MOTIVATIONS FOR SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

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The purpose of this paper is to show that there are at least two necessary conditions for the serial verb constructions to emerge in language:

The first condition is that there must be necessary functional prerequisites. These functional prerequisites are: for the SVCs that perform the 'function' of case marking the language may not have inflectional devices to mark the case and if it has adpositions these may not perform the same function as the ones performed by the SVC. If the SVC perform the function of directional markers, then the language will not have the adpositions that have the directional function (ex. Chadic)

The above conditions, while they provide a motivation for the emergence of some devices to mark the semantic functions, do not yet force emergence of the SVCs. In order for that to happen yet another condition must be met: language may not have a coordinated conjunction, equivalent of IE 'and'. This is a necessary prerequisite for the use of two finite forms of verbs in a sequence. In languages that do have coordinated conjunction the emergence of VV is disallowed. Instead one has to use either V-CONJ-V or V SUBORDINATOR V. (e.g. Russian). The evidence in support of my hypothesis is provided by the fact that in all languages that have the SVC there is no coordinate conjunction for clauses (This actually has to be shown!)
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The purpose and scope of the paper

Serial verb constructions (SVC), despite abundant literature that deals with them, still present a considerable interest. Their categorial status is by no means clear (cf. Foley and Olson 1985, and earlier Ansre 1961, Stahlke 1970, Schachter), they are a basis at which several grammaticization processes take place (cf. Lord 1975, Givón 1975, Li and Thompson 1974, Hagège 1975, Lightfoot 1979, Lehmann 1985). Why SVC do occur is asked less frequently, and the usual answer is that the function of the SVC is to increase the valency of the verb (cf. Foley and Van Valin 1984:197, Foley and Olson 1985), to serve as case markers (Givón 1975) or as a 'concatenation of small propositions in which, roughly, a one-to-one correlation is maintained between verbs and nominal arguments' (Givón 1979:220). My purpose in the present paper is to show that SVC's are an attempt to describe a situation under two linguistic constraints: the structural properties of the lexicon and inherent properties of individual lexical items, properties that go beyond the valency. Thus the necessary conditions for the emergence of SVC's are at the same time, pragmatic (description of a situation), structural, and lexical.
The paper will be based on data from Mopun, a West Chadic language spoken in the Plateau State of Nigeria. This will be the first description of SVC's in any Chadic language. As it will become apparent SVC's in Mopun, while sharing some of the functions they have in other languages, do have some functions that have not been noted in other languages. The additional interest of this paper is the fact that, unlike in most Kwa languages, many SVC's in Mopun are not obligatory, which enables a description of SVC's in the process of their emergence.

1.2 Definitions of SVC's

Despite a rich literature on the subject there exists only a consensus of what the SVC is. Usually in lieu of a definition it is stated that it is a construction that resembles some sentence in one of the Kwa or South East Asian languages. Most often, for a construction to be labeled serial verb construction it has to have two or more verbs without any overt linker between them, the verbs must share some (core) arguments, and there must be only one tense or aspect marker for the verbs. Note that this description, which is accepted in a number of works (cf. Foley and Van Valin 1984, Lehmann 1985) may, if not further constrained, include also the auxiliary and modal verbs. As will become apparent in the next section, the distinction between SVC and a construction involving auxiliary or modal verbs is by no means trivial, and although feasible for a particular language, a distinction that would be valid across languages has yet to be produced.

2. CATEGORIAL IDENTITY OF SVC IN MOPUN

2.1. Do SVC's exist in Mopun?

Since there are no descriptions of SVC's in any of the Chadic languages, and the very existence of SVC's may be put in doubt, here are a few examples from Mopun of constructions that are typically given as SVC's in various Kwa languages:
1. pàk mò mà mò dém às mét ngûrûm
   some 3pl also 3pl like dog surpass people
   'Some of them like dogs more than people'

b. wûr sù së d'm màkàràntà
   3m run go-away go-to school
   'He run to school'

c. wûr k' tòñ n-jîñ ji
   3m Habit stay Prep-Jîng come
   'He comes from Jîng' (Mopun)

Compare now 1 with the following typical examples of SVC's in Yoruba:

2. Ayò ní ogbòn jù mí lo
   Ayo has cleverness surpass me go
   'Ayo is cleverer than I am' (Stahlke 1970:64)

b. Àjàò rin lo (si) ilé "'
   Ajao walked go (to) home
   'Ajao walked home' (George 1975:82)

The evidence that mét in 1a. is a verb is provided by the following sentence:

3. nàpûs mét nàlép n-rét
Prep-beauty

'Napus is prettier than Nalep'

In order to provide evidence for the separate SVC category in Mopun one has to show that it differs from at least three other types of constructions that also frequently have no overt marker of juncture between two or more verbs: (1) constructions involving auxiliaries and modals, (2) constructions involving conjoined clauses (3) constructions involving embedding. The discussion will thus provide not only evidence for the existence of SVC in Mopun but it will also provide evidence for the categorial status of SVC as units different from a complex clause and from a simple clause containing just one verb. It will thus provide a support for the claims of existence of such intermediate units found already in Pike and more recently in Foley and Olson 1985.

The relative word order of constituents of a main indicative clause in Mopun is:

\[ M 3 T A' Aux \ V O \]
\[ M T A 1/2 Aux 1/2 \ V O \]

'A' is an aspect marker and 'M' is a modal marker. When the subject is a third person (nominal or pronominal) it precedes the tense marker (T) but when it is first or second person it follows the tense marker.

2.2 Difference between SV and Auxiliary-verb constructions

By the term auxiliary verb in Mopun I designate a group of verbs such that none of its members can occur as the sole predicate of a clause, and that must be always followed by another verb. This set is functionally quiet different from the category Aux in Indo-European languages but rather similar to auxiliaries in other Chadic languages. Some of its members are:
yá 'start', nök 'stop', tąp 'carefully'. Throughout the paper I will be using terms V₁, V₂, and V₃, etc. in reference to the first, second, and third verb of an SVC. The question that must be resolved in the present section is the difference, if any, between an auxiliary
verb and $V_1$ of the SVC. The surface structure of an SVC and a clause with an auxiliary show a certain amount of similarities and some important differences. The similarities first: If a clause does not have a tense marker but has an Aux then the first and second person subjects will always precede the main verb of the clause but in addition they may precede the Aux. Similarly, if there is an SVC construction $V_1$ behaves just like an auxiliary. Example 4 below illustrates use of auxiliaries sé 'go', tén 'already', while example 5 illustrates an SVC with $V_1$ ji 'come'.

4 a. d' n-sé n-siám n-Pankshin
    Remote Past 1sg-go 1sg-descend Prep-P.
    'I went down to P.'

4 b. mù sé mù d'm n-Pankshin
    1sg go away 1pl go to Prep P.
    'We went to P.'

4 c. sé mù d'm n-Pankshin
    1pl
    'We went to P.'

4 d. wùr sé d'm n-P. 
    3m
    'He went to P.'

4 e. k" n-tén n-sé mbisè
    Compl 1sg-already 1sg-eat food
    'I have already eaten'
5 a. ji n-wúl n-Pankshin
   come 1sg-arrive Prep
   'I arrived in P.'

b.

Now the differences. The internal locative argument occurs after the first verb in
SVC. In constructions involving auxiliaries it will never occur after an auxiliary but rather
after the main verb of the clause, e.g.:

6 wúr k‘ tón n-Essen n‘ ji
   3m Compl stay Prep-Essen Def come
   'He had already come from Essen'

7 a. mò yáa kàa à zúl
   3pl start climb Prep mountain
   'They started to climb a mountain'
b. mò nòk kàa à zúl
   'The stopped climbing a mountain'
c. mò tāp siám a gién côteót
   carefully descend to river Adv-carefully
   'They carefully descended to the river

The differences and similarities between an Aux and V₁ can best be explained by the fact
that Auxiliary verbs are the old V₁s that have become grammatical morphemes. There
is in fact a synchronic evidence for this explanation. The auxiliary sé ‘to depart' has a
fuller form sëet when it occurs as the main verb. Thus the set of Auxiliary verbs represent a subset of V₁ that became constrained in their syntactic roles. Functional explanations provided further in this paper about the emergence of SVC's will therefore partially apply to auxiliary verbs as well.

2.3. Differences between modal verbs and V₁

The set of modal verbs differs from the SVC (and Auxiliary) in that both third and non-third subjects precede the modal verbs. In addition, similarly to the Auxiliaries, modal verbs may not be followed by a nominal argument. Here are a few examples of the modal verbs:

2.4. Differences between SVC's and sentential complements

Sentential complement constructions indicating a non-achieved purpose are marked by preposition n-, e.g.:

8  wùr sè  d'm  n-sè  lùà 'x
3m go-away go-to Prep-eat meat goat
'He went to eat [some] goat meat'

Note that in the above sentence the first two verbs constitute a SVC and the third verb is a sentential complement. There are some verb-sentential complement constructions that do not have preposition n- but they differ from SVC in that the first and second person pronouns may occur only before the first verb, e.g.:

9 a. n-ci  sè  dùrì n-jòs
1sg-refuse eat yam  Prep-Jos
'I refused to eat yam in Jos'
b. *cè n-sè dúrí n-jós

10 a. mú ji án kók às
    1sg come pick-up dog
    'We came to pick-up a dog'
    cf. b. *ji mú án kók às

2.5. Differences between SVC's and conjoined clauses

There are at least two structures in Mopun that from the functional point of view
overlap, at least partially, with clauses conjoined by 'and' in English. One is a
construction with conjunction *à. This conjunction in Mopun indicates that the second
clauses remains in a cause-effect relationship with the first clause, or that the event
described in the second clause occurred after the event described in the first clause, e.g.:

11 kát á zlán mò k’ jiráp mó mò ji káat síák
    when Cop boy Pl Conj girl Pl Pl come meet each other
    jè mò yà t”kók k’ n“
    Conj Pl start spoil Conj it
    'When young bopys and girls meet each other they spoil it [the
    language]

This construction is thus different from SVC in the presence of the conjunction. The
second construction that corresponds to clauses conjoined with 'and' in English does not
have a conjunction but instead it has the subject repeated in the second clause, e.g.:

12 mú yà mú t’kók
    1sg cut 1sg spoil
    'We cut and spoiled it'
3. MOTIVATION FOR SVC

3.1. Hypotheses

Recall that in the current literature on SVC the motivation for these constructions is essentially limited to two factors: The first one is increase of valency of a verb (Foley and Olson 1985) and closely related but better formulated, introduction of an additional argument into a clause (Givón 1979). This source would in turn be motivated by the claim that verbs in languages with SVC are inherently limited to one argument (Givón 1979, repeated in Foley and Olson 1985). The second motivation is that SVC's serve as case markers (Givón 1975). Note that both of these motivations, and several others to be found in earlier literature (e.g., George 1975) imply that languages tend to realize the same meanings and that SVC are another means serving the same aim, corresponding in a straightforward way to case markers and/or prepositions of other languages. The analysis of data in Mopun points to more complex motivations for SVC's. Only some SVC's have the function that in other languages is performed by prepositions or case markers. I will call these factors grammatical, because presence or absence of prepositions, i.e. of a lexical category, affects the grammatical system of the language (cf. Hagège 1975). But there are also SVC's whose function is not to introduce an additional argument into a clause, but rather to alter the inherent properties of individual lexical items. I will call these factors lexical. There are finally some SVC's whose presence is motivated by a different approach to the description of a situation. I will call these factors pragmatic. More often than not, individual SVC's will be motivated by a combination of several factors at the same time.

3.3. SVC induced by lexical properties

3.3.1. Types of lexical properties
Two sets of properties will be described. The first set involves constraints on
the nature of movement. The second set contains several features that do not have much
in common.

3.3.2. Properties of verbs of movement

It is often assumed that verbs of movement can occur at the same time with
arguments indicating the starting point and the goal of movement. It is also assumed that
these verb can also encode a manner of movement. The data in Mopun provide an
evidence for a lexically different encoding of movement. Unlike verbs of movement in
I.E. languages, most verbs of movement in Mopun encode only one parameter. The first
one is direction of movement with reference to the source or goal, i.e., certain verbs can be
described only with reference to source and others only with reference to goal. The
other parameter is the spatial orientation of movement, viz., whether the movement is
ascending or descending. The third parameter has to do with the tellic characteristic of
movement, to be more precise it encodes the initiation or the conclusion of the movement.
Since each verb carries only one parameter in order to form a proposition containing
several parameters it is necessary to combine several verbs together. Serial verb
constructions emerge as a result of an attempt to incorporate all those different
parameters within one proposition. In what follows I will describe which verbs realize
what parameters and how they are combined together.

3.3.3. Spatial configuration of movement

At least three verbs encode the relative position of two places involved in
movement, the source and the goal. These verbs are: ḏ'm 'to go on a level', sǐám 'to
descend' and ká 'to ascend'. The functions of these verbs is illustrated on the diagram
below:
These verbs constitute a group because they cannot cooccur with each other in any configuration. Verbs siam and ká are the marked members of the group, the third verb d'm is the unmarked member. It is used not only with respect to the movement on a level but also to any movement for which the speaker does not want to draw attention to the spatial relation of places involved, e.g.:

14 a. yák-s" mù d'm dì n-Germany n'
time-Dem 1sg go there Prep Def
'Then we went there to Germany'

b. d'm n-cin tăr fêr dì
go 1sg-do month four there
'I went and spent four months there'

c. x'r pák mò yöl ká n-pyányá mò tòñ n-pé m'n"
but some 3pl get-up ascend Prep- 3pl stay Prep-place that
'But some of them got up and went up to Pyanya and settled there'

In addition to examples a. and b. above compare the following utterance in which a movement between two places involved: Home town Jipari and Pankshin which is
relatively higher than Jipari: Movement from Jipari to Pankshin is described with ก้า 'ascend'; movement from Pankshin to Jipari is described with quential 'descend':

15  หวานนม้องนิ่ม

return 1pl descend Prep-home
'Ve returned (descended) home

นิ่มก้านิงอีกนั้นล้าสไปโนะโม

morrow Def do again 1sg-ascend ascendant 1sg-take photo Def PI
on the morrow I went up again to Pankshin went up to take photos

หวานนิ่มก้า

return assoc 3 inanim
[and] returned (descended) with [them]

Note that the actual place from which movement originated does not have to be mentioned in a sentence or discourse. And actually the second verb of an SVC does not have to be a verb of movement. Compare the following three examples, the first of which was taken from an actual discourse and the other two were elicited:

16a.  ก้านิงล่ามาอ้ายคำ

3pl ascend put 1sg grade four
'They came up and put me in grade four'

b. ก้านิงล่ามาอ้ายคำ

'They came down and put me in grade four'

c. ก้านิงล่ามาอ้ายคำ

'They came and put me in grade four'
3.3.4. The parameter of directionality

The following diagram represents functions of verbs of movement, with respect to a place of reference. 'The place' can be any place identified in a conversation. It could also be a place at which the speaker is. If it were the place of the speaker, the diagram would have to be slightly modified to exclude the verb wûl 'to arrive'. The glosses of the verbs in the diagram are only approximations and by no means imply a one to one correspondence between verbs in Mopun and their English translations.

![Diagram]

It appears that all verbs of movement allow for at most one overt locative argument, and that several verbs of movement do not allow for the overt locative argument at all.
The verb ji differs from its English counterpart 'to come' in that it admits only one locative argument, the goal. Thus if one were to indicate the source of the movement, one would have to introduce it with another verb, e.g.:

18  wùr tôň á America ji
    3m live Prep come
    'He comes from America'

Similarly to English, when the goal is the place of speech, it is not overtly marked, i.e., ji is not followed by any complement, e.g.:

17   á jì
    2m come
    'Come!'

But unlike in English, it is possible to use the verb ji 'come' with reference to a place at which speaker is not or will not be present. In such a case, however, a SVC construction must be used, with another verb, usually wùl 'arrive' serving as V₂, e.g.:

18   jì n-wùl n-Jos
    come 1sg-arrive Prep-Jos
    'I came to Jos' (Said when the speaker is no longer there).

A similar situation obtains with the verb wà 'to return'. Its inherent argument is the place of speech, i.e., the verb inherently means 'return here'. This verb may, however, occur with an overt argument introduced by a locative preposition. Such overt argument refers to the source from which one returns, e.g.:
19 a. dón wùr wà n-makaranta n-jós
yesterday 3m return Prep-school Prep-Jos
'Yesterday he returned from school in Jos'

b. wùr wà n-Boulder
'He returned from Boulder'

If one wants to express a return to a place other than the place of speech then one of
directional verbs of movement must be used in addition to the verb wà. We have thus
another source of SVC, e.g.:

20 a. fè wùr wà siám n-Jos
temp 3m return descend Prep-J.
'then he returned to Jos'

b. fè wùr wà bà n-Jos
return
'then he returned to J.'

3.3.4. The parameter of manner

Mopun verb meaning 'to run, to jump' and possibly a few others, have
different properties from their Indoeuropean counterparts. These verbs encode the
manner of movement, and similarly to other verbs of movement they do not encode any
other parameter. Thus such verbs cannot be followed by a locative complement, e.g.:

21 *wùr sú n-mákárántà
3m run Prep-school
for 'He run to school'

In order to describe a situation in which more than one parameter is involved along with the notion of running, another verb must introduce this parameter, e.g.:

22 a. wür sù sé.et
    3m run go-away
    'He run away'

b. mò sùé sé.et
    3pl run-Pl
    'They have run away'

3.3.3. The notion of 'via'

The diagram contains several verbs that are not directional but nevertheless induce a SVC participate in a SVC. These verbs are tâ 'stop over', òél 'pass by', and völ 'get up'. The last one is used as a first verb in an SVC to introduce the source of movement. Use of this verb will be discussed further in the paper. If one would like to indicate that the movement constitutes a part of another, larger movement, then verbs tâ 'stop by' and òél 'pass by' will be used. An interesting characteristic of these verbs in an SVC is that they cannot be followed by an overt locative complement. They have an inherent complement, which can be either a place of speech or some other place mentioned earlier in a conversation, e.g.:

23 a. yâk-s' kôr n' mò òél siám n-môpûn
time-Dem rest Def Pl pass descend Prep-M.

'Then the rest of them passed by [a certain place] and went down to M.'
b. tà, mò ji tà dèe n-Pankshin pák-mò ᵇël siám n-Shendam... O.K.
3pl come stop-by stay Prep-P. Quant-Pl pass go-down Prep-S
'O.K., they came and stopped over in Pankshin; some of them passed by
[Pankshin] and went down to Shendam.'

Verb tà may occur as the only predicate of a clause but then it means 'to fall down',
e.g.:

24 a. wùr tà n-yïl
   3m fall Prep-ground
   'He fell down'

   b. *à tà n-pànsìn
   2m stop over Prep
   'Stop over in Pankshin!'

Verb ᵇël occurs as the only argument with the meaning pass but without a locative
argument, e.g.:

25 a. târ ᵇël s"
   month Rel pass Dem
   'The month that passed'

   b. * wùr ᵇël n-pànsìn
   pass-by
   'He passed by Pankshin'
3.3.4 'To leave a place'

Consider the following sentences:

26 a. n-yit tůl sé n-d'm már
leave home go away 1sg-go farm
'I went to the farm from home'

b. n-yit jiň dì
Postp<'go'
'I left Jing'

The question that one has to answer is why, apart from the verb yit 'to leave' we have to have some other verbs in Mopuru for notions that in Indo-European languages are realized by just one verb. The answer is that the verb yit does not take a locative argument. The only possible nominal complement of this verb must be an affected object. Thus sentences with locative complements of the verb yit will all be ungrammatical, while sentences with affected object will be grammatical, e.g.:

27 a. *n-yit tůl
1sg home

b. *n-yit n-tůl
Prep

c. n-yit siwól n-pûén s
lsg money Prep-place Dem
'I left some money over there'
The role of the the SVC here is to allow for the description of a situation in which the notion of leaving a place is involved, a notion that has not been encoded by a separate lexical item in Mopun.

4. **GRAMMATICAL FACTORS INDUCING SVC'S**

4.1. The role of grammatical properties

In the previous sections SVC's were explained as being induced by lexical properties of the individual verbs. But as I have also indicated at the beginning of the paper lexical properties are not sufficient to explain the existence of SVC's, because, SVC's do not have to be the only strategy through which language overcomes, as it were, idiosyncratic features of lexical items. Thus one could claim that individual verbs of movement in I.E. have similar properties to verbs of movement in Mopun and yet there are no serial verb constructions in those languages. While certain grammatical properties will be shown to be crucial and obvious for the existence of SVC's others will not be so obvious.

4.2. Lack of directional prepositions and case inflection

Let us consider again a situation in which somebody comes to place Z from the place Y. For the sake of simplicity let us assume that Y is the place of speech. In English such a construction will have the form

28 X come FROM-Z, e.g.:

29 John came from Nigeria

In Mopun the similar situation will be described by the structure:

30 X tóñ n-Z ji e.g.
31. wür töñ n-túl ji
   3m stay Prep-home come
   'He comes from home'

n- in 30-31 is a locative preposition. The verb töñ occurs otherwise in the language with
the meanings 'be seated, sit down, stay, live', e.g.:

32 a. wür k' töñ à n-jiñ
   3m Habit live Foc Prep-Jing
   'He lives in Jing'

b. wür töñ n-ká bín
   sit on clay bench
   'He sat on a bench'

c. à töñ á nl
   2m Foc where
   'Where did you stay?'

d. wür töñ n-yíl
   ground
   'He sat down'

As has already been pointed verb ji may occur as the only verb in a clause with the
meaning 'to come', e.g.:

33. d“ án n-pánksín fे nálép ji
Past 1sg Prep Consec come

'When I was in Pankshin Nalep came there'

The explanation for why it takes one verb in English and two verbs in Mopun to describe the same situation, apart from individual properties of verb of movement, must also include the following: Locative prepositions in English are portmanteau morphemes indicating at the same time the locative function of the argument they precede and a direction of movement. The locative preposition n- in Mopun has only the grammatical function of marking the following argument as locative. There are no directional prepositions. Thus the verb tôn introduces the source of the movement. Note, that although one could talk here about an increase of valency of the verb ji, one could also talk about the increase of the valency of the verb tôn. There are no compelling reasons to choose between one verb and another as the main verb of the clause. Postulating ji as the main verb, would take the properties of the verb 'to come' in English and its equivalents in other I.E. languages as somehow prototypical. Instead of 'valency increase' function of SVC it better to postulate that it allows for description of a situation in which there are more than two parameters. The grammatical system of Mopun does not have other means to introduce additional participants. The pattern:

34 N tôn n-N V

is used not only for the description of situation 'X come to Y from Z' but also for all other situations involving movement and a source, e.g.:

35 a. wür tôn n-túl d'm

    home go

    'He left home for some other place'

b. wür à n-túl d'm kánò
Foc

'It is from home that he went to Kano'

The evidence that the construction has been grammaticalized is provided by the fact that one cannot substitute any other verb for tón, e.g.:

36 a. *wür sām túl ji
    sleep
    for 'He slept at home came'

    b. *wür tón á n-túl nás án
       beat 1sg
    for 'He beat me at home'

There are other verbs that perform a function of indicating source and goal. Thus the temporal phrase 'from X till Y' is realized in Mopun with the help of two verbs yôl 'to get up' and ji 'to come', e.g.:

37 a. yôl pùs ji n-kà n-s‘x“n
    day Prep-on Prep-night
    'from day till night'

    b. n-cîn cêk n-mát-lú-fên d‘ yôl n-January hâr ji
       lsg-give check Prep-wife-1sg Rel get-up Prep till come
       wûl n-ta December
       reach Prep-month
    'I gave my wife a check [to from January till December
6 wùrk‘ tõnl n-Essen n‘ jì
3m Compl stay Prep-Essen Def come
'He had already come from Essen'

The reason that yöJ, ji, and wúl in the above sentences are not analyzed as prepositions is because they do occur otherwise in the language as verbs.

4.3. The causative function of SVC's

Let us consider now in detail the situation in which one person sends something or somebody to a certain place or person. In English this situation is realized by the structures:

38 a. X SEND Y TO Z
   b. X SEND Z Y

where Y represents the object sent and Z represents the location in a. and the recipient in b. A similar situation in Mopun is realized by at least two structures. The first one is rather similar to English:

39 X L%oP Y n-Z

The person sent is represented by Y and the destination is Z preceded by the locative preposition. If a non-animate object is sent it is introduced by associative preposition k‘. Examples:

40 a. n-lép siär fën n-jíblík
   friend 1sg Prep
   'I sent my friend to Jíblík'
b. pūn fën lép k‘ siwól n‘-an
   father 1sg  Prep money Prep-1sg
   'My father sent me some money'

Since this construction does not represent a special interest I will not deal with it any further. There is, however, another construction that can be used and actually is preferred by most informants. It has the following form:

41 X Lൻ%P Y SIN VERB₃ n-Z

where Y represents the person sent and Z represents a location. If a non-animate object is sent the structure is:

42 X Lﻥ%P k'-.Y SIN VERB₃ n-Z

i.e., the affected object is introduced by the associative preposition k‘. If the destination is not indicated by an inherently locative noun, then, instead of the preposition n- a preposition p‘ and a postposition like particle qį are used. What is of interest to us here is the fact that where English employs one verb to describe a situation, Mopun has three verbs.

The first verb, lép may occur as the only predicate in a sentence with at least two meanings, 'to send' as illustrated earlier, and 'to put (on)', e.g.:

43 a. wūr lép cîrêm n‘ n-diár
   3m grain Def Prep-granary
   'He put the grain into the granary'
b. mò lép wùr á mìskòm mòpûn
3pl 3M COP chief
'They appointed him the chief of Mopun'

The verb lép can take also a locative argument, but interestingly, this argument must be
the source, e.g.:

44 mò lép wàr á n-tûl sin ji n-'ân
3pl Foc Prep-home Prep-1sg
'They sent her from home to me'

The second verb, sin occurs otherwise in the language as meaning 'give', and can take
three arguments, e.g.,

45 a. n-sín mbisè n-wûr
1sg-give food Prep-3m
'I gave him food'

b. wûr yò sin mwès n-'ân
REC-PAST give wine Prep-1sg
'He gave me wine earlier today'

The position of the third verb (VERB3) can be occupied by several directional verbs of
movement, such as, d'm 'go', ká 'climb', siâm 'go down', ji 'come'. There appears to be
no difference in meaning between constructions consisting of lép as the only predicate and
SVC's consisting of three verbs, e.g.: