

NOMINAL AND VERBAL PLURALISATION IN PODOKO

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Podoko has two classes of nominal pluralisation, the first used with count noun and the second with mass nouns or with the idea of collectivity. The first is marked by the suffix -ki or by a ə->a vowel change, the second by a proclitic ndá. Verbal pluralisation is marked by a similar vowel change and by the suffix -aw. It indicates plurality of the subject of an intransitive verb or object of a transitive verb, or simply plurality of action. Such pluralisation has its parallels in other Chadic languages. The occurrence of the vowel change as a mark of pluralisation in both nominal and verbal systems is significant to the debate on pluralisation in Chadic, as is perhaps also one of the markings of the imperfective.

En langue podoko il existe deux espèces de pluralisation du nom. L'une s'emploie avec les noms comptables, l'autre avec les noms massifs ou collectifs. La première est marquée du suffixe -ki ou du changement vocalique ə->a, la seconde d'un proclitique ndá. La pluralisation du verbe est marquée d'un changement vocalique similaire et du suffixe -aw. Ces marques indiquent la pluralité du sujet d'un verbe intransitif ou la pluralité de l'objet d'un verbe transitif ou simplement une pluralité de l'action.

La pluralisation en podoko a des parallèles dans d'autres langues tchadiques. Le fait que le changement vocalique se présente également dans les systèmes nominaux et verbaux est important dans la discussion de la pluralisation dans les langues tchadiques. Il se peut qu'une des marques de l'imperfectif y soit également importante.

0. INTRODUCTION

A considerable amount of study of pluralisation in Chadic languages has already been done, focusing in particular on the formal marking of pluralisation, the relationship between nominal pluralisation and verbal pluralisation (Frajzyngier 1977), and the place of verbal pluralisation in the verbal system as a whole (Wolff 1977).

This paper¹ seeks to present in some detail the marking and use of pluralisation in the nouns (sect.1.) and verbs (sect.2.) of Podoko, a Chadic language of the Biu-Mandara (Central Chadic) Branch. Finally (sect.3.), some parallels with pluralisation in other Chadic languages will be pointed out.

The plural form of a Podoko noun or verb is in contrast not with a truly singular form but with an unmarked, neutral form, which semantically can be either singular or plural. However, following convention, the unmarked form will be referred to as the singular form in this paper.

1. NOMINAL PLURALISATION

1.1 THE MARKERS OF NOMINAL PLURALISATION

There are two distinct classes of pluralisation of nouns in Podoko:

(1) The first class is of two types:

(a) The suffix **-ki** (suffixed to the a form of the noun²).

e.g. **nawá** 'goat' **nawáki** 'goats'

Certain words take an irregular form of this suffix, **-kaki**:

| | | | |
|----------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|
| dáya | 'bird' | dáyakaki | 'birds' |
| kwama | 'mouse' | kwamakáki | 'mice' |
| matsara | 'robber' | matsarakáki | 'robbers' |

The word **muta** ('rite, sacrifice') has the irregular plural form **mutatáki**.

(b) The vowel change **a->i** in non-final syllables (the final vowel often becomes **i**). This is found in nouns referring to family members:

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|---------|
| nawala | 'man' | nawali | 'men' |
| nasé | 'woman' | nasi | 'women' |
| udzara | 'child' | udzara | etc. |
| zágwana | 'boy' | zagwani | |
| matsaha | 'older brother' | matsahi | |
| kwadára | 'younger brother' | kwadari | |
| dáhwala | 'young man' | dahwali | |
| dáhala | 'girl' | dahali | |

These words optionally take the **-ki** suffix in addition to the vowel change. They are particularly inclined to take it when they are followed by a possessive pronoun, e.g. **udzaraki dála** 'my children'. Some other nouns, which could be classified as belonging to a wider household group, obligatorily have this double plural marking.

| | | |
|------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| dagwazama | 'male goat' | dagwazamaki |
| mbálva | 'bull' | mbalələváki |
| utsake | 'chicken' | ustakáki |
| yválke | 'calf' | yvaləkáki |
| yvarndé | 'baby' | yvarəndáki |
| ngwálfa | 'blind man' | ngwaləfaki |

One word shows a loss of voicing in the final consonant as well as the regular marks of pluralisation:

^Ydǎlgwǎ 'financé' dalək wáki

A very few words have a plural form by suppletion:

dǎwǎ 'girl' tək wami

(2) The second class has a single type, the proclitic ndǎ.

- (1) ndǎ bata a mata
 pl. father:his with mother:his
 'his father and mother'
- (2) ndǎ mata slǎbǎ mǎnǎ
 pl. big meat his
 'his big pieces of meat'
- (3) ndǎ makəkǎ sǎrǎ
 pl. week two
 'two weeks'

Ndǎ occurs initially in the noun phrase, and normally neutralises the tone of the word that follows it³. If the noun is qualified by ^Yngǎdǎ ('a certain, another'), ndǎ is optionally repeated between the qualifier and the noun:

- (4) ndǎ ^Yngǎdǎ ndǎ ^Ytakwasǎ
 pl. certain pl. thing
 'some (other) things'

With the noun mǎndǎ ('person') this repetition is obligatory:

- (5) ndǎ ^Yndǎdǎ ndǎ mǎndǎ
 pl. certain pl. person
 'some (other) people'

1.2 THE USES OF NOMINAL PLURALISATION

The plural markers have been divided into two classes on the basis of their function and meaning. Ndǎ (class 2) might be more correctly termed a "collective" marker, at least in some of its usages. Whereas class 1 indicates plurality of equivalent items, class 2 tends to be used of diverse items, where the group consists of distinct, even different, elements or individuals. For example, ndǎ Zaza ('Zaza' is a proper name) does not mean 'the Zazas' but 'Zaza and his family'. Similarly, ndǎ slǎwandǎla means 'the chief and his retinue'. 'The chiefs' would be (ndǎ) slǎwandǎlaki, with the -ki suffix and the optional presence of ndǎ.

Ndǎ is often used with co-ordinate noun phrases and lists:

- (6) a ^Yǎkǎ slǎri ndǎ Dǎvi sǎrǎ ta Esther
 do work pl. Deva two they Esther
 'Deva and Esther were working' or
 'Deva was working with Esther'
- (7) ndǎ ^Yudzǎ dǎwǎ tá zǎgwǎna
 pl. small girl boy
 'the young girl and the boy'

(8) ^Ysakw-ələ sǎdavá ndi akó tǎkwami, ndá ^Ypatəla kímake ba
^Ytata

buy-3 pers. clothes one for girls cloth shoes all
 'One buys clothes for the girls: cloth, shoes, etc.'

See also (1) above.

Another use of ndá is with mass nouns (class 1 plurals can be used only with count nouns). Ndá ^Ypəhi (pl. beer), for example, means 'several containers of beer'. Ndá díra (pl. bean) means 'several basketfuls of beans'. See also (2) above.

It is therefore generally true to say that class 1 pluralisation is used with count nouns, while class 2 is used with mass nouns and to indicate collectivity. However, not infrequently ndá is found where one would expect class 1 plural markers. It would seem that some count nouns never take the -ki suffix, only ndá. One such very common noun is mǎndə ('person'), which forms the plural always with ndá: ndá mǎndə ('people'). See also (3) above, where makəká is clearly a count noun. Some other nouns which can take the -ki suffix will occasionally take ndá instead, or in addition, without necessarily any meaning of collectivity.

Bearing in mind that the singular (neutral) form can have a plural meaning, there are on occasion three different possible ways of expressing the plural.

(9) ...ndi ^Ywarə nawé s-aha navira ndá sla
 one drive goat come-down with pl. cow
 '...one drove down the goats and cows'

In (9), which was drawn from a text, ndá sla can be acceptably replaced by either slaki or simply sla. It is for this reason that ndá has been treated together with the class 1 plural markers rather than as a separate marker of simple collectivity.

2. VERBAL PLURALISATION

2.1 THE MARKERS OF VERBAL PLURALISATION

There are two ways of marking pluralisation in the verb in Podoko:

- a) Vowel change ə → a (as has also been seen in certain nouns)
 e.g. sakw- 'buy', plural sakw-
- b) Suffix -aw
 e.g. ndz- 'sit', plural ndzaw-

Pluralisation is "added" to the verbal base to form the plural stem. Singular (i.e. unmarked) stems are identical to the base.

The commonest verbal bases are:

- | | | |
|-----------|---------|----------|
| i) C- | e.g. d- | 'go' |
| ii) CəC- | vəl- | 'sell' |
| | wəy- | 'walk' |
| iii) Cac- | dab- | 'follow' |

A base that contains no ə cannot be marked for plural by vowel change, only by suffix. These three bases yield the following plural stems:

Table 1

| base | C- | C ₁ əC ₂ - | C ₁ aC ₂ - |
|-------------|------|--|------------------------------------|
| Plural stem | Caw- | C ₁ aC ₂ - C ₁ aC ₂ aw- | C ₁ aC ₂ aw- |

| | |
|---------|-------------|
| e.g. d- | plural daw- |
| vəl- | val-/valaw- |
| wəy- | wayaw- |
| dab- | dabaw- |

It should be noted that the CəC- base has two possible plural stems. Some verbs of this type have only the longer plural stem (with both vowel change and suffix); others have both plural stems, but with a slight difference of meaning, as will be shown later.

The formation of plural stems from other verbal bases is summarized in Table 2. Examples are given in the appendix.

Some verbs have a suppletive plural form:

| | <u>Singular</u> | <u>Plural</u> |
|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| e.g. 'die' | məts- | rəw- |
| 'kill' | kəd- | pasl- |
| 'catch' | kəs- | mbah- |
| 'choose' | kəs- | mbad- |

Mbar- 'run, flee' occurs only with a plural subject. In the singular val- 'run' or fəts- 'flee' is used, but these can be both used also in the plural.

P- serves for the plural of both f- 'place' and v 'give'.

Table 2

| Base | Plural Stem |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| C_1uC_2- | C_1awaC_2-/C_1uC_2aw- |
| $uC-$ uC_1aC_2- uC_1aC_2- | $waCaw-/uCaw$ uC_1aC_2aw- uC_1aC_2aw- |
| C_1iC_2- | C_1iC_2aw- |
| $C_1aL(a)C_2^{-4}$ | $C_1aLaC_2(aw)-/C_1aLaC_2(aw)-/C_1aL(a)C_2aw-$ |
| $C_1aC_2aC_3-$ $C_1aC_2aC_3-$ | $C_1aC_2aC_3(aw)-/C_1aC_2aC_3aw-$ $C_1aC_2aC_3aw-$ |

2.2 USES OF VERBAL PLURALISATION

As in the case of the nouns, the "singular" verb stem is not expressly singular; it is simply neutral with regard to plurality. Thus, in many of the examples that will be given, a singular form may be used. The plural form, however, is more explicit.

A plural verb usually indicates that the action is plural, either because the object (if the verb is transitive) or subject (if the verb is intransitive) is plural, or because the action is repeated even without a plurality of object or subject. In this last case, the verb may have habitual meaning.

Some examples:

- (10) A lah-áw-álá lah-awə ta ^Yvəgə zláfa
Dig-pl. dig-pl. they hole again
'They dug some more holes'
- (11) A ndz-aw-á a ndz-aw-i ta
sit-pl. with sit-pl. they
'They sat down'
- (12) A ^Ytal-awə utsəkə gana
touch-pl. chicken squirrel
'The squirrel keeps touching the chicken'
- (13) A d-awə bá a ^Ysəgə yá dá kwasakwa
Go-pl. with foot I to market
'I walk to market'

In (10), the verb, which is transitive, is plural because the object is plural. The object ('hole') is not marked as plural, but it is understood to be so because the verb is plural. If only one hole were dug, the verb would be singular:

- (14) A lah-álá lahə ta ^Yvəgə
Dig dig they hole
'They dug the hole'

In (11), the verb is again plural, but in this case it is not the object but the subject ('they') that is plural. This is because the verb is intransitive. They may have all sat down simultaneously or sequentially, but this does not change the plurality of the action.

In (12), the object ('chicken') is singular, but the action is plural because the squirrel keeps pawing the chicken (in order to kill it).

In (13), the verb is intransitive and the subject ('I') is singular, but the action is repeated (regularly, over a period of time). The verb has a habitual meaning: 'I habitually walk to market.'

A plurality of subject or object does not always imply plurality of action, and so sometimes the plurality of the verb is due only to the fact that the subject or object (or even beneficiary) is plural:

(15) A ^Yval-əl-u ^Yvála yá makala mayé bá ^Ytata tá mǎndə kwǎtǎrá
 sell:pl. sell:pl. I bun my all to person one
 'I sold all my buns to one person'

(16) A ^Ygǎzlə makala kwǎtǎrés yá tá udzara
 divide:pl. bun one I to children
 'I divided one bun between the children'

In (15) there is a single act of selling, but because many things were sold the verb is plural.

In (16) there is a single act of sharing, but because there are several recipients of the fragments of bun the verb is plural.

Verbs with a CəC- base and which have a choice of two plural stems, use the shorter one (Cac-) when it is the plurality of the subject (if the verb is intransitive) or object (if the verb is transitive) that is important, and the longer one (CaCaw-) when it is the plurality or repetition of the action that is important. This is illustrated with the verb zlah- ('receive'):

(17) A ^Yzlahə ^Ymǎtǎbá-ka yé sa dála
 receive: pl. stranger:pl. I to house:my
 'I receive strangers in my home'

(18) A ^Yzlah-əwə ^Ymǎtǎbé yá sa dála
 receive:pl. -pl. stranger I to house:my
 'I habitually receive the stranger in my home'

(19) A ^Yzlah-əwə ^Ymǎtǎbá-ka yé sa dála
 'I habitually receive strangers in my home'

A similar sort of distinction is found in the verbs which have a plural form from a different lexical stem. Here we find the suppletive plural form used with plural objects and the -aw suffix being attached to the singular stem for plural or repeated action:

(20) A ^Ymbahə kwəma-kaki patəwa
 catch:pl. mouse-pl. cat
 'The cat is catching mice'

(21) A ^Ykəs-awə kwəma patəwa
 catch-pl. mouse cat
 'The cat habitually catches mice'

In (20) the object is clearly marked as plural. In (21) it is not so marked. It can safely be assumed that the cat catches a different mouse each time, but she catches them one at a time, and what is important is that she does so repeatedly.

It would seem that originally there were two quite separate sorts of verb pluralisation in Podoko, one, vowel change (or suppletive stem), focusing on the plurality of (usually) the subject or object (depending on the transitivity of the verb), and the other, a suffix, on the repetition of the action. In most cases these two have lost their distinctive functions, and it is only in certain verbs (especially those that have a CəC- base) that the distinction is preserved.

3. PARALLELS WITH OTHER CHADIC LANGUAGES

3.1 FORMAL MARKING OF PLURALISATION

Frajzyngier (1977) draws attention to two widespread devices in Chadic languages for marking pluralisation: 1) gemination of a consonant and/or reduplication of part of a stem, and 2) the vowel a. The former is absent in Podoko, but the latter is found in the ə:a (sg.:pl.) alternation in some nouns (household members) and certain verbs (the CəC- base verbs), as seen above. Frajzyngier (1977:37) wrote: "One of the characteristic features in a number of Chadic languages is the identity of markers of nominal plural with the markers that indicate the frequentative, intensive form of the verb and at the same time, often, plurality of object." This feature is seen in Podoko in the fact that the a pluralisation cuts across the noun/verb distinction.

The -i suffix that occurs in the plural form of most household members (in addition to the ə → a vowel change) is parallel with the -i found in some other Chadic languages. For example, Hoffmann (1963:58) gives the following plural form in Margi:

| | | | |
|-----|----------------|-----------|----------|
| ndù | 'person, man' | pl. mji | 'people' |
| sál | 'man, husband' | pl. shííí | |

Parallel with the class 2 nominal plural marker ndá is the Lamang preposition ndâ 'and, with, accompanied by' (Wolff 1983:242).

3.2 MEANING AND USE OF PLURALISATION

3.2.1 Nominal Pluralisation

The first class of nominal pluralisation described for Podoko (see sect. 2.) is very common and needs no comment. The second, which can refer to a group of different elements or individuals

rather than to a plurality of roughly identical items, has a parallel in Margi (Hoffmann 1963), where *Síapú 'yâr* means 'Siapu and his people'. In Margi, however, the one plural marker (-'yar) is used for both classes of nominal plural, whereas in Podoko there are two distinct markers.

3.2.2 Verbal Pluralisation

As for verbal pluralisation in Chadic, its general use has already been indicated in the quote from Frajzyngier above (3.1). It is rare in Chadic for a verb to agree in number with the subject (except in the case of an intransitive verb). The plurality of the verb has to do rather with plurality (or intensity) of action or of the object of a transitive verb or the subject of an intransitive verb. In Bachama (Carnochan 1970), plural forms often correlate in intransitive clauses with a plural subject and in transitive clauses with a plural object. Again, in Kanakuru: "A small subset of Kanakuru verbs are number-sensitive and obligatorily agree in number with the direct object of a transitive sentence, or with the subject of an intransitive sentence" (Newman 1974:72).

The existence of two distinct types of pluralisation in Podoko is interesting. Wolff (1977, 1983) has shown degrees of plurality in Lamang: "Lamang plural verb stems form a gradation system in which increase in morphological material corresponds to increase in the degree of plurality" (1983:107). But this seems to be difference of degree rather than difference of type. However, in Pero (Frajzyngier 1977) some verbs show two types of pluralisation, the first, the reduplication of a consonant, giving the verb a specialized meaning, and the second, a suffix, making it plural in the usual sense.

e.g. *cúbù* 'show', *cúbbò* 'teach', *cúbbújò* 'show, teach many things.

Although it is only the secondary pluralisation that agrees in meaning with pluralisation in Podoko, yet the existence of two types is parallel.

Wolff (1977) argues for a relationship between plural marking and the marking of the marked aspect (A-II, imperfective). In Podoko, verbal pluralisation functions identically for perfective and imperfective verbs, and bears no relation to the marking for the imperfective. The marking for the imperfective is palatalisation for transitive verbs and -i for intransitive verbs:

e.g. *par-* 'wash

(22) A ^Y*parə səfává udzəra* trans.
Wash garment child
'The child was washing the clothes'

(23) A *pari udzəra* intrans.
wash child
'The child was washing (himself)'

The form of the verbal noun is also *pari*. It has been noted above (3.1) that *-i* can be a mark of nominal pluralisation not only in Podoko but also in some other Chadic languages. Whether or not the *-i* of nominal pluralisation has any connection with the *-i* of imperfective intransitive verbs and of verbal nouns is a matter of speculation.

Overall, it is clear that Podoko fits well with what is already known about pluralisation in Chadic languages.

APPENDIX

Verbal bases with a medial u:

Some of these verbs must come originally from a *CawəC-* base:

e.g. *sud-* 'jilt' plural *sawad-*

Most, however, simply take the *-aw* suffix with no vowel change:

e.g. *tsuf-* 'respect' plural *tsufaw-*
zuf- 'drown' *zufaw-*

^Y*dud-* 'surround' has two plural stems, both ^Y*dawad-* and ^Y*dudaw-*

Verbal bases with an initial u:

In most verbs of this type the *u* remains intact in the plural stem:

e.g. *uf-* 'boil' plural *ufaw-*
ufəl- 'spy' *ufəlaw-*
upad- 'chew' *upadaw-*

However, in a few it is apparent that the *u* comes from *wə*:

e.g. *us-* 'stir' plural *wasaw-*

uz- 'eat' has two plural stems, *uzaw-* and *wazaw-*. The pronunciation is similar and it is not always easy to distinguish them.

Verbal base with *i*:

I know of only one verb of this type, *fikw-* 'whistle'. The plural stem is formed with the *-aw* suffix and without vowel change: *fikwaw-*.

Verbal bases with a *CəL* syllable:

It is possible that a *CəLəC-* base exists alongside the *CəLC-* base, but it is very hard to distinguish them in the singular stem (identical to base). However, there are three distinct types of plural stem:

- (i) *gar(ə)v-* 'chase' plural *garav-*
- (ii) *tərd-* 'twist' *tərəd-*
- (iii) *dzərhw-* 'pound' *dzərhwaw*

Verbal bases with three consonants:

Most verbs of this type that have ə only in the first syllable have a plural stem with the vowel change ə → a and sometimes also the suffix -aw:

e.g. mət̩sak- 'grill' plural mət̩sak-
 kwəslah- 'cough' kwaslahaw-

However, if C₁ and C₂ are identical, there is no vowel change, only the suffix.

e.g. dəd̩ar- 'tamp' dəd̩araw-

Verbs that have ə in both syllables change both vowels and add the suffix.

e.g. hwəmbər- 'embrace' hwambaraw-

NOTES

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²The -a form of the noun is found elsewhere only pre-pause.

³The tone on the first two syllables of the word changes to LL, except in the case of one noun class.

⁴L=liquid, i.e. l or r.

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