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#### MIYA AS A WEST CHADIC LANGUAGE WITH V...S WORD ORDER\*

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##### 1. Word Order in Chadic

Though we have syntactic documentation for relatively few of the 150 or more Chadic languages, what information we do have shows that among Chadic languages we find two basic word order types. SVX is by far the most common. This is the exclusive order reported in East Chadic languages, it is virtually the exclusive order in West Chadic, and it is the most common order in Central Chadic (= Biu-Mandara + Masa).<sup>1</sup> However, VSX is the basic word order in some fairly well documented Central Chadic languages, e. g. Lamang (WOLFF [1983]), Podoko (JARVIS [1981]), and Gud'e (HOSKISON [1983]). Two published comparative-historical studies, FRAJZYNGIER (1984) and WILLIAMS (1989) propose a reconstructed basic word order for proto-Chadic. Despite the fact that SVX is today the most common order across Chadic, both these studies reconstruct basic proto-Chadic word order with postverbal subjects (FRAJZYNGIER reconstructing VSX order for all sentence types, WILLIAMS VS for intransitive verbs but SVX for transitive). Although my thinking differs somewhat from that of these two previous writers, I suggest developments which share with their reconstructions a postverbal position for subjects as the basic neutral order for proto-Chadic sentences (§ 6 below).

Before turning to the central topic of this paper, word order in Miya, I should specify what I mean by "basic word order". For our purposes, I will

\* Miya is a West Chadic language of the "North Bauchi" group. It is spoken by perhaps 5,000 people in the area of Miya town in Bauchi State, Nigeria. I did field work on Miya in 1982-83 while I was a Visiting Professor in the Department of Nigerian and African Languages at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. This research was supported by a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. My thanks to Sarkin Miya, Vaziya Chiroma, Haladu Soja, and the people of Miya. I would also like to thank Neil Skinner, who correctly suggested that Miya would be a good place for linguistic fieldwork.

<sup>1</sup> NEWMAN (1977) has four major Chadic branches (West, Biu-Mandara, Masa, and East), whereas JUNGRAITHMAYR and SHIMIZU (1981), JUNGRAITHMAYR and IBRISZIMOW (1994) have three (West, Central, and East). All the VSX languages are in Newman's Biu-Mandara Branch.

use this term to refer to the order of constituents in clauses where none of the constituents S, V, or X are "displaced" for pragmatic reasons, esp. questioning, focusing, or topicalization. Consider English clauses such as the following: *the farmer chased the monkey from the farm*, *the farm that the farmer chased the monkey from*, *before the farmer chased the monkey from the farm* ... We say that English has basic SVX order because in these clauses, this is the order of the nominal S(ubject) (= *farmer*), the (V)erb (= *chase*), and X (= part or all of *the monkey from the farm*). Clauses such as the following do not conform to the "basic" word order of English: *what did the farmer chase from the farm!* (displacement of [part of] X in asking a question), *he chased the monkey from the farm*, *the farmer* (nominal S as an "afterthought" at the end of the sentence), etc. Many languages pose problems for deciding on "basic" word order because they use different word orders in different clause types. Thus, German generally has "verb 2nd" order in main clauses but SXV order in most types of subordinate clauses; Berber languages generally have fairly rigid VSX order in subordinate clauses, but in main clauses, while they allow this order, SVX is also common. Analytical problems of this type in Miya will, in part, be the subject of this paper.

The main descriptive section of the paper (§ 3) discusses the placement of nominal subjects in various clause types in Miya. We will see that several categories of clauses allow only V...S order. "Neutral" main clauses permit either SV... or V...S order, though SV... predominates. The only clause types which require SV... order are those in which some constituent is questioned or focused. The concluding section notes other cases of V...S order in West Chadice and speculates on how the various word orders in Chadice languages may have arisen.

## 2. Miya Non-nominal Subjects and Non-Verbal Clauses

Clauses without overt subjects of any kind are common in Miya, e. g. *à zar vbrkə* '[he/she/they] called a boy'.<sup>2</sup> Because such clauses show nothing about the relative word order of subject and verb, I will have little more to say about them (though see § 4).

<sup>2</sup> The initial *à* in this clause is an aspect marker. It disappears when any kind of overt subject, noun or pronoun, is present. The following conventions are used in examples: *tl* = [t], *dl* = [d], *sh* = [ʃ], *gh* = [ɣ]; ' and ` = the first in a sequence of one or more high or low tones respectively; ˘ after ˘ = downstepped high; FSP = Focused Subject Perfective, Imperf = Imperfective, Perf = Perfective, part. = particle of unclear function, PVS = Postverbal Subject marker, Sjnc = Subjunctive, Tot = Totality marker(s). See Schuh (1998) for details.

Likewise, I will have little to say about pronominal subjects. Overt pronominal subjects always precede the verb in all persons, regardless of aspect,<sup>3</sup> clause type, or other factors, e. g.

<i>mán zàr vbrkə</i>	'I ( <i>mán</i> ) called a boy'
<i>tá má zàra vbrk-uw</i>	'he ( <i>tá</i> ) will not call a boy'
<i>bá njá d-aalüw</i>	'the one whom she ( <i>njá</i> ) loves'

Finally, I will restrict the discussion to verbal clauses. Subjects of non-verbal clauses (equational sentences, "have" sentences, locative sentences), whether nominal or pronominal, are always clause initial.

<i>Ndüywa Miy-dzshə</i>	'Nduya is a Miya man'
<i>tiy Miy-dzshə</i>	'he is a Miya man'
<i>Ndüywa j-áa m̀r</i>	'Nduya has money'
<i>tl̀n aa kám</i>	'they are in the house'
<i>dóo naka lookàciy ká,</i>	'during that time, the <i>dodo</i> ( <i>dl̀ramba</i> )
<i>dl̀ramba nd-aa papám</i>	is in the cave'

## 3. Miya Nominal Subjects

### 3.1. Independent Main Clauses

Nominal subjects usually precede the verb in independent main clauses, i. e. in individual sentences used as statements in conversational discourse. This is true for all verb aspects, affirmative and negative.

<i>mb̀rgu zuw súw táhiy tuws-ay</i>
ram leave Tot food its-Tot
'the ram left its food'

<i>Ndüywa zar má Kasham-uw</i>
Nduya call NEG Kasham-NEG
'Nduya didn't call Kasham'

*Kasham tà zar*  
'Kasham should (*tà* hortative) call'

<i>Ndikay s-áa díya s̀pən-ay</i>
Ndikay Tot-Imperf cook tuwo-Tot
'Ndikay will cook <i>tuwo</i> '

However, in both texts and elicited data, I found a fair number of sentences with V...S order, sometimes given as an alternative to SV... In the

<sup>3</sup> I will use the term "aspect" here as a cover term for the various expressions of tense, mood, and aspect. The semantics of the verbal system plays no role in word order.

examples here, note the post-verbal subject marker (PVS) *àa*. This marker must precede a post-verbal subject in any clause type:

*tòò, à gəsə súw mùlkíy-áy aa wuya-səbə*  
well Perf collect Tot power-Tot PVS Hausas  
'well, the Hausas took power'

*ghàduw tsəfɔ s-ay = à tsəfɔ s-aa ghàduw*  
wood dry Tot Perf dry Tot-PVS wood  
'the wood dried'

*ghàruw vər s-ay = à vər s-aa ghàruw*  
'the cow ran off'

### 3.2. Consecutive clauses in narrative

In narrative discourse, Miya expresses the sequence of events which advance the narrative line using a "consecutive" aspect marked with proclitic, *də*. This form is used in both "imperfective" contexts, such as procedural texts, and in "perfective" contexts, such as history or tales. As in independent main clauses, nominal subjects are usually preverbal in consecutive *də* clauses, e. g.

*kwáa y-áa tsùway ká, tɔvəm də dɪngà zábaw*  
when "be" dawn when, women *də* carry-on dancing  
'when the dawn comes, the women carry on with dancing'

*dàga ðam éwíyá, 'án ta sən n-aaGítuwà də baa-z(a)ée kùw(a) aabíy*  
when arrive day, wife-of-man-of-Gituwa *də* go-ICP to-draw water  
'when day broke, the wife of the Gituwa man went to draw water'

However, as in independent main clauses, V...S order is not uncommon.

... *shíykèenán də zara-z(a) áa níy bàa-za*  
OK *də* call-her PVS those-of father-her  
'... well then her father and others call her [girl about to be married]'

*dàga fáarà dawak áa (aa)bíy, də dzara-tlən aa səbə*  
when began falling PVS water, *də* disperse-ICP PVS people  
'when it began raining, the people dispersed'

### 3.3. "Purpose" clauses and complement clauses to verbs

I found two types of subordinate clauses which show SV... or V...S variation parallel to that for the main clauses illustrated in the two preceding sections. The two subordinate clauses types are "purpose" clauses introduced by the conjunction (*à*)*dama* 'because, in order that' and complement

clauses to various verbs such as *sən* 'know', *nay* 'see', *dəkay* 'hear', *mar* 'find, discover', *lakə* 'fear', *zay* 'cause', and *a kamaata* 'be fitting'.

Preverbal:

... *ádama dərħə ndən ndəm-áy*  
because road circuit circuiting-Tot  
'... because the road makes a detour'

*míy sən súw acám mar-mà s-áy*  
we know Tot work get-us Tot  
'we know that work has overtaken us'

*mən aa zay Ndúwya də buwáy m̀r*  
I Imperf cause Nduya Sjnc bring money  
'I'll have Nduya bring money'

Postverbal:

... *dàma ðíya sɔpən aa Kàsáy<sup>4</sup>*  
so that cook tuwo PVS Kasay  
'... so that Kasay might cook tuwo'

*kóowènéekìy sən súw s-àatáa buwa-tlən aa səba yaakíy*  
everyone know Tot Tot-Cont come-ICP PVS people-of war  
'everyone knows that the war makers are coming'

*mən áa lùw də b-úws aa Kàsham rədzà*  
I Imperf want Sjnc come-ICP PVS Kasham afternoon  
'I want Kasham to come in the afternoon'

### 3.4. Invariant V...S order in subordinate clauses

In contrast to the clause types illustrated in the preceding sections, several types of subordinate clauses have invariant V...S order for nominal subjects.

#### 3.4.1. Relative clauses

Nominal subjects within relative clauses are always postverbal. Note in the second and third examples below that the subject follows not only the verb, but also direct objects and, in the third example, the resumptive instrumental phrase *áa tìy* 'with it'.

<sup>4</sup> As with Hausa *sabòodà*, Miya (*à*)*dama* can be used with subjunctive to mean "in order that" or with other clause types to mean "because". In my elicited data, clauses with the former sense all have postverbal subjects, and clauses with the latter sense all have preverbal subjects. In texts, I have found examples of postverbal subjects with the latter sense as well.

*tàabàrma ba kèn áa vòrkə*  
 mat which buy PVS boy  
 'the mat which the boy bought'

*vòrkə ba tsa-yà mîr áa Kàsham*  
 boy who give-him money PVS Kasham  
 'the boy to whom Kasham gave money'

*gìti b(a) áa-dè baa gháduw aa òy aa Kasham*  
 axe which Perf split wood with it PVS Kasham  
 'the axe with which Kasham split the wood'

### 3.4.2. Adverbial subordinate clauses

Several types of adverbial clauses always have postverbal nominal subjects. These clauses include those introduced by the conjunctions *kwáa* 'when, if' (= Hausa *idan* expressing temporal relation to main clause), *tá(n)* 'if' (= Hausa *idan* expressing condition required for main clause to take place and also Hausa *koo* in concessive conditionals), *dàgaldàgré* 'when' (= Hausa *dá* expressing completed events), *jé* 'then' (similar to Hausa *sai* in sequential narrative), *bà* 'if, were it that' (= Hausa *dáa* counterfactual), and *kàafin* 'before'.

*kwáa náya kám aa òy ká, dè tabàna gɔɔanzakway-áy*  
 when see house PVS dog when Consec abuse hyena-Tot  
 'when a dog is in sight of his house, he abuses the hyena'

*tá dòo m(a) áa ghàns-úw, míy má dèma tàwaz-úw*  
 if fall NEG PVS "God"-NEG we NEG do planting-NEG  
 'if it doesn't rain, we won't do the planting'

*dàga zara-tlèn aa Kàsham, dè buwá-tlèn*  
 when call-them PVS Kasham Consec come-ICP  
 'when Kasham called them, they came'

*jé gèra-yá ee bàw-uwsà aa sèn naa-Mángilá*  
 then show-him where exit-ICP PVS man of-Mangila  
 'then the man from Mangila showed him where he had come from'

*bà zar-tlèn áa Kàsham ká, à buwíy-tlèn*  
 if call-them PVS Kasham if Perf come-ICP  
 'if Kasham had called them, they would have come'

*kàafin dè bíy ná àu tlàwíy, ...*  
 before Sjne part. be-cooked PVS meat  
 'before the meat was done cooking, ...'

### 3.5. Invariant SV order in questions and focus constructions

One class of clauses seems never to admit postverbal nominal subjects. These are sentences where a constituent is questioned or syntactically focused, such as the following:<sup>5</sup>

Q: *m-áa mbyára kábə taf-a?*  
 what-IPSP tear gown your (ms)-Q  
 'what tore your gown?'

A: *gháduw dè mbyára-zà*  
 wood FSP tear-it  
 'WOOD tore it'

Q: *Ndúwya náy wèr?*  
 Ndunya see who  
 'who did Ndunya see?'

A: *Ndúwya náy-mà míy*  
 Ndunya see-us us  
 'Ndunya saw US'

There are pragmatic reasons for lack of postverbal subjects in such clauses. When Miya subjects are questioned or focused, they obligatorily fall in sentence initial position, obviously precluding their postverbal ordering. Non-subjects, when questioned or focused, remain *in situ*. Since the "neutral" position for all non-subjects is postverbal, the postverbal placement of a subject together with a questioned or focused non-subject would create a pragmatic clash, i. e. a postverbal subject would "interfere" with the place of privilege for the questioned or focused constituent. This is the mirror image of the situation in Bade, for example, where the neutral position for subjects is preverbal, but subjects, when questioned or focused, are placed postverbally. In sentences with questioned or focused subjects and full nominal objects, speakers frequently place the objects in sentence initial position as topics, thus reserving the postverbal position for the subject (SCHUH [1982]).

### 4. Subject Order in Narrative Discourse

Examples in the preceding sections come primarily from data which I elicited in the course of field work. It is possible that such data could be skewed in some way. I therefore made a study of word order in natural texts

<sup>5</sup> I did not explicitly check for ungrammaticality of postverbal subjects in such sentences. However, unlike other independent clause types (§§ 3.1-2), postverbal subjects never showed up in sentences with questioned or focused constituents, either in elicited data or texts.

to test whether the generalizations expressed here would be born out. I looked at 3 procedural texts (the conduct of an important Miya festival, a description of beer making, and customs in courting and marriage), a historical text on the founding of Miya town, and a folktale. For reasons given in § 2, I counted only verbal clauses. The first table below summarizes total clause count. I separate clauses with first and second person subjects from clauses with third person subjects since the former always have overt, preverbal pronoun subjects and are thus excluded from this study (cf. § 2). The second table summarizes the results for the 345 clauses with third person subjects:

	Total clauses	1st/2nd pers. subjects	3rd pers. subjects
3 procedural texts:	133	2	131
one historical text:	75	12	63
one folktale:	223	72	151
<b>Total</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>345</b>

Table "Distribution ..." see page 443

The shaded areas represent configurations which I have claimed to be excluded (§§ 3.4-5), viz. postverbal subjects in clauses with questioned or focused constituents (Q/F) and preverbal nominal subjects in relative clauses (R/C) and most types of adverbial subordinate clauses (ADV.). The lack of any such configurations in the sample from natural texts supports those claims. Counts from texts also jibe with claims about relative frequency of preverbal vs. postverbal nominal subjects in independent main clauses (INDEP.), including *d* consecutive clauses (*d* Consec.), viz. nominal subjects are most commonly preverbal in such clauses, but postverbal subjects are also grammatically possible (I return to the issue of relative frequency below). There were not enough examples of Purpose clauses and verbal complements (Comps.) in the sample examined to say anything about relative frequency of subject orderings.

The text count of subject configurations raises points that do not arise obviously when examining sentences elicited individually. One such point is the relative frequencies of  $\emptyset$ , pronominal, and nominal subjects. The tables show that a  $\emptyset$  subject configuration is overwhelmingly the most frequent type, constituting 61% (211 of 345) of the clauses with third person subjects and almost half the total number of clauses including all persons. The pronominal configuration constitutes only 7% (24 of 345) of the clauses with third person subjects. The distribution of third person pronominal subjects is also of interest. Of the 17 clauses where the pronoun is apparently a true

CLAUSE TYPE		$\emptyset$	Pro-S V	Pro topic	N-S V	N topic	V... N-S
Q/F	Foc. or Q (any TAM)		1		4		
I N D E P.	Per. (aff. & neg.)	4			7	1	1
	Imperf. (aff. & neg.)	6	16	1	7	5	
	Put. 2	7					
	Sjnc. 2 (aff. & neg.)	1			1		
	<i>d</i> Consec.	111		3	40	2	4
D P.	Purpose	1					
	Comps.	2			2		
RC	RC	29					
A D V.	<i>tá</i> 'if'			1			1
	<i>kwáa</i> 'when'	14				5	18
	<i>jée</i> 'when'	17		2		1	6
	<i>dàgée</i> 'when'	19					9
	<i>kàafin</i> 'before'						1
TOTAL		211	17	7 <sup>a</sup>	61	14 <sup>a</sup>	40

Distribution of clauses with third person subjects

<sup>a</sup> Among the examples with topicalized semantic subjects, the 7 with pronouns and 9 of those with nouns have  $\emptyset$  grammatical subjects. These are not included among the 211 examples listed with  $\emptyset$  grammatical subjects. The 5 topicalized noun examples in the "Imperf." row have overt pronominal subjects, which are included in the count of Pro-S V examples.

grammatical subject, 16 are in Imperfective clauses. As in many Chadic languages, the Miya Imperfective shows signs of having originated as a non-verbal, probably locative structure. For example, the verb form is nominal, and in negation, the discontinuous negative marker *má-...-úw* encompasses the entire predicate as in non-verbal sentences rather than just the postverbal elements as in the clearly "verbal" Perfective:

Perf.:	<i>à már mà zhàak-úw</i>	'he didn't get a donkey'
Imperf.:	<i>tš má mara zhaak-uw</i>	'he will not get a donkey'
Locative:	<i>mán má vóna kám-uw</i>	'I am not in front of the house'

I propose the following restrictive statement on the distribution of Miya third person pronominal subjects: overt third person subject pronouns are used only (i) when focused, (ii) when the subject of a non-verbal sentence, or (iii) (optionally) when the subject of an Imperfective clause (which is, historically at least, a subcategory of [ii]). All other apparent pronominal subjects are grammatical topics.

Counts of grammatical topics is the final point of interest raised by the table. Since preverbal position is the most common placement for subjects in the clause types labeled "INDEF." in the table, a semantic clausal subject can be unequivocally recognized as being a topic only where some overt evidence of topicalization is present. For both nouns and pronouns, topicalization can be overtly shown by a topic marker such as *ká*, *má*, or *kúma* (1st and 2nd examples below) or by placement of the semantic subject of an adverbial clause before the clausal conjunction (3rd and 4th examples below). For nominal semantic subjects, the presence of an overt pronominal subject indicates that the nominal is a topic rather than the grammatical subject (5th example below):

<i>njś kuma dš dšra fíy</i>	'as for ( <i>kúma</i> ) her she ground flour'
<i>níyka wútləmiy kídèniy</i>	'as for ( <i>ká</i> ) those 3 boys
<i>ká dš bau-tlón Wúshir</i>	(they) go to Usur'
<i>tš tán s-aa àaluw-za ká ...</i>	'he if (he) loves her ...'
<i>yúw kwáa tsáa ka ...</i>	'the dawn if (it) breaks ...'
<i>náka sšn n-aaMángilà tš</i>	'that man from Mangila
<i>d-aa-táa ndəma ...</i>	he ( <i>tš</i> ) was exploring ...'

In the data sample here, 29% (7 of a total 24) of the semantic subjects expressed as pronouns are topics rather than grammatical subjects. Among semantic subjects expressed as nouns in preverbal position, it appears that a smaller percentage of the total – 19% (14 of a total 75) – are topics rather than grammatical subjects. However, among independent "tensed" clauses, i. e. independent clauses other than *dš* consecutive, 29% (2 of a total 15) are topics rather than grammatical subjects. It is the 40 cases of *dš* consecutive clauses listed as having preverbal grammatical subjects vs. only 2 with topi-

calized semantic subjects which primarily account for the nominal topic percentage being smaller than the pronominal topic percentage. I suggest that many (if not most or even all!) of these apparent grammatical nominal subjects are actually topics rather than subjects, even though there is no overt textual marking to this effect. The (admittedly slim) evidence for this claim is the way Vaziya Chiroma, the main informant with whom I worked, translated these clauses in his written Hausa translations of the Miya texts. In 23 of the 40 examples, he provided Hausa translations of the following type:

*səba gaungan dš kərma gaungan*  
= Hausa *makada sai su debi kide-kide*  
'then the drummers (*səba gaungan*) begin drumming'.

In the Hausa translation, the nominal subject is placed before the conjunction *sai* 'then'. The only possible interpretation for this Hausa rendering is that *makada* 'drummers' is topicalized.<sup>7</sup> Miya has no real counterpart to Hausa *sai* as an introducer of consecutive clauses, but the fact that Vaziya chose to translate these preverbal semantic subjects as topics suggests that he conceived of them in this way in Miya.

##### 5. Establishing Miya "Basic" Word Order

Elicited data combined with the narrative discourse counts yield the following observations regarding the placement of nominal subjects in Miya: (i) postverbal subjects are obligatory in two large classes of subordinate clauses, viz. relative clauses and adverbial subordinate clauses; (ii) preverbal subjects are obligatory only when some constituent in the sentence is questioned or focused (in particular, questioning or focusing of the subject itself); (iii) in other types of clauses, preverbal subjects predominate numerically, though postverbal subjects are acceptable as well. Alongside these three types of clausal configuration is a configuration with a semantic nominal subject in initial position as a topic followed by a clause with a  $\emptyset$  or, less frequently, a pronominal grammatical subject. The topics in this configuration are often overtly marked, but I have suggested that at least some clause initial noun phrases which appear to be grammatical subjects are actually topics without overt marking.

The conclusion to be drawn is that although a simple count of Miya clauses with nominal subjects might produce a predominance of tokens with

<sup>7</sup> Of the remaining 17 examples out of the 40 *dš* consecutive clauses, 12 are from the folktale text, which was spoken, transcribed, and translated by a different speaker. This speaker's translation follows the regular Hausa pattern of placing *sai* at the head of the clause, before a nominal subject.

preverbal subjects, the "unmarked" position for nominal subjects is postverbal. Not only do large classes of clause types require postverbal subjects, but also unequivocally marked subjects (notably, those which are questioned or focused) are the only nominal subjects which are obligatorily placed in preverbal position. If topicalized noun phrases are included among "marked" constituents, a larger number of preverbal subjects are marked than a simple count of clausal position of subjects suggests.

One issue which I have kept in the background is what "postverbal" means. In most of the examples above, postverbal nominal subjects immediately follow the verb ( $\pm$  pronominal clitics). Such examples might lead to the conclusion that Miya is a VSX language like some of its Central Chadic relatives (see § 1 for references). However, a broader range of examples, esp. some of those in § 3.4, show that postposed subjects are really "post-verb phrase" rather than "postverbal". In fact, Miya subjects consistently follow at least nominal objects, locatives, and instruments, all of which are illustrated in § 3.4. The only constituent type which I have found that seems always to follow postposed subjects is temporal adverbs (cf. *ràdzà* 'in the afternoon' in the last example of § 3.3). Thus, if my speculation is correct about the postverbal order for subjects being the neutral configuration, Miya is to be counted among the rare languages in the world with a basic VXS word order!

### 6. Word Order in West Chadic

There are other West Chadic languages with VXS order. These are languages spoken in the northern and eastern areas of West Chadic, such as Bade, Ngizim (SCHUH [1982]), and Kanakuru (NEWMAN [1974]), which have postverbal placement of questioned or focused subjects. In all the languages for which I have seen relevant data, when a nominal object is present, the postverbal subject also follows the object, e. g.

Ngizim:	<i>lámipíy</i>	<i>zání-ci-n</i>	<i>tám?</i>
	tear	gown-your-PVS	what
	'what tore your gown?'		

The syntactic environment is different from that of Miya, of course, because in Miya, clauses with postverbal subjects have a "neutral" interpretation, i. e. nothing is interpreted as being focused or otherwise pragmatically highlighted. Nonetheless, it is not unreasonable to ask whether these manifestations of VXS word order, an order which is not common in Chadic<sup>8</sup> and

<sup>8</sup> VXS order is not quite unique to the West Chadic languages mentioned here. In Podoko, which has basic VSX order, the "focus slot" is the immediately postverbal

is unusual among the world's languages, are historically related. A related question is whether the VXS order in West Chadic is historically related to the VSX order found in Central Chadic. I propose a scenario that allows us to answer both questions with, "Yes."

Consider first the historical connection of "neutral" VXS order, as in Miya, to VXS order marking the focus of a subject, as in Ngizim. Let us reconstruct a proto-West Chadic system like that in the table below, which is essentially the situation we find in Miya today.  $*S_{[focus]}VX$  would have been differentiated from  $*S_{[topic]}VX$ , as it is in Hausa, Miya, and many other Chadic languages, by special verbal forms and/or other overt markers. It is well known that SVX is a common alternative "neutral" order in VSX languages (GREENBERG [1966]). There are not enough VXS languages to establish clear "universals", but in the case of Miya at least, we have seen that SVX order is actually more pervasive than VXS in independent clauses. Because of the discourse frequency of SVX order where S was a topic, this order was reinterpreted as the "neutral" order at Stage 1. Following Stage 1, languages took one of two paths. The majority, of which Hausa is an example, simply dropped the VXS configuration. Others, of which Bade, Ngizim, Kanakuru, Bolanci, etc. are examples, present a more complex picture. Topicalized constituents cannot be in focus, e. g. it is impossible to say *\*as for what, did you buy (it)?* As the  $S_{[topic]}VX$  construction, where the subject specifically could not be in focus, was interpreted as the "neutral" configuration, subjects in postverbal position were reinterpreted as bearing pragmatic focus. The  $S_{[focus]}VX$  configuration thus became functionally unnecessary and moreover could potentially be confused with the  $S_{[neutral]}VX$ . The VXS configuration was thus reserved for focused subjects and the  $S_{[focus]}VX$  construction disappeared from use.

Proto-W. Chadic	Stage 1	Stage 2 (Hausa, etc.)	Stage 2 (Bade, etc.)
$*S_{[topic]}VX$	> $S_{[neutral]}VX$	> $S_{[neutral]}VX$	$S_{[neutral]}VX$
$*S_{[focus]}VX$		> $S_{[focus]}VX$	—
$*VXS_{[neutral]}$		> —	$VXS_{[focus]}$

By this scenario, Miya would be close to the reconstructed situation, though even in Miya the Stage 1 shift is taking hold in independent clauses. A fact which makes this scenario suspect is the absence of direct evidence, outside Miya, for reconstructing the  $*VXS_{[neutral]}$  sentence type for proto-West Chadic. Normally, one would like to find more than one language

position. A questioned or focused constituent will occupy that position, resulting in VXS order, e. g. *a tala tawá ndi na?* 'what did one cook?' (cooked what one Q-marker). See JARVIS (1981).

which furnished support for a reconstructed structure, preferably by continued productive use of the structure, or in the absence of productive use, at least by remnants, such as frozen expressions. In material available to me, I have been unable to find such support. All documented West Chadic-A languages and the West Chadic-B languages of the Bade/Ngizim group have only SVX "neutral" order in all clause types. In the North Bauchi Group of West Chadic-B, of which Miya is a member, the only language other than Miya for which any relevant syntactic data are available is Pa'a (SKINNER [1979]). Pa'a seems to have only SVX order, even in environments where Miya requires postverbal subjects, e.g. relative clauses - cf. Pa'a *lokacita batangwil na mbii ka* 'the time that the hyena (*batangwil*) came' (SKINNER 1979, p. 127). I was able to glean a few examples from other languages out of transcribed and translated but otherwise unanalyzed texts from SKINNER (n. d.), e.g. Jimbia *daga danmaju ba fara sunahu na ili*, ... 'when the hyena (*danmaju*) began to recognize the dog ...', Diryanci *inguma vanada ciyayi riya* ... 'if the *dodo* (*vanada*) eats me ...' It may be that more information from these or related languages would yield evidence for an earlier VXS stage, but until such information is available, Miya remains the only Chadic language known to me with VXS<sub>[neutral]</sub> order in any clause types.

Given the paucity of direct evidence in West Chadic for the \*VXS<sub>[neutral]</sub> configuration, it is reasonable to look for a scenario which would arrive at VXS order for both neutral and focused subjects from the ubiquitous SVX order. No such scenario is evident to me. However, there is a not implausible source for VXS order in proto-West Chadic, viz. inheritance from proto-Chadic \*VXS. As noted, a number of Central Chadic languages have this as their basic word order. There are three possible sources for this word order in Central Chadic: genetic inheritance from proto-Chadic (and thence proto-Afroasiatic), contact with other VXS languages, or internal historical developments. Non-Chadic languages in the northern Cameroon-Nigeria border area are either SVX or SXV. Contact is thus an unlikely source for the VXS order. Likewise, I know of no internally motivated scenario for historical shift from some other order to VXS, whereas the shift from VXS to SVX does have motivation (grammaticalization of preverbal topics as grammatical subjects) and, indeed, this shift has been well documented outside Chadic. This leaves genetic inheritance as the only likely source of VXS order in Chadic, a source made more likely by the fact that this is the primary order in three other branches of Afroasiatic, viz. Semitic, Ancient Egyptian, and Berber.

Accepting \*VXS order for proto-Chadic, we are left only to explain the shift from this order to the \*VXS order proposed for proto-West Chadic. Here I appeal to unsupported speculation. One possibility is that speakers were motivated to place the subject after the object by the formal grammatical

fact that VXS order maintains the integrity of the Verb Phrase (= VX), whereas VXS order has the well-known grammatical anomaly of disrupting this structure which, on many grounds, behaves as a unitary syntactic constituent. A second possibility is suggested by the Podoko structure mentioned in footnote 8. There, it was pointed out that a focused non-subject directly follows a verb. If this were the method of focus in early Chadic, and if the pragmatic focus associated with the immediate postverbal position weakened (probably being functionally replaced by initial placement for focused constituents) this would leave the immediate postverbal position as the neutral position for non-subjects and the post-verb phrase position as neutral for subjects.

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