Transitivity and Objecthood in Rotuman[1]

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This paper examines one particular aspect of Rotuman morphology that Churchward has characterized as a "transitive suffix." Verbs with this suffix show behavior distinct from that of unsuffixed transitive verbs with respect to a number of phenomena, including object definiteness, causativity, and negation, among others. Our conclusion is that the transitivity of verbs with this suffix is somewhat incidental and that the true nature of the suffix is something akin to object agreement for topicalized objects. In the end, we see that although Churchward's label for this suffix may be somewhat misplaced, his careful distinction between two types of transitive verbs, unsuffixed and suffixed, was an important one.

1. INTRODUCTION. C. Maxwell Churchward's *Rotuman grammar and dictionary* (1940) remains the critical descriptive source for the Rotuman language, a member of the Central Pacific group of the Oceanic family. This impressive work provides not only a compendium of information for the researcher but also some of Churchward's own analyses of the data that he recorded. From a modern perspective, however, the information is often packaged in a way that obscures potentially critical relationships between pieces of data. Similarly, Churchward's analyses, while often insightful, clearly reflect the frame of reference of the author and the age of the work. None of this detracts from Churchward's accomplishment, but it does suggest that a reanalysis of the data may uncover interesting, previously unexplored aspects of Rotuman, as well as clarify existing information about it.

This paper examines Churchward's characterization of verbal transitivity against the data in his grammar and in a collection of folktales that Churchward edited.[2] Based on the interactions of transitivity with a number of other phenomena such as definiteness, causativity, and negation, inter alia, the paper will argue that the relevant distinction in the verbal system with respect to the above phenomena is not transitivity per se but rather the existence of overt morphological marking of a certain type. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents an overview of transitivity within Churchward's framework. Verbs are then divided into two categories—those that are not morphologically marked for transitivity and those that are. Section 3 presents data on verbs that are morphologically unmarked and section

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4 on verbs that are morphologically marked. An analysis of the morphological marker is presented in section 5. Section 6 contains the conclusion.

2. TRANSITIVES AND INTRANSITIVES. Churchward classifies verbs into three categories with respect to transitivity. The first two cover only verbs that have no morphological marking for transitivity (i.e., no transitive suffix). Verbs that fall into these two categories are distinguished from one another by their "typical" use as intransitive or transitive, rather than by any morphological marking. Of the first of these (the intransitive), Churchward states: "Verbs that are seldom or never used transitively are classed as intransitive." (This intransitive status is indicated by 'i.' in the citation forms in the dictionary.) Examples (1–3) are illustrations of intransitives.[3]

(1) Gou fesia' se irisa.
     I   hate   to   them
     'I hate them.'

(2) Nōnō ma   'oria ö'   rua   al …   (Tiaftot 16.8)
     after awhile their(2) parent two   die
     'After awhile, their parents died …'

(3) Tinrau, fa 'on   sau, seksek   se ut ne 'on hanue ta. (Tiaftot 16.11)
     Tinrau   son belong king walk-along to end of his town   the
     'Tinrau, the king's son, walked along to the outskirts of his town.'

Churchward himself points out that this classification is not absolute. For example, he adds to his discussion the case of a "usually intransitive" verb used transitively: *maţa'u—ia maţa' se irisa* 'he looks after them' but *ia maţa' iris* 'he looks after them'.

Of the second category (verbs with no morphological marking that are typically used transitively), he says "Verbs [that] are used transitively though they have no trans. suffix—and there are many such verbs in Rotuman—are said to be "informally" trans. Exs. are *hili, hil*, to choose, and *ho'a, hoa'*, to take or carry."[4] (The informally transitive status of a verb is indicated by "inf.t." in the citation forms.) A textual occurrence of this last is given in (4).

(4) ne   'auar hoa' ia se tei   (Äetos 176)
     IND.Q. you-two carry it to where
     '...where you two are carrying it to.'

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3. Examples from the Rotuman legends in *Tales of a lonely island* (Titifanua and Churchward 1940) are cited by story name and line number (e.g., Tiaftot 16.8), following Churchward. All unmarked examples are drawn from Churchward 1940.

    Any differences in form as a result of phase are abstracted away from in the glosses given, as they are not relevant to the discussion. For some detailed discussions of Rotuman phase, see McCarthy (1995 and 2000), Hale and Kissock (1998), and Hale (2000).

    Abbreviations used in the text are as follows: com. phase, complete phase; DIR, directional; DU, dual; f.t., formal transitive; FUT, future; i., intransitive; inc. phase, incomplete phase; indef., indefinite; IND.Q., indirect question marker; INGR, ingressive; inf.t., informal transitive; NEG, negation; OPT, optative; P, preposition; PL, plural; SG, singular; TR, "transitive suffix"; trans., transitive.

4. Churchward's use of the term "informally" is a literal one meaning 'without form'. He notes this in the description of morphologically marked transitive verbs cited below.

    Churchward typically cites both complete and incomplete phase forms, as here.

Once again, Churchward qualifies strict categorization by adding, "Some verbs, again, [that] are usually trans. (inf.t.) are occ. used intransitively: e.g., *tuki* 'to stop (a person from doing something)' is generally trans., as in *gou la tük iris*, 'I will stop them;' but one may also say (with a slightly different force) *gou la tük se irisa*, 'I will make an effort to stop them ...' "

It is apparent from his examples and discussions of these two categories of unmarked verbs that Churchward takes the presence of a preposition plus noun sequence (along with absence of a bare object) to be clear evidence of intransitivity. As Rotuman has no morphological case marking on nouns, evidence for the object status of nouns accompanying transitive verbs typically comes from word order (SVO) rather than accusative (or other) case marking.

Churchward's third category comprises all verbs that are transitive due to some type of morphological marking. He explains this as follows:[5] "The principal suffixes that serve to mark verbs as transitive are *-a, -na,* and *-kia*, some verbs taking one, some another. When *-a* is used, it is attached to the com. phase; *-na* to the com. phase (its *e*-form if it has one); *-kia* to the inc. phase. Verbs having these suffixes are said to be "formally" trans., their transitiveness being shown by their form" (Churchward 1940:22).

Examples (5) and (6) illustrate these transitive-by-form verbs.[6] These examples may be contrasted with their unsuffixed counterparts in (1) and (4) above.

(5) Gou fesi'e-n iris.   (6) 'ạmia   la   hoa'-kia äe. (Äetos 216)
     I   hate-TR   them   we-two   will carry-TR   you-SG
     'I hate them.'   'We will carry you.'

Unlike the two previously mentioned categories (morphologically unmarked verbs that are typically either intransitive or transitive), Churchward offers no qualifying remark that allows for some exceptions to this third category. Instead, he states quite deliberately: "Formally trans. verbs, however, cannot be used intransitively: they are immutably transitive" (Churchward 1940:116). This formal transitive morphology is productive and not a lexically-determined property of individual verbs.

Churchward's classification, summarized in table 1, is based on two potentially unrelated properties: (1) a traditional notion of transitivity (presence or absence of a direct object); and (2) presence or absence of morphological marking on the verb (in this case, a suffix). This paper will argue that presence of the morphological marking

TABLE 1. CHURCHWARD'S CLASSIFICATION

CHURCHWARD'S CATEGORY	TRANSITIVE USE	INTRANSITIVE USE	MORPHOLOGICAL MARKING
intransitive (i.)	rarely	usually	Ø
informal transitive (inf.t.)	usually	rarely	Ø
formal transitive (f.t.)	always	never	*-a, -na, -kia*

5. The productive forms of this morpheme appear to be *-a* and *-na*, their distribution being phonologically-determined. In addition to *-kia*, Churchward also cites *-ana, -ena,* and *-nia* as transitive suffix forms for a handful of verbs. The irregular morphology for this small set of verbs suggests that an approach that separates features from form, such as Distributed Morphology, may be indicated.
6. The "formal transitive" morpheme is glossed as "TR."

is a critical distinguishing factor in the syntactic behavior of both objects and verbs. The transitive/intransitive split, on the other hand, is just the expected (lexical) distribution of verbs based on their inherent argument structure. The next two sections will support this position by illustrating that verbs without morphological marking behave as a class with respect to a number of phenomena and that they may be contrasted with morphologically-marked verbs (which also behave as a class with respect to the same phenomena). In the following section, verbs that are not morphologically marked for transitivity will be referred to simply as "unmarked" for convenience, though obviously the term is not being used in its markedness sense.

3. UNMARKED VERBS. Unmarked verbs show similar behavior with respect to voice neutrality, causativity and applicative formation, counterfactuals, object definiteness, incorporation, and tense marking. Each of these will be illustrated and briefly discussed below. The same phenomena are discussed for morphologically marked verbs in section 4. A table summarizing the findings in sections 3 and 4 is given at the beginning of section 5.

3.1 VOICE NEUTRALITY. Unmarked verbs are generally voice-neutral. For example, Churchward (1940:123) points out that *iris 'ā* is ambiguous between an active ('they ate') or a passive ('they were eaten.') reading. He notes that the presence of a "complement" (Churchward's term for an incorporated noun) disambiguates between these two readings, allowing only an active one. Similarly, the presence or absence of a direct object will serve to disambiguate voice, as in (7) and (8).

(7) iris rou le' ta 'e Losa
    they leave child the P Losa
    'they left the child at Losa'

(8) iris rou 'e Losa
    they leave P Losa
    'they were left at Losa'

According to Churchward, the preposition *'e* can mark the agent when a verb is used as a passive but "by phrases" of that type are unusual.

Churchward notes that intransitive verbs occasionally show voice neutrality as well and gives several examples of this, one of which is repeated in (9).

(9) Ia la matạ' sin.
    he will look thereto
    'He will look after (it/them/him, etc.)'

We would not normally expect an intransitive verb to form a passive (assuming that raising of an object is a necessary part of passivization) and, in fact, examples such as (9) are not passives of intransitives in the true sense of the word. (Lacking an object to raise, a true passive of an intransitive should result in an expletive construction of the *es wurde getanzt* 'it was danced' type.)

3.2 CAUSATIVE. Rotuman has a single morphological form, -*'ạki*, which functions either as a causative or an applicative marker, increasing the valency of the verb or changing its subcategorization frame, respectively. Churchward classifies causative

verbs in -*'ạki* as "informally transitive." This classification of causative verbs (which have suffixes and are transitive) indicates that Churchward's intention with the "form" of "formal" and "informal" is to refer specifically to the actual form of the transitive suffix, not just any suffix.

3.2.1 The causative function.   Both transitive and intransitive unmarked verbs may have causative -*'ạki* suffixed to them, as indicated by Churchward: "Causative. This usage is very common, though by no means universal, with intr. verbs …. In a few instances it occurs with inf.t. verbs … e.g., from *tole* 'to carry on the shoulder,' we get *tol'ạki* 'to cause to be carried on the shoulder, to place a burden on another's shoulder' ..." (Churchward 1940:105–106).

The voice neutrality of verbs in Rotuman interacts in interesting ways with the -*'ạki* causatives. For example, in many cases it appears that it is the *passive* reading of the bare stem that serves as the input to causative formation (as in the example cited by Churchward in the discussion of causatives above: *tole* 'to carry on the shoulder'—and therefore, by voice neutrality, also 'to be carried on the shoulder'—causative *tol'ạki* 'to cause to be carried on the shoulder', built only to the passive reading). By contrast, the verb *'imo* 'drink' (but also, by voice neutrality, 'to be drunk' in a nonalcoholic sense) gives rise to an ambiguous -*'ạki* form: *'iom'ạki* means both (a) 'to cause (obj. a person) to drink' and (b) 'to cause (obj. water) to be drunk.'

The causative function of -*'ạki* does not appear to be its most common function, however. It competes, in this function, with the Rotuman reflexes—one "direct" and one "indirect" (Biggs 1965)—of the well-reconstructed Proto-Oceanic (POc) causative prefix **paka*-: *a'a*- and *faka*-. These two prefixes can be seen in their causative function in pairs like: *a'soko/fakasoko* 'to cause to reach' or 'extend to'.

3.2.2 Other functions.   A relational or prepositional use is by far the most common use of -*'ạki* in Rotuman.[7] The types of relationships it may express appear to be centered around 'instrumental' and 'dative' (broadly construed, i.e., including both goals and beneficiaries, for example). It appears to promote an originally oblique argument with this type of theta-role to direct object position. Churchward (1940:106) includes both intransitive and transitive unmarked verbs in his listing of relational/prepositional/durational -*'ạki* suffixation (transitive: *pạni* 'to paint', *pàn'ạki* 'to paint with'; intransitive: *fäega* 'to speak,' *fäeag'ạki* 'to speak about'; *mua* 'to go in front,' *mua'ạki* 'to go in front of, to lead'; *mạuri* 'to live,' *mạür'ạki* 'to live for [a certain number of years]. "Many words terminating in -*'ạki* may be used in two or more of the above senses. For example, *'ātē'ạki*, from *ā'tē*, to eat things, may come under either (a), (b), or (c): meaning (a) to cause to eat, to feed, (b) to eat with, to use (cutlery, plates, etc.) in eating, (c) to eat for (so long)" (Churchward 1940:106.

Additional examples of both intransitive and transitive verbs with these noncausative uses of -*'ạki* are plentiful: (i) *afa* (intransitive) 'to make a mark/impression' ('on' expressed with a PP): *af'ạki* 'to make a mark with (obj. pencil, rubber stamp, etc.)', (ii) *ạtu* (transitive) 'to grasp or embrace tightly with both arms' : *ạt'ạki* 'to clasp (obj. arms) tightly around *(se)* something', (iii) *lemi* (transitive) 'to lick' :

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lem'ạki 'to lick with' (obj. the tongue), (iv) *mamāe* (intransitive) 'to mourn' : *mamāe'ạki* 'to mourn for', (v) *momono* (transitive) 'to plug up, block' : *momon'ạki* 'to use for plugging up or blocking'.

The durational function mentioned by Churchward may be able to be collapsed with the prepositional uses mentioned above. If we assume that the prepositions used to express these durational properties are dative or instrumental markers, the generalization would be simply that anything marked by these prepositions may be elevated to object position by *-'ạki*. On the other hand, not *any* prepositional relationship can be captured by *-'ạki* suffixation. Simple spatial relationships (*under, behind, by, from, around*) and nondative directionals (e.g., *from, away from, through*) do not appear to be expressable by *-'ạki* and a direct object. If we accept, on the evidence of Western Austronesian focus systems, that theta-roles like 'goal' and 'instrument' must be structurally represented (cf. Paul 1999), it is likely that it is precisely these structural positions that *-'ạki* deals with.

3.3 COUNTERFACTUALS—NEGATION AND OPTATIVE. Rotuman has bipartite negation, as in French *ne ... pas*. The Rotuman forms are *kat ... ra*, or, in the future, *kal ... ra*),[8] with (minimally) the verb placed between the two elements.[9] With unmarked verbs, negation may detransitivize the verb, forcing its object into a prepositional phrase; compare (10) and (11). This detransitivization is also seen with the optative *pa* 'to wish', as in (12).

(10) Ia rē   garue ta.
     he do   work   the
     'He does the work.'

(11) Ia kat rē ra   'e garue ta.
     he NEG do NEG P work   the
     'He did not do the work.'

(12) Ia pa   rē 'e garue ta.
     he OPT do P work   the
     'He wishes to do the work.'

The detransitivization process is sensitive to the definiteness of the object and will be discussed further in the next section.

3.4 DEFINITENESS. Definiteness is marked by a postposed definite article *ta* in the singular. There is no corresponding definite plural article; instead, definite plurals are indicated by complete phase on the noun or adjective. Definite singular and plural are shown in (13) and (14), respectively.

(13) hàn   fis   ta
     woman white the
     'the white woman'

(14) famori 'ea
     people say
     'the people say'

8. The form *kal* is a merger of the future marker *la* with the negative.

9. The surface position of the verb in negated strings (between the two parts of the negation) suggests that, in certain theoretical frameworks, Rotuman would be analyzed as having V-raising at least to T, if not higher.

Indefinites are marked with a cliticized indefinite article *-t* or a *preposed* article *ta* in the singular. As with definites, there is no plural indefinite article marker, and indefinite plurals are identifiable by incomplete phase on the noun or adjective. Examples of these are given in (15), (16), and (17).[10]

(15) hȧn   fisi-t
     woman   white-a
     'a white woman'

(16) ta 'eap
     a   mat
     'a mat'

(17) famör 'ea
     people say
     '(some) people say'

Unmarked verbs, when transitive, are found with both definite and indefinite objects, as illustrated by examples (18), (19), and (20).

(18) Ia   rē   garue ta.
     he   does work   the
     'He does the work.'

(19) Ho'a-m   ta 'eap.
     bring-DIR a   mat
     'Bring a mat! '

(20) Gou ho'a-m   'ou   puku-t.
     I   bring-DIR your letter-a
     'I brought a letter of yours.'

However, while indefinites appear to be permitted to occur with these unmarked verbs in all types of clauses, definites are more restricted. The detransitivization in counterfactuals discussed in the previous section appears to be triggered by the definiteness of the object, as examples (21), (22), and (23) illustrate.[11]

(21) Ia kat al'ȧk ra   ta   le'.
     he NEG kill NEG   a   person
     'He did not kill anyone.'

(22) pō 'e hȧn   ta   kat 'es väväne-t   ra   (Haoag 8)
     since woman the NEG have husband-a NEG
     'since the woman did not have a husband'

(23) ka gou kal   'es   hoi'ȧk ra   'e   'äea   (Pure 40)
     and I   NEG-FUT have any more NEG P   you-SG
     'and I will not have you any more'

Indefinite objects in counterfactuals do not undergo detransitivization.

3.5 INCORPORATION. Rotuman noun incorporation (NI) can be divided into two types. The first might be termed "real" incorporation.

3.5.1 Real incorporation. In this case, bare, nonspecific nouns incorporate with unmarked (transitive) verbs.[12] Diagnostics for this type of incorporation are given in the following subsections.

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10. For an analysis of the phase-distinction marking for definiteness, see Hale and Kissock (1998).
11. van den Berg (1995) discusses a similar connection between definiteness and detransitivization in Muna, where detransitivization is indicated by the verb shifting from a transitive to an intransitive class, rather than by demoting the object to a prepositional phrase, as in Rotuman.
12. Incorporated elements are connected to their host by a hyphen.

3.5.1.1 Adverb position. Adverbs normally precede objects but are postposed to objects in NI cases, as in (24) and (25).

(24) Iris rē aʻlelei garue ta.
      they do well   work   the
      'They did the work well.'

(25) Iris ʻā-famör aʻtiʻ.
      they eat-people greatly
      'They do a great deal of people-eating.'

3.5.1.2 Negation position. Unincorporated objects stand outside the bipartite negation, and incorporated ones within it, as in (26) and (27).

(26) Ia kat alʻạk ra   ta leʻ.
      he NEG kill   NEG a person
      'He did not kill anyone.'

(27) Iris kat ʻā-famör ra.
      they NEG eat-people NEG
      'They don't people-eat.'

3.5.1.3 Use of the NI form as a nominal or adjective. This is exemplified in (28) and (29).

(28) ʻoris ʻā-famör ta
      their eat-people the
      'their cannibalism'

(29) tạk   rē-ʻalat
      doctor-indef. do-teeth
      'a dentist'

3.5.1.4 Verbal suffixation. Verbal suffixes appear on the NI form, instead of on the verb itself, as with the case of the directional suffix *-m* in (30).

(30) Ia fàʻ-puku-m   se goua.
      he write-letter(s)-DIR to me
      'He wrote a letter/letters to me.'

3.5.2 Pseudo Incorporation. A second type of incorporation, again found only with unsuffixed (transitive) verbs, is broader in scope than NI and has been termed "pseudo" incorporation (cf. Massam 2001). The wider range of elements able to incorporate includes adverbs, complex indefinite objects, and morphologically explicit plurals.

3.5.2.1 Adverbs. This includes not only the incorporation of directionals (a feature shared by other Oceanic languages) but a broad range of adverbs. Examples of these are in (31) and (32).

(31) ke kat hạʻhạʻu-ag ʻesea ra se ʻoris ö rua   (ʻÄeatos 19)
      only NEG reach-DIR   same NEG P their parent two
      'only they did not reach at the same time their parents'

(32) Ma Rah kat räe-hoiʻạk ra se fā ta.   (Haoag 106)
      and Raho NEG see-again   NEG to boy the
      'And Raho didn't see the boy again.'

Churchward asserts (1940:107) that a number of suffixes are affixed to the adverb rather than to the verb, as expected in a verb-adverb sequence. The suffixes include: (1) directionals; (2) the 'ingressive' in -*'ia*; (3) the "pronominal suffixes" that express the ingressive for certain types of verbs (which appear, in fact, to be reflexive pronouns); and (4) the transitive suffixes used to form formally transitive verbs. He gives the examples listed in (33)–(36). (The starred strings represent his own examples of ungrammaticality, with hyphens inserted to illustrate the relevant morpheme boundary.)

(33) iris sur miji-m   (*iris suru-m mij)
      they come promptly-DIR
      'they enter promptly'

(34) fā   ta fek fakapau-'ia
      man the angry very-INGR
      'the man became very angry'

(35) gou jön väve-atou
      I   flee quickly-I
      'I fled quickly'

(36) fā   ta füt hoi'ạki-a lū   ta   (*fā ta futi-a hoi'ạk lū ta)
      man the pull again-TR   rope the
      'the man pulled the rope again'

Additional examples of this are widely attested in the legends. Examples (37), (38), and (39) are all drawn from the legends.

(37) ka ia kal   pō hoi'ạk-'ia ra   ia   (Sau 156)
      and he NEG-FUT get again-INGR   NEG her
      'and he would not be able to get her again'

(38) ka fā rua kat rē   a'lelei-'ia ra   hȧn rua   (Sianpual'etaf 45)
      and man two NEG treat badly-INGR   NEG wife two
      'and two men began to ill treat their two wives'

(39) ka iria kat foar-pau-sio ra   se hȧn   rua   ('Äeatos 27)
      and they NEG tell-fully-DIR   NEG P woman two
      'and they didn't explain fully to the two women'

Suffixation of this type strongly supports the idea that these adverbs are, in fact, incorporated—note, particularly, that the transitive suffix will follow the adverb if present.

3.5.2.2 Complex, *indefinite* objects. Nouns with an accompanying indefinite article as well as with an adjective can incorporate as in (40) and (41).

(40) Ma raksa'ia 'e 'itar kat 'es rȧhi-t ra.   (Le Mafi 109)
      and unfortunate that we-two NEG have fire-a NEG
      'But unfortunately we haven't any fire.'

(41) Ma ia kat 'es sui tore-t   ra.   (I'or 59)
      but he NEG have bone leftover-a NEG
      'But he didn't have a leftover bone.'

Pearce (2001) discusses a somewhat similar extension of traditional noun incorporation in Iaai and Fijian. The similarities to the Rotuman data above lie in the fact that the incorporation includes articles in addition to nouns. Pearce has analyzed the article incorporation as being dependent upon the semantic content of the article itself (i.e., articles that have semantic content may incorporate but articles with only functional content may not).

3.5.2.3 Explicit morphological plurals. Morphologically marked plurals, not generally subject to incorporation in Polynesian and Micronesian languages, may be incorporated in Rotuman, as can be seen in (42).

> (42) Ka sȧghȧn uan   ‘on Rah kat ‘es lelea‘ ra   (Haoag 11)
>   and sister   middle his Raho NEG have children NEG
>   ‘and Raho's middle sister had no children’

Lele‘a is the lexical plural of *le‘e* ‘child.’

3.6 TENSE MARKERS AND OTHER SUFFIXES. Rotuman has only two actual tense distinctions, present and future. There is no present tense morphology, the base form of the verb being used for this purpose. Futurity is indicated by *la* or *täla* immediately preceding the verb.[13] Churchward refers broadly to two other "tenses" that are aspectual in nature—the "ingressive" and the "completive." The ingressive is indicated by the suffix -*‘ia*, or by the suffixation of distinct pronominal forms. These suffixes attach freely to unmarked verbs. The stative-dynamic distinction determines which of the ingressive forms is suffixed, with the -*‘ia* form attaching to stative and the pronominal forms to dynamic verbs.

The next section examines the behavior of transitively marked verbs (Churchward's formal transitives) with respect to these same five topics: voice neutrality, causativity, counterfactuals, definiteness, and incorporation. For convenience, we will refer to these verbs as marked, with the specific meaning of "marked with a transitive suffix."

4. MARKED VERBS

4.1 VOICE NEUTRALITY. The issue of voice neutrality for marked verbs is not entirely clear.[14] However, as noted in section 2, Churchward makes a strong statement about the exceptionless transitivity of marked verbs. In addition, he goes so far as to bring up what look like exceptions to the "immutably transitive" nature of marked verbs. He takes this opportunity to point out homophonous suffixes that can be mistaken for the transitive suffixes, leading to misanalyses of the forms and therefore to apparent exceptions.

4.2 CAUSATIVES. As mentioned earlier, Churchward classifies causative verbs in -*‘ạki* as informally transitive. There is no evidence to indicate that the -*‘ạki* suffix

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13. The distribution of these two future markers and their behavior with respect to certain verbal suffixes, such as the completive suffix, is complex and not immediately relevant to the topic.
14. For a discussion of the possible origin of voice neutrality in Oceanic, see Hale (1998).

in either its causative or applicative function can affix to a marked verb. However, Churchward does note that causative verbs in -*'aki* have formal transitive counterparts. Thus we get *ala* 'to die', *al'aki* 'to kill' (informal transitive), and *al'akia* 'to kill' (formal transitive with transitive suffix -*a*).[15]

4.3 COUNTERFACTUALS—NEGATION AND OPTATIVE. Verbs marked for transitivity are unaffected by counterfactual conditions—no detransitivization takes place, as is shown in example (43).

> (43) ia pa al'aki-a iris
>   he wish kill-TR   them
>   'He wishes to kill them.'

Churchward does, however, note some type of semantic difference between an unmarked verb that has detransitivized and use of the corresponding marked verb, as in (44) and (45).

> (44) ia kat al'ak ra   'e irisa
>   he NEG kill   NEG P them
>   '(The man said he would kill them but) he did *not* kill them.'

> (45) ia kat al'aki-a ra   iris
>   he NEG kill-TR   NEG them
>   '(The man wounded them but) he did not *kill* them.'

As the upper case and parenthetical presupposed material indicate, the difference seems to lie in which constituent, negation or the verb, receives contrastive focus.

4.4 DEFINITENESS. Verbs morphologically marked for transitive cooccur only with definite objects, as in (46) and (47).

> (46) 'Amia la   hoa'-kia ae.
>   we-DU will carry-TR   you-SG
>   'We will carry you.'

> (47) Fā ta feu-a   laga.
>   man the brushes.away-TR the.flies
>   'The man brushes away the flies.'

Example (46) shows a pronoun and (47) shows a definite plural noun.

4.5 INCORPORATION. Not surprisingly, marked verbs do not permit incorporation (where incorporation would give a sequence Verb-Trans.Suffix-Incorporated Noun). However, the transitive suffix itself may attach to incorporated adverbs and nouns as in (48) and (49) below.

> (48) fā ta füt hoi'aki-alū ta   (*fā ta futi-a hoi'ȧk lū ta)
>   man the pull again-TR rope the
>   'the man pulled the rope again'

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15. For a discussion of constraints on causative affixation to transitively marked verbs, see Pagotto (1992) for Marshallese.

(49) ia rak'ȧk tē-an   iris
     he teach   thing-TR them
   'he teaches them things'

Note that, in a case like (49) where a noun is incorporated and then the entire sequence is marked with the transitive suffix, there is an unincorporated object as well.

4.6 TENSE MARKERS AND OTHER SUFFIXES. Churchward (1940:117) notes that "F.t. verbs cannot take any of the tense-forming suffixes" (where -*'ia* and the pronominal suffixes form the ingressive "tense," and -*tia* and -*a* form the completive "tense"). Some explanation for the failure of these suffixes to attach to marked verbs may be found in their historical origins: -*'ia, -tia,* and -*a* look like versions of the POc transitive suffixes. While a detailed investigation of the use of these forms in Rotuman is still outstanding, it is not clear that we should accept Churchward's characterization of them as marking tense at all. They seem more likely to represent the POc *-Cia suffixes, whose precise function differs from language to language even within Polynesian (for example), and has proved remarkably difficult to characterize definitively. The suffix was, in any event, incompatible with any transitive marking on the verb to which it attached. These forms need to be investigated in Rotuman—without such an investigation, their significance for the problems under discussion cannot easily be determined.

The next section will synthesize the information presented above and discuss several options for analyzing the distinction between these unmarked and marked verbs.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 THE "TRANSITIVE" SUFFIX. The distinction that Churchward drew between formal and informal verbs captures a significant feature of verbs in Rotuman—one that has a quite different status from the transitive/intransitive distinction. We will argue in what follows that the transitive suffix that marks formal transitives is mischaracterized as a transitivizer and that it marks, instead, the presence of a topic. The argument against the transitive suffix marking transitivity comes from two main sources. First, verbs marked with transitive suffixes are only a subset of the class of transitive verbs. Moreover, an informal transitive verb like *hili* 'to choose' can have a formal transitive counterpart *hilia*. Therefore, it is not necessary for a verb to have a transitive suffix in order to be transitive. Moreover, the existence of such pairs argues directly against the transitive suffix actually having anything interesting to do with transitivization per se. (It is not clear what it could possibly mean to have a verb that is already a transitive verb become *more* transitive.) Second, the differential behavior we see with respect to things like counterfactuals, definiteness, and incorporation appears to be based on the presence or absence of the transitive suffix, not on the actual transitivity of the verb.[16] Accordingly, this discussion will focus on the distinctions between marked and unmarked verbs.

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16. Kikusawa (2001) points out that this lack of correspondence between something described as a transitive suffix is true not only for Rotuman but also for Fijian.

The transitive/intransitive distinction between unmarked verbs appears, on the other hand, to be primarily a lexical (specifically, argument structure) one. While such a distinction is certainly relevant to the syntax, it is, nevertheless, an expected distinction—one that seems to be found universally in natural language. Rotuman appears to be like English in that verbs need no special morphology to be transitive (or intransitive).

Table 2 provides a synopsis of the data presented in sections 3 and 4. It contrasts unmarked intransitive verbs, unmarked transitive verbs, and marked verbs.

Two initial hypotheses regarding the transitive suffix marker suggest themselves: (1) that the transitive suffix is not a transitivizer at all but rather something that prevents an *intransitive* reading; and (2) that the transitive suffix has no direct bearing on transitivity, specifically on whether or not an object is *present*—the transitivity of the marked verb in those cases being due simply to the verb root itself (as with unmarked transitive verbs).[17]

The first hypothesis would appear to be a relatively straightforward inference from the distribution of objects with marked and unmarked verbs. The one string that seems definitely to be ungrammatical is a verb marked with the transitive suffix that has no object:

> *Subject   Verb-TR   Ø

If hypothesis (1) accurately characterized the function of the so-called transitive suffix, that would account for the ungrammaticality of strings like the one above. It would not, however, explain the remaining behaviors of marked verbs relative to unmarked verbs—for example, why would there be restrictions on the definiteness of the object? In addition, it is difficult to see exactly how the presence of the transitive suffix could prevent an intransitive reading unless it somehow filled the syntactic object position (at some level of representation). On the other hand, if the transitive suffix has nothing at all to do with transitivity, as the second hypothesis suggests, then the obligatory presence of an object has to be explained in some other way. In the end, it seems that a combination of (1) and (2) may be needed to account for the transitive suffix, as we will see from a detailed comparison of marked and unmarked verbs.

Verbs that are marked are distinct from those that are unmarked in the following ways: (i) they allow *only* definite objects; (ii) they are unaffected by irrealis conditions; (iii) they do not allow any type of incorporation (real or otherwise); and (iv) they do not allow applicative formation. The incorporation and detransitivization facts suggest a closer assocation between object and unmarked verb than object and marked verb. If one regards applicative formation as a type of incorporation, then the behavior of marked verbs with respect to applicatives can be subsumed under their behavior with respect to incorporation (just in terms of a close association with any type of complement phrase, a PP, or an NP). These same data indicate that reducing the valency of the verb (as occurs under incorporation and detransitivization) is not an option for marked verbs.

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17. Vamarasi (n.d., cited in Kikusawa) has proposed that the "transitive suffix -*a*" is a marker of 'irrealis' rather than transitivity.

In addition to the verb-object relationships described above, the objects of marked verbs themselves show two peculiar distributions. The first of these is that those objects can only be definite. This would certainly be an unexpected constraint if the suffix were merely a transitivizer (where we would not necessarily expect constraints on the definiteness of the object). Second, while definite objects of unmarked verbs participate in the detransitivization in counterfactuals, definite objects of marked verbs do not. This is especially notable given that the detransitivization process seems to target *only* definite objects—indefinite objects never participate. Both of these points suggest that there is a qualitative difference in the status of the objects of marked verbs relative to the objects of unmarked verbs. Georgopoulos (1998) discusses several cases in Austronesian where definiteness of the object triggers morphological marking on the verb (e.g., an object agreement marker or a transitive marker). Adopting a similar analysis here would be difficult, however, due to the split nature of definite objects just discussed.

Finally, as we have seen earlier, the transitive suffix may attach to incorporated nouns and adverbs as in (48) and (49), repeated here as (50) and (51) for convenience.

(50) fā   ta füt hoi'aki-alū ta   (*fā ta futi-a hoi'ak lū ta)
     man the pull again-TR   rope the
     'the man pulled the rope again'

(51) ia rak'ak tē-an   iris
     he teach   thing-TR them
     'he teaches them things'

In addition, the suffix cooccurs independently with negation, as in (45), repeated as (52) below.

(52) Ia kat   al'aki-a ra   iris.
     he NEG   kill-TR   NEG   them
     'He did not kill them.'

TABLE 2. SYNOPSIS OF SECTIONS 3 AND 4

TOPIC	UNMARKED (INTRANS.)	UNMARKED (TRANS.)	MARKED
Voice Neutral	N/A†	yes	?
Causative (-'aki)	yes	yes	yes
Applicative (-'aki)	yes	yes	no
Counterfactual detrans. (definite objects)	N/A	yes	no
Counterfactual detrans. (indef. objects)	N/A	no	no
Definite objects	N/A	yes	yes
Indefinite objects	N/A	yes	no
Incorporation	yes	yes	no
"Tense" suffixes	yes	yes	no

†   As noted in 3.1, there is no true passive of an intransitive verb.

A combination that is expected from the presence of both of the above types is a negated incorporated sequence with a transitive suffix. This particular combination does not appear to be attested, however.[18]

5.2 ANALYSIS. There is a two-part analysis based on the two hypotheses entertained earlier that would account for the relationship between marked verbs and their objects, as well as for the behaviors of the objects themselves. First, with respect to the nature of the "transitive suffix" (henceforth just "TR") itself, we can account for the *necessary* transitivity of marked verbs by base-generating the TR in object position. This blocks strings that are intransitive (and also any overt direct objects in actual object position). From a historical perspective, this is plausible, being supported by the evidence in Pawley (1973). It is likely that the TR was a pronominal object (in *-a*) that ultimately became a clitic whose host was the verb.[19] As a clitic, movement of the TR is purely phonological (prosodic) movement, not syntactic. For the purposes of the syntax, the TR remains in object position.[20] Under this analysis of the TR, the fact that it appears to be a transitive marker is epiphenomenal—the TR is an object, and verbs with objects are transitive.

Second, we posit that the definite objects of these marked verbs are actually topics base-generated outside the VP in a topic position. We will refer to these as "object-topics" simply to indicate that they are topics coindexed with the element that occupies object position (i.e., the TR). The TR serves to mark agreement with these object-topics. This follows the analysis of Letsholo (2002) for Ikalanga, a Bantu language spoken in Botswana. Letsholo has shown that in Ikalanga, a marker in object position (much like a resumptive pronoun) serves to indicate that the object is in topic position. As in Rotuman, objects in Ikalanga that reside in object position do not trigger these markers (cf. Bresnan and Mchombo 1987 for similar facts in the Bantu language Chicheŵa).

If we now review the data again in light of this analysis, we find that it explains a number of contrasts between marked and unmarked verbs and their "apparent" objects. The failure of such objects to incorporate into verbs marked with the TR now has a straightforward explanation—because the TR occupies the position out of which object incorporation takes place (i.e., object position) and the apparent object does not (it is in a topic position), the apparent object cannot incorporate.

The fact that definite objects of marked verbs do not behave like definite objects of unmarked verbs with respect to detransitivization is due to their status as topics, not objects. As object-topics, these apparent definite objects are in fact outside the

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18. Note that such a combination would require the following sequence of elements: NEG v-obj(indef)-TR NEG obj(def.). Specifically, the verb would have to be ditransitive, with one indefinite object (i.e., an object that can incorporate) and one definite object. Given these conditions, one would not predict many instances of such a combination and we consequently take lack of attestation to be an accidental property of the corpus.

19. See Georgopoulos (1998) and references therein for similar types of reanalysis in Austronesian.

20. In fact, the TR *could* undergo syntactic movement in addition to phonological cliticization, to, for example, the head of AgrO assuming a minimalist framework and given that the TR, itself, was a head (a bare D). Such movement would appear vacuous for our purposes, as nothing overt intervenes between the verb (including its incorporated elements) and the TR.

scope of both negation and the optative, and their differing behavior with respect to detransitivization in counterfactuals is explained.[21]

Finally, the fact that these object-topics are always definite would not be an unusual feature cross-linguistically. It is well documented that definite (true) objects are far more likely to raise out of the VP (a requirement for topichood) than indefinite objects (cf. Diesing 1992). Austronesian languages in particular seem to show a tight connection between definiteness and topicalization of objects, and transitivity and its related verbal morphology.

Schematically, the distinction between marked and unmarked verbs can be represented as follows:

Unmarked verbs (with objects)	$[\text{V NP}_{obj}]_{\text{VP}}$
Marked verbs	$[\text{V-TR}^{i}_{obj}]_{\text{VP}} \text{ NP}^{i}_{topic}$

From a historical perspective, reanalysis of a pronominal object as a type of object agreement, especially in the case where the pronominal object is coindexed with a topicalized NP, is relatively trivial.[22] From a purely synchronic perspective, however, there is evidence that the "transitive suffix" must be analyzed as marking object-topics.

6. CONCLUSION. We have attempted to show in this paper that the Rotuman suffix that Churchward characterizes as transitive is not a marker of transitivity (and probably never had that function). However, while he was perhaps not entirely accurate with respect to the function of the transitivite suffix, Churchward was nevertheless on the right track in insisting that the presence of a form (i.e., suffix) was the critical distinguishing feature between verbs built to the same root. We have contrasted the behavior of the verbs with and without the transitive suffix and suggested that this suffix is more aptly characterized as an object marker signaling a coindexed topic.

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21. A reviewer pointed out that the TR would itself be within the scope of detransitivization (with negation and optatives) and wondered why it failed to undergo detransitivization. There are a couple of possible explanations for this. One is that the TR actually does undergo vacuous movement to the head of AgrO, a possibility mentioned in an earlier footnote. Such movement, if it occurred prior to the detransitivization, would take the TR out of the position for detransitivization. In addition, the clitic nature of the TR could well block such detransitivization—clitics often behaving quite differently from full DP's or NP's. These two scenarios could, of course, be combined with one another, as well.

22. Kikusawa (2000) discusses a somewhat similar case of ambiguity between clitic pronoun and agreement on the verb for Fijian.

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