‘Eating’, ‘drinking’ and ‘smoking’

A generic verb and its semantics in Manambu

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Many of the world’s languages have different forms for the concepts of ‘eating’ (solid food) and ‘drinking’ (liquid). Manambu, from the Ndu family in the Sepik region of New Guinea, has the same verb covering the notions of ‘eating’, ‘drinking’, ‘smoking’ and ‘breast-feeding’. It also refers to destructive processes (‘drowning’ and ‘burning down’), and to the ritual distribution of a mortuary payment. The verb of consumption is similar to a number of general verbs in the language whose semantics is disambiguated by their object arguments. Having one form for all ingestive processes is a feature Manambu shares with many languages of New Guinea. Examples of a similar polysemy outside New Guinea come from a number of Australian languages, all adjacent to each other, pointing towards its diffusability.

Many of the world’s languages have different forms for the concepts of ‘eating’ (solid foods) and ‘drinking’ (liquid) (see John Newman, Chapter 1, this volume, for an overview). However, this is not universal. In a number of languages of New Guinea, the same form covers these concepts. We first discuss the functions and metaphorical extensions of such a verb in Manambu, a Ndu language from the Sepik area of New Guinea (Section 1), and then look at its properties within the context of the Manambu verbs (Section 2). Section 3 addresses the generic verb of ‘consumption’ in a genetic and areal perspective.

1. The verb of ‘consumption’ and its semantics in Manambu

1.1 Eating, drinking and smoking: General remarks

Manambu has one verb ka- referring to the consumption of any substance (independent of its consistency) that involves swallowing, inhaling or going down the

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1. Manambu is spoken by over 2000 people in 5 villages in the Ambunti district, East Sepik Province. It is predominantly suffixing and agglutinating with some fusion, and combines both dependent-marking and head-marking. The subject is always cross-referenced on the verb; another constituent
person's throat. This verb can refer to drinking, as in (1), to eating, as in (2), and to smoking, as in (3):

(1) gu  ka-na-wun
    water  consume-ACT.FOC-1SG.BAS.NP
    'I am drinking water; I have drunk water.' (lit. 'I am consuming water; I have consumed water."

(2) kannagw  ka-na-wun
    food  consume-ACT.FOC-1SG.BAS.NP
    'I am eating food; I have eaten food.' (lit. 'I am consuming food; I have consumed food.'

(3) yaki  ka-na-wun
    tobacco  consume-ACT.FOC-1SG.BAS.NP
    'I am smoking tobacco; I have smoked.' (lit. 'I am consuming tobacco; I have consumed tobacco.'

The exact meaning of the verb ka- is disambiguated by its second argument, that is, the object which can be water, food, or tobacco. The second argument has all the properties of an object. For instance, it can be marked with the accusative case if definite or referential, as in (4):

(4) ka  gu-a: m  ka-k-na-wun
    DEM.PROX.FEM.SG  water-ACC  consume-FUT-ACT.FOC-1SG.BAS.NP
    'I will drink this water.'

The majority of Manambu verbs are S=A ambitransitive – they can be used transitively and intransitively. The verb ka- 'consume' is one of these – it can be used transitively (as in (1)–(4)) or intransitively, as in (5).

(5) bota: y  ka-na-wun
    already  consume-ACT.FOC-1SG.BAS.NP
    'I have already eaten/drank/smoked.'

This sentence does not presuppose any specific object – rather, it describes the act of having consumed food, drink or smoke, depending on the context (and implies that the speaker is satisfied and does not want any more). This is quite unlike many other languages, such as Athapaskan, described by Sally Rice (Chapter 6, this volume), where the choice of ingestive verb depends on the properties of the object, similarly to typical classificatory verbs. And also, unlike many other languages, the ingestive verb in Manambu does not display any quirky transitivity

(object, location, time, or manner) can also be cross-referenced if it is more topical than the subject. A verb marked with action focus and non-past tense can refer to present, recent past and near future (as in (1)–(4)). Manambu has nine case-forms, including accusative-locative case marking referential and definite objects, and dative case (Aikhenvald 2008 provides a reference grammar).
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patterns (see Åshild Naess, Chapter 2, this volume, and Amberber 2002 and Chapter 3, this volume, for cross-linguistic generalizations concerning the transitivity of ingestive verbs). The verb ka- is not used with any directionals. It appears in the first slot of a few verb compounds, ka-kata- (consume-try) 'taste, try and consume' and ka-kuwa- (consume-finish) 'finish consuming, eat/drink up'. In Section 2, we return to its other properties in the context of grammatical subclasses of verbs in Manambu.

If the object is clear from the context, it can be omitted, and no ambiguity arises with regard to which ingestive process is implied. Consider (6). The object gu ‘water’ is understood from the context due to the presence of the verb ‘pour’ and the location, ‘cup’:

(6) kapar wur-sakin ak
     cup+lk+all pour-across.away+seq impv+consume
     'Drink (water) pouring it into the cup (from the bucket);' (or: ‘Drink water having poured it into the cup.’)

The verb ka- can also mean ‘suck, breast-feed’, as in moñi ka- (breast consume) 'be breast-feeding' (of a baby) in (7).

(7) yaba-wa moñi ka-kwa-na
     road+lk-comit breast consume-hab-act.foc+3fem.sgbas.np
     'She usually breast-feeds (as we go) along the road.'

This expression also occurs in the term for 'last child,' ka-tap-sa-moñi (consume-be. closed-lk-breast) lit. 'eat breast for the last time.'

We will now turn to further uses and metaphorical extensions of this polyfunctional verb (§1.2). Further verbs to do with consumption of food and drink in Manambu are considered in §1.3. Then we address the problem of which of the 'ingestive' meanings – if any – is primary (§1.4).

1.2 ‘Metaphorical consumption’ in Manambu

As expected (see John Newman, Chapter 1, this volume), the 'ingestive' verb has a variety of metaphorical extensions. A number of these refer to destructive processes (compare similar, 'destructive', overtones of ingestive verbs in Amharic, discussed by John Newman and Daniel Abera, Chapter 11 of this volume). The verb ka- in combination with gu ‘water’ as its formally unmarked direct object may also mean 'drown', as in (8):

(8) ŋab-a:r yitukwa gu + ka-ku
     Sepik.river-lk+all go-proh water+consume-compl.ss
     kiya-k-na-nin
die-fut-act.foc-2fem.sgbas.np
     'Do not go to the Sepik River, (or else) you will die by drowning.'
That 'consuming water' involves drowning is clear from the context because the negative consequence, 'dying', is overtly mentioned. In fact, the context may be sufficient, as in a warning:

(9)  
\[ \text{gu + ka-} \text{ka-} \text{na-} \text{ni-n} \] 
\[
\text{water + consume-fut-act.foe-2fem.sgbs.np}
\]
'The water is deep (since you can't swim, and the river is deep).'

The grammatical function of 'water' in the expression gu ka- 'drown' is different from that of gu 'water' in gu ka- 'drink water' (exemplified in (1) and (4)). The expression 'drown' is a lexicalized complex predicate which consists of two phonological words but forms one grammatical word (the two components are separated in examples (8) and (9) with +). No constituent can normally intervene between gu 'water' and ka- 'consume', and gu 'water' cannot be modified by an adjective or a demonstrative; neither can it be understood as definite or referential and take accusative case marking. And gu in (8) and (9) cannot be questioned. A question agwa-jap ka-k-na-ni (what-thing consume-fut-act. foe-2fem.sgbs.np) 'What might you consume?' presupposes consuming water, or food, or tobacco, but cannot be answered with something like *gu ka-k-na-wum (water consume-fut-act. foe-1sgbs.np) 'I might drown'. This is unlike the same word gu 'water' as an object of ka- in its conventional meaning 'consume' – this was illustrated in (4).

The verb ka- 'consume' has a destructive extension in another idiomatic expression, yi ka- (fire consume) 'burn completely'. Here, the fire is the transitive subject (A), and the village is the object (O):

(10)  
\[ \text{a-da} \text{i-p o yi-} \text{bata-y ka-d} \] 
\[
\text{dem.dist-masc.sg village fire already consume+3masc.sgbs.p}
\]
'The village has been devoured by fire.'

The verb ka- 'consume' has a destructive extension in yet another context. If a person breaks a taboo concerning the two ritually most important resources, yams and fish, they have to appease the ancestral spirits of yams and of fish, with offerings of a chicken, betelnuts, or a pig. Otherwise the offender would run the danger of falling sick and dying as a result of what Harrison (1990: 49) called 'a grim reversal of the normal role of man and food': the foods the offender had misused would 'eat him' (Harrison 1993: 49):

(11)  
\[ \text{ka-ka-nan-dana-} \] 
\[
\text{consume-fut-act.foe-3plsubj.np-3masc.sgbs.np}
\]
'They will consume (that is, destroy, eliminate) him.'

The verb ka- has an additional culturally important metaphorical extension, embedded within the traditional Manambu system of exchange and payment.
between kinsmen. When a sister's child dies, their mother's kinsmen receive a large payment (nowadays of cash and/or shell valuables) which is supposed to repay them for their gifts and other services to the dead person (including payments for bride-price). The payments are distributed as a follow-up to the Mortuary Feast, *kaka-tap* (consumed-red-be-closed), lit. ‘eating for the last time.’ The name of the feast is transparent: it is indeed conceptualized as ritual ‘eating’ of a relative (see further discussion in Harrison 1990: 35). The bride-price, *nakwa-yu* (woman+LK-greensnail-shell (used as shell money)), or simply *yu-*, is also ‘eaten’, that is ‘consumed’, by the recipient. All the Manambu are proficient in Tok Pisin, the lingua franca of Papua New Guinea, and some know a fair bit of New Guinea English. Whenever they speak about organizing the Mortuary Feast and receiving concomitant payments in Tok Pisin, they use the verb *kaikai* ‘eat’. This confirms that the speakers do conceptualize receiving a payment as tantamount to consuming food.

This idea of ‘consuming’ a payment is reflected in the way a speaker explained who the recipient of a particular mortuary payment was. The verb *ka-* is in bold.

(12)  

\[\text{atawa} \quad \text{kaka-tap} \quad \text{kai-ba-k} \quad \text{aw} \]  

\[\text{thus consumed-red-be-closed give.to.3.pl-compless so} \]  

\[\text{da-ka} \quad \text{amay} \quad \text{ta-ka-di} \quad \text{gakaka-di} \quad \text{day} \quad \text{ya-ku} \]  

\[\text{he-obl+fe-m.sg mother she-obl-pl side+obl-pl they come-compless} \]  

\[\text{day} \quad \text{yu} \quad \text{ka-da-d} \]  

\[\text{they shell.valuable consume-3plsubj.p-3plbas.p} \]

‘Thus as we give ‘Mortuary Feast’, his (relatives), so those on his mother’s side having come, they receive (lit. consume) shell valuables.’

The idea of a particular sub-clan having the right to receive a payment on their sister’s child’s death is usually described as ‘consuming’:

(13)  

\[\text{nakik} \quad \text{ta-ku} \quad \text{day} \quad \text{ka-da-d} \]  

\[\text{blood+dat be-compless they consume-3plsubj.p-3plbas.p} \]

‘Due to their blood (inherited through one’s maternal side), they consume it (the payment).’

One talks about ‘consuming’ money and valuables at the Mortuary Feast, as in (14).

2. A major feature of the kinship system of the middle Sepik area societies, including the Manambu, is the tie between mother’s brother and sister’s child, whereby the mother’s brother maintains a warm, solicitous and quasi-maternal relationship with the nephew (see Harrison 1993: 43, and Forge 1971).
(14) nak-a-na nak-a-na jap mani am san
one-LK-one one-LK-one thing money share put/plant+seq
kə-da-d
consume-3plSUBJ,3p-3plBAS.at
They consume valuables (lit. things) (and) money, sharing them one by one.

'Consuming' a relative has an additional meaning of organizing the Mortuary Feast. The compound 'sister's children' is in the O function:

(15) nakabi kə-kwa-na-dian gabaraw-ñanuwñ aggress
_together consume-HAB-ACT.FOC-1plBAS.NP sister's.child-children
'We consume sister's children all together.' (that is, we prepare the Mortuary Feast together)

In this metaphorical meaning, the verb kə- can be used as a convenient way of summing up a kinship relationship between people without going into too much detail. During my fieldwork in Avatip, the major Manambu-speaking village, I was adopted into a family, and consequently into a clan. Just like all the indigenous groups of the area, everyone in the Manambu community is related to everyone else, and the major issue is to determine exactly how the person, especially a newcomer, fits into the existing system. A store owner in the Avatip village had figured out my relationship to him (before I did) and summed it up as follows:

(16) kus-añ añ-am kə-k-na-wun
finish-2PEM,SG-COMPL.DS you-LK+ACC consume-FUT-ACT.FOC-1SGBAS.NP
'When you die, I will consume you.'

This was said instead of going into a lengthy explanation of what clan he belongs to and what makes me count among his sister's children. There are no more anthropological implications to such ways of expression than there are to the Christian tradition of holy communion, whereby Christ's flesh and blood are metaphorically 'consumed'.

The Mortuary Feast and associated mourning ceremonies are among the few traditional ritual activities still very much alive among the Manambu (see Aikhenvald 2008: 11–13). The Mortuary Feast occupies a central role in Manambu society, providing a 'social glue' for the Manambu within villages and also away from them, for the urban Manambu. This is undoubtedly due to the monetary exchange and potential gain for the participants.

Once the relative has been metaphorically 'eaten' and the payment received, the person is said to be 'over and done with' since the obligation has been fulfilled:
(17) *kaka-tap* kui-ku, *da-ka-m*
consumer +d-cclosed give to 3-p-comp.le ss he-obl-acc
*wukomaymar-ba-l* *aka ya*
forget: red-1plsubj, p-3fem, sgbas, fp there emph
‘Having given him the Mortuary Feast, we fully forget about him.’

This takes us to a further overtone of ‘consume’ – that of something done and forgotten. This is illustrated in (18), from a lament about a foiled marriage (Harrison 1983: 51–2; glossing and translation are mine). The would-be bride remembers the man who promised to marry her, and then adds that this is not something to be forgotten easily. This is phrased as ‘thing to eat with food and forget’ (in bold in the example below):

(18) *wun-ak* *knak* *wa-mans-k* *wun ma* *wukamar 1-lk+dat marry+purp.ss say-2masc, sg-comp, des I neg forget: neg
*kannagwa-wa* *kan* *wukmar-jap-adu* *wa-kar* *wun*
food+lk-comit consume +d-comp forget-thing 3-plnom say-des I
*wukil-jabar* *ra* *ka-tua-ksan*
think-customary sit-fut 1sgsubj, np-2masc, sgbas, np
‘After you said you would marry me, I did not forget (this). Do I want to say that these are things to eat with (one’s food) and forget (lit. these are things forgotten, after having been eaten with food)? I always think about you.’

That is, ‘being eaten with one’s food’ is a sure road to oblivion.

In addition, *kq* can also refer to one’s livelihood: (19) implies that lazy people live off store goods rather than having their own gardens:

(19) *kannagw* *yapi:n* *ka-kwa-na-di* *kaykwag-adu*
food buy+seq consume-hab-act, loc, 3plbs, np lazy-3plnom
‘They live on store goods (lit. they eat food by buying), they are lazy.’

1.3 Other verbs referring to food consumption

Manambu has highly productive verb compounding. Numerous verbs may have been compositional compounds at some point in time; however, nowadays only one part can be recognized as an extant verb. For instance, the compound *gra-maki*- means ‘cry a lot’ and obviously contains the verbal root *gra*- ‘cry’ (which has cognates throughout the Ndu family). The component -maki- is not found in the modern language (or in the other related languages). Two verbs contain *ka*- ‘consume’ as their first component. These are *ka-marki*- ‘swallow’ (the meaning of *marki- is obscure) (see (21)) and *ka-jaba*- ‘spit out’ (the form *jaba- on its own means ‘spit’). The verb *ka* never means ‘bite’: *weto*- ‘bite, sting (of mosquitoes)’ is used in this meaning.
If food is only chewed and not swallowed, the verb *ja*- is used. This verb is S= A ambitransitive, just like the general verb *ka*- 'consume' (see (1)-(5)).

(20) **mas akas ja-kwa-na**  
    betelnut **NEG.HAB chew-HAB-ACT.POC43FEM.SG.BAS.NP**  
    'She never chews betelnut.'

The most typical traditional chewing activity among the Manambu and their neighbours involves betelnut. (This practice is forbidden for some Christian denominations – (20) was said about a woman who is a Seventh Day Adventist, and therefore abhors betelnut chewing.) Nowadays *ja*- also applies to such Western innovations as chewing gum (also chewed, but not swallowed). This verb can also describe chewing food for someone else who cannot do it otherwise, so as to facilitate its consumption. (21) comes from a traditional narrative about Kamkundi, the sole survivor of a bloody battle who had been hiding in the trunk of a sago tree for so long that he could not eat by himself. A Manambu man, Sisaw, found him. In order to save Kamkundi's life, Sisaw had to chew food and put it into his mouth:

(21) **adoka ja-taeya lau-lap ata**  
    DEM.DIST.MASC.SG.TOP chew-COTECP.SS ripe-banana then  
    kui-do-kata ka-marki-do-l  
    give.to.3P-3MASC.SG-POPL.DS then CONSUME-SWALLOW-3MASC.SG.SUBJ.P-3FEM.SG.BAS.P  
    'Having chewed (it) he (Sisawi) gave him ripe banana, then he (Kamkundi) swallowed it.'

Manambu has another verb, *nam- 'chew food in order to put into baby's mouth.' This describes a traditional way in which the Manambu women used to feed babies who could not yet take solid food. The Manambu term for such baby food is *nam-kamnagw* (chew.for.baby-food). This is how it was described:

(22) **kwasa-namagw-sak** **kui-kwa-bana kamnagw**  
    small-children-LK+DAT give.to.3P-HAB-1PLSUBJ.NP+3FEM.SG.BAS.NP food  
    **nam-kamnagw-al**  
    chew.for.baby-food-3FEM.SGNOM  
    'The food we give to small children is the food chewed for babies (and put into their mouth).'

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3. As is typical for many Papuan languages (see Roberts 1997 for an overview), the identity of participants is disambiguated by switch reference: same subject (ss) forms are distinct from different subject (ds) forms. A literal translation of (21) is 'He (Sisawi) having chewed, having given him ripe banana, then he (Kamkundi) swallowed it. Note that *lap* 'banana' is feminine.
Example (21) comes from a version of the story told by a man. In her version of essentially the same story, a woman story-teller used the verb  ꞏnam-  rather than  ꞏan-:

(23)  ada  ꞏnam-tay  lau-lap  ata
dem.dist.masc.sg.top chew.for.baby-cotemp.ss ripe-banana then
give.to.3.p-3masc.sg-compl.ds  ata
consume-swallow.3masc.sgubj.p-3fem.sgbas.p

'Having chewed (it) (as the food is chewed for babies and put into baby's mouth) he (Sawirl) gave him ripe banana, then he (Kamkundi) swallowed it.'

The activity described by  ꞏnam-  is what women do. Consequently, there is little wonder that a woman-narrator opted for this term, and a man employed a more general verb for 'chewing' instead. Various other speakers commented on the fact that the choice of the verb  ꞏan-  was not felicitous in this context.

We can recall that the verb  ꞏan-  never refers to chewing without swallowing. Consequently, a form  kala  – an action nominalization of  ꞏan-  – refers to 'consumption in general', that is, eating, drinking, or smoking, depending on the context (but not to chewing). It does not refer to food. As we will see in the next section, Manambu has three separate forms for 'food'. Two of them can be used as evidence in favour of 'eating' as the central meaning of the verb  ꞏan-  'consume'.

1.4  'Eating' as the central meaning of the verb 'consume'

Manambu has three general terms referring to food of various kinds. The term  kamnagw  (or its variant  kamna: ) refers to food prepared for eating. The form  kamnagw  appears to derive from a compound  kami-nagw  (fish-sago). Fish and sago are the staples of the Manambu diet, so generalizing a combination of these to refer to food in general makes sense.4

4. Iatmul, also from the Ndu family, has a compound  kami-nau  (fish-sago) 'fish and sago'. The noun  nau  'sago' in Iatmul is used in a more general meaning of 'food' (e.g.,  gabi-nau  'morning food, breakfast'), while its Manambu cognate  nagw  is not. (Both nau and nagw can refer to baked goods involving flour, e.g., Iatmul  wlaniba-nau  'white people-sago, Manambu  wani-magw. )

A compound  kami-kamnagw  (fish-food) is used to refer to provisions, or foodstuffs, to be stored, or procured. The term  may-a-kamnagw  (real-lx-food) 'real food' refers to traditional Manambu foods rather than the opposite,  wai-kamnagw  (white.person-food) 'white people's food'; typically store-bought. Saying  kamnagw man:  (food nks) implies the lack of
The term for 'raw food' is kakapat. Synchronously, this form is not segmentable. However, it has a cognate in Iatmul ki-ki-van (eat-drink) 'food' (Jendraschek 2007; Staalsen & Staalsen 1973) (Iatmul v corresponds to the Manambu p whose intervocalic allophone is v; and word-final Iatmul k corresponds to Manambu r). While the Iatmul -van is a productive derivational suffix, its Manambu cognate -pat is found only in this term. Interestingly, the word for 'raw food' contains ka- 'consume' in one of its senses, that of eating.

The third term ka:p refers to protein food, such as game or fish. Speakers conceive of this word as unsegmentable. Etymologically it is a compound consisting of ka- 'consume' and jae:p 'thing'. Once again, the 'eating' sense ka- is the one occurring in this, now fossilized, compound. The fact that the root ka- has the meanings of 'eating' in the two now lexicalized derived nominal forms may serve as a piece of evidence in favour of 'eating' – rather than 'drinking' or 'smoking' – being its central meaning.

Along similar lines, the verb k‡ in Iatmul means 'eat, drink, smoke' (the exact meanings are disambiguated by the context). But in the two extant terms for 'food' this same root refers to 'eating': Iatmul ki-ka-da (eat-drink-thing), ki-ki-va:k (eat-drink-er) 'food'. (The two terms appear to be full synonyms: Jendraschek 2007.)

Manambu has no general word for a drink – the word gu 'water' covers all liquids, including beer and wine, and even petrol. Similarly, there is no generic term for 'smoke' – the word yaki 'tobacco' is used. The root ka- does not occur in any derivation with the meaning of 'drink' or 'smoke'. This confirms our suspicion that 'eating' is indeed its central meaning.

2. The status of the verb of consumption in Manambu

Manambu has a large open class of verbs which fall into several subclasses depending on their transitivity and also on their semantics. We have seen the verb ka- 'consume (eat, drink, smoke)' is S=A ambitransitive. The class of verbs is open to loans (see Aikhenvald 2008: 605–618). It is not open by derivation: in other words, Manambu has no word-class-changing mechanisms which would result in a derived verb.

protein food (on several occasions, this was said when there was plenty of sago, rice and bananas in the house, but no meat or fish).

5. An alternative term for alcoholic drink is either wali-gu 'white person’s water' or kuprapa gu 'bad water', or even kuprapa-saprapa gu 'really bad water', depending on the speaker’s attitude.
Manambu also has a closed subclass of a dozen verbs with fairly generic semantics. Different semantic overtones for these verbs are achieved through the choice of a nominal complement, or a directional, or a part of a verb compound. Generic verbs are versatile and highly frequent (in terms of type and in terms of token in texts of all genres). Five verbs used as auxiliaries, as support verbs (or light verbs) with nouns, as copulas and as lexical verbs are: *ta-* ‘become’, *be’, ‘exist (vertical position)’ (in a location); *have’; *re-* ‘be in/at’, ‘exist (horizontal position)’; *kwa-* ‘be in/at’, ‘exist (in general, or in multiple locations)’; *yi-* ‘do, be’; and *kur-* ‘do, get, become (fully)’.

Other generic verbs — all of them ambitransitive — cannot be used as copulas or auxiliaries. They have a fairly general meaning on their own; but the exact meaning always has to be specified by an object or a directional marker. For instance, the verb *sa-* can mean ‘plant, call, move’, depending on the object. If the object is ‘garden’ or any garden produce, such as *kapayawi* ‘sweet potato’, it refers to planting, e.g., *kapayawi* *sa-* ‘plant a sweet potato’. If the object is a song, a name or a word, it refers to ‘calling’ or ‘singing’, e.g., *ga:m* (serenade) *sa-* ‘sing a serenade’, *wayopi* (address term) *sa-* ‘use an address term’ (also see (14)). If used intransitively, it usually means ‘move’, especially in combination with directional suffixes, e.g., *sa-*tay-tay- (generic.verb-to.side-to.side) ‘move back and forth’. It can also occur in lexicalized complex predicates, such as *bas sa-* ‘ask’ where *bas* means ‘first’ when used independently. Other verbs with similar properties include *kar/-kra/-ka-* ‘bring, carry, take’, *ku-* ‘put’, *ta-* ‘hit, move’ and *taka-* ‘put, stay’. In addition, Manambu has a catch-all pro-verb *magi-* ‘do whatever, be whatever’ used whenever the speaker cannot remember the appropriate specific verb, or if the speaker chooses not to specify the exact manner of action. Generic verbs cannot be substituted with *magi*- The verb of consumption *ka-* shares two major features with generic verbs. Firstly, its exact meaning is determined by its object argument. Secondly, *ka-* cannot be replaced by the pro-verb *magi*.

Having a closed class of verbs with fairly general semantics is a feature Manambu shares with many Papuan languages of New Guinea, such as Kalam (Kalam-Kobon: Pawley 1993). Unlike Manambu, Kalam has only about 130–140 verb roots, of which 30 roots are the most frequent. Each of these has numerous senses, and the verbs combine together in serial verb constructions consisting of a generic verb preceded by one or more verb stems and one or more nominal or adverbial complements” (Pawley 1993: 96). Despite the fact that “the object or a nominal or an adverbial complement in a broader sense carries the more specific meaning, the verb stem is not empty of meaning” (Pawley 1969: 30). Numerous Papuan languages from most areas of New Guinea have a closed set of similar, fairly generic verbs which occur with nominals (often in the object function) (see the preliminary overview in Lang 1975: 181).
The typical meanings of such generic verbs include 'do, say', as in Asmat (Asmat-Kamorro: Drabbe 1959: 25); 'do, 'say' and 'go' as in Mianmin (Ok: Smith & Weston 1974: 85); 'hit', 'do, 'be' and 'pierce' in Benabena (Gahuku-Benabena: Young 1964: 78–80). In Enga (Lang 1975: 178) – and a number of other languages from the East New Guinea Highlands family to the southwest of the Sepik River Basin where Manambu is spoken – the verb of consumption has been analyzed as a generic verb. In Kewa (also from East New Guinea Highlands: Franklin 1971: 74) the verb 'eat' has been analyzed on a pair with generic verbs such as 'speak', 'bring', 'emit', 'hit' and 'make'. Similar examples are found in Melpa (Lang 1975: 189) and Kuman (Lang 1975: 200), from the same family. This typological similarity takes us to the next section.

3. 'Verb of consumption' in Manambu: Genetic and areal perspective

The polysemic of ka- 'consume' in Manambu [1] is not an innovation. Most Ndu languages use a cognate form to refer to both eating and drinking, e.g., Iatmul [2] ki- (Jendraschek, p.c.), Ambulas [3] ka (Kundama et al. 1987: 29–30), Boikin [4] (Kwusas dialect) ka (Laycock 1965: 165). Boikin (Yengom dialect) has a form tiko (Freundenburg 1975) which translates as both 'eat' and 'drink'. This same form means 'smoke' in Iatmul and Ambulas (we have no information about other languages). The same polysemic is found in some unrelated neighbouring languages, Kwoma [5] (Kwoma-Nukuma family) which has been in contact with Manambu for a long time has one verb a 'ingest' to refer to eating and drinking (Bowden 1997) (there is, however, a different root for 'smoke').

One verb covers the meanings of eating and drinking in a number of other New Guinea languages. Within the Sepik area, it is found in Alambilak [6] (Sepik Hill family; Les Bruce, p.c.) – a language which shares a number of areal features with Manambu and other Ndu languages (Aikhenvald forthcoming). The same polysemic has been recorded for two languages from the Lower Sepik

6. The approximate location of the languages cited here is given in the Map. Manambu has been assigned number 1. All other numbers are given in square brackets after each language name.

7. The data presented here were based on a query on the Papuanist List (October 2006). I am grateful to Les Bruce, Borut Tehan, Darja Hoeningman, Alan Rumsey, Karl Franklin, Ken Sumbuk, Andrew Pawley, Lila San Roque, Lise Debrin, the late Cindi Farr, Ngawae Mito, Carol Priestley, Matthew Dryer, John Roberts, Colin Filer, Lourens de Vries, Ross Bowden, and Gerd Jendraschek for providing invaluable information on the languages of their expertise. I am indebted to Nicholas Evans, Mary Laughren and David Nash for answering my questions about Australian languages, and to R.M.W. Dixon for incisive comments on various issues in this paper.
do, say, as in Asmat Miammin (Ok: Smith 1971: 74) and other languages of the Sepik River has been analyzed as "speaking" (Lang 1975: 189) and "drinking" (Bowden 1974).

Map: Manambu has been... each language name.


A number of languages from other families and areas have the same polysemy: these include Binanderean languages Orokaiva [16] (Lise Dobrin, p.c.), Korafe [17] and [18] (Cindi Farr, p.c.) from Oro Province, Biangai [19] (Goilalan: Ngawae Mitio, p.c.), from Morobe Province; Koromu [20] (Evapia group, Madang, Rai Coast: Carol Priestley, p.c.), and Amele [21] (Gun family: John Roberts, p.c.) from Madang Province; a number of Torricelli languages, including Yahang [22] (Colin Filer, p.c.), Arapeshan languages [23] (Lise Dobrin, p.c.), and Walman [24] (Matthew Dryer, p.c.), at least one Sko language, Roko-Rawo [25] (Matthew Dryer, p.c.), all from Sandaun (West Sepik) Province.

The distribution of this polysemous pattern goes beyond the Highlands area, involving numerous Sepik and Torricelli languages. It has also been attested in Inanwatan, from Bird’s Head Peninsula area in West Papua (Lourens de Vries, p.c.). However, this polysemy is not ubiquitous. It is absent from Sare (also known as Kaprimal [26a]), a language from the Sepik Hill family, closely related to Alambak (Ken Sumbuk, p.c.). Two languages from the Ndu family distinguish different forms for ‘eat’ and ‘drink’. Yeloge (or Kaunga [27a]: Laycock 1965: 165) has ka ‘eat’ (a reflex of the Proto-Ndu form ‘consume’) and na ‘drink’ (etymology unknown). Gala [28a] distinguishes ‘eat’ (ka- or kaa-) and ‘drink’ (dige-/diga-) (my fieldnotes; Akkhenvald 2008; pace Laycock 1965: 165). This can be considered a Gala innovation.9

We can conclude that the apparent lack of formal differentiation between ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’ in Manambu is a feature shared with many other related languages. Having the same form for ‘eat’ and ‘drink’ could well be an areal feature of the island of New Guinea as a whole. Interestingly, this polysemy has not really infiltrated any variety of Tok Pisin in the Sepik area.10

8. Which of these languages use the same root for smoking or chewing is a matter for further investigation.

9. The Kwoma expression ukura (lit. water ingest) ‘drink’ looks suspiciously similar to the Gala verb meaning ‘drink’. Since there was a considerable amount of contact between the Gala and the Kwoma, the Gala form may well be a borrowing.

10. The expression kaikaim wura (lit. eat/bite water) to mean ‘drink’ occurs in the Tok Pisin part of the SIL questionnaire used for Bolokin (Yengguru variety) in Freudenburg 1975.
Examples of a similar polysemes outside New Guinea come from a number of Australian languages. The distribution of languages which employ a single lexeme for ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’ is determined by genetic and areal boundaries (see classification and the discussion of areal distribution in Dixon 2002). One form for ‘eat’ and ‘drink’ is found in some languages of the Yapa subgroup of the Northern Desert Fringe genetic grouping, e.g., Walpiri ngarni (Mary Laughren. p.c.; Menning 1981: 151, 155) and Ngardi (or Ngari: Menning 1981: 87) ngarnanta.11 (But note that Warimnaps, from the same subgroup, has different forms for ‘eat’ and ‘drink’.) Of the neighbouring languages only Mudbara (Menning 1981: 79) and Walmajarri (Menning 1981: 127) have the same term for ‘eat’ and ‘drink’ (Mudbara nga-njia, Walmajarri nganyja). Other languages in the same subgroup have different lexemes.

Of the four languages of the Maningrida subgroup only two have one lexeme covering ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’: Na-Kara (Eather et al. 2005: 6, 17) has verbs bara ‘eat, drink, bite’ and also djia ‘eat, drink’, and Burarra (Glasgow 1994: 113) uses bay for ‘eat, drink, bite, smoke.’ This same polysemes has been attested in the adjacent Yolngu languages, Djapu (Morphy 1983: 183) luka ‘ingest: eat, drink, smoke’, Ritharru (Heath 1980: 204) luka- ‘to eat, to consume, (occasionally) to drink’ and Gugapuuyu (Anonymous n/d) luka ‘eat, drink, take’. These facts point towards areal diffusability of having a single verb of ‘consumption’.

A single cover term for ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’ may have different metaphorical extensions in different languages. Ku Waru (Alan Rumsey, p.c.) uses the verb ‘consume’ for ‘burn completely’ – just like Manambu (see (10)). But while in Manambu ‘the man drowned’ translates as ‘the man consumed water’, the same meaning in Kyaka Enga translates as ‘water consumed the man’ (Draper & Draper 2002: 281). Manambu, Enga and its relatives share the generic character of the verb of consumption. However, the details of usage differ. Expressions involving the verb ne- ‘consume’ in Enga (Lang 1975: 103, 178) include ‘steal, be difficult, afflict, be sick’ and so on. None of these are found in Manambu.

This aberrant usage (John Burton, p.c.) may reflect a nonce calque from Boikin itself. Carol Priestley (p.c.) reports that she heard kaikai wara used by native-like speakers of Tok Pisin in the Highlands in the 1970s.

11. David Nash (p.c.) suggests that the Warpiri verb is etymologically ‘eat’ rather than ‘drink’.
12. In Binjap Gun-wok or Gunwinjgu, from the adjacent Gunwinjgu-Gunbarlang group, and in Dalabon, from the Far East Arnhem Land group, ‘drink’ is formed by incorporating the noun for liquid into the root meaning ‘eat’ (Nicholas Evans, p.c.). Kayardild, a Tangkic language in the same area, has a form djaja which means ‘eat’ but can include drinking as well (Evans 1992: 43 and p.c.). But closely related Yukulta (Keen 1983: 301) and Lardil (Leman 1997) have different lexemes for ‘eat’ and ‘drink’.

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Unlike other Papuan languages described so far, Manambu provides evidence in favour of one central meaning of the verb of consumption. The words for ‘food’ indicate that ‘eating’ is its central meaning. Further evidence in favour of differentiating eating, drinking and smoking comes from the words for ‘hunger, be hungry’, ‘thirst, be thirsty’ and ‘(have) desire to smoke’. All these concepts are lexically differentiated in Manambu. The word for ‘hunger’ is kəm typically used with the verb yasa– ‘feel a desire’. The ways of saying ‘be thirsty’ are gu yasa– (water feel a desire) or kwad yasa– (neck feel a desire). And for ‘(have) desire to smoke’ one says yaki yasa– (smoke feel a desire). Other Ndu languages also distinguish ‘hunger’ and ‘thirst’ (compare Ambulas kaadé ‘hunger’, gutak ‘thirst’; Kundama et al. 1987: 28, 24; latmul wudi ‘hunger’, gu kaka (lit. water consuming) ‘thirst’; Gerd Jendraschek, p.c.). (Along similar lines, Warlpiri distinguishes yarrunjuku ‘hunger’ and purraku ‘thirst’: Mary Laughren, p.c.) This is unlike Awiyakay, an Arafundi language from the Septik area, where one term covers ‘eat’, ‘drink’ and ‘smoke’, and another term refers to both hunger and to thirst (Darja Hoenigman p.c.). How likely is a language with a generic ingestive verb covering eating, drinking and smoking to extend this ‘underdifferentiation’ into the domain of hunger and thirst? The question remains open for the time being.

A final typological observation is in order. Dixon (1999: 331–2) proposed a semantic typology of verbal meanings, based on two parameters: (A) ‘verbs are taken to describe a kind of action with respect to the (articulation of) types of participants that are involved; or (B) verbs are taken to describe a kind of action per se.’ The Girramay dialect of Dyirbal has three specific transitive verbs of eating, depending on the nature of the foodstuff being consumed: rubima- ‘eat fish’, burnyja- ‘eat meat’, and namba- ‘eat vegetables’. This, and also the Athapaskan languages (Sally Rice, Chapter 6, this volume) are examples of the (A) type. In contrast, Jarawara, an Arawá language from southern Amazonia, has a number of transitive verbs of eating, which describe the nature of action rather than the type of object involved, e.g., -kaba- ‘eat where a lot of chewing is involved (e.g., eat meat, fish, sweet corn); jome- na- ‘eat where little or no chewing is needed (e.g., eat an orange or a banana, also used for swallowing a pill), komo- na- ‘eating which involves spitting out seeds’ and bako- na- ‘eating by sucking (e.g., watermelon, sugar cane).’ This is an instance of the (B) type.

Characterisations (A) and (B) are better viewed not as polar alternatives, but as the ends of a continuum. Manambu occupies a mid-way position on this continuum: the verb itself loosely defines the action which is further specified with the object argument. Additional verbs are available to specify the manner in which the action is performed (in the domain of consuming food or drink these include ja- ‘chew’ and nam- ‘chew (food) and put it in baby’s mouth’).
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Abbreviations

A = transitive subject; ACC = accusative; ACT.FOC = action focus; ALL = allative;
BAS.NP = basic cross referencing set non past; BAS.P = basic cross referencing set past; COMIT = comitative; COMPL.DS = complete different subject; COMPL.
SS = complete same subject; GOTE.MP.SS = cotemporary same subject; DAT = dative; DEM.DIST = demonstrative distal; DEM.PROX = demonstrative proximal;
DER = derivation; DES = desiderative; EMPH = emphatic; FEM = feminine; FUT = future; give.to.3.P = give to third person; HAB = habitual; IMPV = imperative; LK = linker; masc = masculine; NEG = negative; NOM = nominal cross referencing; O =
object; OBL = oblique marker; PL = plural; PROH = prohibitive; PURP.SS = purpose
same subject; RED = reduplication; S = intransitive subject; SEQ = sequential; SG = singular; SUBJ.NP = subject marking cross referencing set non past; SUBJ.P = subject marking cross referencing set past; TOP = topic.

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