irrealis		*β*	*ra-*	EXT	*-m*	
n/a	perfective	irrealis		*β*	*ra-*	RS		
n/a	imperfective	imperative		*β*		EXT		IMP
n/a	perfective	imperative		*β*		RS		IMP
n/a (delayed)	imperfective	imperative		*β*		EXT	*-m*	IMP
n/a (delayed)	perfective	imperative		*β*		RS	*-m*	IMP

Not all logically possible combinations of morphs are grammatically acceptable. For example, the *α* and *γ* prefix series only combine with EXT and RS stems respectively, but not vice versa. Likewise, the past suffix *-a* and the durative suffix *-m* are mutually exclusive and a verb form with both is rejected as ungrammatical. Third, the irrealis prefix *ra-* only combines with the *β* prefixes and not with the other prefix series. Lastly, the immediate past clitic *n=* can only attach to a verb form which employs the *α* prefix series, not to the other combinations. We can conclude from this observation that the combinatorial space is not fully exhausted, i.e. not all logically possible combinations of the morphological material are actually employed. Such a system is to not surprising because all natural languages evolve incrementally without an overall design. What is remarkable about Komnzo in specific and the Yam languages in general is the fact that so many combinations are employed. In other words, the genius of the verb morphology lies in its extensive exploitation of combinations.

In the following section, I will describe the functions and some of the distributional characteristics of the morphemes in Table 6.1.

6.2.1 The prefix series

The five prefix series *α*, *β*, *β*1, *β*2, *γ* were briefly addressed in §5.5.1.2. The table from page 223 is reproduced here as Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: TAM prefixes

gloss	*α*	*β*	*β*1	*β*2	*γ*
1SG	*wo-*	*kw-*	*ku-*	*kwof-*	*zu-*
1NSG	*n-*	*nz-* / *nzn-*	*nzu-*	*nzf-*	*nzn-*
2SG	*n-*	*nz-* / *gn-*	*gu-*	*gf-*	*nzn-*
3SG.F	*w-*	*z-*	*zu-*	*zf-*	*z-*
3SG.MASC	*y-*	*s-*	*su-*	*sf-*	*s-*
2|3NSG	*e-*	*th-*	*thu-*	*thf-*	*th-*
M	*ŋ-*	*k-*	*kw-*	*kf-*	*z-*

The *α* prefixes combine only with the extended stem. They are used to encode non-past (1), recent past durative (2) and past imperfective (3). Example (1) comes from a hunting story, where the narrator meets a spiritual being in the forest. In (2), the speaker reports an incident from a neighboring village involving a young boy who was attacked by a sorcerer in his yam garden. Example (3), is from an interview about the customs around the sister-exchange marriage system.

(1) *"nzä maf* ***wonrsoknwr****?"*
nzä maf wo-n-rsokn-wr-∅
1SG.ABS who.ERG 1SG.*α*-VENT-bother.EXT-ND-2|3SG
2|3SG:SBJ>1SG:OBJ:NPST:IPFV:VENT/bother

"'Who bothers me here?"' [tci20111119-03 ABB #165]

(2) *fthé zöfthamen zamatho frk komnzo zä* ***wtnägwrmo****.*
fthé zöftha=thamen z-a-math-o-∅ frk komnzo zä
when first=TEMP.LOC M.γ-ND-run.RS-AND-2|3SG blood only PROX
2|3SG:SBJ:RPST:PFV:AND/run
w-tnäg-wr-m-o-∅
3SG.F.α-lose.EXT-ND-DUR-AND
SG:SBJ>3SG.F:OBJ:RPST:DUR:AND/lose
'At first, when he started to run, he was just losing blood here.'
[tci20130901-04 YUK #40]

(3) *nzun etha nzüthamöwä* ***warnzürwrath*** *wath.*
nzun etha nzüthamöwä wo-a-rnzür-wr-a-th wath
1SG.DAT three times 1SG.α-VC-dance.EXT-ND-PST-2|3NSG dance
2|3PL:SBJ>1SG:IO:PST:IPFV/dance
'They danced three times for me.'
[tci20120805-01 ABB #769]

If the proclitic *n=* is attached to a verb employing the α prefixes, the resulting inflection is either immediate past imperfective (4) or immediate past durative (5) depending on suffixal material. In other words, the immediate past is built from verbs inflected for non-past. This is preserved in the integrated glossing style, because the *n=* is analyzed as a clitic. The *n=* is related to the imminent particle *n* (see §6.3.1). Example (4) sums up a story about the origin of the Morehead people. In (5), the speaker talks about competitive yam cultivation and how older people assess a young man's status by the number and size of his crop.

(4) *trikasi mane* ***nŋatrikwé*** *fof … ŋafynm … badafa ane fof ŋanritakwa fof.*
trik-si mane n=ŋ-a-trik-w-é fof (.) ŋafe=nm (.) bada=fa
tell-NMLZ which IPST=M.α-VC-tell.EXT-ND-1SG EMPH (.) father=DAT.NSG (.) ancestor=ABL
IPST=1SG:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/tell
ane fof ŋ-a-n-ritak-w-a-∅ fof
DEM EMPH M.α-VC-VENT-pass.EXT-ND-PST-SG EMPH
2|3SG:SBJ:PST:IPFV:VENT/pass
'The story which I have just told passed from the ancestors to (our) fathers.'
[tci20131013-01 ABB #403-405]

(5) *fthé bone kafarwä* ***nefathwrmth*** *"eh yabun zane!" wtrikaräsü we gnrärm.*
fthé bone kafar=wä n=e-fath-wr-m-th eh yabun zane
when 2SG.POSS big=EMPH IPST=2|3NSG.α-hold.EXT-ND-DUR-2|3NSG eh big DEM:PROX
IPST=2|3PL:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:NPST:DUR/hold
wtri=karä=sü we gn-rä-r-m
fear=PROP=ETC also 2SG.β-COP-ND-DUR
2SG:SBJ:FUTIMP:IPFV/be
'When they have just held your big (yam tubers) and say: "Hey, that (is) a big one!"

then you have to be afraid!' [tci20120805-01 ABB #378-380]

The β series is split into a basic series β and two related series β1 and β2. The basic β series is used for all the non-tensed categories like the irrealis (6) and the imperatives (7). Example (6) comes from a procedural text about fish baskets and the speaker explains how the fish gets trapped inside. In (7), the narrator took over the role of a character in a stimulus picture task.

(6) *watik, fthé **kranbrigwrth** keke kwa zba we **krämätroth**.*
watik fthé k-ra-n-brig-wr-th keke kwa zba we
then when M.β-IRR.VC-VENT-return.EXT-ND-2|3NSG NEG FUT PROX.ABL also
2|3PL:SBJ:IRR:IPFV:VENT/return
k-rä-mätr-o-th
M.β-IRR.VC.ND-exit.RS-AND-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ:IRR:PFV:AND/exit
'Well, when they turn around, they will not escape from here.'
[tci20120906 SKK #45]

(7) *"bné **käznobe**! nzä keke miyo worä."*
bné k-ä-znob-e nzä keke miyo wo-rä
2NSG.ERG M.β-ND.VC-drink.RS-2NSG.IMP 1SG.ABS NEG desire 1SG.α-COP.ND
2PL:SBJ:IMP:PFV/drink 1SG:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be
"'You drink! I don't want to."' [tci20111004 RMA #282]

Table 6.2 shows that there are two formatives for the first non-singular (*nz-* and *nzn-*) as well as the second singular (*nz-* and *gn-*) of the β series. For the first person non-singular, *nz-* is used for irrealis (8) and *nzn-* for the imperatives (9). In example (8), the speaker explains how a kundu drum is carved and prepared. Example (9), is taken from a conversation by the fire that involved a lot of hearsay. In conclusion, the speaker tells the two addressees to go to Morehead and clarify the rumours.

(8) *fiyafr **nzrayak** tauri woku thoraksir.*
fiyaf=r nz-ra-yak tauri woku thorak-si=r
hunting=PURP 1NSG.β-IRR-walk.EXT.ND wallaby skin search-NMLZ=PURP
1PL:SBJ:IRR:IPFV/walk
'We will go hunting and search for wallaby skin.' [tci20120824 KAA #64]

(9) *kanbrime! … aneme nzenm **nznatrife**!*
k-a-n-brim-e (.) ane=me nzenm
M.β-VC.DU-VENT-return.RS-2NSG.IMP (.) DEM=INS
2DU:SBJ:IMP:PFV:VENT/return
nzn-a-trif-e
1NSG.DAT 1NSG.β-VC.DU-tell.RS-2NSG.IMP
2DU:SBJ>1DU:OBJ:IMP:PFV/tell
'You come back and tell us about it!' [tci20130901-04 RNA #162]

For the second singular, the situation is more complicated. The *gn-* formative is used for the imperatives of prefixing verbs, where the prefix encodes imperative mood and the addressee simultanously (10). The second non-singular prefix is *th-* for all inflections that involve the *β* series. Note that, for ambifixing verbs in the imperative, there is no overt marking of second person in the prefix because it would be reflexive ('X yourself!') or auto-benefactive ('X for yourself!'). As pointed out in §5.4.5, reflexives and auto-benefactives are expressed in a middle template. Hence, the first verb in example (9) above, could be translated as a reflexive ('return yourselves!').

(10) *ezi **gnyako!***
ezi gn-yak-o
morning 2SG.*β*.IMP-walk.EXT.ND-AND
2SG:SBJ:IMP:IPFV:AND/walk
'You go there in the morning!' [tci20120906 MAB #31]

The second formative for the second singular in Table 6.2 (*nz-*) is used for irrealis inflection of prefixing and ambifixing verbs. Interestingly, only the second person singular of ambifixing verbs does not employ the irrealis prefix *ra-* in the irrealis inflection (11). If it is a prefixing verb, the irrealis prefix *ra-* is employed (12)[1] Example (11) is taken from a procedural text in which the speaker shows me how to manufacture two children's toys. In (12), the malignant protagonist invites a stranger to stay with her.

(11) *gräthé znsä rä … thrma **nzasämiré** bun.*
grä-thé znsä rä (.) thrma nz-a-sämir-é
slow-ADJZR work 3SG.F.COP.ND (.) later 2SG.*β*-VC.ND-whisper.RS-1SG
3SG.F:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be 1SG:SBJ>2SG:IO:IRR:PFV/whisper
bun
2SG.DAT
'It is easy work … I will teach you later.' [tci20120914 RNA #50-51]

(12) *nima zräzigrm "awe nzone moba **nzranyak**?"*
nima z-rä-zigr-m awe nzone moba
QUOT 3SG.F.*β*-IRR.VC.ND-look.around.RS-DUR come 1SG.POSS where.ABL
3SG.F:SBJ:IRR:PFV/look.around
nz-ra-n-yak
2SG.*β*-IRR.VC-VENT-walk.EXT.ND
2SG:SBJ:IRR:IPFV:VENT/walk
'She looks around and says "Come my friend! Where are you coming from?"' [tci20120901-01 MAK #74]

[1]Both verbs in this example are deponent employing the valency changing prefix *a-* without a change in the valency pattern. The second verb *yak* 'walk' is only deponent when it employs the ventive marker meaning 'come', not when it is neutral or andative 'walk', 'go away'

The β1 and β2 series are used for recent past imperfective (13), past durative (first verb in 14) and past iterative (second verb in 14). In example (14), the speaker talks about his experiences at the Rouku mission school in the 1960's.

(13) *kayé ama zuzir **zfyak**.*
kayé ama zuzi=r zf-yak
yesterday mother fishing=PURP 3SG.F.β2-walk.EXT.ND
3SG.F:SBJ:RPST:IPFV/walk
'Yesterday, mother went fishing.' [tci20111107-03 RNA #40]

(14) *teste **nzwasäminzrm** bobomr kwarikwari efoth … sokoro **kfäbth***
teste nzu-a-sämi-nzr-m-∅ bobomr kwarikwari efoth (.) sokoro
thursday 1NSG.β1-VC-whisper.EXT-ND-DUR-2|3SG until midday sun (.) school
2|3SG:SBJ>1PL:IO:PST:DUR/teach
kf-ä-bth-∅
M.β2-VC.ND-finish.RS-2|3SG
2|3SG:SBJ:PST:ITER/finish
'On Thursday, he was teaching us until midday and then school always ended (for the week).' [tci20120904-02 MAB #14]

These two prefix series are derived from the β series by adding an element to it. For β1, it is the vowel *u* and, for β2, this is the consonant *f*. The only exceptions are the first person and the second person singular formatives (see Table 6.2 above). In a different analysis, the *u* and *f* elements could be described as separate morphemes. Like the prefixes, these two morphemes would have to receive an abstract label. Such an analysis would reduce the number of prefix series to three. Under the current analysis, there are three main series and two subseries. I retain the current analysis, but I do not see either as being more elegant or more parsimonious. More important is the question regarding the difference between β1 and β2 which for the moment is unsettled. I will briefly discuss two possible explanations.

First, the difference might be understood in terms of sociolinguistic variation, i.e. the use of either variant is determined by an individual's linguistic biography. Although all Komnzo speakers are multilingual, the strongest influence comes from two close varieties, namely Wära and Anta. In my preliminary survey of the surrounding varieties, I found that β1 and β2 exist in Wära as well as Anta. My impressionistic view is that the β2 prefix series occurs much more frequently than β1. More comparative work and documentation on both varieties is needed.

A second explanation is a true difference in meaning. Although β1 and β2 are almost always interchangeable without a clear change in meaning, there are some hints. For example, the copula can only take β2 and not β1 and the same is true for the verb *yak* 'walk' (13). Only when the copula is used in an ambifixing template, are both β1 and β2 possible. However, in an ambifixing template the copula cannot be translated as 'be', but instead functions as a light verb with the meaning 'do'. For other verbs, β1 and β2 are interchangeable. This observation leads me to believe that the β2 prefixes encode either

a longer duration of the event or a greater degree of affectedness of the participants. However, targeted elicitation and close observation of natural texts did not lead to a clear pattern along these lines. Informants found it hard to give a characterisation or translation of the difference and they often contradicted each other or themselves. I will leave this question open for now for future research.

The *γ* prefixes are used for the perfectives: the recent past perfective (15) and the past perfective (16). Example (15) comes from a spontaneous conversation in the yam garden when a friend happened to pass by on his bicycle. Example (16) describes a dance that took place in the nearby settlement of Forzitho.

(15) *watik, zä zf* ***zamse*** *bä* ***nznäthor****.*
watik zä zf z-a-ms-e bä nzn-ä-thor
then PROX IMM M.*γ*-VC.DU-sit.RS-1NSG 2SG 2SG.*γ*-ND-arrive.RS
1DU:SBJ:RPST:PFV/sit 2SG:SBJ:RPST:PFV/arrive
'Then, we two sat down and you arrived.' [tci20130823-06 CAM #31]

(16) *wati, mane änyaka forzitho wath* ***sathaifath****.*
wati mane e-a-n-yak-a forzitho wath
then which 2|3NSG.*α*-VC-VENT-walk.EXT.ND-PST forzitho dance
2|3PL:SBJ:PST:IPFV:VENT/walk
s-a-thayf-a-th
3SG.MASC.*γ*-ND-bring.out.RS-PST-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:PST:PFV/bring.out
'Well, those who came to Forzitho brought the dance out (to the village square).'
[tci20120909-06 KAB #25]

6.2.2 The irrealis prefix *ra-*

The irrealis prefix *ra-* is used for the imperfective, perfective and durative irrealis inflections. We have seen examples of all three aspect values in (11) and (12). Example (11) showed that the only place in the paradigm where the irrealis prefix *ra-* is not used is the second person singular of an ambifixing verb.

The interaction of the irrealis prefix with the valency changing prefix *a-* and pre-stem dual marking is explained in §5.5.3.4. In that section, I pointed out that the irrealis prefix *ra-* overrides the valency changing prefix *a-* to the effect that the absence versus presence of the valency changing prefix is neutralised. For verb forms which employ the extended stem, this neutralisation is complete. For verb forms which employ the restricted stem, there are small changes in the pre-stem duality marking pattern (see §5.5.3.4). In these cases, only the case frame indicates whether the undergoer argument is a direct object, the ABS case on *szsi* 'calling' in (17), or an indirect object, the DAT case on *ŋatha* in (18). Both examples are taken from the same hunting story in which the narrator talks about his usual routines when going on a hunting expedition.

(17) *ŋathar foba* ***szsi threthkäfé***

ŋatha=r foba sz-si th-rä-thkäf-é
dog=PURP DIST.ABL call.out-NMLZ 2|3NSG.β-IRR.ND-start.RS-1SG
1SG:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:IRR:PFV/start
'From there, I started calling out for the dogs.' [tci20111119-03 ABB #63]

(18) *watik wamnza* ***ŋathanm*** *biskar mni* ***threthkäfé***
watik wo-a-m-nz-a ŋatha=nm biskar mni
then 1SG.α-VC-sit.EXT-ND-PST dog=DAT.NSG cassawa fire
1SG:SBJ:PST:IPFV/sit
th-rä-thkäf-é
2|3NSG.β-IRR.ND-start.RS-1SG
1SG:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:IRR:PFV/start
'Then I sat and started to cook the cassava for the dogs.' [tci20111119-03 ABB #73]

6.2.3 The past suffix *-a*

The position of the past suffix *-a* within the suffixing subsystem is described in §5.5.1.1. The past suffix *-a* is employed for two TAM categories: the past imperfective (19) and the past perfective (20). Example (19) is taken from a text on oral history of the Morehead district. The narrator talks about conficts caused by an alleged sorcerer in the 1940's. The second example (20) comes from much more recent event. A woman talks about camping at the Morehead river and going fishing only a week before the recording was made.

(19) *watik gathagatha zokwasi fä* ***ykonath****.*
watik gathagatha zokwasi fä y-ko-n-a-th
then bad words DIST 3SG.MASC.α-speak.EXT-DU-2|3NSG
2|3DU:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:PST:IPFV/speak
'Then, they cursed him there.' [tci20131013-02 ABB #102]

(20) ***zukorath*** *"mama, bä bana ketharuf! zuzi käzir!"*
zu-∅-kor-a-th mama bä bana k-ä-tharuf-∅ zuzi
1SG.γ-DU-speak.RS-PST-2|3NSG mother 2SG poor M.β-VC.ND-enter.RS-2SG.IMP fishing.line
2|3DU:SBJ>1SG:OBJ:PST:PFV/speak 2SG.SBJ:IMP:PFV/enter
k-ä-zir-∅
M.β-VC.ND-throw.RS-2SG.IMP
2SG.SBJ:IMP:PFV/throw
'They said to me: "Mama, get on (the canoe) and throw the fishing line!"'
[tci20120922-25 ALK #7-8]

6.2.4 The durative suffix *-m*

The durative suffix *-m* is described in §5.5.1.1 with regard to its position in the suffixing subsystem. It is employed for durative aspect which expresses an ongoing event in im-

mediate past[2], recent past (21), past (22) and irrealis (23). In example (21), the speaker reports on how he fought a bushfire in his garden the preceding day. Example (22) is taken from a story about rain-making magic which the narrator acquired and practiced in his youth. The irrealis example (23) is taken from a conversation about local customs surrounding the sister-exchange system.

(21) *wthzak zane* ***ŋanrsirwrmth***.
wthzak zane ŋ-a-n-rsir-wr-m-th
sole DEM:PROX M.α-VC-VENT-burn.EXT-ND-DUR-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ:RPST:DUR:VENT/burn
'These soles here of my feet were burning.' [tci20120922-24 MAA #63]

(22) *grigri zä* ***kwasogwrmth***.
grigri zä kw-a-sog-wr-m-th
maggot PROX M.β2-VC-ascend.EXT-ND-DUR-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ:PST:DUR/ascend
'The maggots were climbing up here.' [tci20110810-01 MAB #71]

(23) *fäms fthé* ***krakwinmth*** *... fäms fämsnzo ...*
fäms fthé k-ra-kwi-n-m-th (.)
exchange.man when M.β-IRR.VC-argue.EXT-DU-DUR-2|3NSG (.)
2|3DU:SBJ:IRR:IPFV/argue

fäms fäms=nzo (.)
exchange.man exchange.man=ONLY (.)
'When exchange men are fighting ... exchange man (against) exchange man ...'
[tci20120805-01 ABB #460]

Part of the function of the durative suffix is to backshift the tense. If we remove the *-m* suffix from a verb inflected for recent past durative (21) or past durative (22), the resulting form would be non-past imperfective and recent past imperfective respectively. Figure 6.1 shows this with the verb *songsi* from example (22).

NPST.IPFV *ŋasogwr* 'S/he climbs.'	→	NPST.IPFV-*m* = RPST.DUR *ŋasogwrm* 'S/he was climbing.'
RPST.IPFV *kwasogwr* 'S/he climbed.'	→	RPST.IPFV-*m* = PST.DUR *kwasogwrm* 'S/he had been climbing.'

Figure 6.1: The backshifting function of the durative suffix *-m*

The durative suffix can also attach to an iterative inflection, in which case the iteration of the event is streched over a longer duration as in (24) and (25). In (24), the speaker

[2]The immediate past occurs with a low frequency in the text corpus and consequently, there is only a handful of examples in immediate past durative. Example (5) on page 248 is one of these.

talks about the first fire which destroyed the world inhabited by humans. In (25), the speaker describes how the people used to avoid a particular place during the early and late hours of the day because it was inhabited by a story man.

(24) *zfth mni nä kayé* ***zwäsmth*** *kidn.*
zfth mni nä kayé zu-ä-s-m-th kidn
base fire some yesterday 3SG.F.β1-ND-call.RS-DUR-2|3NSG kidn
2|3PL:SBJ>3SG:OBJ:PST:ITER:DUR/call
'They always used to call the eternal fire Kidn.' [tci20120909-06 KAB #55]

(25) *kwamonegwrmth e efoth fthé zbo warfo* ***kwänkorm*** *fthé kwarafinzrmth zä zerä.*
kw-a-moneg-wr-m-th e efoth fthé zbo warfo
M.β1-VC-wait.EXT-ND-DUR-2|3NSG until sun when PROX.ALL above
2|3PL:SBJ:PST:DUR/wait

kw-ä-n-kor-m-∅ fthé
M.β1-VC.ND-VENT-become.RS-DUR-2|3SG when
2|3SG:SBJ:PST:ITER:DUR:VENT/become

kw-a-rafi-nzr-m-th zä z=e-rä
M.β1-VC-paddle.EXT-ND-DUR-2|3NSG PROX PROX=2|3NSG.α-COP.ND
2|3PL:SBJ:PST:DUR/paddle PROX=2|3PL:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be
'They were waiting until the sun always reached highest point and then they paddled here.' [tci20120922-19 DAK #13]

The durative suffix *-m* can be suffixed to perfective verbs in recent past, past and irrealis. In this case, the event is only backgrounded without encoding a longer duration. However, these inflections are so rare that, at least for recent past and past, they are not attested in the corpus. For the irrealis perfective with the durative suffix, there are a handful of examples. In (26)[3], the speaker talks about an old procedure for punishment which involved striking the culprit with a yam tuber over the head.

(26) *nasime* ***sräkwrmth*** *ebaren "ah, miyatha käkor bä monwä zbrigwé!"*
nasi=me s-rä-kwr-m-th ebar=en ah
long.yam=INS 3SG.MASC.β-IRR.ND-hit.RS-DUR-2|3NSG head=LOC ah
2|3PL:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:IRR:PFV:BG/hit

miyatha k-ä-kor-∅ bä mon-wä
knowledge M.β-ND-become.RS-2SG.IMP 2.ABS HOW-EMPH
2SG:SBJ:IMP:PFV/become

z-brig-w-é
3SG.F.β-return.EXT-ND-2SG.IMP
2SG:SBJ>3SG:F:OBJ:IMP:IPFV/return

[3] I will show the backgrounded status of the perfective verb in the unified gloss line with BG as in the examples below. In the maximally segmented gloss line, I will continue to use the durative label DUR.

'They would hit him on the head with the long yam (and say) "Now you come up with a plan to pay this back!"' [tci20120805-01 ABB #236-240]

Irrespective of perfectivity, the durative suffix on any irrealis inflection can have a far future interpretation. In examples (27) and (28), it is clear from the context that the event is set in the future and the *-m* on the verb indicates that the event is further in the future (as opposed to an irrealis without the *-m* suffix). In (27), the speaker showed me an old method of how to tie a bowstring. He then speculates as to if and when these old practices will vanish. Example (28) is taken from a conversation about yam cultivation during which the speaker complains about young people's lack of interest in gardening.

(27) *ni miyamr mä kwa kräbth mane … mrnen* ***kräbthmo*** *frthé*
ni miyamr mä kwa k-rä-bth-∅ mane (.) mrn-en
1NSG ignorance where FUT M.*β*-IRR.VC.ND-finish.RS-2|3SG which (.) clan-LOC
2|3SG:SBJ:IRR:PFV/finish
k-rä-bth-m-o-∅ frthé
M.*β*-IRR.VC.ND-finish.RS-DUR-AND-SG when
SG:SBJ:IRR:PFV:BG:AND/finish
'We do not know where it will finish … in which generation it will finish.'
[tci20130914-01 KAB #43-44]

(28) *nzä miyamr thrma ra* ***sranathrmth*** *… nagayé*
nzä miyamr thrma ra s-ra-na-thr-m-th
1SG.ABS ignorance later what 3SG.MASC.*β*-IRR-eat.EXT-ND-DUR-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:IRR:IPFV:BG/eat
(.) nagayé
(.) children
'I do not know what the children will eat later.' [tci20120805-01 ABB #577]

If the durative suffix is attached to a verb in imperative mood, it encodes a delayed or future imperative ('do X a little later!').[4] The future imperative is also a rare inflection and we have seen one text example in (5) on page 248. In example (29) below, the speaker describes how competitive yam harvesting took place in the old days. After harvesting and sorting, a piece of rattan was used to measure the size of the largest tubers. This measurement was then sent to the competitors as a sign of one's superior harvesting skills.

(29) *wati, ŋatr* ***thärifthm*** *nafanmedbo!*
wati ŋatr th-ä-rifth-m-∅ nafanme=dbo
then rattan 2|3NSG.*β*-ND-send.RS-DUR-2SG.IMP 3NSG=ALL.SG
2SG:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:FUTIMP:PFV/send
'Then, you send the measure string to them!' [tci20120805-01 ABB #402]

[4] I gloss the future imperative with FUTIMP in the unified gloss line.

6.2.5 The imperative suffixes

The formatives of the imperative actor suffix series were given in Table 5.8 on page 216, where I pointed out the syncretism with the first person indicative actor suffixes and the second person imperative suffixes as well as the fact that the second singular suffix differs between perfective and imperfective imperatives. I refer the reader to section §5.5.1.1 for further information.

Here I describe the morphology of imperatives for the prefixing template. Prefixing verbs as defined here encode their single participant in the prefix. We saw in Table 6.2 on page 246 that imperatives are formed with the *β* prefix series. For prefixing verbs, the formatives are *gn-* (2SG.IMP) and *th-* (2NSG.IMP). A further suffix is added to prefixing verbs only. Consider example (30)[5] in which the speaker quotes himself talking to his wife. The imperative inflected verb is marked with an *-é* suffix which resembles the actor suffix of an ambifixing imperfective imperative (2SG.IMP) or of an ambifixing indicative of any aspect class (1SG). In the morphological context of prefixing imperatives, this *-é* does not encode a person value as can be seen in example (31) when the number of the addressee argument is plural. In other words, the *-é* suffix looks like a person/number suffix, but with prefixing verbs it is inert to those categories and it only encodes imperative mood.

(30) *bä znrä. zä **gnamnzé** kwot e nzä kränbrimé!*

bä	z=n-rä	zä	gn-a-m-nz-é	kwot	e	nzä
2.ABS	PROX=2SG.*α*-COP.ND	PROX	2SG.*β*-VC-sit.EXT-ND-IMP	properly	until	1SG.ABS
	PROX=2SG:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be		2SG:SBJ:IMP:IPFV/sit			

k-rä-n-brim-é
M.*β*-IRR.VC.ND-VENT:return.RS-1SG
1SG:SBJ:IRR:PFV:VENT/return
'Now you are here. You stay here until I return.' [tci20130823-06 STK #221]

(31) *… zbär fiyafr mane eyak famäsü **thyaké!***

(.) zbär	fiyaf=r	mane	e-yak	fam=ä=sü
(.) night	hunting=PURP	who	2|3NSG.*α*-walk.EXT.ND	thought=ASSOC=ETC
			2|3PL:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/walk	

th-yak-é
2|3NSG.*β*-walk.EXT.ND-IMP
2|3PL:SBJ:IMP:IPFV/walk
'You (boys) who go hunting at night must be careful!' [tci20130901-04 RNA #27]

The *-é* formative for imperatives, regardless of whether it occurs on prefixing or ambifixing verbs, shows the same idiosyncrasies as the first person singular suffix *-é* that is described in §5.5.1.1. For example, it disappears when other suffixes are added as we saw in example (10) on page 249 where the *-é* suffix does not appear because of the andative suffix *-o*.

[5] The verb *msaksi* 'sit, dwell, stay' is deponent and employs the valency changing prefix *a-* without a change in the valency of the verb.

6.3 The TAM particles

The rich system of TAM categories in Komnzo can be further supplemented by a set of preverbal particles. These include the future *kwa*, the habitual *nomai*, the potential *kma*, the iamitive *z*[6], the apprehensive or prohibitive *m* and the imminent *n*. The latter two are related to the deictic proclitic *m=* and the immediate past *n=*. These particles integrate with the numerous TAM categories and there are only few limitations on the combinatorics.

6.3.1 The imminent particle *n*

The imminent particle *n* expresses the point in time just before the event takes place, usually without implying that it actually happened. This often gets translated by informants as 'try to do X' or 'be about to do X'. Both interpretations are possible, the intentional and the imminent reading, and they are difficult to separate. In example (32), the speaker showed me how to weave a fish basket. He says that he will 'try and fetch me when he is finished' because he does not know whether or not it will be successful.[7]

(32) ***n*** *thrma* ***nzänmesé*** *… fthé zräbthé zane kafar.*
n thrma nz-ä-n-mes-é (.) fthé
IMN later 2SG.β-ND-VENT-fetch.RS-1SG (.) when
1SG:SBJ>2SG:OBJ:IRR:PFV:VENT/fetch
z-rä-bth-é zane kafar
3SG.F.β-IRR.ND-finish.RS-1SG DEM:PROX big
1SG:SBJ>3SG.F:OBJ:IRR:PFV/finish
'Later I will try and fetch you, when I have finished that big (basket).'
[tci20120906 SKK #18]

The imminent particle can occur with inflections of different TAM categories. The important part of its semantic contribution is twofold: (i) the point in time before the event and (ii) the fact that the action has not yet been carried out or – in most cases – is not or was not carried out. Example (33) is taken from a headhunting story in which two men are about to kill a young woman when they realise that the rest of their headhunting party has left already.

(33) ***n zfrnmth*** *di kam garsir "awkwot! ngemäku, kabe matak erä!"*
n zf-r-n-m-th di kam gar-si=r awkwot
IMN 3SG.F.β2-do.EXT-DU-DUR-2|3NSG back.of.head bone break-NMLZ=PURP interjection
2|3DU:SBJ>3SG.F:OBJ:PST:DUR/do
ngemäku[8] kabe matak e-rä
foster.parent man nothing 2|3NSG.α-COP.ND
2|3PL:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be
'They were about to break her neck. (He said:) "Oh no, my friend, all the people

[6] I adopt the term *iamitive* from Olsson (2013), who has coined the term based on Latin *iam* 'already'.
[7] Indeed, he never came and showed me the finished fish basket because I left the village before.

have left!"' [tci20111119-01 ABB #151-152]

There is an overlap in the semantics of the proclitic *n=* which encodes immediate past and the imminent particle *n*. I pointed out earlier that the immediate past clitic attaches to a verb which is otherwise inflected for non-past. Thus, it marks a point in time immediately before the present. The particle *n* occurs in front of verb forms of different TAM categories, marking a point in time immediately before the event. The semantic difference is in the implication as to whether or not the event was actually carried. In the case of the immediate clitic, the event has happened, but with the particle *n* this is not the case. The difference between the two also lies in formal criteria. The particle *n* is syntactically independent in that it may be unbounded as in (32) or it may occur directly in front of the verb where it is hard to say whether it is a proclitic or an independent element (33). On the other hand, the immediate clitic *n=* is always bound to the verb.

Speakers of Komnzo who have been brought up in a Wära speaking family, and most young speakers of all backgrounds have replaced the immediate past proclitic *n=* with its Wära equivalent *nz=*. This change only affects the proclitic and not the imminent particle *n*.

6.3.2 The apprehensive particle *m*

I point out in §5.6.2 that among the deictic proclitics there is one with a limited distribution. The *m=* proclitic can only attach to the copula, in which case it turns the clause into a question ('where is X?').[9] See example (69) on page 242. The *m* particle shows more syntactic flexibility as it can procliticise to the verb as *m=*, encliticise to the potential particle in the combination *kma=m* or occur by itself. The latter is only attested through elicitation and there are no corpus examples of independent *m*. Nevertheless, it sits somewhere between a particle and a clitic.

The particle *m* functions as an apprehensive. It is attested in the corpus with irrealis, imperatives as well as perfectives. Example (34) is from a story about a man who mocked a crowd of dancers by threatening them with a matchbox. They were afraid as they did not know about matches and lighters.

(34) *krenafthth "sritüthe! sfafe! kidn mni* ***mzärfusir*** *… frthe bramöwä ŋarsirwre."*

k-rä-nafth-th		s-∅-ritüth-e
M.*β*-IRR.VC.ND-say.RS-2|3NSG		3SG.MASC.*β*-DU-grab.RS-2|3NSG.IMP
2|3PL:SBJ:IRR.PFV/say		2DU:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:IMP:PFV/grab
s-∅-faf-e		kidn mni
3SG.MASC.*β*-DU-hold.RS-2|3NSG.IMP		kidn fire
2DU:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:IMP:PFV/hold		

[8]The term *ngemäku* is a form of address between two people where one has adopted the child of the other.

[9]I will gloss *m* as interrogative (where=) when it attaches to the copula. I will gloss it as apprehensive (APPR) in all other cases including the cases where *m* and the potential particle *kma* express a prohibitive.

m=z-ä-rfusir-∅ (.) frthe bramöwä
APPR=M.γ-VC.ND-light.up.RS-2|3SG (.) when all
APPR=2|3SG:SBJ:RPST:PFV/light.up

ŋ-a-rsir-wr-e
M.α-VC-burn.EXT-ND-1NSG
1PL:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/burn
'They said: "Grab him! Hold him! He might ignite the Kidn fire. (That is) when we will all burn."' [tci20120909-06 KAB #82]

In these cases, the particle *m* seems to override the TAM value of the verb. In (34), the verb is in recent past but lacks a recent past reading. Likewise, I often heard the warning *mkätr*[10] '(watch out) you might fall!' where *m* is attached to an imperative inflection, but lacks an imperative reading. Naturally, if *m* occurs with an irrealis inflection, there is no such conflict. Example (35) below is taken from a story about a bushfire. The speaker explains how he set a small controlled fire in order to stop the wild bushfire from spreading.

(35) *we ane nzefé zaföfé … we* ***mkrärit*** *we fafä.*
we ane nzefé z-a-föf-é (.) we
also DEM 1SG.ERG.EMPH 3SG.F.γ-VC.ND-burn.down.RS-1SG (.) also
1SG:SBJ>3SG.F:OBJ:RPST:PFV/burn.down

m=k-rä-rit-∅ we fafä
APPR=M.β-IRR.VC.ND-pass.RS-2|3SG also after.that
APPR=2|3SG:SBJ:IRR:PFV/pass
'I also burned down this (grass) … (the fire) might cross over later.'
[tci20120922-24 MAA #30-31]

If *m* occurs with an imperative inflected verb and the potential *kma* it functions as a prohibitive. Example (36) is from the very beginning of a hunting story. The speaker tells his son to be quiet during the recording, while I am setting up the microphone.

(36) *zokwasi wzänzr … daddyf.* ***kmam kanafré!***
zokwasi w-zä-nzr-∅ (.) daddy=f kma=m
words 3SG.F.α-carry.EXT-ND-2|3SG (.) father=ERG.SG POT=APPR
2|3SG:SBJ>3SG.F:OBJ:NPST:IPFV/carry

k-a-naf-r-é
M.β-VC-speak.EXT-ND-2SG.IMP
2SG:SBJ:IMP:IPFV/speak
'Daddy is recording the words. You must not talk!' [tci20130903-03 MKW #3-4]

[10] *mkätr*
m=k-ä-tr-∅
APPR=M.β-VC.ND-fall.RS-2SG.IMP

In the prohibitive construction, the particle *m* is rather flexible. I can attach to the verb as a proclitic (37) or to the potential particle *kma* as an enclitic (36 and 38). What is important for the prohibitive reading is the co-occurence of *m* and *kma* in the clause, not the fact that they are conjoined. Example (37)[11] comes from a public speech at a dance in which the speaker tells the audience the rules for the night. Example (38) is taken from a text about food taboos.

(37) ***kma** wärir bä **mgnanyaké** zena zbär zbo!*
kma wäri=r bä m=gn-a-n-yak-é zena
POT sex=PURP 2.ABS APPR=2SG.β-VC-VENT-walk.EXT.ND-IMP today
APPR=2SG:SBJ:IMP:IPFV/come
zbär zbo
night PROX.ALL
'You must not come here for sex tonight!' [tci20121019-04 ABB #46]

(38) *be **kmam** ŋazikarä **kathafrakwé**!*
be kma=m ŋazi=karä k-a-thafrak-w-é 2SG:SBJ:IMP:EXT/mix
2SG.ERG POT=APPR coconut=PROP M.β-VC-mix.EXT-ND-2SG.IMP
'You must not mix it with coconut' [tci20120922-26 DAK #12]

6.3.3 The potential particle *kma*

The potential particle *kma* can be employed with almost all TAM categories. We saw above in §6.3.2 that it encodes a prohibitive when it occurs together with imperatives and the apprehensive particle *m*. This is the only construction in which *kma* and the imperative inflections occur together.

The potential particle *kma* is used to encode various types of speculation and counterfactuality with deontic or epistemic interpretation. Example (39) is taken from a public speech at a dance, where the guest side has brought too many people, and consequently the host side found it impossible to meet the needs of so many people. The speaker regrets that no proper arrangement has been made prior to the event. Thus, the clause 'it should look good' has a clear deontic reading.

(39) *namä **kma** nimame zrarenzrm fof … fthé namä yamme nüfifthakwrme.*
namä kma nima=me z-ra-re-nzr-m fof (.) fthé namä
good POT like.this=INS 3SG.F.β-IRR.VC-look.EXT-ND-DUR EMPH (.) when good
3SG.F:SBJ:IRR:IPFV/look
yam=me n=w-fifthak-wr-m-e
custom=INS IPST=3SG.F.α-put.down.straight.EXT-ND-DUR-1NSG
IPST=1PL:SBJ>3SG.F:OBJ:NPST:DUR/put.down.straight
'It would have looked good today, if we had straighten things out in a good way.'
[tci20121019-04 ABB #79]

[11] The verb *yak* 'walk' is deponent and employs the valency changing prefix a- without a change in the valency of the verb. It is only deponent when it employs the ventive marker meaning 'come', not when it is neutral or andative meaning 'walk', 'go away'.

Example (40) is taken from an origin myth in which the speaker speculates that one of the protagonists 'must have had' a shotgun, while his brother only had bow and arrow.[12] This is a clear epistemic use of *kma*.

(40) *nafangth **kma** markai nabikarä sfrärm.*
nafa-ngth kma markai nabi=karä sf-rär-m
3.POSS-ySib POT outsider bow=PROP 3SG.MASC.β2-COP.ND-DUR
3SG.MASC:SBJ:PST:DUR/be
'His younger brother must have had a shotgun.' [tci20131013-01 ABB #112]

6.3.4 The future particle *kwa*

Future is marked periphrastically in Komnzo with the particle *kwa*, which combines either with non-past (41) or irrealis inflections (42).

(41) *zena **kwa natrikwé** bun … no kzima.*
zena kwa n-a-trik-w-é bun (.) no kzi=ma
today FUT 2SG.α-VC-tell.EXT-ND-1SG 2SG.DAT (.) rain barktray=CHAR
1SG:SBJ>2SG:IO:NPST:IPFV/tell
'Today, I will tell you about the rain-making barktray.' [tci20110810-01 MAB #1]

(42) *gb **kwa thrarfikwr** zba.*
gb kwa th-ra-rfik-wr zba
sprout FUT 2|3NSG.β-IRR-GROW.EXT-ND PROX.ABL
2|3PL:SBJ:IRR:IPFV/grow
'The sprouts will grow from here.' [tci20120805-01 ABB #35]

The future particle can also be used by itself meaning 'wait' as in example (43) where the name of a particular plant has slipped from the speaker's mind.

(43) ***kwa**! yf kwot keke miyatha worä.*
kwa yf kwot keke miyatha wo-rä
FUT name properly NEG knowledge 1SG.α-COP.ND
1SG:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be
'Wait! I don't quite know that name.' [tci20130907-02 RNA #609]

When negated, the future particle *kwa* can express 'not yet' as in example (44) where speaker points out that he has not heard yet the name that will be given to a particular person at an upcoming namesake celebration.

[12] This is the *Kwafar* myth which is widespread in the Morehead area. It involves two brothers who - after fighting a malignent creature - are separated by a flood of water. The younger brother ran to the South towards Australia. In recent versions of the myth, the younger brother always holds a shotgun. This might be seen as an adaption of the story to the fact that during the colonial era Australians brought modern equipment like shotguns.

(44) *ni miyamr mane zrarä ane kar yf fof.* ***keke kwa*** *kar yf nä zamare fof.*
ni miyamr mane z-ra-rä ane kar yf fof keke kwa kar
1NSG ignorance which 3SG.F.β-IRR-COP.ND DEM village name EMPH NEG FUT village
3SG.F:SBJ:IRR:IPFV/be
yf nä z-a-mar-e fof
name some 3SG.F.γ-ND-see-1NSG EMPH
1PL:SBJ>3SG.F:OBJ:RPST:PFV/see
'We do not know which local name it will be. We have not heard the name yet.'
[tci20110817-02 ABB #58-60]

Younger speakers of Komnzo are beginning to use the Wära equivalent *ka*, which lacks the labial part of the labio-velar onset.

6.3.5 The iamitive particle *z*

I adopt the term iamitive from Olsson's (2013) comparative study of particles that express a perfect. Reesink (2009: 184) uses the term "perspectival aspect", which he adopts from (Dik 1997). Olsson's label is based on the Latin word *iam* 'already'. Komnzo speakers often translate the iamitive particle *z* as 'already', hence the gloss label ALR. An introductory example is given in (45). This is taken from a recording where two women took me on a plant walk. Example (45b) is the answer to the question in (45a).

(45) a. *zuyak z safäs?*
zuyak z s-a-fäs-∅
zuyak ALR 3SG.MASC.γ-ND-show.RS-2|3SG
2|3SG:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:NPST:PFV/show
'Have you shown him zuyak (Rhodania sp) already?'
[tci20130907-02 JAA #44]

b. *z fof!*
z fof
ALR EMPH
'Yes, (I have) already.' [tci20130907-02 RNA #121]

Example (45) shows that the function of the iamitive is to express "current relevance" of some past event. Consequently, the particle may combine with verbs inflected for different TAM categories. Example (45) shows a verb in recent past perfective. In (46), the iamitive particle is used with a past durative inflected verb. This combination is rarer, but well attested in the corpus. In the example, the speaker explains which clans settled at which locations. He points out that his clan had already been living in Masu for a while.

(46) *fi fobo thwamnzrm nima … ni masun z nzwamnzrm.*
fi fobo thu-a-m-nzr-m nima (.) ni masu=n z
3.ABS DIST.ALL 2|3NSG.β1-VC-sit.EXT-ND-DUR like.this (.) 1NSG masu=LOC ALR
2|3PL:SBJ:PST:DUR/sit

nzu-a-m-nzr-m
1NSG.β1-VC-sit.EXT-ND-DUR
1PL:SBJ:PST:DUR/sit
'They lived over there this way … and we had already been living in Masu.'
[tci20120922-08 DAK #97-98]

The iamitive particle can also be used with a non-past. This is often restricted to interrogatives as in (47) where the speaker asks a crowd of people whether they can hear him speaking.

(47) *zbär bä zagrwä ämnzro. z wanrizrth?*
zbär bä zagr=wä e-a-m-nzr-o z
night MED far=EMPH 2|3NSG.α-VC-sit.EXT-ND-AND ALR
2|3PL:SBJ:NPST:IPFV:AND/sit

w-a-n-riz-r-th
1SG.α-VC-VENT-hear.EXT-ND-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ>1SG:IO:NPST:IPFV:VENT/hear
'Tonight you are sitting too far away. Can you hear me?' [tci20121019-04 SKK #9]

The iamitive particle additionally expresses the completion of an event. Evidence for this come from different observations. First, it can express a the current relevance meaning. Secondly, the iamitive particle never combines with verbs in iterative aspect, which express an ongoing repetition of some event in the past. Thirdly, the iamitive particle marks sequentiality of events in some narratives where the verb form which combines with it seems to be almost a prerequisite to the following verb. Example (48)[13] is a description of a path. The speaker had taken the previous day. He describes the sequenced stages of his path to the location called *Tümgo*.

(48) *bä komnzo zwäzik … ksi karen z kwanyak e zbo zwänthor tümgon.*
bä komnzo zu-ä-zik (.) ksi kar=en z
MED only 1SG.γ-ND-turn.off.RS (.) bush place=LOC ALR
1SG:SBJ:RPST:PFV/turn.off

ku-a-n-yak e zbo zu-ä-n-thor tümgo=n
1SG.β1-VC-walk.EXT.ND until PROX.ALL 1SG.γ-ND-VENT-arrive.RS tümgo=LOC
1SG:SBJ:RPST:IPFV:VENT/walk 1SG:SBJ:RPST:PFV:VENT/arrive
'It turned off (the path) there … I walked in the bushy place until I arrived here in *Tümgo*.' [tci20120922-24 MAA #8-10]

The iamitive particle *z* in Komnzo shares a number of semantic characteristics set out by Olsson (2013) in his comparative study. The main two characteristics are "the notion of a "new situation" that holds afer a transition" and "the consequences that this

[13] The verb *yak* 'walk' is deponent and employs the valency changing prefix *a-* without a change in the valency of the verb. Note that this occurs only with the ventive marker, in which case the verb means 'come', not when it is neutral ('walk') or marked with the andative ('go away').

situation has at reference time for the participants in the speech event" (Olsson 2013: 43). The former was described above as event completion, and the latter as current relevance. In fact, the iamitive particle is the main way to express event completion in Komnzo, because the perfective aspect does not explicitly set this boundary on an event.

There has been much discussion in the literature about paths of grammaticalisation of perfects, for example in Bybee & Dahl (1989). In Komnzo, the iamitive particle *z* is formally closest to the proximal series of the deictic markers and one might speculate about these as a source of grammaticalisation (see §3.1.12).

6.3.6 The habitual particle *nomai*

The habitual particle *nomai* typically combines with durative inflections. In example (49), the cockatoo always warns the protagonist of another man who comes and visits him.

(49) *krara ymd suwägrm maf swatrikwrm* ***nomai*** *nima "oh, kabe yanyak."*
krara ymd su-wägr-m maf
coockatoo bird 3SG.MASC.β1-be.on.top.ND-DUR who.ERG
3SG.MASC:SBJ:PST:DUR/be.on.top
su-a-trik-wr-m-∅ nomai nima oh kabe
3SG.MASC.β1-VC-tell.EXT-ND-DUR-2|3SG HAB QUOT oh man
2|3SG:SBJ>3SG.MASC:IO:PST:DUR/tell
y-a-n-yak
3SG.MASC.α-VENT-walk.EXT.ND
3SG.MASC:SBJ:NPST:IPFV:VENT/walk
'The cockatoo bird used to sit on top (of the tree), and told him always: "Oh, a man is coming."' [tci20100802 ABB #80-82]

The habitual can also combine with verb forms inflected for other TAM categories, such as imperfectives (50). It only occasionally occurs with perfectives as in (51) where the event is negated. In both examples, *nomai* expresses an extended amount of time, instead of a repeated habit.

(50) *yamnza yamnza … ***nomai*** … ysokwr tüfr.*
2x[y-a-m-nz-a] (.) nomai (.) ysokwr tüfr
2x[3SG.α-VC-sit.EXT-ND-PST] (.) HAB (.) year plenty
2x[3SG.MASC:SBJ:PST:IPFV/sit]
'He stayed and stayed there for many years.' [tci20120904-01 MAB #13]

(51) *keke* ***nomai*** *zämsath.*
keke nomai z-ä-ms-a-th
NEG HAB M.γ-VC.ND-sit.EXT-PST-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ:PST:PFV/sit
'They did not stay (there) for long.' [tci20131013-02 ABB #87]

6.4 Some remarks on the semantics of TAM

Following from our description of the morphology and combinatorics of TAM in Komnzo, I want to sketch out a coherent picture of the semantics of these categories and their extended uses. Although tense, aspect and mood are intertwined, I will discuss them separately in the following sections.

6.4.1 Tense

We saw that Komnzo has 3-4 morphological tenses depending on the analysis: the non-past, the recent past and the past. The immediate past is expressed by a clitic and builds on a verb form inflected for non-past. Future reference is expressed periphrastically with the particle *kwa*.

The temporal reference of the immediate past and the recent past overlaps. The immediate past is used for events that took place a short while prior to speaking and it may be used to put extra emphasis on that fact. The recent past covers the same period of time, but it reaches further back, usually to the preceding day. Example (52) is taken from a hunting story, at the end of which the speaker returns home to find one of his dogs. He tells his wife that this is the dog, which had disturbed him at the outset of the trip when he was about to cross the Morehead river. He had pushed the dog into the water, whereupon the poor dog ran back to the house. The whole episode in (52) is set in the same time frame with respect to the moment of speech. Only the 'pushing in the water' is expressed in immediate past, while the other two verb forms are in recent past.[14]

(52) *nzefe nima "ane ŋatha bä **nzwathofikwr** … watik anema **nzibrüzé** bobo … watik ane wtrime fi ŋatha **zanmath**."*
nzefe nima ane ŋatha bä nzu-a-thofik-wr-∅ (.) watik ane=ma
1SG.ERG.EMPH QUOT DEM dog MED 1SG.β1-VC-disturb.EXT-ND-2|3SG (.) then DEM=CHAR
2|3SG:SBJ>1SG:OBJ:RPST:IPFV/disturb
nz=y-brüz-∅-é bobo (.) watik ane wtri=me fi ŋatha
IPST=3SG.MASC.α-submerge.EXT-ND-1SG MED.ALL (.) then DEM fear=INS 3.ABS dog
IPST=1SG:SBJ>2|3SG.MASC:OBJ:NPST:IPFV/submerge
z-a-n-math-∅
M.γ-VENT-run.RS-2|3SG
2|3SG:SBJ:RPST:PFV:VENT/run
'I said: "That dog disturbed me there and therefore I pushed him into the water. Well, full of fear he ran back here."' [tci20130903-03 MKW #188]

The bidirectional time adverbials discussed in §3.1.8 help to identify the appropriate time frames for each tense value. The term *kayé* expresses a moment in time, which is removed by one day from the present time. Thus, *kayé* can mean 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow' and it is appropriate to use the recent past for that part of the timespan that is in

[14] The speaker uses the *nz=* formative of the immediate past clitic. As pointed out in §6.3.1, this formative is a borrowing from Wära. The Komnzo formative is *n=*.

the past. Events further back in time have to be expressed by the past tense. Likewise, one cannot use a recent past with the time adverbial *nama* which indicates a point in time that is removed two days from the present time ('day before yesterday' or 'day after tomorrow'). In short, the recent past reaches back one day, whereas the past tense covers everything before yesterday irrespective whether it happened a week ago or in ancestral time. Example (53) shows the use of *kayé* and the recent past. Example (54) shows the use of *nama* and the past tense.[15]

(53) ***kayé*** *nzä boba* ***zenfaré*** *… kanathr.*
kayé nzä boba z-ä-n-far-é (.) kanathr
yesterday 1SG.ABS MED.ABL M.γ-VC.ND-VENT-set.off.EXT-1SG (.) kanathr
1SG:SBJ:RPST:PFV:VENT/set.off
'Yesterday, I set off from there towards here … to Kanathr.'
[tci20120922-24 MAA #1]

(54) *zane nane dayr zbo* ***nama*** *mane* ***wänyaka*** *…*
zane nane dayr zbo nama mane
DEM:PROX elder.sibling dayr PROX.ALL two.days.ago which
w-a-n-yak-a (.)
3SG.F.α-VC-VENT-go.EXT.ND-PST (.)
3SG.F:SBJ:PST:IPFV:VENT/go
'The older sister Dayr who came here two days ago …'
[tci20130901-04 RNA #87]

Tense values can be used with a pragmatic motivation. It is quite common to foreground events in a narrative by putting them into non-past, even though the story is set in the recent past or the past. Example (55) comes from a story that took place in the speaker's youth. In the example clauses, he decribes walking with a friend during night time. The two boys rested along the way and smoked tobacco. Although the story is set in the past, only the first and the last verbs in (55) are inflected in the past tense ('walk' in both cases). The 'sitting down' and the 'setting off' are inflected in irrealis, thus tenseless. The rolling of the cigarettes and their smoking is told in the non-past, which moves this part in the foreground.

(55) *nyana ttfö bä rä … bäne … sazäthi fä kramse sukufa* ***eknne änane*** *boba krafare … zbär nzfyanm.*
n-yan-a ttfö bä rä (.) bäne (.) sazäthi fä
1NSG.α-walk.EXT.DU-PST creek MED 3SG.F.COP.ND (.) RECOG (.) sazäthi DIST
1DU:SBJ:PST:IPFV/walk 3SG.F:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be
k-ra-ms-e sukufa e-kn-n-e
MED.β-IRR.VC.DU-sit.RS-1NSG tobacco 2|3NSG.α-roll.EXT-DU-1NSG
1DU:SBJ:IRR:PFV/sit 1DU:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:NPST:IPFV/roll

[15] *Nama* can also be used metaphorically to mean 'recently'.

e-a-na-n-e boba k-ra-far-e (.) zbär
2|3NSG.α-VC-eat.EXT-DU-1NSG MED.ABL MED.α-IRR.VC.DU-set.off.RS-1NSG (.) night
1DU:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:NPST:IPFV/eat 1DU:SBJ:IRR:PFV/set.off
nzf-yan-m
1NSG.β2-walk.EXT.DU-DUR
1DU:SBJ:PST:DUR/walk
'We walked. There is a creek there (called) Sazäthi. We sat down there, rolled the cigarettes and smoked. We set off from there. We were walking in the night.'
[tci20210904-01 MAB #140-143]

Future reference can be expressed by irrealis or non-past inflections combined with the future particle *kwa*. The main difference between the two strategies seems to lie in the anticipated degree of certainty: the non-past inflection is usually used when the speaker is more certain that the event is going to take place.

6.4.2 Aspect

I have labelled the principal aspectual distinction in Komnzo imperfective versus perfective. Durative aspect is understood as a subtype of the imperfective and we could label these two as 'basic imperfective' and 'durative imperfective'. I use the traditional labels imperfective and perfective, but I want to spell out the particular flavour that Komnzo gives to them.

The traditional definition of perfectivity often takes the completion of an event as a starting point (Frawley 1992: 296) or suggests that "perfectivity indicates the view of a situation as a single whole" (Comrie 1976: 16). In Komnzo, completion does not really play a role in the semantics of the perfective-imperfective distinction. The boundary set up by the perfective seems to concentrate more on the left edge – on the beginning of the event. Similar systems are found elsewhere in the Southern New Guinea region, for example in Marind (Drabbe 1955: 41), Nama (Siegel 2014) and Nen (Evans 2015b). In Komnzo, the main mechanism for expressing event completion – to set up a right edge event boundary – is the iamitive particle, which can occur with verb forms in perfective, imperfective and durative aspect (see §6.3.5). It follows that imperfectivity does not entail that the event is open-ended. Example (56) is taken from a head hunting story. The quantifier *bramöwä* 'all' signals that the attack was full-scale and all inhabitants were killed, but the verb form in (56) is in the imperfective.

(56) *watik ebar kabe ane fof thäthora fof … bramöwä ane fof* ***efnzath***
watik ebar kabe ane fof th-ä-thor-a fof (.) bramöwä ane
then head man DEM EMPH 2|3NSG.γ-ND-arrive.RS-PST EMPH (.) all DEM
2|3PL:SBJ:PST:PFV/arrive
fof e-fn-nz-a-th
EMPH 2|3NSG.α-hit.EXT-ND-PST-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:PST:IPFV/hit
'Then, the head hunter arrived. They killed all of them.'

[tci20131013-02 ABB #143-145]

Likewise, perfectives do not entail that an event is finished, but rather that it has started or that its duration was of a punctual quality. The latter is shown in the first verb 'arrive' of the above example (56). The former is shown in example (57) below, which is taken from a story about a malignant being. At the end of the story that being tries to escape by entering a bird, but the villagers are quick to shoot down the bird. The entering event in (57) is expressed in the perfective, but the imminent particle *n* shows that the event has not started yet. Hence, completion of the entering event is not entailed, but excluded. Thus, a literal translation of *n zäthba* would be: 's/he was about to start to enter'.

(57) *brbrnzo fof* ***n zäthba*** *bafen … ymden fof.*
brbr=nzo fof n z-ä-thb-a-∅ baf=en
spirit=ONLY EMPH IMN MED.*γ*-ND-enter.RS-PST-2|3SG RECOG=LOC
2|3SG:SBJ:PST:PFV/enter
(.) ymd=en fof
(.) bird=LOC EMPH
'Only the spirit was about to go inside that one … inside the bird.'

[tci20120901-01 MAK #193-194]

Aspect in Komnzo seems to concentrate more on a punctual/inceptive versus ongoing/stretched-out distinction. I adopt the traditional labels perfective for the former and imperfective for the latter. The degree to which an event is 'stretched-out' would then decide whether the speaker chooses the imperfective or durative aspect. The basic binary distinction is clearest in the imperative forms. The imperfective imperatives often encode an ongoing action and, depending on context, they can be translated as 'keep on X-ing' or 'do X for some time'. Perfective imperatives, on the other hand, express inception 'start X-ing' or punctuality 'do X once/quickly'. In example (58), the speaker has just produced a toy bullroarer from a coconut leaf and shows me how to hold it properly. In (58a), she tells me not to hit something while swinging, and the imperative of 'hit' is in the perfective.[16] In (58b), she is already swinging the bullroarer telling me to hold it away from the body. Consequently, all the imperative verb forms ('hold', 'blow', and 'swing') are in the imperfective.

(58) a. *fthé* ***sakwr*** *gwonyamen o festhen o wämnen … keke kwa sranor.*
fthé s-a-kwr-∅ gwonyame=n o festh=en o wämne=n
when 3SG.MASC.*α*-ND-hit.RS-2SG.IMP clothes=LOC or body=LOC or tree=LOC
1SG:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:IMP:PFV/hit
keke kwa s-ra-nor
(.) NEG FUT 3SG.MASC.*β*-IRR.VC-shout.EXT
3SG.MASC:SBJ:IRR:IPFV/shout
'If you hit it on clothes, body or a tree, it will not make a sound.'

[16] This is a conditional construction which frequently employs imperative inflections together with *fthé* 'when/if' (see §6.4.3 and §9.6).

b. *zagrwä nima **sfathwé** byé nima **sfsgwé** … **smitwanzé** … fi kwa yanor.*
zagr=wä nima s-fath-w-é
far=EMPH like.this 3SG.MASC.β-hold.EXT-ND-2SG.IMP
2SG:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:IMP:IPFV/hold
b=\yé/ nima s-fsg-w-é (.)
MED=3SG.MASC.COP.ND like.this 3SG.MASC.β-blow.EXT-ND-2SG.IMP (.)
MED=3SG.MASC:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be 2SG:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:IMP:IPFV/blow
s-mitwa-nz-é (.) fi kwa
3SG.MASC.β-swing.EXT-ND-2SG.IMP (.) 3.ABS FUT
2SG:SBJ>3SG.MASC:OBJ:IMP:IPFV/swing
y-a-nor
3SG.MASC.α-VC-shout.EXT.ND
3SG.MASC:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/shout
'You have to hold it away like this and blow and swing it like this … (then) it will make a sound.' [tci20120914 RNA #25-28]

A number of authors have used a scale-based approach to model certain operators which change the structure of predicates (Kennedy & McNally 2005 and Kubota 2010). Such an approach is compatible with the TAM system of Komnzo, once we accept that the imperfective versus perfective distinction highlights different parts of event by manipulating the temporal scale. Applied to the Komnzo TAM system, such a model portrays perfectives as a means to (i) set an explicit initial boundary and to (ii) limit the temporal scale of the event. (Basic) imperfectives leave this initial boundary implicit, but highlight that the event was carried out for some time – a little further along the scale. The durative (imperfective) increases the temporal scale of the event. As shown above, none of these (morphological) aspectual categories sets an explicit boundary at the right edge of the event. The function of event completion is reserved for the iamitive particle. I will leave the theoretical modelling of the semantics of the Komnzo TAM system for future research.

The theoretical discussion of aspect has often focussed on the distinction between viewpoint aspect and situation aspect.[17] Despite all terminological confusion, the former is often called ASPECT, and it is employed for "different ways of viewing the internal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976: 3). Situation aspect on the other hand has often been called AKTIONSART, and it is associated with the internal structure of the event. Thus, situation aspect is something objective about the nature of the event, whereas viewpoint aspect is subjectively manipulated by the speakers, or as Smith puts it: "the categories of viewpoint aspect are overt, whereas situation aspect is expressed in covert categories" (1997: 5). We have seen that this does not apply to Komnzo. Aspectual categories, although highly grammaticalised, are based on the situation type rather than on viewpoint, i.e. they are about inception/punctuality, iteration and duration rather than completion. The fact, that aspect is highly grammaticalised means that the categories are accessible to virtually all verb lexemes. I showed in §5.3 that the two stem types (RS and

[17] See Sasse (2002) for a formidable overview of the research on aspect.

EXT) are attested for almost all stems. This supports the argument that the notion of an objective internal event structure, which is fed into the inflectional system, plays little role in Komnzo.

As we have seen in the discussion of verbal morphology, a central part of the inflectional system are the two stem types. The labels EXT and RS refer of course to 'extended in time' and 'restricted in time' respectively. All perfectives are built from the RS stem and all imperfectives are built from the EXT stem. However, a relabelling of the RS stem as 'perfective stem' and the EXT stem as 'imperfective stem' would be misleading. For example, the RS stem is employed for iterative aspect, which is by definition not bounded in time. This contradiction can be resolved by assuming a more transparent contribution of the morphological mechanisms which participate in the iterative inflection. As shown in §6.2 (Table 6.1), the iterative builds on the RS stem, but it employs the β1 or β2 prefix series, which otherwise only occur with the EXT stem to build imperfectives and duratives. In other words, the iterative aspect limits the event structure by stem selection and simultaneously spreads out the event structure by the selection of the prefix series. This is an interesting scenario, which calls for further comparative research within the Yam languages to shed light on the grammaticalisation of iterative aspect.

6.4.3 Mood

There are three modal categories in Komnzo: indicative, imperative and irrealis, further nuances can be expressed with the help of particles, especially the potential *kma*, the imminent *n* and apprehensive *m* (see §6.3). Here, I will only describe some of the ways in which two of the three basic categories – the imperative and the irrealis – deviate from their conventional definitions.

Imperatives can be used in a number of ways that fall outside the definition of 'giving an order'. In example (59), the speaker showed me the leaves of a pandanus plant pointing out that I can use the leaves to sleep on. The imperative form *gnyaké* 'you go' is thus not a command 'go without a mat', but more like a conditional 'if you go without a mat'. The conditional interpretation also comes from the word *fthé* which means 'when' or 'at the time when'. This type of conditional construction is an extended use of the imperative inflection. Most imperatives are used as commands, and there are conditional constructions without imperative inflections.

(59) *yamemäre fthé **gnyaké** … etfthar.*
yame=märe fthé gn-yak-é (.) etfth=r
mat=PRIV when 2|3SG.β-walk.EXT.ND-IMP (.) sleep=PURP
2SG:SBJ:IMP:IPFV/walk
'When you go without a mat, (this one) for sleeping.'
[tci20130907-02 JAA #546-547]

As we have seen in §6.2.2, the irrealis is marked by the prefix *ra-*. There is no realis marker, but the absence of *ra-* indicates realis inflection. Beyond counterfactuality and futurity, irrealis mood has a number of semantic extensions in Komnzo. Cross-linguistically irrealis mood is employed for a wide range of functiones which has led

some authors to challenge its validity as a comparative category (Bybee et al. 1994). Others have suggested a prototype approach to irrealis mood, for example Givon (1994: 327). I will adopt the latter here. Example (60) and (61) show the irrealis mood in its more central functions, counterfactuality and futurity respectively. Example (60) is taken from a headhunting story which involved the speaker's father.[18] Example (61) is taken from a procedural in which the speaker shows me how to make a toy from a coconut leaf.

(60) *fi fthé niyamnzrm nafäsü kwa* ***thräkwrth****.*
fi fthé n=y-a-m-nzr-m nafä=sü kwa
3.ABS when IPST=3SG.MASC.α-VC-sit.EXT-ND-DUR 3ASSOC.PL=ETC FUT
IPST=3SG.MASC:SBJ:NPST:DUR/sit
th-rä-kwr-th
2|3SG.β-IRR.ND-hit.RS-2|3NSG
2|3PL:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:IRR:PFV/hit
'If he had stayed, they would have killed him with all the others.'
[tci20111107-01 MAK #80]

(61) *katan kwa* ***sräfiyothé*** *… kafar minzü yé.*
katan kwa s-rä-fiyoth-é kafar minzü yé
small FUT 3SG.MASC.β-VC.ND-make.RS-1SG big very 3SG.MASC.COP.ND
1SG:SBJ>3SG:OBJ:IRR:PFV/make
'I will make it smaller. This is too big.' [tci20120914 RNA #41]

Irrealis inflected verbs can be used for habituals. This use, especially with past habituals, has been noticed in a cross-linguistic study by Cristofaro (2004). Example (62) comes from a procedural about poison-root fishing, which is a common activity during the dry season when the water recedes. The speaker talks about the preparations and the process of poison-root fishing, while his family is busy fishing in the background. All verb forms are in irrealis mood.

(62) ***thranäbünzrth*** *… sam ane mane erä* ***threthkäfth*** *…* ***zranrsrwrth*** *fof no* ***zrerärth*** *…* ***thranor*** *"si rore rore rore!!"*
th-ra-näbü-nzr-th (.) sam ane mane e-rä
2|3NSG.β-IRR-smash.EXT-ND-2|3NSG (.) liquid DEM which 2|3NSG.α-COP.ND
2|3PL:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:IRR:IPFV/smash 2|3PL:SBJ:NPST:IPFV/be
th-rä-thkäf-th (.) z-ra-n-rsr-wr-th fof
2|3NSG.β-IRR.ND-start.RS-2|3NSG (.) 3SG.F.β-IRR-VENT-squeeze.EXT-ND-2|3NSG EMPH
2|3PL:SBJ>2|3PL:OBJ:IRR:PFV/start 2|3PL:SBJ>3SG.F:OBJ:IRR:IPFV/squeeze
no z-rä-rä-r-th (.)
water 3SG.F.β-IRR.VC-do.EXT-ND-2|3NSG (.)
2|3PL:SBJ>3SG.F:IO:IRR:IPFV/start

[18] The example also shows the 'relative use' of the immediate past. Although the events in the story happened a long time ago, the speaker uses the immediate past (*niyamnzrm* 'He was staying just before') to emphasise that the headhunt took place just after his father had left the village.

th-ra-nor si.rore.rore.rore
2|3NSG.β-IRR-shout.EXT.ND INTERJECTION
2|3PL:SBJ:IRR:IPFV/shout
'They would smash (the sticks). As for the liquids that start coming, they squeeze them and mix them properly with the water … and they would shout out: "Si rore rore rore‼"' [tci20110813-09 DAK #22-23]

Irrealis mood is frequently used in narratives which report factual truths. Foley (2000: 389) points out that Papuan languages often employ the realis-irrealis distinction for pragmatic purposes. In Komnzo, the pragmatic use comes from the alternation between irrealis and realis inflections especially in event sequencing. In this pattern, the irrealis is used for backgrounding. Example (63) is taken from a hunting story that occured many years ago. The story is told from a first-person perspective, thus, there is no reason to question the factual truth of what is being told. The clauses in (63) describe a sequence of events: fall asleep > be sleeping > wake up. Only the foregrounded clause ('sleep') is expressed in realis (past durative), whereas the backgrounded clauses ('fall asleep' and 'wake up') are expressed in irrealis (perfective). In that sense, the irrealis verb forms act as a backgrounding bracket around the foregrounded clause.[19]

(63) ***krämnzeré*** *efoth etfth* ***kwofrugrm*** *e zizi …* ***krebnafé****.*
k-rä-mnzer-é efoth etfth kwof-rugr-m e zizi
M.β-IRR.VC.ND-fall.asleep.RS-1SG sun sleep 1SG.β2-sleep.EXT.ND-DUR until afternoon
1SG:SBJ:IRR:PFV/fall.asleep 1SG:SBJ:PST:DUR/sleep
(.) k-rä-bnaf-é
(.) M.β-IRR.VC.ND-wake.up.RS-1SG
1SG:SBJ:IRR:PFV/wake.up
'I fell asleep (for) a daytime nap. I was sleeping until the late afternoon … Then, I woke up.' [tci20111119-03 ABB #31-32]

The interaction of TAM categories with information structure was described by Hopper (1979). Hartzler describes a similar function of the irrealis mood in Sentani (1983). I defer the discussion of this topic to §10.5, where a detailed analysis is offered drawing on a longer text segment.

[19] Note that example (55) on page 267 employs the same bracket-like use of the irrealis inflected verb forms. The only difference is that in (55), the foregrounded event is in the non-past, whereas in (63) above the foregrounded event is in past durative.

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A grammar of Komnzo

Komnzo is a Papuan language of Southern New Guinea spoken by around 250 people in the village of Rouku. Komnzo belongs to the Tonda subgroup of the Yam language family, which is also known as the Morehead Upper-Maro group. This grammar provides the first comprehensive description of a Yam language. It is based on 16 months of fieldwork. The primary source of data is a text corpus of around 12 hours recorded and transcribed between 2010 and 2015.

Komnzo provides many fields of future research, but the most interesting aspect of its structure lies in the verb morphology, to which the two largest chapters of the grammar are dedicated. Komnzo verbs may index up to two arguments showing agreement in person, number and gender. Verbs encode 18 TAM categories, valency, directionality and deictic status. Morphological complexity lies not only in the amount of categories that verbs may express, but also in the way these are encoded. Komnzo verbs exhibit what may be called 'distributed exponence', i.e. single morphemes are underspecified for a particular grammatical category. Therefore, morphological material from different sites has to be integrated first, and only after this integration can one arrive at a particular grammatical category.

The descriptive approach in this grammar is theory-informed rather than theory-driven. Comparison to other Yam languages and diachronic developments are taken into account whenever it seems helpful.