

Zodí, aka Dott (Chadic, West-B, South-Bauchi): Grammatical notes and vocabulary

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1. Introduction

Zodí, called Dott by Shimizu (78 : 13), belongs to the Southern Bauchi group of the West Chadic-B sub-branch (SBW) of Chadic (Afroasiatic). **Zodí**¹ is the ethnonym of a group of people living in the village of Dott, and 7 of the 11 wards ruled over by its chief. The 7 wards are : **Wakíli**, **Kuleetó**, **Galaadiima**, **Ábaar**, **Sáraári**, **Círooma**, **Áondí**. Hausa and Fulɓe are spoken in the other wards : **Káágádaámá**, **Sáábóngarí**, **Góóbírááwá** and **Hárdó**. They call their language **Jéróm zodí**, the language of the Zodís. The Zodís started converting to Islam in the 60's, and are now mainly Muslims, with few Christians and Animists among them. The language borrows heavily to Hausa, both in the vocabulary (25 % of our lexical entries) and in the grammar (conjunctions, auxiliaries, topicalization particles). However, it has retained the essential of its typical SBW character.

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¹ This paper is the result of 3 field trips to the village of Dott, of 3 to 4 days each, between 1998 and 2002. I want to express my deep gratitude to the *Sarkin Dott*, and to the *Ubandoma*, Ahmed A. Domas and his family. Ahmed has been an extremely patient and gifted language assistant, and has liberally given me his time and energy, driving me around on the back of his motorcycle on the paths of numerous villages, looking for mysterious Chadic languages way beyond the Zodi area. He and his family have made my stay in his compound in Dott a real pleasure. Many thanks to Ahmed's brother, Nuhu A. Domas, for answering my unending questions.

Transcription system : Long vowels are indicated by double letters ; high (Hi=H) tone = **á/áá** ; low (Lo=L) tone = **a/aa** ; falling tone = **â/ââ** ; rising tone = **ǎ/ǎǎ**. We have preferred to use the IPA instead of Hausa spelling conventions to transcribe Zodi sounds. i.e. Hausa **c** is **ɕ** ; **j** is **ɟ**. However, outside the consonant chart, for the sake of legibility, we have kept the letter **y** to transcribe IPA **j**.

2. Phonology

2.1 Consonant phonemes

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----------------|----|----------------|-----------------|-----|----|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| p | p ^j | t | t ^j | t ^w | ts | tʃ | k | k ^j | k ^w | ʔ |
| b | b ^j | d | | d ^w | dz | ɕ | g | g ^j | g ^w | |
| ɸ | ɸ ^j | ɗ | ɗ ^j | | | y | | | | |
| mb | | nd | | nd ^w | ndz | nɕ | nɕ ^w | ŋg | ŋg ^j | ŋg ^w |
| f | f ^w | s | | s ^w | | ʃ | | | | (h) |
| mv | | z | | | | ʒ | | | | |
| | | ʈ | ʈ ^j | ʈ ^w | | | | | | |
| M | | n | n ^j | | | | | ŋ | | |
| | | r | | r ^w | | | | | | |
| | | l | l ^j | l ^w | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | j | | | | |

As in Hausa, all Zodi words begin with a consonant and vowel-initial words in the transcription are preceded by a glottal stop : **a**, *at* ; **ú**, *of* ; **éti**, *fowl* = **ʔa**, **ʔú**, **ʔéti**. The voiced lateral fricative [ɸ] is absent.

/k/ has many allophones whose distribution is not clear : it is pronounced [k] in initial position, [ɣ] in intervocalic position : [bəyobárka] < bə ko bārka, [he] greeted you, lit. gave you welcome, but cf. [bukáá], after. It is pronounced x when followed by a nasal : [kǒxŋ] = kǒkŋ, arm, wing, branch ; [kaaxni] < kaak-ni, praise-pl ; cf [makaakaʔ] < ma kaak Cak, thank you (lit. we+Aor. praise Perf., Hau mun gode). It is pronounced [k], sometimes [q²] when followed by other consonants, except in the context a__t where it is pronounced [x] : [kaaxti] < kaak-ti, praising. At the end of an utterance, it is pronounced [q] or [ʔ].

The tendency to labialise consonants in front of short /o/ is not as systematic as in Zaar for example : **gon**, here = [gwón~gón]. **g**, **ŋg**, **l**, **r**, **m**, **n** and **ŋ** are palatalised in front of /i/ and /e/.

2.2 Vowels

Zodi has a six-vowel system, all of them except for /ə/ occurring short and long, with no nasals.

| short | | | long | | |
|-------|---|---|------|----|----|
| i | | u | ii | | uu |
| e | ə | o | ee | əə | oo |
| | a | | | aa | |

Pending a deeper phonological analysis, we have chosen to account for diphthongs as a sequence vowel+glide : **aw** ; **ay** ; **oy** ; **uy** ; **əy**. These sequences don't appear in the stock Zodi lexicon. They occur only in loan-words from Hausa, or result from suffixation with **-i(i)** morphemes.

2.3 Tones

Zodi has two levels of tone (Hi, Lo), plus a rising tone (Lo-Hi) and a falling tone (Hi-Lo).

3. Verbal morphology

3.1 Verb classes

Zodi has one and two-syllable verbs, with various tone schemes³ :

² Uvular stop.

³ There is 1 verb borrowed from Hausa with HHL tones : **káránta**, read.

| | | | | | | |
|---------|------------|--------------|------------|-----------|--------------|---------|
| 1 syll. | L (56%) | fee | turn round | H (13%) | fée | tell |
| 2 syll. | HL (20%) | kótír | run | LL (8%) | ƙakaa | swallow |
| 2 syll. | LH (6 ex.) | ƙóbát | stand up | HH (3ex.) | súkót | mix |

3.2 Verb plurality

Verb plurality is not consistently marked in **Zodí**. Verbs and verbal nouns sometimes take a -ni suffix (with a floating Hi tone) in agreement with plural subjects or objects : **pár/pární**, *do* ; **ci/cíní**, *eat* ; **ƙóbát/ƙóbátní**, *get up, grow up, migrate* (Hau. *tashi*).

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|--------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| əri | gu | man | ƙí | ada | man | ci-ni | gálba |
| 3s | Foc | 1s+Fut | eat | Pro | 1pl+Fut | eat+pl | victory |
| <i>it's what I shall eat with</i> | | | | <i>we will win</i> | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------|--------------|
| ú | ƙóbát | ma | ƙóbátní | ú | lootí |
| 2sg+Aor. | grow up | 1pl+Aor | migrate | of | far |
| <i>you grew up</i> | | <i>we came from far</i> | | | |

This suffix is incompatible with the Perfective.

3.3 Verbal extensions

One verbal extension was identified, elicited with Hausa grade 5 'causative' verbs. It is fairly common in the small corpus we used. The form is -r with a Hi tone suffixed to CV verbs, and -dər with a Hi-Lo tone scheme suffixed to CVC verbs.

| original vb. | Hausa | Zodí | derived vb. | Hausa | Zodí |
|--------------------|-------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|
| <i>come out</i> | fita | ta | <i>get out</i> | fitar (da) | tár |
| <i>get down</i> | sauka | ƙí | <i>take down</i> | saukar (da) | ƙír |
| <i>climb</i> | hau | tswaa | <i>take up</i> | hawar (da) | tswár |
| <i>hide (int.)</i> | ƙoye | fun | <i>hide (tr.)</i> | ƙuyar | fúndər |
| <i>get spoilt</i> | ɓata | mal | <i>spoil</i> | ɓatar (da) | máldər |
| <i>pour</i> | zuba | ɗat | <i>pour away</i> | zubar | ɗátdər |
| <i>sit</i> | zauna | suk | <i>sit down</i> | zaunar (da) | súkdər |

Some verbs have the form of a causative, without any obvious original verb to be associated with : **mándər**, *sell* ; **sándər** *bring* ; **ndər**, *róddər*, *take to*.

3.4 Verbal nouns

There exists two type of Verbal Nouns (VN) in **Zodí**. They both have -ti suffixes but they differ by their tones. The VN appearing in non-Continuous constructions have Lo tones :

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>say</i> | ƙet | ƙetti |
| <i>put</i> | wáá | waati |
| <i>swallow</i> | ƙakaa | ƙakaati |
| <i>get up, etc.</i> | ƙóbát | ƙóbátti |

In the Continuous, the tones depend on the number of syllables of the verb.

For one syllable verbs, the Verbal Noun takes a Hi tone on the first syllable. Compare the following examples contrasting continuous and non-continuous uses of the verbal nouns.

| | | | | |
|------------------|----------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| márabá | ú | ƙetti | taa | ƙétti |
| greetings | with | coming | 3pl.+Cont. | coming |
| <i>Welcome !</i> | | | <i>they are coming</i> | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| ər | gu | Tába | footi | ki | mu | (...) |
| 3sg. | that | already (Aux.) | telling | 2sg. | Comp. | |
| <i>he who has already told you that (...)</i> | | | | | | |

dón əɾ si a fóóti kí mu (...)
 because 3sg. Cond Cont. telling 2sg. that
because if he is telling you that (...)

- For two-syllable verbs, the -ti suffix does not alter the lexical tone of the verb in the continuous.

| Lexical Form | | | Non-Continuous | | Continuous | |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|------------------|
| LL | bərti | <i>fear</i> | LLL | bərtiti | LLL | bərtiti |
| LL | ɖikər | <i>roll</i> | LLL | ɖikər̩ti | LLL | ɖikər̩ti |
| LH | bikát | <i>spin</i> | LLL | bikət̩ti | LHL | bikát̩ti |
| LH | dokál | <i>lear</i> | LLL | dokalt̩ti | LHL | dokál̩ti |
| HL | fífee | <i>whistle</i> | LLL | fífeeti | HLL | fífeeti |
| HL | gjom̩ti | <i>laugh</i> | LLL | gjom̩ti | HLL | gjom̩ti |
| HH | kwákál | <i>cement</i> | LLL | kwakalt̩ti | HHL | kwákál̩ti |
| HH | súkát | <i>mix</i> | LLL | sukət̩ti | HHL | súkát̩ti |

4. Numerals

| | | | |
|----|--------------------|------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | nəm | 11 | sup-cedíí-nəm |
| 2 | rop | 12 | sup-cedíí-rop |
| 3 | maakó | 13 | sup-cedíí-maakó |
| 4 | wópsə | 20 | subii-rop |
| 5 | nantám | 21 | subii-rop- cedíí-nəm |
| 6 | maamak | 30 | subii-maakó |
| 7 | wusúr-maakó | 40 | subii-wópsə |
| 8 | wusúpsə | 50 | subii-nantám |
| 9 | natúrópsə | 100 | subii-sup |
| 10 | sup | 1000 | dúbúú |

Ordinals are made with the preposition **ú** preceding the cardinal number, which appears in the definite form, *viz* suffixed with an -i : **ú rə̀bi**, *second* ; **ú maakóy**, *third*, etc. **ú kə̀na**, **ú pá̀rkó**, *first*, is an exception. **kə̀na** is to be compared to Zaar **kə̀n**, *face, front, forward*. **pá̀rko** is borrowed from Hausa.

5. Nouns

5.1 Gender

There is no morphological gender in Zodi.

5.2 Plural

In nouns, plurals are rare, lexical, and limited to humans : *women* (**mwáti**, sg. **mə̀sl**), *children* (**méér**, sg. **wun**). *men* (**min**) for example, is a collective noun. However, in the nominal system, plurality is marked in the indefinite, in deictics and relative pronouns.

5.3 Possessive NP + NP constructions

Possessive constructions in Zodi use the genitive link **ú** : **lok ú zodi** ‘king of Dot’ ; **bən ú bas ú wun**, ‘(the) house of (the) father of (the) girl’.

The genitive link **ú** is polyfunctional. Its use is not limited to possession, but expresses a more abstract link between two notions. It is used also for adjectival constructions (cf. *infra* XXX) and composition (**ɖom ú zii** ‘iron’, lit. ‘metal of black’ ; **ɖom ú laari** ‘copper’, lit. ‘metal of red’ ; **peedi ú bəri** ‘sunlight’, lit. ‘sun of white’ ; **ɕar ú bəri** ‘moonlight’, lit. ‘moon of white’ ; **rə̀b-ú-t̩fi** ‘food’, lit. ‘thing of food’⁴). It is used to introduce complements of nominal predicates

⁴ In the compound **rə̀b-ú-t̩fi**, the genitive link [ʔú] has lost its initial [ʔ].

(*lwáksi ú əróm gu...*, ‘angry with the thing that...’ ; *pərti sálláma ú gəḏós* ‘greeting his wife’, lit. ‘doing greeting of wife-his’) and of prepositional phrases : a *dum ú lok* ‘in front of the king’.

5.4 Definiteness

5.4.1 Definite

The -i suffix in **Zodi** expresses a low level of definiteness and can be interpreted as a mark of individuation.

5.4.2 Indefinite

The indefinite determiner is **gəlêḡm** for the singular, and **ḡilêḡm** for the plural. It can be used pronominally :

áp! áy gəlêḡm a gon!
 excl. excl. some at here
Look, there's one ! (Hau : Ap ! Ai ga wani nan !)

When used as a determiner, it can occur on the right of the noun :

d̄ii ma bən əróm gəlêḡm ndi
 Neg 1pl know thing some Neg
We don't know anything

bukáá mbárti ḡilêḡm
 after day some
after a few days

or on the left. In this case, it becomes MH and it is followed by the definite (-i) form of the noun :

d̄ii a tába patti gəlêḡm ərómi gu máálêḡm slam mbi
 Neg 1sg already get some thing that spoil+1sg heart Neg
I never got anything that made me sad (lit. spoiled my heart).

5.5 Quantifiers

The distributive quantifiers are **kóono** (pro.), *everybody* ; **kóógee** (det.), *each/every (for a thing)*.

kóono a gyamṭəti.
 everyone Cont laughing
Everybody is laughing.

The determiner **kóógee** is followed by a noun phrase with the -i definite suffix:

kóógee ḡzeni kóógee ḡzen nantami
 each day+def each day five+def
every year every five year

The global quantifier **kúm**, *all*, has both adjectival uses

kúm əróm gu fáálóm mak ...
 all thing that bother+1s Perf ...
all the things that bothered me...

and pronominal uses :

miní sállá miní kírísta kúm tíḡa mááni sóḡ
 people+of prayer people+of Christ all 3pl+Hab gather+pl. 3pl.+pl
Muslims, Christians, all gather.

5.6 Deictics

Zoḏi uses proximal and distal deictics. Pronouns and determinants are sensitive to number.

| | | proximal | | distal | |
|--------------|----|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Adverbs | | woní | <i>here</i> | wáy | <i>there</i> |
| Determinants | sg | (fáá) goní | <i>this (cow)</i> | (fáá) gway | <i>that (cow)</i> |
| | pl | (fáá) ḡoní | <i>these (cows)</i> | (fáá) ḡway | <i>those (cows)</i> |
| Pronouns | sg | goní/gon | <i>this one</i> | gway | <i>that one</i> |
| | pl | wúrḡoní | <i>these ones</i> | wúrḡway | <i>those ones</i> |

6. Adjectives

Although there are a certain number of verbs with a stative meaning, the adjectival function is relatively well developed in Zoḏi, with adjectives proper and participles.

6.1 Adjectives proper

Adjectives are not uncommon in Zoḏi, and are represented beyond the class of colour terms : **fáari**, *white* ; **laari**, *red* ; **fúúḏi**, *blue* ; **zú**, *black* ; **bari**, *big* ; **báli**, *sweet* ; **dasári**, *ugly* ; **dəkáni**, *wet, unripe* ; **limí**, *deep* ; **mámbəri**, *new* ; **fíndi**, *cold*. The unusual adjective **mbaa**, *big*, is found in the expression **mbaa lwaar**, *big spirits*.

6.2 Participles

Participles are derived from verbs with the suffix **-(n)i** —often pronounced **-(n)əy**— and a MH(M) tone scheme :

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| fan | heat up | faní | hot |
| dzu | fill | dzūyni | full |
| kút | circle | kūtni | round |
| kóγən | be dry | koráni | dry |
| mása | be narrow | masāyni | narrow |
| ndərəŋ | get old | ndərəŋi | old |
| γγyóó | ripen | γγyōyni | ripe |
| pusáŋ | remain | pusáŋi | left over |
| ros | rot | rosíni | rotten |

Some participles cannot be linked to a verb : **fopláŋi**, *void* ; **ndzoŋi**, *sour* ; **γγwakáni**, *crooked* ; **soorí**, *evil, mad* ; **sokí**, [swoγəy], *honest*.

6.3 Adjectival constructions

6.3.1 Attributive adjectives

The paratactic construction uses the Noun + Adjective : **leemú bəli**, *an orange* (lit. *lemon sweet*) ; **fáá fəri**, *a black cow* (lit. *cow black*)

The analytic construction uses the genitive link **ú** and the word order Noun + **ú** + Adjective : **es ú bari/gabi**, ‘elder/younger brother’, lit. ‘brother of old/young’ ; **fáawarí ú maní**, ‘good advice’, lit. ‘advice of good’ ; **sər ú təmi**, ‘good song’, lit. ‘song of nice’.

ma dal fəŋlaa ú limi
I+Aor cross river of deep
I crossed a deep river.

6.3.2 Predicative adjectives

Predicative adjectives use the non-verbal predicate **ni**⁵ (‘be’) with the order Noun + Adjective + **ni** :

⁵ This word is pronounced [ni] in sentence-final position and [nə] elsewhere.

yàáŋ goní dasóŋ ni
 man this ugly be
This man is ugly.

The negative uses the particle **ndí** :

íáy ɔ́ŋir ni ndi, bóri ni
 cow+def black be Neg. white be
The cow is not black, it is white.

Another construction uses **níí**, which is a contraction of **ni** ('be') and the genitive link **ú** ('of'), with the order Noun + **níí** + Adjective :

íáy níí zii pədí níí bari
 cow+def be+of black tree+def be+of big
the cow is black the tree is big

This same construction is used when the predicate is a quality expressed by a noun :

ko ko níí ílimí too amamá ma fá ...
 2sg 2sg be+of knowledge well but 1pl Top ...
You, you are educated, well but as for us...

6.4 Participle constructions

6.4.1 Attributive participles

There exists only a paratactic construction, with the order Participle + Noun, using the short form of the participle.

mándəram kokón bréedi ya?
 give+me dry bread Perf
Give me some dry bread !

6.4.2 Predicative participles

In the affirmative, predicative participles use the non-verbal predicate **ni** only, without genitive link, and the word order Noun + Participle + **ni**. The negation uses the Negative Perfect of the corresponding verb. (cf. 8.2.3)

bréedi ni kokóni bréedi ɗii kókən ndi
 bread+def be dry bread+def Neg dry Neg
the bread is dry the bread is not dry

7. Pronominal paradigms

7.1 Subject pronouns

There are three basic paradigms : Aorist, Continuous and Future.

Other aspects (Perfect, Habitual) are marked by particles combined with the Aorist pronouns.

7.1.1 Basic TAM's

| | Aorist | Future | Continuous |
|------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 1sg. | a | máá | ám |
| 2sg. | ú | kíí | kyáà |
| 3sg. | Ø | Ø | tyáà |
| 1pl | ma | man | maa |
| 2pl | ko | kon | kwaà |
| 3pl | tí | tín | taa |

In the Continuous, the verb is replaced by a Verbal Noun (cf. § 3.4).

The Future often appears with **-ni** suffixed to the verb :

tin tén-ni ɬáá
 3pl+Fut touch-ni cow
They will touch the cow.

However, the same suffix can appear with other tenses, such as the Aorist used with stative verbs :

a ndák-ni ʃim ú ɓani
 1s+Aor like-ni food of hot
I like hot food.

ʃim goní ɓan-ni sooséé
 food this hot-ni really
This food is too hot.

With a nominal subject, the aspect morpheme appears alone : zero (Ø) for the Aorist, **a** for the Continuous and **níí** for the Future.

súkǎí Ø lwáksi ú ərám gu mbakáŋ a párti.
 rabbit Aor. get angry of thing Comp he-goat Cont. doing
Rabbit got angry about what He-goat was doing.

mbakáŋ níí tá-ni
 he-goat Fut enter-ni
He-goat will enter.

7.1.2 Derived TAM's

7.1.2.1 Perfect

The Perfect is a combination of the Aorist + **CaK** at the end of the Verb Phrase. The initial /C/ of the particle assimilates to the preceding consonant or becomes [h] when following a vowel. If the initial C of the particle has assimilated to a nasal, a lateral, a semi-vowel, or [h], the utterance-final /K/ is realised [h].

min Ø tá [hah]
 people Aor come out Perf
people came out

ti féé sárkín-yááki [yah]
 they-Aor tell (traditional title) Perf
they told the war chief

/K/ is realised [x] when followed by a nasal (generally the negative particle **ndi**) :

baa sáy min Ø pór maan̄ti [yax] ndi.
 Neg until people Aor do war Perf Neg
it doesn't mean that people make war

It is realised [q] when followed by any other consonant or when utterance final :

in yaan si Ø kap paq⁶ too [...]
 if one that Aor take Perf well [...]
if one agrees, well [...]

7.1.2.2 Habitual

The habitual is marked by **ɗa** inserted between the Aorist subject pronouns and the verb.

yaan ɗa rəs a maan̄ti ú tóó mat ndi
 one Hab go at war of hand empty Neg
People don't go to war empty-handed (Hau. «akan koyar da yara harbi »)

ɗa can also appear with the Future :

súyáy gu tin ɗa pór aɗa
 like this that 3p-Fut Hab do again
that's the way they will go on doing (Hau. «haka ne za su yi ta yi»)

⁶ When utterance final, the [q] can be replaced by the glottal stop [ʔ].

ɗa is related to the adverb **ɗa**, *again*⁷. This adverb often appears redundantly with the Habitual, as in the example above.

7.2 Other pronouns

| | Object pronouns | Possessive pronouns | Nominal Predication | ICP | Independent pronouns |
|------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|------|----------------------|
| 1sg. | -(ó)m | gin | ám | H | ám |
| 2sg. | kí | gee | kí | -kí | kí |
| 3sg. | əri | gəs | əri | -tí | əri |
| 1pl | ma | gəm | ma | -ma | ma |
| 2pl | ko | gəŋ | ko | -ko | ko |
| 3pl | səŋ | gəsəŋ | səŋ | -səŋ | səŋ |

Comments :

- 3 kinship terms (**baa**, *husband* ; **kon**, *son* ; **ʔénsi**, *mother's brother*) have a special genitive paradigm :

| | Possessive pronouns | <i>uncle</i> | <i>husband</i> |
|------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1sg. | -nǐí | ʔenǐí | baanǐí |
| 2sg. | -nǐŋgee | ʔenǐŋgee | baanǐŋgee |
| 3sg. | -nəs | ʔenəs | baanəs |
| 1pl | -nəma | ʔenəma | baanəma |
| 2pl | -nəŋgən | ʔenəŋgəŋ | baanəŋgəŋ |
| 3pl | -nəsəŋ | ʔenəsəŋ | baanəsəŋ |

- ICP's are suffixed to the verb, with frequent consonant assimilation. The 1st person singular is marked by a Hi tone on the last syllable of the verb.
NB : the 3rd person singular -tí which, with the Continuous **tyàá**, is the only survival of the common Chadic personal mark, under the form of the feminine pronoun. Elsewhere, the 3rd person mark is replaced by the word **əri**, which is to be compared to the word **ərám**, *thing*.
- The Dative does not have a specific paradigm, but is only marked in the 3rd person by a -íí suffixed to the verb. It replaces the Direct Object 3rd person singular pronoun **əri**, and the 3rd person plural pronoun **səŋ**, becomes Lo :

| | | | |
|------------|-----|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Perfect | sg | tə súndərǐí yaʔ | <i>they brought (it) to him</i> |
| | pl. | tə súndərǐí səŋ ŋaʔ | <i>they brought (it) to them</i> |
| Continuous | sg | taa súndərtǐí | <i>they are bringing (it) to him</i> |
| | pl | taa súndərtǐí səŋ | <i>they are bringing (it) to them</i> |
| Future | sg | tən súndərnǐí | <i>they will bring (it) to him</i> |
| | pl | tən súndərnǐí səŋ | <i>they will bring (it) to them</i> |

8. Syntax

8.1 Verbless sentences

8.1.1 Identification

Identification is expressed either with a zero predicate :

ʔin gin Ø múúsá zeyláání.
 name 1s.poss Equ Musa Zailani
My name is Musa Zailani.

or with the non-verbal predicates **ni** or **səŋ** :

⁷ The relation with the polysemic **ɗa** of location is not clear (cf XXX)

kí ni lok ú zodi.
 2s Equ king of Zodi
You are the King of Dott.

Dáwda Múúsá sɛŋ lok zodi.
 Dauda Musa Equ king Zodi
Dauda Musa is the King of Dott.

8.1.2 Location

Location typically uses the non-verbal **ni** and prepositional phrases beginning with **a**, at : **a bə(t)**, *on top of* ; **a gəs**, *under* ; **a dalón**, *across* ; **a káá**, *behind* ; **a dum**, **a kənaa**, *in front* ; **aasi**, *inside* ; **a ndóŋ**, *outside* ; **a bií**, *near*, etc.

kwálbá naa (<ni+a) bət téébur
 cup (<be+at) top table
The cup is on the table

8.1.3 Existence, location & possession

The non-verbal predicate **ada** is highly polysemic. From a basic locative meaning, depending on the semantic properties of the NP's it is associated with, it will express existence, location or possession :

Existence :

ee yanzú ada
 yes Yanzu Loc
Yes, there's Yanzu

súkti ú dəfor ládabí ada
 staying of formerly respect Loc
In older days, there was respect.

Location :

ám a bən rəp gu ám ada
 1sg 1sg know place Rel 1sg Loc
(only) I know where I am

Possession :

ám ada ú 'yerəm wúrɕu [...]
 1sg Loc of friend Rel+pl. [...]
I have friends who [...]

tí ada ú wúni gələm
 3pl Loc of young some
they have a small (one)

lok ada ú vee ndi
 king Loc of tail Neg
the king doesn't have a tail

8.2 Negation

Negation is marked by the particle **ndi/mbi** at the end of the phrase or the sentence.

8.2.1 Non-verbal sentence

ye minés maní si ada ndi maní si doŋ sɔŋi
 see people+3s. how many Foc Loc Neg how many Foc return 3pl.
He saw how many of his people were not there, how many had come back.

8.2.2 Verbal sentence

ú bən yaan ɗa rəs a maŋti ú tóo mat ndi
 2sg+Aor know one Hab go at war with hand empty Neg
One doesn't go to war empty-handed.

8.2.3 Perfect

In the Perfect, the discontinuous negation **dii ... ndi** replaces the Affirmative Perfect mark **Cak**.

dii ti pat gálba a bət ma ndi
Neg 3pl.+Aor get victory at top 1pl. Neg
They have not overcome us.

8.2.4 Hausa loanwords

The negative marker **baa** (borrowed from Hausa) is often used at the beginning of negative phrases and sentences.

baa ni bəki ú bari ndi
Neg Ident. Festival of big Neg
It is not a big festival.

In the same way, **kada** is borrowed from Hausa for the negation of the subjunctive uses of the Aorist :

dón káda mini kən ərám gəsəŋ ndi
because Neg people+def take thing 3sg.+Poss Neg
So that people don't take his things.

8.3 Focus

The focused element is fronted, preceded by the identification predicate **ni**, and followed by the topic particles **si** for subjects and **gu**⁸ for other functions. With circumstantial complements (place, time, manner, cause) there appears the resumptive location particle **ada**.

Non-focused sentence :

wúni wu ŋgin asi gaa
child+def. pour milk into calabash
The girl poured milk into a calabash.

Focused subject

ni wún si wu ŋgin asi gaa
Ident. child Foc pour milk into calabash
It's the girl that poured milk into the calabash.

Focused object

ni ŋgin gu wúni wu asə gaa
Ident. milk Rel child+def. Pou into calabash
r

It's milk that the girl poured into the calabash.

Focused circumstantial

ni asi gaa gu wúni wu ŋgin ada
Ident. into calabash Rel child+def. pour milk Pro
It's into the calabash that the girl poured milk.

8.4 Question

8.4.1 Yes/no questions

Yes/No questions have the same syntactic structure as declarative sentences. They are characterised by a falling intoneme at the end of the sentence, which is perceived only when the sentences finishes with a Hi tone, and a lengthening of final vowels.

(kóó) ú pór mákárántá hak?
(or) 2s.+Aor do school Perf
Did you go to school ?

⁸ **gu** is also the relative complementiser (cf. *infra*).

When the sentence is not in the Perfect, **aa** or **ee** is added to the last word :

kí afa ú 'yerómaa
2sg. Poss of friend+Quest
Did you have friends ?

koða bāni wurbi, waato sadáàkèè?
2pl.+Hab. Give+pl. money that is dowry+Quest
Did you use to give money, that is a dowry ?

8.4.2 Wh- questions

Zodfi questions words are : **nen**, *what* ; **noo**, *who* ; **gee**, *which one* ; **geegoy** (< **gee+goo**, 'day' + **def.**), *when (lit. which day)* ; **maní**, *how many* ; **nómi**, *how* ; **shép nin / sherám nin**, *why*. The same falling intoneme is used with Wh questions and yes/no questions. Questions words appear either *in situ*, or in a focus construction.

8.4.2.1 In situ constructions

tāmti ú nās sáá ú bas gee fot tāmti ?
pleasure of mother with of father which one exceed pleasure
Between a mother's joy and a father's, which one is the best?

máfi gee manû ?
wife 2s.+Poss how many
how many wives do you have ?

ú wómni nómi goo gu ti [...] ?
2s.+Aor feel+Pl. how day that 3pl.+Aor
how did you feel the day that they [...] ?

wún koni yépmi máásai ayo ?
child boy buy+Pl. pancake+def. where
Where did the boy buy the pancake ?

8.4.2.2 Focus construction

In the focus construction, the question word comes first in the sentence, followed by the focus markers : **si** to question subjects, and **gu** to question the other syntactic functions. Circumstantial complements are characterised by the resumptive pronominal mark **afa**, followed by either the definite suffix **-i** or the question mark **-oo**

8.4.2.2.1 Subject

gyee si fot tāmtî ?
which one Foc exceed pleasure+Quest
Which one is the best ?

manû si mās kû ?
how many Foc die 2sg+Quest
How many [children] did you lose ? (lit. died [on] you)

8.4.2.2.2 Object

nèn gu wún koni cû ?
what Rel child boy eat+Quest
What did the child eat?

8.4.2.2.3 Circumstantial

geegwey / ayo / nómi / shyáp nin gu yep máása afa / adaw ?
when / where / how / why Rel buy pancake **afa**+def. / **adaw** + Quest
When / where / how / why did he buy pancake ?

noo gu ko fot súkti ko kóóḏaw ?
who Rel 2sg. exceed staying 2sg. 2sg.+**afa**+Quest
Who did you most stay with?

8.5 Complex sentences

8.5.1 Relative clauses

The relative pronouns are **gu** for singular and **wúrdɔ̀** for plural pivot nouns.

too sáy kon wúni pi əróm gu a ndákəti
well then child boy+def. do thing Rel. Cont. wanting
Well, then the child did what he wanted.

sáy mée mət wúrdɔ̀ ti pat máni
then children girl Rel.+pl. 3pl.+Aor take men+def.
ɗii ti doŋ səŋ ŋak ndi
Neg 3pl.+Aor return 3pl. Perf. Neg
Then, the girls who had found a husband did not return.

8.5.2 Subordination

Subordination can be unmarked, with subordinate clauses as a mere topic interpreted as a condition, cause or temporal clause according to the context. Conjunctions can be either of **Zoɗi** origin (**gu** / **súúgu**, *when* ; **nzee gu**, *before* ; **bukáá**, *after* ; **shep**, *because, so that* ; **kóógu**, *although*) or borrowed from Hausa (**say**, *then* ; **kafin**, *before* ; **tun**, *since* ; **don**, *because, so that*). We will just illustrate this with conditionals.

Except for the 1st person singular, the condition (generally with a temporal meaning) is marked by **si**⁹ appearing between the subject and the verb of the protasis. The verb is generally in the Perfect, more rarely in the Continuous.

sən si ɗoo səŋ ŋak, to [...]
3pl. Foc follow 3pl Perf well [...]
If they follow them, then [...]

sáy goo si sloo wak, [...]
then day Foc cut Perf [...]
Then, if the day breaks, [...]

lok si suk kak, sáy [...]
king Foc sit down Perf then [...]
If the king sits down, then [...]

ín, borrowed from Hausa, is often added to the beginning of the protasis.

ín bəkí fwak-fwak si tʃet tak
if festival fwak-fwak Foc arrive Perf
a bət ɗɛn ɗok-pərsi, to [...]
at top day ɗok-pərsi, well [...]
If the fwak-fwak festival falls on the day of the ɗok-pərsi festival, then [...]

If the verb of the protasis is in the 1st person singular, the condition is expressed by a specific form of subject pronoun : **ámaa** :

ámaa pat min nak a bət maŋti, sáy [...]
1sg+Cond find people Perf at top fight then [...]
If I find people fighting, then [...]

The protasis can also be a non-verbal clause.

ín baa ni ɗɛn fwak-fwak ndi, to sáy [...]
if Neg it is day fwak-fwak Neg well then [...]
If it is not the day of fwak-fwak, well, then [...]

⁹ It is difficult not to relate this **si** to the Focus marker. This poses an interesting problem for general linguistics which, since Haiman, tends to consider conditionals as topics.

Counterfactuals are introduced by the **səŋ** particle :

səŋ **yàání** **dīi** **pat** **karaatú** **ndi** **áy** [...]
Count. People+anaph. Neg get education Neg excl. [...]
If people hadn't got any education, well [...]

9. References

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