

**ON THE ORIGIN OF THE HAUSA
“RELATIVE” ASPECTS AND THE “STABILIZER”**

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1. Two Features of Hausa Syntax

There are two features of syntax that figure prominently in every descriptive and pedagogical grammar of Hausa: the functions of the “stabilizer”¹ or copula and the distinction between the “general” and “relative” TAM’s.² I illustrate the stabilizer in (1) and the general/relative distinction in (2), with corresponding forms from the Eastern and Western dialect areas, typified by the Hausa of Kano and that of Sakkwato respectively. The morphemes of interest are underlined.

(1)	Eastern	Western	
	Mūsā d’alībī <u>nè</u>	Mūsā d’alībī <u>nà</u>	‘Moses is a student’
	Hàdizà d’alībā <u>cè</u>	Hàdizà d’alībā <u>tà</u>	‘Hadiza is a student’

(2)	Eastern	Western	
General Completive	wad’annân yârā <u>sun</u> gudù	wad’annân yârā <u>sun</u> gudù	‘these children ran’
Relative Completive	wad’annè yârā <u>sukà</u> gudù?	wad’annè yârā <u>sukà</u> gudù?	‘which children ran?’
General Continuative	wad’annân yârā <u>sunà</u> gudù	wad’annân yârā <u>sunà</u> gudù	‘these children are running’
Relative Continuative	wad’annè yârā <u>sukè</u> gudù?	wad’annè yârā <u>sukà</u> gudù?	‘which children are running?’

Because of the overwhelming numerical and geographical dominance of Hausa among languages of the Chadic family, there has long been a tendency, spoken or unspoken, in comparative Chadic studies and more broadly in comparative Afroasiatic studies referring to Chadic data to look to Hausa as a sort of prototype for features of grammar such as these. I will argue that both these prominent features of Hausa syntax are innovations within Hausa or its immediate ancestor. Some Chadic (and non-Chadic) languages may share typological parallels, and all the Hausa morphemes involved here are Chadic inheritances, but none of the functional patterns have been directly inherited from an ancestral language common to Hausa and its existing sisters and cousins.

I will further argue that as unrelated as the construction types in (1) and (2) appear to be, in fact they all come from a single typological development, viz. the shift in function of determiners from deictic uses to use as copulas.

¹ Parsons (1963) coined the term “stabilizer”, a term which I find meaningless as well as superfluous since there a suitable traditional term, “copula”, to refer to morphemes of similar function. I will use the term “copula” in this paper in order to emphasize function and to provide a cover term for both the stabilizer and the other morpheme that I will argue is, in origin, a copula.

² TAM is an acronym for “Tense, Aspect, Mood”, functional categories, which in Hausa and most other Chadic languages comprise a single set of mutually exclusive morphological categories. The terms “general” and “relative” are unfortunate, but they are now such an ingrained feature of the description of Hausa that it would only cause confusion to use other terms.

2. The Copula (“Stabilizer”) *nēctē ~ nā/tā*

Mènē nè wannàn? “What is this?” is one of the first questions any student of Hausa will learn (or, if the student is in the Western parts of Hausa country, *Mīnà nà?*). The copula *nē ~ nā* (masculine or plural) and the feminine counterpart *cē ~ tā* pervade Hausa speech such that they are among the most high frequency words in the language. Yet the use of overt copulas in Hausa must be an innovation which has taken place since the time that Hausa became an independent language. Few other West Chadic languages have an overt copula of any kind and certainly none have an overt copula comparable to, much less cognate with Hausa *nē/cē ~ nā/tā*. Even within Hausa there is good evidence that use of a copula in equational sentences is a fairly recent development. Though the copula is semi-obligatory in straightforward equational sentences such as those in (1), there are certain types of sentences that are “equational” in interpretation, but that generally disallow the copula. These are sentences where the predicate is a name, a time, a place, an occupation, or a number (Newman 2000:164), as in (3a). Moreover, many fixed expressions that have the form of equational sentences, e.g. proverbs like those in (3b), do not include a copula.

- (3) a. *sūnansà Mūsā* ‘his name [is] Musa’
yāu Āsabār ‘today [is] Saturday’
gàrinmù Kanò ‘our hometown [is] Kano’
sàna’ārtà kāsuwanci ‘her occupation [is] trading’
mātānā biyu ‘my wives [are] two’, i.e. “I have two wives”
- b. *Tambārīn talàkà cikīnsà.* ‘A commoner’s drum [is] his stomach.’
Hàkurī māgānin dūniyā. ‘Patience [is] the remedy for (the ways of) the world.’
Gīwā à gārīn wani zōmō. ‘An elephant in another’s town [is] (just) a hare.’

Canonical equational sentences such as those in (1) predicate some property of the subject, e.g. “studenthood”. Sentences of the type in (3a) differ from such canonical equational sentences in that the predicates are *not* properties of the subjects. The first four identify a subject of a particular type (a name, a day, etc.) with a token from a set appropriate to that type. Compare an equational sentence like *wannàn Mūsā nè* ‘this is Musa’, which predicates “Musahood” of the person indicated by *wannàn* ‘this’, with the first sentence in (3a), which does *not* say that *sūnā* ‘name’ has the property of being Musa.³ Number predicates like the last example in (3a) do not express a property of the subject, viz. “twohood”, but rather quantify the subject. Below I claim that the copula has developed from a demonstrative. Demonstratives have deictic function—they do not express types or a tokens of types nor would they quantify or, in most cases, be quantified. If the Hausa copula originated as a demonstrative, this would explain why it would never have been appropriate in sentences such as those in (3a), giving the impression in modern Hausa that the copula has been “omitted”.

Proverbial expressions such as those in (3b) pass from generation to generation in a fixed form. They must come into modern Hausa from a time when the copula had not yet developed or was a recent innovation that had not reached its more rigid modern status as a quasi-obligatory marker of a predicational relation.

The claim that the Hausa copula is an innovation raises two main questions: (1) what is the source of the copula and (2) what accounts for the dialect difference between *nē/cē*,

³ The standard way of asking, “What is your name?” is *Yàyà sūnankà?*, literally, “How [is] your name?”, i.e. it does not even have the NP-NP structure of an equational sentence. Some speakers now use the innovative *Mènē nè sūnankà?*, literally, “What copula your name?”, apparently on analogy with canonical equational questions.

typical of approximately the eastern half of Hausaland, including the Kano “standard” dialect, and *nā/tā*, typical of the western reaches?

The answer to the first question is straightforward: the copula *nēctē* ~ *nā/tā* developed from demonstratives with the Chadic (and Afroasiatic) determiner bases **n* masculine and plural and **t* feminine (Greenberg 1960). These bases still have determiner function within Hausa and many other Chadic languages, e.g. as the Hausa previous reference markers ̀*n* (masculine and plural), ̀*ř* < **t* (feminine):

- (4) z̀*ābo*-*n* ‘the male Guinea fowl’
- z̀*ābuwa*-̀*ř* ‘the Guinea hen’
- z̀*ābī*-*n* ‘the Guinea fowls’

It has been a fairly common typological development in the world’s languages in general and in Chadic languages in particular for demonstratives and third person pronouns to evolve functionally to become copulas (Schuh 1990:614). The specific path by which this took place in Hausa is subject to speculation, but one possible path is equational questions. The questions meaning, “What is this?” cited in the first paragraph of this section actually have a double copula. I suggest the following development (using modern standard Hausa forms to illustrate, though these are probably not the original phonetic forms):

(5) Stage I	M̀ <i>ē</i> ǹ <i>ē</i> ? what [is] this	The questioned predicate ⁴ is <i>m̀ē</i> ‘what?’. The subject is the demonstrative <i>ǹē</i> .
Stage II	M̀ <i>ēnē</i> ǹ <i>ē</i> ? what [is] this	The original <i>m̀ē-nē</i> is interpreted as itself meaning “what?” or “what-is?”, necessitating an additional <i>nē</i> ‘this’ as the subject.
Stage III	M̀ <i>ēnē</i> ǹ <i>ē</i> ? what is-it M̀ <i>ēnē</i> ǹ <i>ē</i> wanǹ <i>à</i> ? what is this	The final <i>nē</i> of Stage II is reinterpreted as a copula, necessitating the addition of the demonstrative <i>wanǹà</i> if one wishes to express an overt deictic subject.

Reinterpretation of the demonstrative of the Stage II question as a copula rather than a noun phrase allowed it to spread to equational statements which had overt nominal or pronominal subjects and predicates.

While there are other conceivable paths for the evolution of a demonstrative to become a copula, the scenario in (5) has certain things to recommend it. First, it explains why the copula is sentence final. Hausa is an SVO language. One would expect a copula to fall between subject and predicate, but in the scenario in (5), the demonstrative from which the copula developed *was* the subject, left in sentence final position when the questioned predicate was fronted.

Second, it explains the apparent double copula in standard equational questions⁵ as well as the fact that Hausa can still ask equational questions which, depending on one’s perspective on how to describe the modern language, either lack a copula (the view of Newman (2000:162)) or have a simple question word *m̀ē/mī* ‘what?’ or *ẁā* ‘who?’ and a single copula. Abraham (1962) gives *m̀*īnā*?* as a Sakkwato form equivalent to Standard

⁴ Hausa places WH question words at the beginning of the sentence. We know that ‘what?’ is the predicate, not the subject by comparing English equational sentences with an auxiliary verb, e.g., “What could this be?” The fact that “could” and “this” are inverted shows that “this” is the subject. Were “what?” the subject, the question would be, “What could be this?”

⁵ The claim that the “double copula” arises, historically, from reinterpretation of Q-word+Copula as just Q-word gains credibility for an innovative use leading to a *triple* copula! In a segment of the *Hausar Baka* video series (Bature et al. 1996-98:§2.08), a speaker, on hearing a visitor outside his door, says, “Ẁ*ānēnē* nē?” (historically, “Who-is-it-is-it is-it?”!).

Haua *mènē nènē?* and Bargery (1934) lists both *mina?* and *mine?* (tones and vowel lengths unmarked). Standard Hausa has the forms *wàyê?* ‘who is it?’, *mèyê?* ‘what is it?’, which I had always viewed as colloquial contractions of *wànē nènē?* and *mènē nènē?* without thinking very carefully about how “nene” would turn into “ye”, a change which would not follow from any known phonological alternations in Hausa. From a historical perspective, the explanation for the existence of these forms is that they are archaisms, reflecting Stage I in (5). The *yê* of *wàyê?* and *mèyê?* is a demonstrative formed on the base *y-/i*, a widespread determiner base in West Chadic and probably the source of the 3rd masculine singular pronouns of Hausa that are realized as *ya* or *-i* (as in *nā gayà ma-i* ‘I told him’).

As far as I know, no one has ever addressed the question of why some dialects have a copula *nā/tā*, with a low vowel, while other dialects have *nē/cē*, with a mid front vowel (the *t/c* difference in the feminine form results from a pan-Hausa rule of palatalization of alveolar obstruents before front vowels). Newman (2000:161) states simply, “These variants with /ā/ represent the historical original shapes.” I had always assumed likewise, but when one considers Hausa vocalic phonology, there is no support for this assumption. There are no phonological processes in Hausa that could explain a shift from a low vowel to a mid vowel. The only alternation between mid and low vowels is the *lowering* of SHORT mid vowels when they occur in medial environments, e.g. *kārē* ‘dog’ + *̀n* ‘the’ → [kārān] ‘the dog’. There are no alternations taking low vowels to mid vowels.⁶ In fact all the historical sound changes with mid vowels as the end product involve LOWERING of *high* vowels, resulting, for example in alternations such as *fīrā* ‘paring’ vs. *fērē* < **fīrē* ‘to pare’ (see Newman (2000:235-239) for further changes involving high vowel lowering).

The answer for the dialect difference in copula form does not lie in phonological change at all. Rather it lies in difference in deixis in the demonstrative system from which the copulas developed. Consider the following forms from Bole:

(6)

Proximal		Distal	
emè	‘this one’ (m)	amā	‘that one’ (m)
oshè	‘this one’ (f)	oshā	‘that one’ (f)
màinè	‘these’	màinā	‘those’
tenè	‘here’	tanā	‘there’

As this paradigm shows, Bole systematically marks proximal deixis with a mid front vowel and distal deixis with a low vowel. As striking as this similarity is with the Hausa dialectally distributed copulas with mid front versus low vowels, I doubt that Bole and Hausa have directly inherited the distinction from a common ancestral language. In languages of the Bole-Tangale group for which I have information on the deictic systems, Bole is the only language that I know of which has this specific association of *e/a* with proximal/distal deixis. What *is* widespread in West Chadic, however, is the typological characteristic of associating vowel color with deictic differences, e.g. Bode *m̀so* ‘this one (m)’, *m̀sì* ‘that one (m)’, and it is this typological characteristic which Hausa must have inherited. The distinction between Western *nā/tā* and Eastern *nē/cē* copulas reflects an original deictic distinction. At Stage I of (5), when there was an actual demonstrative subject, the subject could, of course, have been either distal or proximal. During the period of reinterpretation of the demonstrative as a copula, from Stage II to Stage III, there was fluctuation in form of the emerging copula because of its source in the demonstrative system, with (at least) two deictic distinctions. Modern Hausa has stabilized with one

⁶ Newman (2000:236) does mention cases where low vowels in palatalizing or labializing environments have raised, e.g. **gwānā* > *gōnā* ‘farm’. This has only taken place medially and is lexically sporadic. Moreover, in the case of the feminine copula *cē*, it is the front vowel which palatalized the **t*, not the *c* which raised the vowel.

dialect area having grammaticalized the original distal demonstrative as the copula while the other area has grammaticalized the original proximal.⁷ Perhaps being influenced by the Bole forms, I suspect that the “a” forms were distal and the “e” forms were proximal. The “k” copula, to be discussed in the next section may provide some internal Hausa evidence for this association.

3. The Copula *kè/kà*

Hakà shikè! ‘Thus it is!’ It has been nearly twenty years since I taught as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Nigerian and African Languages at Ahmadu Bello University, but I still can hear one of my students, in his terse Sakkwato accent, saying this phrase. One may translate the final *kè* here as “is”. I believe that most of us who have looked at Hausa from a historical perspective have, at least implicitly, thought of sentences using *kè* in this way as being an extension of verbal sentences that use *kè* as a relative continuative TAM marker (cf. (2) above), or even as being actual verbal sentences with the “pro-verb” *yi* ‘do’ deleted. We have had it backward. Sentences such as this must, in fact, represent the original use of *kè*. That is, the original use of Hausa *kè* is as a copula in non-verbal sentences. Its function as a relative TAM marker in verbal sentences is the innovative extension.

Modern Hausa retains a variety of non-verbal constructions where *kè* has copular function. The main ones are in (7). (See Newman (2000:579-580) for more extended discussion.) The standard orthography writes subject clitic + *kè* as one word. I hyphenate the forms to highlight the *kè*.

(7) a. Clefted sentences with adverbial, stative, locative, or nominal predicate

Hakà shi-kè! (= Eastern <i>Hakà ya-kè!</i>)	‘Thus it is!’
À kishìngìde ta-kè.	‘Reclining is how she is.’
À kàrkashin gadō maciìjī ya-kè.	‘Under the bed is where the snake is.’
Bà mù san kì dà Gimbiya ba. Ìndo ki-kè!	‘We don’t know you as “Princess”.
	Ìndo is who you are!’

(from Sarauniya Films Kano, *Daskin da Ridi*, Part 1)

b. Equational sentences embedded in relative clauses (often with a stabilizer as well)

màtâr dà ta-kè mālāmā (cè)	‘the woman who is a teacher’
lōkàcîn dà na-kè yārò	‘when I was a child’

c. ‘Have’ sentences with a questioned or focused constituent or in a relative clause

Wà ya-kè dà sùfànà?	‘Who has a wrench?’
Mūsā nè ya-kè dà ita.	‘MUSA has one.’
sùfànār dà Mūsā ya-kè dà ita.	‘the wrench that Musa has’

Like the *nè/cè ~ nā/tā* copula, the *kè* copula has its origin in the determiner system, though unlike *nè/cè ~ nā/tā*, which represent a recent innovation within Hausa, *kè* with copular function must have been inherited as such from the language ancestral to Hausa. Proto-Chadic had a **k* determiner base (Schuh 1983a) which probably originally functioned as a gender neutral marker of definiteness. The **k* base in what is something

⁷ Reinterpretations involving the distal/proximal distinction in deictic systems sort themselves out in interesting ways. In Kilba, the distal/proximal determiner distinction has produced “past tense” vs. “present tense” copulas respectively (Schuh 1983b). In Hausa, the distal/proximal distinction as in *can* ‘there’ vs. *nan* ‘here’ originates in the feminine vs. masculine gender distinction!

like this original function is well represented in the “B” branch of West Chadic, e.g. Ngizim *sōnō-gu* ‘the shoe’ (Schuh 1977a:132-133), Miya *mbàrgu ká* ‘the ram’ (Schuh 1998:221). The **k* determiner base seems to have been lost in the Bole-Angas-Ron group of West Chadic-A⁸, but it is still present in Hausa in the Western dialect area demonstrative clitic *ga*, e.g. *wa-n-gà* ‘this one (m)’, *wa-g-gà* < **wa-t-gà* ‘this one (f)’, *dōkì-n-ga* ‘this horse’, etc. (Newman 2000:148). Accounting for why this clitic has [g] rather than [k] is problematic, since voicing features of syllable initial obstruents have been quite stable within Hausa, even in weak clitics. However, if my hypothesis that proto-Hausa inherited the **k* determiner already evolved into a copular function, it is not unlikely that the **k* in its determiner function had likewise undergone change, becoming voiced in the language ancestral to Hausa, probably because of its weak clitic function (cf. Ngizim *-gu* cited above, which co-exists with the original *[*k*] in other Ngizim deictic forms, e.g. *t-ku* ‘this’, as in *dùkà-t-ku* ‘this horse’).

The *-a* of *-ga* together with the *-e* of *kè* shows the same *a/e* deictic related difference in the **k* derived copulas as in the modern stabilizer. As I will argue below, the actual *kà* form shows up in the “relative” TAM's of modern Hausa, but the **ka* copula is also seen in the modern Western copula now realized as *aG* (G = gemination of the following consonant), as in (8). (Newman 2000:581)

- (8) *shī aš Sarkī* ‘it’s he who is King’
yârā ač cikin makarantā ‘it’s the children who are in school’
Mūsā ađ dà kuđfī ‘it’s Musa who has money’

The modern *aG* developed from **ka* as follows:

(9)

Stage 1:	X- <i>ka</i> Y	
Stage 2:	XV-k Y XC <i>a</i> -k	(X ended in a vowel) (X ended in a consonant, <i>a</i> was epenthetic)
Stage 3:	XV-G Y XC <i>a</i> -G Y	(G = geminate copy of next consonant, i.e. * <i>k</i> assimilated to the next consonant)
Stage 4:	X <i>aG</i> Y	(originally epenthetic <i>a</i> interpreted as part of a clitic “ <i>aG</i> ”)

The copular uses of the **kV* deictic also reflect the short vowel of the original form. All the constructions in (7) have this short vowel, and the *aG* Western form < **ka* must have likewise had a short vowel to explain apocopation. There are modern Hausa forms with a long vowel, viz. the relative continuative TAM's and the rhetorical (Newman 2000:588). The examples in (10) pair the “general” forms with their “relative” counterparts.

- (10) Locative: *Tuwō ya-nà cikin tukunya.* ‘*Tuwo* is in the pot.’
Mè ya-kè cikin tukunyā? ‘What is in the pot?’
- Relative continuative: *Mūsā ya-nà gudù.* ‘Musa is running.’
Wà ya-kè gudù? ‘Who is running?’

⁸ Newman (1977) has three coordinate groups West Chadic-A: Hausa, Bole-Angas, and Ron. The Bole-Angas and Ron languages share several innovations showing that they form a subgroup distinct from Hausa. Among those innovations that distinguish this subgroup from the Hausa subgroup are the loss of the **k* determiner base, the change of the initial consonant of the 2nd feminine pronoun **kām* to [š], the loss of the final nasal of the 2nd feminine pronoun in all its forms, and the development of a specifically masculine determiner base **m*.

<u>Potential</u> :	Mūsā yá- <u>à</u> gudù.	‘Musa will surely run.’
<u>Rhetorical</u> :	Mūsā (?*ya-) <u>kà</u> gudù.	‘Musa would dare run.’

What distinguishes all the uses in (10) from those in (7-8) is the fact that those in (10) can be reconstructed with an auxiliary **à(a)* preceding the predicate, while those in (7-8) must be reconstructed as involving direct juxtaposition of the subject and the predicate. Compare the Bole (West Chadic A) and Ngizim (West Chadic B) forms.

(11) a. **Sentence types with direct juxtaposition:** equational, stative

<u>Bole</u> :	Tijjāni Àpìno tèmshi ngòra-tò	‘Tijjani [is] a Hausa’ ‘the sheep [is] tied up’
<u>Ngizim</u> :	waka-tku mēshēnu akəraucin da-jiba	‘this tree [is] a tamarind’ ‘the thieves [are] caught’

b. **Sentence types with auxiliary *à(a)*:** locative, imperfective⁹

<u>Bole</u> :	tàkinshe <u>à</u> wòlwòli indi Bamoi <u>à</u> kàppà mòrdfo	‘the shoes <u>are</u> under the bed’ ‘Bamoi <u>will</u> plant millet’
<u>Ngizim</u> :	garū-gā <u>à</u> miya mavgī-gā Āmadu <u>à</u> dlamau	‘my goats <u>are</u> next to my doorway’ ‘Ahmadu <u>will</u> do (it)’

The lengthening of the vowel of **kV* is a result of coalescence with the auxiliary. The most conservative pairing of *à/kV-à* in Hausa is the pairing of potential and rhetorical, which directly reflect the original situation. This pairing was originally simply imperfective vs. “relative” imperfective, the syntax of the latter being the imperfective in a cleft construction using copular **kV* (‘Musa it-is [who is] running’). Newman and Schuh (1974) present evidence that the modern Hausa “general” continuative marker, *-nā*, derives from the original auxiliary **à* fused with the widespread 3rd singular masculine pronoun clitic **n-*. This innovative form, paired with the modern relative continuative *kè*, has replaced simple *à*, now seen only in the somewhat marginalized TAM's, potential and rhetorical.¹⁰

There are certain details for which I admit to not having a ready explanation: Why does the modern relative continuative marker have the vowel *è* rather than *à*, still seen in the potential and the rhetorical? Why is the relative continuative marker in western dialects *kà*, with a short vowel, rather than *kā* or *kè*? Why is the relative *kè* in sentences like those in (7) realized long when a subject agreement clitic is not attached (*wā kè dà lâifi?* ‘who is at fault?’—cf. Neman 2000:579)? Why does length of *kè(e)* in Hausa vary among speakers and among constructions for locative and stative sentences (R.M. Newman 1976)? The answers to these questions must lie in various analogical shifts and reinterpretations that arose after the basic phonological and morphological shifts described here took place. Nonetheless, the basic picture is clear: we can reconstruct a deictic-derived copula with two vocalic forms, **kà* and **kè*, both of which still appear in Hausa,

⁹ The imperfective verbal use probably evolved from a locative construction, something like, “He [is] at planting.” However, the locative and the verbal imperfective probably were already functionally separate at the time of proto-West Chadic. All West Chadic languages that I know anything about differentiate these constructions in one way or another, e.g. by using a special imperfective verb form distinct from a derived verbal noun.

¹⁰ This is an interesting case of Kuryłowicz’s 4th “Law of Analogy” (Kuryłowicz 1945-49), which states, “Quand à la suite d’une transformation morphologique une forme subit la différenciation, la forme nouvelle correspond à sa fonction primaire (de fondation), la forme ancienne est réservée pour la fonction secondaire (fondée).”

the forms with long vowels derive from coalescence of the short-voweled forms with an auxiliary, *à*.

I have omitted comparative discussion of one construction, viz. “have”. In Hausa, this construction pairs the general continuative *-nà* with the short relative *kè*, as in (12a). The account above claims that the *-nà* auxiliary has its source in the reconstructable **à(a)*, and since the long relative *kè* comes from short *kV*+auxiliary, the relative ‘have’ construction should have long *kè*. The solution to this puzzle, like many others, comes from comparative evidence. Such evidence shows that the innovation is an analogical extension by Hausa of the general continuative auxiliary *-nà* to ‘have’ constructions. We must reconstruct the ‘have’ construction in West Chadic as consisting of simple juxtaposition of subject and a “with” predicate, with no intervening auxiliary. Bole and Ngizim illustrate this in (12b-c). The Hausa relative ‘have’ construction is thus older within the history of Hausa than is general ‘have’.

- (12) a. Hausa: Mūsā ya-*nà* dà kudī ‘Musa has money’
 Wà ya-*kè* dà kudī? ‘who has money?’
- b. Bole: Bamoi gà dàrà ‘Bamoi has wealth’
- c. Ngizim: Kwāna nā dūka ‘Kwana has a horse’

4. Hausa Completive

4.1. Preliminaries: West Chadic and Hausa aspect marking. Comparative evidence from West Chadic points to a basic three-way Tense/ Aspect/ Mood (TAM) system (Schuh 1977b). I will refer to the three parameters as “perfective”, “imperfective”, and “subjunctive”, having roughly the respective basic functions of showing action viewed as a “unit” (completed or past for active verbs, existing in a state for stative verbs), “incomplete” (progressive, future, habitual), and “dependent” (actions controlled by higher complementizing constructions such as verbs of desire, expressions of necessity, etc.; actions in sequence where the TAM context is known; expressions of purpose; exhortations; and other functions). All modern Chadic languages have elaborations in their TAM systems, and proto-West Chadic probably did too, but such elaborations would have been built on this three-way basic system.

Formally, proto-West Chadic marked its TAM distinctions on the verb, certainly by final vowel, and possibly by tone pattern. Person agreement consisted of CV proclitic pronouns. Third person probably did not have verbal agreement proclitics, using just the bare verb, but adding independent pronouns if it was crucial to overtly mark a non-nominal third person subject.

Modern Bole uses a system very much like this reconstructed system.¹¹

(13)	1 st sg. subject	3 rd sg. subject	
Perfective	̀̀n s̀̀ru-ẁ̀	(ishi) s̀̀ru-ẁ̀	‘... fell’
Imperfective	̀̀n s̀̀rà	(ishi) à s̀̀rà	‘... will fall’
Subjunctive	̀̀n s̀̀re	(ishi) s̀̀re	‘that ... fall’

Bole has elaborated its system with a habitual, which uses a special verbal noun form ending in *-o*, e.g. *̀̀n s̀̀ro* ‘I fall’, and a progressive, which is built on the imperfective with

¹¹ I write this at a time when I am engaged in research on Bole, but lest one think that I am reconstructing proto-West Chadic to look like a language I am familiar with, I note that a system very much like this exists in other Bole/Tangale languages as well as in Bade/Ngizim and in Miya, languages of the West Chadic-B branch.

an auxiliary *jì* (from the word meaning 'body'), e.g. *n-jì sòrà* 'I am falling'. The imperfective seen in (13) in isolation is usually translated as future, but in context, the bare imperfective often has a progressive meaning.

Modern Hausa retains elements of this proto-West Chadic system. The Hausa continuative (< proto-West Chadic imperfective) differentiates its verb from other TAM forms by using a form which can also function nominally. This may well have been true of proto-West Chadic inasmuch as most other West Chadic languages also use noun-like forms in the imperfective. Hausa uses identical verb forms for TAM's other than the continuative with one exception, viz. imperatives of grade 2 and grade 3 verbs. These verbs end in *-i* in the imperative, a reconstructable feature of proto-West Chadic.¹² Compare Bole and Hausa:

(14)	Bole	Hausa	
Perfective	̀̀ duw-wò-yi	nā dōkā	'I beat (it)'
Imperfective	̀̀ dùwā-yi	inā dūkā	'I am beating (it)'
Subjunctive	̀̀ dùwīi	in dōkā	'that I beat (it)'
Imperative	dùwīi	dōki	'beat (it)!'

Hausa also retains remnants of the CV proclitic subject agreement markers in what Newman (2000) refers to as "weak subject pronouns" (wsp). These reconstructable proclitics still show up in immediate preverbal position in the negative perfective and the subjunctive. Unlike most of its sisters and cousins, Hausa requires these clitics in 3rd person as well as 1st and 2nd.

(15)	2nd m. sg. subject	3rd m.sg. subject	
Neg. Perfective	bà <u>kà</u> gudù ba	bà-ì (< *yà) gudù ba	'... didn't run'
Subjunctive	<u>kà</u> gudù	yà gudù	'that ... run'

Other Hausa TAM's, aside from the general and relative completive, also use the wsp proclitics, but always with some auxiliary element, e.g. *ka-nà gudù* 'you are running', *ka-kàn gudù* 'you run', *ka-à gudù* 'you will surely run'. Use of these proclitics as subjects connected to non-verbs is probably also a proto-West Chadic feature. Some other languages use these clitics, at least in first and second person, to mark subject agreement regardless of sentence type. Of interest is the fact that when the Hausa wsp proclitics directly precede the verb, they have low tone (see 15), whereas with preverbal auxiliaries, they have high tone. There are several possible explanations for this tonal difference. One explanation may involve analogical leveling. It may be that the proto-West Chadic subject clitics did not have the same tone in all persons. In a number of the Bole/Tangale languages, first person singular has low tone but other persons have high, e.g. Bole *̀̀ sòrà* 'I will fall' but *ka sòrà* 'you (m.s.) will fall', *mu sòrà* 'we will fall' (cf. 14). In Ngizim, first person *plural* subjects have low tone whereas other persons have high, etc. It may be that Hausa has leveled this tonal distinction to low in immediate preverbal position but to high in pre-auxiliary position. Another explanation for the tone differentiation may be a sort of "alternating stress" rhythm. In the collocation wsp-verb, the verb is clearly the strong element. Building from the weak clitic to the stronger verb, may call for lowering of

¹² Newman (2000:264) notes that this explanation for the final *-i* of the imperative has been accepted by him and others for a long time. Unfortunately, he backs away from this clear and convincing explanation based on comparative Chadic data, suggesting instead that the imperative may be the lexical base form. He points toward this "explanation" in the belief that the "real" base form for grade 2 verbs is the pre-nominal object form, which ends in *-i*. Choosing this as the "base" form for grade 2 makes for analytical convenience for the linguist, but I know of no good evidence that in a Hausa speaker's mind this is the base other than the fact that the imperative has this form, a circular argument!

the clitic tone. In the collocation *wsp*-auxiliary-verb, however, both the *wsp* and the auxiliary are “weak” with respect to the verb. Note that all the *wsp*-auxiliary combinations have high-low tones, giving a sort of alternating stress to the entire collocation. Whatever the explanation, it is clear that the immediate preverbal pronouns and the pre-auxiliary pronouns are the single set of CV subject proclitics inherited from proto-West Chadic.

4.2. Hausa general and relative completive. One TAM distinction that Hausa did NOT inherit from proto-West Chadic is the distinction between general and relative completive. I know of no West Chadic B languages that make this distinction.¹³ Some West Chadic A languages do make the distinction, e.g. Kanakuru (Newman 1974) and some of the Ron languages (Jungraithmayr 1970), but formally the paired forms in those languages could not, by any stretch of imagination, share common ancestral forms with Hausa or with each other. One can therefore assume only a typological drift, perhaps more areal than genetic, since Kanuri also makes a similar distinction.

The basic distribution of Hausa general and relative completive is as follows: The *general* completive is used to make assertions or ask yes/no questions about events viewed as “unitary”. The *relative* completive is the obligatory means for expressing perfective aspect when a constituent is placed sentence initial for questioning or focus and in relative clauses. In a sequential narrative about past events, the *relative* completive carries the event line, while the *general* completive expresses anteriority (an event which happened preceding the current point of the event line). It is incorrect, however, to view the relative completive as a “sequential” completive. It has this function in past narrative and in a sequence of events where the syntax requires a relative rather than general completive, as in a WH question (‘who came, took the food, and left?’), but in a context where the syntax requires a general completive, if there is a sequence of events, the entire sequence will be in the general completive, e.g. as a complement to a verb of perception (‘I saw that he had come, taken the food, and left’).

The Hausa general and relative completives have the following forms:

(16)	General comp. (pandialectal)	Relative comp. (eastern)	Relative comp. (western)	
1sg.	nā gudù	na gudù	nag gudù	‘I ran’
2m.sg.	kā gudù	ka gudù	kag gudù	‘you (m) ran’
2f.sg.	kin gudù	kikà gudù	kig gudù	‘you (f) ran’
3m.sg.	yā gudù	ya gudù	yag gudù	‘he ran’
3f.sg.	tā gudù	ta gudù	tag gudù	‘she ran’
1pl.	mun gudù	mukà gudù	munkà gudù	‘we ran’
2pl.	kun gudù	kukà gudù	kunkà gudù	‘you (pl) ran’
3pl.	sun gudù	sukà gudù	sunkà gudù	‘they ran’

Historically, the relative completive is the general completive + *kà*. The developments leading to the modern forms are as below. This is basically a restatement of the account in Newman and Schuh (1974). The 2nd person forms illustrate all the changes that have taken place. PD = pandialectal, W = western dialect area only, E = Eastern dialect area only, “G” in the pronoun forms = geminate copy of the next consonant. I use doubled vowels here rather than the macron to indicate length. The sound changes are historically ordered from left to right.

¹³ Skinner (1979:45) presents a form in Pa’a which she calls “Relative Completed Tense”. The function of this TAM bears only vague similarities to Hausa relative completive. In the environments of relative clauses and narrative sequence, I suspect what she calls a TAM marker is actually a clause level operator. In the canonical environment for Hausa relative completive, viz. WH questions, Pa’a uses the simple “completed tense” (pp. 87-88).

(17)

proto-Hausa relative perf.	Apocope & Shortening (PD)	Assimilation (PD)	Leveling of 2f (W)	Degemination (E)	Clitic leveling (E)	Eastern	Western
*kaakà	*kak	*kaG	(*kaG)	ka	(ka)	ka	kaG
*kinkà	-----	-----	*kiG	-----	kikà	kikà	kiG
*kunkà	-----	-----	-----	-----	kukà	kukà	kunkà

Apocope and shortening: The pronouns with open syllables apocopated the **a* of **kà*, accompanied by automatic shortening of the original long vowel in the resulting closed syllable.¹⁴

Assimilation: Since very early in its history, Hausa has not tolerated syllable final velar consonants. The syllable final **-k* resulting from Apocope may have thus assimilated as soon as the vowel was lost. Newman [and Schuh?] (in preparation) point(s) out that syllable final velars had two outcomes in Hausa, differentiated by environment. The best known was Klingenberg's Law, by which **K > w / ___\$*. The other is complete assimilation resulting in gemination. Newman [and Schuh] describe this as being specific to CVC reduplication, but it may more generally apply to any environment where placement of velar in syllable final position comes about through a productive morphological process.

Leveling of 2f: The second feminine singular pronoun, **kin* did not originally have an open syllable and hence should not have been subject to Apocope. However, it is the only singular person with CVN structure. Replacement of expected **kinkà* must be the result of analogical leveling to make all the singular persons structurally CVG (cf. fn.).

Degemination: Eastern dialects have degeminated the original CVG pronouns, yielding Cv (v = short vowel). This could be spontaneous degemination as has happened in a number of lexical items (cf. Western *raggō*, Western *ragō* 'lazy person'), or it could be leveling toward Cv pronouns on analogy with other TAM's (cf. fn.). *Clitic Leveling* (see immediately below) gives plausibility to this latter explanation.

Clitic leveling: In the eastern dialect area, the *-n-* of the original CVNkà forms has dropped. This must be on analogy with all other proclitic+auxiliary TAM markers which have a simple CV proclitic.

The completive forms raise two questions: what is the function of the relative completive *-kà*, and why does the reconstructed completive (both general and relative) not have reflexes of the proto-West Chadic CV agreement proclitics?

In answer to the first question, Newman and Schuh (1974:7) state unequivocally that *kà* is a reflex of a reconstructable proto-Chadic perfective marker **kà* (or **kə*), a position which Newman (2000:571) repeats. In fact, there is no convincing evidence that this is correct. Newman and Schuh (1974:7) cite examples from four languages: Sura and Ron (Fyer) of the A branch of West Chadic and Tera and Margi of the A branch of Biu-Mandara. In the case of Tera and Margi, neither actually has "*ka*", but rather *wa* and *ga* respectively. In any case these languages are only distantly related to Hausa, and moreover, the Biu-Mandara languages in general have TAM marking which differs typologically from most of West Chadic. Sura and the Ron languages are West Chadic and are even in the same main branch of West Chadic as Hausa, but they are spoken on the southern edge of West Chadic and have undergone heavy typological influence from their

¹⁴ Newman (2000:571,§5) seems to assume that the pronouns with open syllables (1sg, 2ms, 3ms, 3fs) were originally the weak proclitic pronouns with a short vowel. This may be a plausible view for the analysis of the modern reflexes—it would provide an abductive motivation for the leveling of 2fs to *kiG* in Western dialects rather than expected **kinkà* and the degemination in Eastern dialects giving Cv rather than CvG forms—but it is certainly wrong historically and runs counter to the analysis we had already arrived at over a quarter century ago in Newman and Schuh (1974).

Niger-Congo neighbors. Among the more northerly West Chadic languages, which have probably always had other Chadic languages as neighbors and are typologically much more like Hausa, I know of no languages from either the A or B branches which have anything like a preverbal “*ka*” perfective marker.

But in fact one need go no further than Hausa itself to question the claim that the relative completive *kà* is a reflex of a proto-(West) Chadic perfective auxiliary. First, ALL other TAM's in Hausa use reflexes of the proto-West Chadic CV proclitics, including those which have preverbal auxiliaries. Why would the completive be any different? Second, in the Western dialect area, *kà* marks both relative completive and relative CONTINUATIVE. If this morpheme were a reflex of a West Chadic PERFECTIVE marker, why would it mark continuative, a reflex of proto-Chadic imperfective?

I propose the following reconstruction for the Hausa affirmative completives:

- **Pronouns:** The subject agreement pronouns were not originally subject pronouns but were functionally “stressed” pronouns. Their historical origin is the proto-West Chadic A independent pronouns, typified by those of Kirfi (Schuh 1978:34):

(18) Kirfi independent pronouns			
	Singular		Plural
1	nǎa	1	mùnnu
2m	kǎa	2	kùnnu
2f	cǐi		
3m	shǐi	3	sùnnu
3f	tǎa		

The only significant differences between these pronouns and the completive pronouns of Hausa, other than tone, are the absence of the proto-Chadic (indeed, proto-Afroasiatic) final nasal in the 2nd feminine singular, which was lost in a language ancestral to Kirfi (proto-Bole-Angas-Ron), and the 3rd masculine singular *shǐi* instead of **yǎa*. There are three morpheme types associated with 3rd masculine singular, viz. *s-*, *n-*, *y-*, all of which can be found in most West Chadic languages, but with different distributions from language to language.

- ****kà* relative completive marker:** This was the copula **kV* discussed above in section 3. Its function was not that of a TAM marker but that seen in all other constructions where it appears, viz. a copula which marked clefted focus constructions.
- **Function of the reconstructed completives:** I am confident of the reconstructed sources of the completive subject pronouns and relative completive *kà*. An account of the functional origins of the two completives is more speculative, but a likely scenario is the following: The pronoun of the *general* completive was originally a topicalized pronominal subject, something like, “As for me, I ran.” The pronoun of the *relative* completive was originally a focused subject pronoun with *kà* being a copula marking a cleft construction, something like, “It was I who ran.”

The linguistic events leading to the modern Hausa completive forms is as follows. I illustrate the stages with a quasi-reconstruction using a third person plural subject and a verb ending in *-a*, one of the two vowels that could terminate verbs in the completive, the other most likely being *-u* (Schuh 1977b).

Stage I: Completive was marked by a *-u* or *-a* vowel termination, subjunctive by final *-i*. Person agreement was marked by a CV subject clitic. Because of its functional distribution, the subjunctive would not have admitted topicalized or focused constituents.

Neutral statement:	su-fita (completive)	'they went out'
	su-fiti (subjunctive)	'that they go out'
Topicalized subject:	sun su-fita	'as for them, they went out'
Focused subject:	sun kà su-fita	'it was they who went out'
Focused non-subject:	jiyà kà su-fita	'it was yesterday that they went out'

Stage IIa—change in TAM marking: TAM distinctions begin to shift to preverbal auxiliaries. The imperfective (eventually differentiated into modern potential and continuative) already had an auxiliary, **à*, and the modern future *zā* may have been developing. Whether this shift was driven by incipient loss of TAM marking on the verbs themselves or the development of preverbal auxiliaries made marking on verbs superfluous, we cannot say.

Stage IIb—change in subject agreement function: The changes of Stage IIa would have left the agreement+verb complex indistinguishable between the completive and the subjunctive. All other TAM's had, and still have, some sort of preverbal marking. A way to differentiate completive and subjunctive was available, though, viz. to require topicalized subject pronouns, which would have been excluded from subjunctive clauses, for completive subject marking. This, in turn, would have rendered the original subject agreement clitics superfluous. We cannot say whether or not there may have been a period of coexistence of the “new” obligatory completive pronouns and the subject agreement clitics, but their eventual loss in completive, in effect, made the original CV agreement clitics the markers of subjunctive, since all other TAM's now had some sort of distinctive preverbal marking. At some point Hausa developed a new set of independent pronouns. These were used as topics since the original topic pronouns were shifting to TAM marking/person agreement functions.¹⁵

Neutral statement:	sun (su-)fita (completive)	'they went out'
	su-fita (subjunctive)	'that they go out'
Topicalized subject:	sū sun (su-)fita	'as for them, they went out'

Stage IIc—development of a “relative” completive for functions other than clefted subjects: Originally, the relative completive *sun kà ...* ‘they it-is [who] ...’ would have been a clefted subject only. If constituents other than the subject were focused, the subject pronoun would obviously have been absent, with *kà* being the clefting particle for whatever preceded it. However, with loss of the subject agreement clitics in the completive and subject agreement transferred to the original “stressed” pronoun, the complex Pronoun+*kà* was reanalyzed as the focus/clefting marker. In order to focus a pronoun subject, it was now necessary to add another pronoun; when a non-subject was focused, the erstwhile stressed pronoun was required for agreement.

Focused subject:	sū (nè) sun-kà fita	'it was they who went out'
Focused non-subject:	jiyà sun-kà fita	'it was yesterday that they went out'

I have named the latter three strages as IIa-c rather than as three sequential stages because, in fact, these reanalyses and reallocations of function probably were interdependent, feeding and feeding from each other. Whatever the primary driving forces

¹⁵ I do not have any good ideas on the origin of these pronouns. They are reminiscent of Bole CVV object clitics that are used when some other clitic follows (Gimba 2000:102). What seems clear is that the Hausa completive subject pronouns WERE the original independent pronouns, or, at the very least, they were not bound forms. Newman (2000:569) suggests that they were “a noncliticized object set”, but I know of no support for this. All the West Chadic languages I know, including Hausa, use a single set of pronouns both as noncliticized objects and in “independent” functions, e.g. topics, objects of prepositions, and the like.

were, the developments outlined here, whose likelihood is supported by both comparative and internal Hausa evidence, lead to the modern Hausa situation, quite different from but quite naturally relatable to the situations in Hausa's West Chadic cousins.

One final difference between Hausa and its cousins is in the construction of narrative. In all the West Chadic A and B languages other than Hausa where I have studied the use of TAM's in narrative, the subjunctive carries the event line, regardless of temporal setting. In Hausa, the subjunctive has this function in discourse not viewed as completed (procedural texts, texts about not yet concluded events, etc.), but in narrative viewed as a completed story (folktales, historical narrative, anecdotes about the past), Hausa uses the relative completeive. This function for the relative completeive does not obviously group as a natural class with the other canonical functions of the relative completeive, viz. WH-questions, focus constructions, and relative clauses, which commonly share structural properties cross-linguistically. Newman (2000:572) eschews the term "relative completeive" in favor of "preterite" in large part because of its function in narrative, noting that although a purely syntactic rule requires relative rather than general completeive in "relative" environments, "preterite seems preferable to 'Rel-completeive' because this TAM *can* occur in narratives and in other non_Rel environments." As the base meaning for the "preterite", Newman says that it "denotes discrete events in the past". This seems relatively accurate to me, and this meaning may be the path by which it has been extended to narrative sequence about the past. In unpublished work, I had ventured the label "definite perfective". In WH-questions and focus, the event is presupposed, similar to definite marking on nouns, where a noun so marked is known from previous context. In relative clauses, the clause modifies a referent of a presumably existing type. In narratives of past events the events are stated as known and completed facts.

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