

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI "L'ORIENTALE"
DIPARTIMENTO ASIA, AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

Studi Africanistici
Serie Ciado-Sudanese

7

**SELECTED PROCEEDINGS OF THE
SYMPOSIUM ON WEST AFRICAN
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University of Naples "L'Orientale"

Naples 27-28 March 2014

Edited by

GIAN CLAUDIO BATIC and SERGIO BALDI



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On Bure verbal morphology and TAM system

Gian Claudio BATIC
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Abstract

Cet article vise à illustrer le système aspectuel et la morphologie verbale du bure, une langue tchadique parlée dans le village de Bure (État de Bauchi, Nigéria). Le bure présente trois aspects verbales: le perfectif, l'imperfectif, et le neutre (neuter). La phrase verbale est constituée d'un sujet aspectuel suivi par: (a) un forme verbale dans le cas du perfectif et du neutre, ou (b) un nom verbal dans le cas de l'imperfectif. Le temps-mode est défini par des particules ‘satellites’ qui occupent des positions différentes en fonction de l'aspect.

1. The TAM system: an overview¹

Bure [bv̥h] (West Chadic, A.2, Bole-Tangale, Bole proper) is an aspectual language distinguishing between three aspects: perfective, imperfective and neuter.

The perfect and the subjunctive are the only TAMs that display a verbal form. The imperfective makes use of a nominalized form, i.e. a verbal noun. TAMs are encoded through a system of subject pronouns (high tone vs. low tone) and TAM markers.

¹ Abbreviations:

CERT	certainty marker	PERF	perfect
IMPER	imperative	PL	plural marker
IMPERF	imperfect	s/p	singular/plural
m/f	masculine/feminine	SUJ	subjunctive
OBJ	object pronoun		

	PERFECTIVE	IMPERFECTIVE			NEUTER
	<i>perfect</i>	<i>imperf.</i>	<i>fut. I</i>	<i>fut. II</i>	<i>subj</i>
subject tone	L	H	H	H	H
TAM marker	-kò	kù	∅	gà	ká-

Table 1 - The TAM system

TAM markers are satellites and occupy different positions depending on the TAM:

	<i>TAM</i>	<i>TAM marker</i>	<i>Position of the TAM marker</i>
PERFECTIVE	perfect	-kò	suffixed to the verb
IMPERFECTIVE	imperfect	kù	preceding the verbal noun
	future I	∅	-
	future II	gà	preceding the verbal noun
NEUTER	subjunctive	ká-	prefixed to the subject pronoun

Table 2 - Position of TAM markers

2. The perfective

2.1 Aspectual set

The perfective aspect displays a low-tone pronominal set.

		<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>singular</i>	1	nà	
	2	kà	sì
	3	sì	tì
<i>plural</i>	1	mù	
	2	kù	
	3	sù	
<i>(impersonal)</i>	4	à	

Table 3 - Perfective pronominal set

2.2 Morphology

The perfect(ive) is formed by suffixing the perfect marker **-kò** to the verbal stem. The plural form requires an infix plural marker **-ín-** placed between the verbal base and the perfect marker. Allomorph of **-kò** is **-yò**: this realisation of the perfect marker is found in the singular form, generally preceded by an epenthetic high tone **-í-**.

(1)	<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>tone</i>	<i>perf. sg.</i>	<i>perf. pl.</i>
	DAL-	‘want’	H-(HL)	dál-í-yò	dál-ín-kò
	DAW-	‘kill’	L-(HL)	dàw-í-yò	dàw-ín-kò
	DAAT-	‘put on’	L-(HL)	d̥aat-í-yò	d̥aat-ín-kò
	DAL	‘swallow’	L-(HL)	d̥al-í-yò	d̥al-ín-kò
	FEED-	‘awake’	L-(HL)	fèed-í-yò	fèed-ín-kò
	MOR-	‘steal’	L-(HL)	mòr-í-yò	mòr-ín-kò
	MUUN-	‘forget’	L-(HL)	mùun-í-yò	mùun-ín-kò
	SOB-	‘ask’	L-(HL)	sòbb-í-yò	sòbb-ín-kò
	SUP-	‘suck’	L-(HL)	sùpp-í-yò	sùpp-ín-kò
	TUL-	‘pluck’	L-(HL)	tùll-í-yò	tùll-ín-kò

2.3 Stem and assimilation

A high number of Bure verbs display the full diconsonantic stem only in the plural, the singular form undergoing a process of stem reduction. Five rules govern the stem reduction of the singular form:

Rule #1

<i>Verbal stem</i>		<i>perf. sg.</i>
CVVC-	>	CVVC-í-yò

Since a long stem vowel can not be shortened and long vowels in closed syllables are not admitted, stem reduction does not take place when the verbal stem is CVVC-. An epenthetic vowel follows the base, as shown in the following examples:

(2)	DAAT-	‘put on’	*d̥aàt-kò	>	d̥aat-í-yò
	FEED-	‘awake’	*fèèd-kò	>	fèed-í-yò
	SEET-	‘squeeze’	*sèèt-kò	>	sèet-í-yò

Rule #2

<i>Verbal stem</i>		<i>perf. sg.</i>
CVC ₁ - (verbal form does not admit C ₁ in coda position)	>	CVC-í-yò

When the structure of the stem is CVC- and the verbal form does not admit the second consonant in coda position, then assimilation does not take place and an epenthetic vowel follows the verbal base.

- (3) **DINK-** ‘cook’ *dìnk-kò > **dìnk-í-yò**
 MOR- ‘steal’ *mòr-kò > **mòr-í-yò**
 SUP- ‘suck’ *sùp-kò > **sùp-í-yò**

Rule #3

<i>Verbal stem</i>		<i>perf. sg.</i>
CVC ₁ - (C ₁ admitted as coda)	>	CVk-kò

When the structure of the stem is CVC- and the second consonant is admitted in coda position, then the coda consonants is assimilated to the onset of the perfective marker:

- (4) **DAS-** ‘chop, cut’ *dás-kò > **dák-kò**
 MUT- ‘die’ *mút-kò > **múk-kò**
 OF- ‘open’ *óf-kò > **ók-kò**

Rule #4

<i>Verbal stem</i>		<i>perf. sg.</i>
CV’- (’ not admitted in coda position)	>	Cíí-yò

When the second consonant of the stem is a glottal stop and the stem vowel is /i/, then the glottal stop is dropped and the /i/ is lengthened:

- (5) **BI’-** ‘wash’ *bí’-kò > *bí’-í-yò > **bíí-yò**
 RI’- ‘enter’ *rí’-kò > *rí’-í-yò > **ríí-yò**
 TI’- ‘eat’ *tí’-kò > *tí’-í-yò > **tíí-yò**

Rule #5

<i>Verbal stem</i>		<i>perf. sg.</i>
CV ₁ V ₁ y-	>	Céé-wò
CV ₂ V ₂ y- (V ₁ =front vowel, V ₂ =round vowel, glide not admitted in coda position)	>	Cóó-yò

If the second consonant of the stem is the palatal glide /y/, the singular form drops the approximant and displays the perfective allomorph **-wò** if the stem has a front vowel, or the allomorph **-yò** if it has a back vowel.

- (6) **JEEY-** ‘store’ *jééy-kò > *jèè-yí-yò > **jée-wò**
 LOOY- ‘say’ *lóóy-kò > *lòò-yí-yò > **loo-yò**
 SEY- ‘drink’ *sééy-kò > *sèè-yí-yò > **sée-wò**

In presence of an object pronoun, the full stem is displayed and the perfect marker morpheme, invariably realised as **-yò**, is preceded by an epenthetic í:

- (7) a. **sì** **mùní-sì-yò**
 PERF:3sm leave-OBJ:3m-PERF
 ‘He left it’
 b. **mù** **mùní-sì-yò**
 PERF:1p leave-OBJ:3m-PERF
 ‘We left him’

2.4 The ventive extension

Some verbs can display a ventive (or distance) extension. The ventive marker **-ín-** is infixal between the verbal base and the perfective marker **-kò**.

- (8)

<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>tone</i>	<i>perf.</i>
GET-	‘bring to’	L-(HL)	gèt-ín-kò
NAAS-	‘take to’	H-(HL)	nàas-ín-kò

As it is the case of Kirfi (Schuh 1978:39), the plural marker and the ventive extension are identical and mutually exclusive, that is, no distinction can be operated when the subject is plural:

- (9)
- | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|--|
| mù | gèt-ín-kò | ‘we took’/‘we took [it] to’ |
| mù | nàas-ín-kò | ‘we brought’/‘we took and brought’ |
| mù | màd-ín-kò | ‘we came’/‘we came back’ |
| mù | mòr-ín-kò | ‘we stole’/‘we stole and brought [it]’ |
| mù | yòos-ín-kò | ‘we took’/‘we took [it] to’ |

2.5 Geminatìon of the second consonant of the stem

The geminatìon of the second consonant of the stem may encode some semantic function. Analogously to what Stolbova hypothesises for Kirfi, the geminatìon of the second radical might be related to the notion of plurality or totality (Stolbova 2009:143). Some verbs display a default geminatìon (**MUT-** ‘die’ as in **mùttínkò** ‘(we) died’), while others can occur with or without geminatìon (**SEET-** ‘squeeze’: **sèetínkò** ‘(we) squeezed’ vs. **sèttínkò** ‘(we) squeezed completely’; **SEK-** ‘slaughter’: **sèkíyò** ‘(we) slaughtered’ vs. **sèkkínkò** ‘(we) cut into pieces’). Finally, some verbs do not admit the geminatìon of the second stem consonant (e.g. **MAAL-** ‘lay something down’: **màalíyò** ‘(I) laid something down’ vs. ***màllíyò**; **MUUN-** ‘forget’: **mùuníyò** ‘(I) forgot’ vs. ***mùnníyò**).

2.6 The marker -’àló

To encode the factuality of an action or event, that is, the certainty about its occurrence, Bure makes use of the morpheme -’àló. The morpheme is affixed to the perfective marker **-k(ò)**. In the presence of a nominal object, the morpheme drops the final vowel.

- (10)
- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| a. | mìmmíj | gàmbíyò | mùtt-ín-k-’àló |
| | men | those | die-PL-PERF-CERT |
| | ‘Those men have died’ | | |
| b. | jéerfijè | dìnk-’àl | jòtíniyè |
| | women | cook-CERT | food |
| | ‘The women cooked the food’ | | |

2.7 Triconsonantic stem verbs

Triconsonantic stem verbs are usually Hausa loanwords integrated into the Bure verbal system.

(11)	<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>perf sg</i>	<i>perf pl</i>
	KAMAAT-	'be necessary'	kàmàat-íyò	kàmàat-íkò
	RUNGUM-	'embrace'	rùngùm-íyò	rùngùm-íkò

3. Imperfective

3.1 Aspectual set

The imperfective aspect displays a person-aspect complex constituted by two elements: a high-tone pronoun encoding gender and number plus a low-tone marker **kù/gà/** (imperfect/future II) indicating the TAM (or \emptyset in case of simple future). In the imperfect the TAM marker follows the high-tone pronoun (or, in case of negative sentence, the negative particle **máá**).

		<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>singular</i>	1	ná	
	2	ká	sí
	3	sí	tí
<i>plural</i>	1	mú	
	2	kú	
	3	sú	
<i>(impersonal)</i>	4	á	

Table 3 - Imperfective pronominal set

3.2 Verbal nouns

Regular verbal nouns are formed by suffixing the morpheme -na to the verbal stem. Regular pattern. The second consonant of the stem is usually assimilated to the /n/ of **-nà**. This assimilation results in the gemination of /n/ (e.g. ***dòp-nà** > **dòn-nà** 'looking for', ***tòf-nà** > **tòn-nà** 'catching'). Verbal nouns can be divided in two classes: disyllabic and trisyllabic. Disyllabic verbal nouns display a L-L

(12)	<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>verbal noun</i>
	BAN-	give	bàn-nà
	GET-	take	gèn-nà
	MUT-	die	mùn-nà
	OF-	open	òn-nà
	TOF-	catch	tòn-nà

When the stem is CV(V)C₁ with C₁ being either a glottal stop or a glide, the stem vowel is always long and the second consonant of the base is dropped:

(13)	<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>verbal noun</i>
	DI'-	climb	đi-nà
	JEEY-	store	jèe-nà
	SEY-	drink	sèe-nà
	TI'-	eat	tii-nà

Trisyllabic verbal nouns require an epenthetic vowel between the stem and and morpheme **-na**. This class of verbal nouns displays a L-H-L tonal pattern, as shown in (14):

(14)	<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>verbal noun</i>
	AL-	soak	àll-ínà
	BER-	break	bèrr-ínà
	DINK-	cook	đink-ínà
	FEED-	awake	fèed-ínà
	TUK-	finish	tùkk-ínà
	TUL-	pluck	tùll-ínà

- (15) a. **mú-kù** **bèrrínà**
 1p-IMPERF breaking
 'We are breaking'
- b. **ná-kù** **tùllínà**
 1s-IMPERF plucking
 'I am plucking'

When followed by a nominal object, the verbal noun morpheme **-(i)nà** undergoes apocopation:

- (16) **mú-kù** **jèè** **môr** **dùrò**
 1p-IMPERF storing oil groundnut
 ‘We are storing groundnut oil’

Irregular verbal nouns do exist. When derived from a transitive verb, they coexist with the correspondent regular form.

(17)	<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>verbal noun</i>
	DAL-	swallow	ḍàllà
	KOM-	be satisfied	kómmà
	KOR-	wait	kòríjè
	NOK-	rest	nókdòrà

Irregular verbal nouns take the regular **-nà** ending when infixed with an object pronoun, as shown in (18):

- (18) a. **ná-kù** **kòríjè**
 1s-IMPERF waiting
 ‘I am waiting’
 b. **ná-kù** **kòr-sù-nà**
 1s-IMPERF waiting-OBJ:3p-VN
 ‘I am waiting them’

4. The neuter aspect: the subjunctive TAM

4.1 Aspectual set

The subjunctive mood displays a pronominal set whose morphology is slightly different from the sets seen so far. The syllabic structure is C_1VC_2 , with $C_1=k$, $V=a$ (or u for the second and third person of the plural), and C_2 encoding the number and gender (that is, **n** for the first singular, **k** for the second singular, and so on).

		<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>singular</i>	1	ká-n	
	2	ká-k	ká-s
	3	ká-s	kát
<i>plural</i>	1	ká-m	
	2	kú-k	
	3	kú-s	
<i>(impersonal)</i>	4	kí	

Table 4 - Subjunctive: pronominal set

4.2 Tone and morphology

The subjunctive form allows two possible tonal patterns: low-high and low-low. The form is constituted by the stem (invariably low) followed by an ending **-é/è**. The second consonant of the stem is geminated, unless it is either a glide, a trill/tap, or a prenasal.

(19)	<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>subj</i>
	DAW-	'kill'	dàw-é
	DINK-	'cook'	dĩnk-é
	MOR-	'steal'	mòr-é
	SUP-	'suck'	sùpp-é
	TUK-	'finish'	tùkk-é
	TUL-	'pluck'	tùll-é
	YO'-	'go'	yò'-é
(20)	<i>stem</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>subj</i>
	AF-	'answer'	àff-è
	DINK-	'cook'	dĩnk-è
	LOO-	'say'	lòow-è
	MUN-	'leave'	mùnn-è
	RI'-	'enter'	rì'è
	SOB-	'ask'	sòbb-è
	TIY-	'eat'	tìy-è

4.3 Use of the subjunctive

The subjunctive is used in the object clause after verbs such as **kamaat-** 'ought, be necessary', **DOOL-** 'be necessary, must' and **DAL-** 'want':

- (21) **kàmàatí ká-n àffè**
 ought SUJ-1s answer
 ‘It is necessary that I answer’
- (22) **ná-kù dálná kú-s munnè**
 1s -IMPERF wanting SUJ-3p finish
 ‘I want them to leave’

The subjunctive is also used in the conditional construction with **gì** ‘if’:

- (23) **ká-n gí munnè nà sìmí dádàasè**
 SUJ-1s if leave PERF remember past
 ‘If I leave, I will remember the past’

The subjunctive is also used in narration to indicate past events. The narrative use of the subjunctive is very common: events are described by a chain of subjunctive forms, with no need to use the perfect tense.

Direct objects are affixed to the subjunctive form deprived of the ending **-è/é**:

- (24) **nà kàmàatíyò ká-n sòb-sè**
 PERF:1s ought SUJ-1s ask-OBJ:3m
 ‘I should ask him’

4.4 Negation

The negative form of the subjunctive is rendered through the particles **kèe** and **nòbù**. **Kèe** precedes the subject/agent, whereas **nòbù** is attached to the verb.

- (25) **kèe ká-k fèedí-nòbù**
 NEG SUJ-2sm wake up-NEG
 ‘Don’t get up’

4.5 Imperative

The imperative form is used to give a direct order or to exhort somebody to do something. It should be regarded as a firm exhortation, not entailing any idea of unkindness or disrespect. The

imperative form consists of the verbal stem (high tone) plus the morpheme **-dò**. Imperatives are disyllabic words displaying an invariable H-L pattern.

(26)	ábdò	‘drop!’	máddò	‘go back!’
	bétdò	‘dive!’	óndò	‘peel!’
	dáddò	‘cut down!’	péedò	‘cover!’
	kéddò	‘touch!’	sétdò	‘squeeze!’
	láadò	‘stand up!’	sórdò	‘stop!’
	náddò	‘follow!’	túddò	‘eat!’
	ndúrdò	‘descend!’	yóddò	‘go!’
	ngóddò	‘throw!’	wáddò	‘pour!’

The imperative form can be followed by an indirect or direct object pronoun, or by a noun:

- (27) a. **yóddò** **ì** **sí-sìkò**
 go:IMPER with foot-POS:f:2sf
 ‘Walk away!’ (lit. ‘go with your foot’)
- b. **ngól** **lèemó**
 throw:IMPER lemon
 ‘Throw the lemon!’

The imperative form can be followed by an indirect or direct object pronoun. Independent pronouns, if attached to the imperative form, work as object pronouns, as shown in (28):

- (28) a. **òd-sè’é** = **òd-sè**
 open:IMPER-IP:3sm open:IMPER:3sm
 ‘Open it!’
- b. **mún-tà’á** = **mún-tè**
 leave:IMPER-IP:3sf leave:IMPER-O:3sf
 ‘Leave her!’

If the stem has a high tone and the vowel is long, then the suffixation of a direct object entails the shortening of the vowel and a tonal change from high to high-low:

- (29) **dúudô** ‘beat!’ > **dûsè** ‘beat him!’
kéedô ‘put up!’ > **kêsè** ‘put it up!’
péedô ‘cover!’ > **pêsò** ‘cover them!’

5. Past participle nouns and verbal substantives

5.1 Past participle nouns

Bure past participle nouns are constructed by suffixing the perfect morpheme **-ko** to the verbal stem. The tone of the morpheme is variable; apart from a few exceptions, in disyllabic past participles the tone of **-ko** is high if the stem tone is low and low if the stem tone is high.

- (30) **bèt-kó** ‘dived’ **nàan-kó** ‘filled’
bòl-kó ‘scraping off’ **nèe-kó** ‘seen’
dèp-kó ‘got’ **síin-kò** ‘remembered’
kà’à-kó ‘burnt’ **tsùm-kó** ‘soaked’
mát-kò ‘given back’ **tùr-kó** ‘pushed’
múun-kò ‘followed’ **ùp-kò** ‘showed’

Verbs with CVVC-, CVC₁C₂-, and CVC₁C₁² stems make use of an epenthetic vowel before the ending in **-ko**. If the verbal stem has a mid-open central or front vowel (such as [e], [ɛ], or [a]) the required epenthetic vowel is [u] (**beer-** ‘break’ > **bèerùkó** ‘broken’; **dal-** ‘swallow’ > **dállúkò** ‘swallowed’); if the stem displays the front close vowel [i], then the past participle suffix is also preceded by [i] (**bi’-** ‘wash’ > **bi’ikó** ‘washed’; **tiy-** ‘eat’ > **tíyikò** ‘eaten’). Those verbal stems with a close or mid-open back vowel ([o], [ɔ]) require an epenthetic [i] if the stem is CVC₁C₂ (**sorg-** ‘tear’ > **sòrgíkò** ‘torn’) or a [o] if the stem structure is CVC₁C₁ (**kol-** ‘feel, hear’ > **kòllókò** ‘felt, heard’).

- (31) **bànnùkò** ‘known’ **kòllókò** ‘felt, heard’
bèerùkó ‘broken’ **ónnùkò** ‘peeled’
béerùkò ‘started’ **rá’àkò** ‘scratched’
bi’ikó ‘washed’ **ránnùkò** ‘lacked’

² CVC₁C₁, that is, CVC₁ stems where C₁ undergoes gemination. The geminated consonant is analysed here as part of the verbal stem only for descriptive purposes.

démalikò	‘licked’	tàanúkò	‘pressed’
ɖallúkò	‘swallowed’	tédùkò	‘arrived at’
kénnùkó	‘learnt’	túbàkó	‘knotted’

In a few cases, the perfect marker **-ko** is realised by the allomorphs **-yo** and **-wo** (e.g. **gèetú-wò** ‘taken’, **nàasú-wò** ‘brought’).

Past participle nouns behave like regular nouns in all respects. They are juxtaposed to other nouns in associative constructions and can be followed by direct object pronouns:

- (32) **bì’i jíyè** ‘body wash’ (lit. ‘the washed of body’)
ónnù lèemó ‘the peeled of orange/lemon’
bì’i-mìkò ‘your washed’

Past participles are also employed in the construction <**EY- sì** ‘do of’ + past participle> to encode the notion of ‘keeping doing something’, as shown in the following examples:

- (33) a. **tà ìì sì kénnùkó**
 PERF:3sf do of learnt
 ‘She kept learning’
 b. **íí sì rá’àkò**
 do:IMPER of scratching!
 ‘Keep scratching!’

5.2 Verbal substantives

Some verbs admit the formation of a verbal substantive. The verbal substantive works as a noun and can not replace the verbal noun. A few verbal substantives are given in the example below:

- (34) **dòfá** ‘seek’ < **DOP-** ‘look for’
dùlé ‘play’ < **DUL-** ‘shake, dance’
láatúwá ‘somebody whom
 has been sent’ < **LAAT-** ‘send (sb)’
máaré ‘slap’ < **MAAR-** ‘slap’
sètá ‘slaughter’ < **SEK-** ‘slaughter’

References

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