Chapter 7

CONCLUSION
Meaning Sustains Form

1. *Introduction*

In Chapter 1, we said that we wanted to place Yogad at the center of what followed. And for the most part, we have done so. Yogad seems to us to be an interesting language. The interest which it generates, however, is a product of the engagement of our expectations with an experience that does not precisely match them. The fact of interest lies as much in us as it does in Yogad. And the encounter affords us an opportunity to examine ourselves and perhaps to refine our expectations.

2. *Types of languages*

Some of the observations that result from our description of Yogad are summarized here. Yogad has only two ROLES, neither of which conforms to the 'Agent' and 'Patient' semantics we might expect. In place of that, there are two ROLES which conform to the content of EVENTS in identifying the PARTICIPANT in which the initial appearance of the EVENT is detected, or in identifying the prominent PARTICIPANT involved after its eruption. Consistent with the absence of the content of 'Agent' and 'Patient' ROLES is the absence from Yogad of the relevance of transitivity. Additional consistency with this configuration is the absence of a clearcut grammar of 'causation'. What we find in its place is a manipulation of the locus of ERUPTION. The semantic contour of EVENTS continues to dominate the organization of the grammar in providing the frame for a finer articulation of the EVENT – PARTICIPANT relations as expressed by the VOICE affixes and their combinations.

In a broad sense, Yogad appears to have given itself over to EVENTS, allowing them to order the organization of PROPOSITIONS, much more so than other languages, which have a stronger admixture of the contribution of the PARTICIPANTS. Bella Coola (Salishan), which centers much of its propositional content about the notion of CONTROL, the degree of it and who has it, may be a candidate for a language to be placed in opposition to Yogad. In contrast with Yogad, Bella Coola is much more articulated in terms of the

PARTICIPANT's contribution to the PROPOSITION.[1] These two extremes may describe a dimension along which languages can now vary, and which may therefore generate a typology.[2]

Because such a typology would be a functional/cognitive one, we would not expect it to be discrete; and languages would be more or less the one or the other. As EVENTS assume prominence, there are reflections of this in the constitution of ROLES and in the constitution of VOICE. VOICE of the first type (as described in Chapter 4, section 4) recedes and VOICE of the third type (of the sort prevalent in Yogad) advances.[3] Alabama (Muskogean) may be a language which inclines towards the direction of Yogad.[4] The fluidity between EVENT and PARTICIPANT is again supported by Yogad. In Chapter 2, we described the determiner system of Yogad and the gradual emergence of well-formed PARTICIPANTS from the stuff of EVENTS, the best-formed being signalled by *yu* and *si*, and the least best-formed (although more PARTICIPANT-like than otherwise) marked by *ya*. The other determiners marked the grades as a PARTICIPANT emerged from the unformed and unbounded content.[5]

In what follows, we depart from Yogad and turn briefly to explore the nature of what we may have learned from this study.

3. *Nature knows no abstractions*

Nature knows no abstractions, yet linguistics is founded on them, and discussions of language turn almost entirely upon debates concerning them. We suggest that that mode of conceptualizing language is in error and that it seriously distorts our understanding of the phenomenon. It misleads us; and an

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[1] Cf. Davis (Ms.), Davis & Saunders (1986, 1997), and Saunders & Davis (1982).

[2] It is interesting to note in this context that both languages would normally be identified as VSO.

[3] It is important **not** to think of this in terms of cause and effect, taking some increasing dominance of EVENT as the origin of the remaining properties. The depiction of the typology here takes it to be a matter of either-or, but it is an open question whether a language could maintain itself at both extremes, or with (some) properties of both.

[4] Cf. Davis & Hardy (1987, 1988) and Hardy (Ms.). Unlike Yogad, Alabama would be an SOV language.

[5] Ilokano does this in a similar manner, but using other semantic stuff. Cf. Baker (1994). It may be interesting to note that DETERMINACY in Bella Coola, a language of the type opposed to Yogad, seems not use its grammar in marking the steps into PARTICIPANCY. Cf. Davis & Saunders (1975a, 1975b, 1976).

index of that error is the very fact that Yogad **is** interesting.6

We introduce an analogy to make our suggestion appear less radical. Consider schools of fish and flocks of birds. It seems common sense to accept that schools and flocks exist and that they are not abstractions. After all, the fish all move in the same direction (much more so than not), and they seem coordinated in changing direction at the same time (again, much more so than not). We do not see fish in a school colliding with each other. But as far as nature (i.e., the universe minus our watching it) is concerned, schools do not exist. Over time, individual variation in fish behavior has changed in an environment of predation so that each individual fish responds to its neighbor to align their motions. The value of such behavior lies in the fact that fish which behave in this way are less probably the victim of a predator than an individual fish by itself. Overall, fish which behave in this way will live longer than fish which do not ... in the same environment. But where now is the 'school'? In nature, without the imposition of our observations of the phenomenon, what we have are individual fish, an environment of predation, and a way of behaving. The 'school' is no longer there. It exists as an abstract projection of our way of understanding the experience of fish behavior.

One of the conclusions that we might draw from our study of Yogad is that there exists an elaborated notion of EVENT which would be the amalgamation of the dimensions summarized in the several figures of Chapters 4 and 5. All the pieces of Yogad which we have examined appear to refer to some single (though complex) idea of what an EVENT is like. In the reverse direction, reference to what such an EVENT is like allows us to feel more comfortable with the variety of those samples of Yogad. In relating the examples, the 'master' EVENT becomes part of the phenomenon. It might be possible, if we were clever enough, to construct a comprehensive figure that would incorpo-rate all those aspects of VOICE and EVENTS which we have uncovered. But having done that, we should then ask what we have gained. What is the nature of such a description? If the figures presented in Chapters 4 and 5 (and elsewhere) are abstractions, this would be the master abstraction. Where does it exist?

Our response is that it does not. It exists no place except on the page where it is drawn. The notion of EVENT elaborated in that way seems so plausible and so useful that we want it to exist someplace; but we believe it

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6 All this assumes, of course, that some description of the sort we have provided is more or less acceptable or plausible. If it is insisted that Yogad has 'agents', 'patients', 'subjects', 'transitivity', 'ergativity', 'active', or some alternative set of categories, then the language will be less interesting. But, of course, it will be so because it will have been reduced to (forced into) some configuration of the expectations we had in entering the book on page 1.

would be a mistake to attribute it to any speaker of Yogad (or to the community of speakers). In place of an integrated notion of the sort we find so comfortable, there exist bits and pieces. Yet the array is not random. We are convinced that there is pattern when fish school and we are convinced that there is pattern when Yogads speak. But the pattern of Yogad is 'distributed' (in the manner of Fox (1994) and of some of the other papers in Davis (1993/1994)). In the Chapter 1, we asserted that Yogad provided an illustration of the belief that morphosyntax is centered about lexical items. It is that condition that we are dealing with here. In place of a single notion of EVENT, there exist many EVENTS, each constituting, somehow, a piece of a whole which does not exist anywhere. Their interrelatedness, like the coordinated movement by the fish, prompts us to cast our understanding of them in terms of an abstract construction, the '?' of Figure 1 or 'school'.

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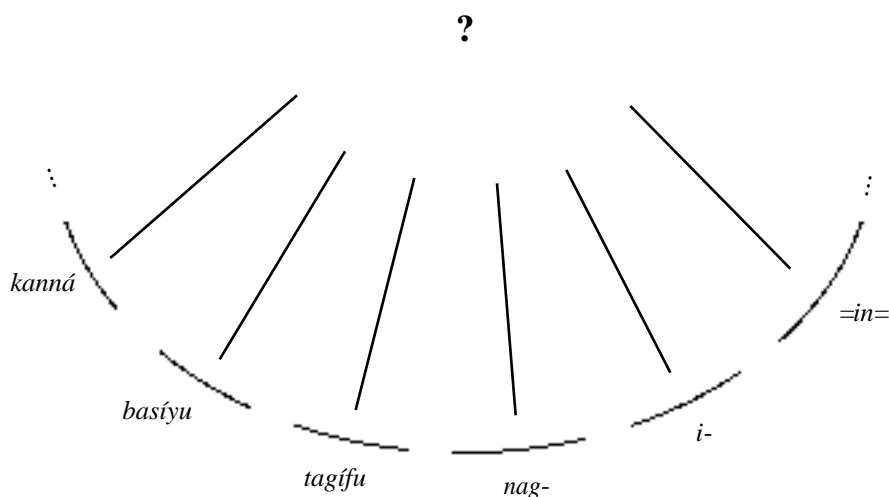kanná

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Figure 1: *The possibility of a 'master' EVENT.*

In place of the abstraction, there exist individual EVENTS with individual but 'coordinated' semantics. We have, for example, summarized the suffix *-an* as LIMIT,[7] although *-an* has accommodated to its environments so that it (singly
or in combination with other affixes) may express or contribute to the expression of any of the following in Table 1:

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[7] Although the discussion below is cast in terms of one affix, it should be interpreted as applying to the language (any language) *in toto*.

Patient	*...-an*
Direction	*...-an*
Source	*...-an*
Beneficiary	*i- ... -an*
Location	*nag- ... -an*
Location	*pag- ... -an*
Surface	*... =in= ... -an*
Partial	*na- ... -an*
	ma- ... -an
	... -an-an
'Struck by'	*na- ... -an*
Adjacent	*ma- ... -an*
etc.	

Table 1: *Some senses of -an.*

There may not exist an abstract sense to *-an* which is the common denominator of these specific manifestations.[8] What a speaker knows in some way is what they have heard in Yogad conversations and whether they can make sense of the current candidate Yogad utterance (whether a novel form or one that seems to have been heard before). A speaker is sensitive to how individual EVENTS may reach their ultimate EXHAUSTION, but that expiration may be different for each EVENT and have endless (and as yet unexploited) aspects. Cf. the 'etc.' in Table 1. In one, e.g. *kik-karéla-n*, the expiration may be a literal limit, in this case the finish line which produces the sense of a competition. And in another, the EXHAUSTION may be the last PARTICIPANT in the EVENT to feel is effects, e.g. *Pínta-n yu binaláy* 'Paint the house'. In a third, e.g. *Damá-n yu wígi* 'Walk to the left', it is a direction. And in yet another, the aspect of the EXHAUSTION that becomes prominent is the EXHAUSTION of the EVENT itself as it loses its force and effects only a partial change, e.g. *Ary-an-**án** ku yu nagyán tu kahón* 'I'll remove **some** of the contents of the box'. Here we have two occurrences of *-an*. With only one occurrence, e.g. *Ary-**án** ku yu nagyán tu kahón*, the entire contents of the box are to be taken out, and with two, the second (?) signals that some of the contents will remain. In life, events have a very large number of ways in which they may play themselves out and fade from existence. Since the EXHAUSTION of an EVENT has multiple facets, there is no reason that *-an* cannot repeat and express some of that richness in the context. There is no **pre**scribed boundary to what portions of that experience may enter into

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[8] This list is still not truly 'specific'. There is still missing the contribution of each EVENT to be added and also the historical context into which the utterance of each form is embedded.

prominence and then be expressed by *-an.* There is only a recollection of how it has happened before. It is as if experience exists and some organization is made (has been made) of it so that it is intelligible; and then *-an* simply incorporates current experience by referring it to some area of that history. Since experience cannot be extracted from itself, i.e., 'abstracted', the pattern of *-an* can not be separate from each historical portion of one's life to which it has pointed; *-an* is contained within experience, in what a speaker knows about each occurrence. Rather than having some prior existence, **pre**ceding and channeling the possible usage of *-an*, LIMIT (and the other meanings we have invoked in our description) is the outcome of a multitude of individual encounters with the language. This re-evaluation is parallel to relocating the notion of 'school' in each fish.

The relation between *-an* and experience is a symbiotic one. The affix provides the means for assembling and relating experience into some connected whole, so that experience is not, from moment to moment, unfathomable; and experience-made-not-strange in turn provides the affix with what we call its 'meaning', which is in turn, on the next occasion, projected onto the next experience relating it to the larger body of remembered experience, rendering it familiar and manageable. And so on. What we perceive as the affix *-an* is not a thing, but a **way** of making things sensible.

Denaturing the phenomenon engenders a Drang nach Gesamtbedeutung, a perceived need for definitions, features, and then a need for metaphor to explain the connections among the dissected pieces. For the purpose of exposition, we have acceded to this drive in our use of figures and terminology such as EXHAUSTION, LIMIT (and even ROLE, VOICE, and EVENT), but the lesson of Yogad seems to be that content is all there all the time; and in one instance one portion will be referred to and at other times, another portion will be used. In the end, Yogad forces us to reconsider the nature of language.