

FOCAL ASPECTS IN THE LELEMI VERB SYSTEM

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The verb system of Lelemi, a Ghana-Togo-Mountain language spoken in the Volta Region of Ghana, has two TAM paradigms which use different sets of subject prefixes and interact with the pragmatic category of focus. While one paradigm can be regarded as default model as it is used in most syntactic environments, the other paradigm is much more restricted, occurring among others in part of the relative clauses as well as in subject and sentence focus constructions. Involved in the restricted paradigm is the morpheme **na** for which a grammaticalization path from a (borrowed) conjunction towards a Perfective prefix is suggested.

Le système verbale du Lelemi, d'une langue faisant partie de la groupe *Ghana-Togo-Mountain* parlée dans la région Volta du Ghana, dispose de deux paradigmes TAM caractérisés par l'utilisation de différents sets de préfix du sujet et interagissant avec la catégorie pragmatique du focus. Tandis que un paradigme peut être regardé comme modèle utilisé par défaut parce qu'il apparaît dans presque tous les environnements syntaxiques, l'autre est plus restreint en appartenant que dans une partie des énoncés relatives et dans des constructions focaux avec le sujet respective l'énoncé se trouvant en focus. Inclût dans le paradigme plus restreint est le morphème **na** pour lequel un chemin de grammaticalisation d'une conjonction (empruntée) à une préfix du perfective est proposé.

0. INTRODUCTION

In this paper¹ we outline the verb system of Lelemi which has two TAM paradigms: one constituting the so-called “simple tenses”, the other the so-called “relative tenses” (Allan 1973), although not every “simple tense” has a counterpart among the “relative tenses”. The simple paradigm is formed by subject prefixes (pronouns for 1st or 2nd person and noun class markers for 3rd persons) and the verb form, whereas the relative paradigm is build up by the obligatory use of a lexical subject, an invariable verb prefix, and the verb form. While the simple paradigm is used in quite a lot of syntactic environments, the relative paradigm only shows up in restricted environments, comprising relative clauses with the subject being the head (hence the term “relative tense”) as well as in subject and sentence focus constructions including questions concerning the subject. It is shown where and how the pragmatic category of focus and the verb system interact and what grammaticalization path the morpheme **na** has taken.

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 1 provides an overview of the language with regard to its classification, history of research, and major linguistic features. Section 2 deals with the basic organization of the verb system and sketches the major distinction between the simple and the relative paradigm both in affirmation and negation. In section 3, it is argued that this paradigmatic distinction results from a systematic interaction between grammar and information structure and a grammaticalization path for the morpheme **na** is suggested. The results are summarized in section 4.

¹ We have undertaken our investigation of the Lelemi language as part of a project working on focus in Gur and Kwa languages within the SFB (collaborative research center) “Information structure: The linguistic means for structuring utterances, sentences and texts” funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). We would like to thank our Lelemi informants for their assistance as well as the participants of the Workshop on the description and documentation of the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages in Ho, July 24-29, 2006, where this topic has been presented the first time, for their helpful comments.

1. LELEMI AND THE BALEMI

This section provides some general information about the language, its history of research, major linguistic features, and its speakers. Lelemi² is spoken by the Balemi people in about 17 communities near the Ghana-Togo border, in the Buem area of the Volta region. In 2003 it was spoken by about 49.000 speakers (Gordon 2005). With regard to its classification, Lelemi belongs to the na-Togo group of the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages within the Kwa language group of the Niger-Congo family. (cf. Heine 1968, Heine and Nurse 2000).

(1) Niger Congo – Volta-Congo – Benue-Kwa – Kwa:



The data presented here was mainly elicited by us during the following occasions: one part was furnished by several Lelemi speakers from Baglo and Borada during a field research in 2004 and another part was supplied by a speaker from Baglo during an invited stay at the Humboldt University of Berlin in 2005. Only at some points we also rely on data provided by the two major grammatical descriptions about Lelemi (Höftmann 1971, Allan 1973).

With respect to the history of research, the first consideration of the language has been from the comparative perspective. Lelemi is regarded within word lists and short grammatical sketches (cf. Christaller 1895, 1899-90, Seidel 1898, Funke 1909, 1910, 1920, Westermann 1922a, 1922b, 1935, and others) as well as in discussions of the genetic relationship among the languages of the area and their internal organisation (Westermann 1922b, 1927, 1954, Westermann and Bryan 1952, Migeod 1911, Struck 1912, Johnston 1919/22, Greenberg 1955, Blench 2001 and others). The language has been treated more intensively in the following linguistic works:

- 1910 Westermann, D. Die Lefanasprache in Togo. Sprachstudien aus dem Gebiet der Sudansprachen. In *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 13: 39-57. Berlin: Reimer.
(phonetics, grammatical scetch, proverbs, Lelemi-German glossary)
- 1911 Migeod, F.W.H. *The languages of West Africa*. 2 vols. London.
(some numbers, collection of 101 sentences in Lelemi)

² The language name **Lèlemi** is represented here as Lelemi for convenience.

- 1952 Bertho, J. Les dialectes du Moyen-Togo: Lelemi-Lefana. *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique noire* 14:1046-1107.
(with comparative wordlist)
- 1966 Höftmann, H. Die Nominalklassen im Lelemi. *Neue Afrikanistische Studien. J: Lukas* (ed.). *Hamburger Beiträge zur Afrika-Kunde*, vol. 5: 100-108. Hamburg.
(description auf nominal system, no description of noun class concord)
- 1967 Kropp, Mary E. *Comparative African Wordlists No. 3. Lefana, Akpafu and Avatime with English Gloss*. Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana.
(vocabulary, short phonological and grammatical notes)
- 1971 Höftmann, Hildegard. *The structure of Lelemi language*. Leipzig: VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie.
(short introduction of phonology, structure of nominals and verbs, sentence structure, with texts and glossar)
- 1973 Allan, Edward Jay. *A grammar of Buem: The Lelemi language*, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London: PhD Thesis.
(detailed grammar of Lelemi)

According to the Ethnologue (Gordon 2005) and in accordance with our observations during the field research, the language is vigorous and used in all domains of everyday life, even though one can observe some incorrect use of the concord system in the speech of younger people. There is some bilingualism with Twi (Northern communities), Ewe (Southern communities) (Gordon 2005, Höftmann 1971, Ring 1981), and English. The literacy rate in Lelemi as first language ranges below 1% (Gordon 2005).

Lelemi displays several linguistic features characteristic for Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages. First, it has a strict SVO word order and mainly postpositions and it places the expression for the possessor before that of the possessed item. Its vowel system comprises seven phonemic vowels (Allan states 9 underlying vowels) and stem-controlled vowel harmony with respect to the tongue position (+/-ATR) (cf. Schwarz 2007). Lelemi is a tone language with tones having lexical and grammatical function. Höftmann (1971) as well as Allan (1973) propose a three-tone system with a contrast between High, Mid, and Low tone. Contour tones LH and HL by tone combinations are common.

Like other Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages, Lelemi provides a complex noun class system that is marked by prefixes. Considering the meaning of nouns with different noun class prefixes, Höftmann remarks that “only a classification in two main groups is possible: one “animate group” (persons and animals) and one “inanimate group”.” (Höftmann 1971: 36f.) while Allan (1973: 97ff.) recognizes some semantic subfields, as displayed in (2).

(2) Noun class system according to Allan (1973: 97ff.), in comparison to Heine (1968:114f.)

genders ³	class prefixes - singular	class prefixes - plural	semantics	Heine 1968
(I)	ɔ-, o-, a-, e-	ba-, be-	most animate nouns	I o-/ba-
(II)	ɔ-, o-	le-, li-, le-	artefacts, domesticated crops	II o-/i-
(III)	le-, li-, le-	ba-, be-	tribes, birds, bats	III li-/a-
(IV)	le-, li-, le-	a-	body parts, natural events ...	III li-/a-
(V)	ka-, ke-	ba-, be-	animals of the bush	VII ka-/a- ?
(VI)	ka-, ke-	kɔ-, ku-	hist.: diminutives	VI ka-/ko-
(VII)	kɔ-, ku-	ba-, be-	few animates	IV ko-/ba-
(VIII)	kɔ-, ku-	a-	body parts, natural things	V ko-/a-
(IX)	ka-, ke-	n-, m-	?	VI ka-/ko-
(X)	∅-	ba-, be-	onomatopoeic, ...	
				VIII o-/a-
				IX bo-/ba-
				X bo-/a-

Apart from the noun class prefixes which also serve to express subject concord on the verb Höftmann (1971: 38-40) and Allan (1973: 117ff.) identify some nominal suffixes which are partly borrowed.

2. LELEMI VERB SYSTEM

In this section, after a short introduction into earlier treatments of the verb system, its basic organization according to our analysis is outlined and illustrated both in affirmation and negation.

2.1 EARLIER TREATMENTS OF THE VERB SYSTEM

A rough draft of the verb system is provided by Höftmann (1971). Sketched is the structure of verbal lexemes with some remarks on the probable functions of a few verbal suffixes (ibid 1971: 43ff.), and some examples illustrating the basic syntax of verbal predicates, partly with auxiliaries, and mentioning the agreement by verb prefixes with a nominal subject are given (ibid 1971: 46ff.). The relevance of grammatical tone (on the verbs or auxiliaries) is stressed, but the tonal specifications are not worked out in detail (ibid 1971: 33, including table).

Allan (1973) offers a thorough description of the verbal system. He explicates that the verb consists of “a Finite Verb Prefix followed by a Verb Stem” (ibid 1973: 236), and that this finite verb prefix “consists of either a Verbal Concord marker or a Relative marker, followed by a Tense marker, [and] followed by an optional Modality

³ Allan cites some more noun classes which are all characterised as mass nouns without singular/plural opposition: n-, m- (XI), a- (XII), ɔ-, o- (XIII), le-, li-, le- (XIV), ka-, ke- (XV), kɔ-, ku- (XVI), ∅- (XVII), bo- (XVIII).

node” (ibid 1973: 237). Analysing tense/aspect/mood on the basis of theories of the 60s and early 70s, he recognizes a five-term tense system distinguishing between Past, Present, Future, Subjunctive, Imperative, expressed by segmental and/or tonal tense markers (ibid 1973: 242ff.) and a five-term aspect system with Negation, Certainty, Customary action, Motion away from the speaker, and Motion towards the speaker (ibid 1973: 281ff.). While these categories are expressed by markers preceding the verb stem, Allan also identifies five verb suffixes which are no longer productive, though (ibid 1973: 246f.).

2.2 OUR ANALYSIS

In our own analysis of the verb system as outlined by structural and semantic features in this section, we concentrate on the temporal/aspectual and modal differentiation for which we propose some modifications from Allan (1973), distinguishing six basic verb categories in affirmation and negation.⁴ Constitutive for their differentiation is the recognition of the following elements in the verb phrase: first and obligatory, there is a subject prefix which agrees in most paradigms with the noun class of a nominal subject, if there is one. Second, there is some TAM-information preceding the verb stem, either in overt segmental form or tonally expressed. Nominal or pronominal objects follow the verb (stem). Grammatical tone is not restricted to a special element of the verb, but can occur on all three obligatory parts of the verb phrase – subject prefix, TAM, and verb stem.

2.2.1 Simple Paradigm in affirmation

2.2.1.1 Perfective (Past)

What Allan (1973) calls the “simple past” can be regarded as an aspectual perfective category with a temporal past interpretation with dynamic verbs in the indicative. Examples (1) to (3) illustrate its use with completed actions.

- (1) **ɔ̀nà̀nà** **ɔ̀ɣv̀d̀** **ú-tí** **ùlòkùbì** **ɔ̀ɣv̀d̀** **ùɣwè̀nɣ̀jì.**
 man DEM 3sg.PF-take girl DEM pen
 The man took the girl’s pen.⁵
- (2) **bé-yè** **èjìbì.**
 3pl.PF-buy fruits
 They bought fruits.
- (3) **kāmáđì** **ní,** **lí-nù** **kòkùn** **kóđì.**
 yesterday PTL, 1sg.PF-hear noise INDEF
 Yesterday, I heard some noise.

2.2.1.2 Stative (Present)

Restricted to stative verbs and verbs describing one’s physical position (only about three dozen of verbs) is Allan’s (1973) “simple present”. As the present tense reading results from the stative semantics provided by these verbs, this tense seems to

⁴ We do not regard further specifications of the temporal/aspectual forms like “certainty, customary action, motion away from the speaker, motion towards the speaker” (Allan 1973: 281 ff.)

⁵ The tonal marking in our examples is as follows: (´) High tone, (˘) Low tone, (ˉ) Mid tone and combinations thereof.

represent a complementary form to the perfective triggering a past reading in the indicative, as presented in (i).

- (4) **n̄-jī** **ká** **sūè** **kū** **ágnès**
 1sg.STAT-know COMPL Sue CNJ Agnes
- bé-yè** **tòyòtá** **kū** **bèns.**
 3pl.PF-buy Toyota CNJ Benz.
 I know that Sue and Agnes bought a Toyota and a Benz.
- (5) ... **nà** **ùlòkú** **ǝméní** **ù-bō** **bébi** **ètè.**
 CNJ woman DEM3sg.STAT-have children three
 ... and this woman had three children.

2.2.1.3 Past 2 (Unclear function/reading)

A third “past” form which does however not assert a punctual event in the past is introduced by Allen as “Past Progressive” and described as follows: “... the Affirmative Past Progressive asserts that the past action has effects continuing till some subsequent time, usually the present” (1973: 256). As this tense does not display a special form for negation but instead uses the negative form of the perfective and as it does not display a relative form of its own, we suggest that here we are probably not dealing with another aspectual differentiation, as the term “progressive” used by Allan might suggest. What the exact function and readings of this “past tense” are and whether it is also linked to information structural categories like verb focus, still needs further investigation.

- (6) **léè-fɛ** **líbí** **lémò** **lí-tè** **míná** **ǝtí.**
 1sg.PAST2-wash car DEM CL.PF-give 1sg.poss father
 I have washed the car for my father.

2.2.1.4 Imperfective (Present, Habitual)

A fourth affirmative verb form, labelled “simple present progressive” by Allan (1973) can be analyzed as aspectual imperfective category which first of all yields a present tense reading with dynamic verbs, while sometimes it can also be interpreted habitually.

- (7) **mòɔ-fɛ** **líbí** **lémò** **lí-tè** **míná** **ǝtí.**
 1sg.IPF-wash car DEM CL.PF-give 1sg.poss father
 I'm washing the car for my father.

2.2.1.5 Future

The future tense (Allan’s “simple future”) is formed by a nominal periphrasis consisting of the subject prefix before a stem **lu/du** of unknown origin and a stem **bo** which is probably of verbal origin (‘to come’) to which a verbal noun (formed by infinitive prefix **bU-**) is added.

- (8) ɔ̄-dūbò bòdì.
 3sg.FUT INF.eat
 He will eat.

2.2.1.6 Subjunctive

The subjunctive identified by Allan is clearly modally defined.

- (9) mò-bòmòdì lì-tiyà lèlèmi lèdì.
 1sg.IPF-try 1sg.SUBJ-learn Lelemi language
 I'm trying to learn the Lelemi language. (Allan 1973: 271)⁶

Comparing the verb forms in the simple affirmative paradigm, an unexpected abundance of prefixed pronominal forms for 1st person singular shows up. Among the forms **II-**, **N-**, **mU-** found in the different tenses, we suspect the syllabic nasal to represent the basic pronominal verb prefix for a 1st person singular subject, due to its most frequent occurrence.

2.2.2 Simple Paradigm in Negation

2.2.2.1 Negative Perfective (Past)

- (10) ń-tá-nū ɲ.
 1sg.PF-NEG-see 3sg
 I didn't see her.

2.2.2.2 Negative Stative (Present)

- (11) lèè-ǰì kàbá kāménì.
 1sg.STAT.NEG-know family DEM
 I do not know this family.
- (12) óòwò, òò-dì ùbìdì nà ú-yè èjìbì ú-tè.
 no, 3sg.STAT.NEG-be.qual child CNJ 3sg.PF-buy fruits 3sg.PF-give
 It is not her child that she bought the fruits for.

2.2.2.3 Negative Imperfective (Present, Habitual)

- (13) nàà-kālì ká ...
 1sg.IPF.NEG-think COMPL
 I don't think that ...
- (14) óòwò, bèlòkúbì ínyò bà-là-kā òkū.
 no, girls two 3pl.IPF.NEG-read book
 No, the two girls are not reading a book.

2.2.2.4 Negative Future

- (15) ù-là-dì.
 3sg.FUT-NEG-eat
 He will not eat.

⁶ In this and subsequent examples taken from Allan 1973 we have adapted the tonal marking. As far as the first verb form of this example is concerned, following the glosses of Allan, the subject prefix should have a long vowel, otherwise it has to be treated as relative form.

- (16) è-lé-bō kùdíkùdí lénò.
 2sg.FUT-NEG-come never also
 You will never come again.

2.2.2.5 Negative Subjunctive

- (17) bù-tà-dù.
 3sg.FUT-NEG-kill/bite
 He should not kill/bite. (Allan 1973: 314)⁷

2.2.3 Relative Paradigm in Affirmation

Contrary to the simple verb paradigm in affirmation and negation, the verb in the more restricted relative paradigm, as outlined below, obligatorily requires a preceding nominal subject or a disjunctive pronoun while the verb itself displays no subject agreeing, but rather an invariable prefix. In affirmation, this prefix immediately precedes the verb stem, as illustrated in examples (18) to (24). Please note that there is no distinctive relative verb form for the Past 2 and the Subjunctive.

2.2.3.1 Relative Perfective (Past)

- (18) Who has eaten the beans?
ùlòkú ómò ná-dí.
 woman DEM REL.PF-eat
 That woman has eaten (them).
- (19) I know that Sue and Agnes bought a Toyota and a Benz.
 But who bought what?
syùè né-yè tòyòtá nà ágnès ú-yè bèns.
 Sue REL.PF-buy Toyota CNJ Agnes 3Sg.PF-buy Benz
 Sue bought a Toyota and Agnes bought a Benz.

2.2.3.2 Relative Stative (Present)

- (20) Whose child has the ticket?
míná òkpàná ùbídí m-bō tíkèti ómò.
 1sg.poss friend child REL.STAT-have ticket DEM
 My friends child has the ticket.

2.2.3.3 Relative Imperfective (Present)

- (21) ùcúli óní mò-nū bècúli lèlò íyò ní ...
 person CL.PTL REL.IPF-look people on DEM PTL
 The person who is looking for the people ... (=flight attendant)
- (22) bí mò-lē mé?
 what REL.IPF-happen here
 What is happening here?

⁷ 'The paradigms for Mid and Low tone verbs are identical; ambiguities are resolved by the context.' (Allan 1973: 314)

- (23) **é**bí **á**nyò **m**ò-**c**úí **n**ā **ù**lù **í**tè.
 car two REL.IPF-burn in road middle
 Two cars are burning in the middle of the road.

2.2.3.4 Relative Future

- (24) **ò**pià **n**ù-**d**ū **ò**nàà **ó**mò.
 spear REL.FUT-kill man DEM
 It's a spear that will kill that man. (Allan 1973: 331)

2.2.4 Relative Paradigm in Negation

In negation (examples (25) to (27)), the subject prefix from the respective affirmative relative tense is combined with one of the negative markers already known from the negation of the simple paradigm (with one exception: the subject prefix **mU** of the affirmative relative Imperfective does not seem to be allowed in negation). As neither our own corpus nor Allan (1973) provides data for the negation of the relative tense with stative verbs (Present), a gap in this respect remains for the moment.

2.2.4.1 Negative Relative Perfective

- (25) **ó**-**d**ī **n**ā **b**ār **ó**ní **n**á-**t**á-**f**ò **k**ùyē **k**ēmō.
 3Sg.PF-eat in bar CL.PTL REL.PF-NEG-be.costage price inside
 She ate in a cheap restaurant.

2.2.4.2 Negative Relative Imperfective

- (26) **b**úbò **b**í **n**à-**s**ā
 INF.have what REL.NEG.IPF-finish
ù-**b**ō **á**lákpa **é**né **á**nyóó.
 3sg.STAT-have thing four there Q
 Does he (still) have four things?

2.2.4.3 Negative Relative Future

- (27) **l**èpià **n**à-**d**ū **ò**nàà **ó**mò.
 spears REL.FUT.NEG-kill man DEM
 Spears won't kill that man. (Allan 1973: 332)

2.2.5 Dichotomy of Simple and Relative Paradigms - Summary

In the following, the major differences between “simple” vs. “relative” paradigms and their tenses as well as some determinative structural differences responsible for the dichotomy are summarized:

- in the *simple paradigm*, the subject is always encoded *on the verb itself* by a prefix rendering information on person, number and gender (irrespective of existence of preverbal lexical subject constituents)
- in the *relative paradigm*, the subject is always encoded *before the verb* by a lexical subject constituent (a noun or a disjunctive pronoun). The slot corresponding to the subject prefix slot in the simple paradigm is filled by an invariable verb prefix which is represented by a pronominal form for the 1st person singular (cf. **N-**, **mU-**) or by a morpheme derived from a clausal conjunction (cf. **na**) as we will argue below.

Summary of simple and relative verb paradigms⁸

SIMPLE	Affirmation				Negation				
	LEX _{Subj}	PNG _{Subj-}	-	stem	LEX _{Subj}	PNG _{Subj-}	TAM-	stem	
Perfective (Past)	(X)	Ī (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...		(Low)	(X)	Ñ (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...	tĀ₁	(identical with lexical verb tone)	
Stative (Present)	(X)	N (1sg) U (3sg, c1) ...	expressed by tone on PNG (identical to lexical verb tone)	(identical to tone of 1 st syllable of the verb)	(X)	Ī (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...	lengthening of the vowel of PNG (low)	(Mid)	
Past 2	(X)	Ī (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...	lengthening of the vowel of PNG (identical to tone of 1 st syllable of the verb)	(identical to tone of 1 st s yllable of the verb)					
Imperfective (Present, Habitual)	(X)	mŪ (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...	lengthening of the vowel of PNG opposite to lexical verb tone)	(identical to lexical verb tone)	(X)	Ñ (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...	(I)A₍₁₎ (opposite to lexical verb tone)	(identical with lexical verb tone)	
Future	(X)	Ñ (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...	(I)Ū	(b)Ō	+VN (with lexical verb tone)	Ñ (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...	(I)A₍₂₎ (identical to tone of 1 st syllable of the verb)	(opposite to lexical verb tone)	
Subjunctive	(X)	Ī (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...		(opposite to lexical verb tone)		Ī (1sg) Ū (3sg, c1) ...	tĀ₂	(Low)	

⁸ Concerning the marking of tones in the table we follow for the moment Allan (1973), who claims that lexically there are only Mid and Low tones on the verb stem. Opposite to verb tone means a tone in opposition to these two tones.

RELATIVE	Affirmation LEX _{Subj}	PNG _{Subj} ⁻	TAM-	stem		Negation LEX _{Subj}	PNG _{Subj} ⁻	TAM-	stem	
Perfective (Past)	X	ná < CNJ		(opposite to lexical verb tone)		X	ná < CNJ	tÁ_I	(opposite to lexical verb tone)	
Stative (Present)	X	N < 1sg	expressed by tone on PNG (identical to lexical verb tone)	(identical to tone of 1 st syllable of the verb)		X	?	?		
Past 2										
Imperfective (Present, Habitual)	X	mŨ < 1sg		(identical to lexical verb tone)		X	Ñ < 1sg	(I)A₍₁₎ (opposite to tone of 1 st syllable of the verb)	(identical to lexical verb tone)	
Future	X	N < 1sg	(I)Ũ	(b)Ō (identical to lexical verb tone)	(+VN / verb?)	X	Ñ < 1sg	(I)A₍₂₎ (identical to tone of 1 st syllable of the verb)	(opposite to lexical verb tone)	
Subjunctive										

3. THE RELATIVE PARADIGM

3.1 DISTRIBUTION OF THE RELATIVE PARADIGM

Having presented the structural properties of both paradigms, we will now turn to their distribution, hereby concentrating on the relative paradigm because the simple paradigm can be said to occur in all other occurrences as default form. Allan (1973: 324ff.) describes the use of these relative forms as follows: “In addition to their use in “same-subject” relative clauses [i.e. in sentences where the subject of the relative clause is also its head – the authors] relative verb forms are used to express emphasis, generalizations, historical facts, or statements of habitual or customary action”. Allan does not offer any linguistic explanation for these diverse occurrences for which at first hand no brace can be found. Compared to his statement, our own data show some deviation: it only confirms the incidence of this form in relative clauses with the subject as head and in utterances with focal subjects including wh-interrogatives, as displayed in the following subsection (i) to (iii).

3.1.1 “Same subject relative clauses”

When comparing restrictive relative clauses with subject respectively non-subject head, one common component can be found: in both types of relative constructions the relativized element is determined by an identifying pronominal form that consists of a noun class concord for the preceding relativized noun and particle **-ní**. If the subject is relativized, one of the “relative” TAM forms presented in 2.2.3-4 is used, i.e. the form with invariable prefix at the verb. If a non-subject constituent is relativized, the simple TAM verb form, i.e. including the agreeing subject prefix, occurs.

3.1.1.1 Subject restrictive relative clause

- (28) **èbùdò ù-nyē,**
 animal 3sg.STAT-stand
 There is an animal there,

ízá òbùdò óní ñ-nyē vò ó-dì ònàànjùé.
 But animal CL.PTL REL.STAT-stand there 3sg-be cattle
 but the kind of animal that is over there is a cattle.

3.1.1.2 Non-subject restrictive relative clause

- (29) **òklámá óḡvò ód-dū trouzis óní ònàabì óḡvò ó-cà.**
 dog DEM 3sg.IPF-bite trousers CL.PTL boy DEM3sg. PF-wear
 The dog bites the trousers which the boy wears.

- (30) **ná àlà àní ná mòd-nū ní ...**
 CNJ things CL.PTL CNJ 1sg.IPF-see PTL
 and the things that I am seeing, ...

3.1.2 Wh-questions concerning the subject (or part of it)

3.1.2.1 Wh-question for subject

The word order for wh-questions concerning the subject follows the order found in statements, i.e. it is characterized by an SVO order. The only difference compared

to statements is the obligatory use of the relative form; the simple paradigm instead would render the question ungrammatical.

- (31) **ǎmá ná-dí àkábí ámò.**
 Who REL.PF-eat beans DEM
 Who ate the beans?

3.1.2.2 Wh-question for non-subject

In wh-questions for the object, on the other hand, the canonical word order is changed. The question word takes sentence-initial position and can optionally be followed by morpheme **nà**. The canonical position in the sentence remains empty. Contrary to questions for the subject, here the simple paradigm has to be used. This is the only way of forming object questions; the question word in situ can only be found in echo questions.

- (32) **bí (nà) ùlòkú ómò ǎ-dí.**
 what (CNJ) woman DEM 3sg.PF-eat
 What did the woman eat?

3.1.3 Reply to wh-question concerning the subject (or part of it), i.e. new information focus on subject and other focal environments

3.1.3.1 Focus on subject (non-canonical)

Parallel to the structure of the question concerning the subject, the reply to this question shows the canonical word order, but in contrast to other statements, the relative paradigm has to occur. This structure does not only serve to encode replies to questions for the subject, i.e. new information focus on the subject, but helps to encode other kinds of focus on the subject, like contrastive focus, as well. Furthermore, this structure expresses sentence focus, as in (33c), which represents the reply to a question ‘What happened?’.

cf. verb form in simple tense:

- (33) a. **ǎnàabì ùmwì pé m̀-đí kùtú. ǎ-đí**
 boy one only REL.IPF-eat orange
 Only *one* boy is eating an orange.
- b. **ǎnàabì ñ-tí ùlòkúbì. ù-tí**
 boy REL.STAT-carry girl
 A *boy* was carrying a girl.
- c. **lǎlǎ ìnyǎ ná-sà. lé-sà**
 lorry two REL.PF-meet
Two lorries collided.

3.1.3.2 Focus on non-subject

Non-subject focus is by default encoded in the postverbal position of the focussed element in the canonical sentence (*in-situ*). Here, the simple paradigm of the verb is used.

- (34) (a) What did the woman eat?
 (b) What did the woman do?

ś-dī **àkábí.**
 3sg.PF-eat beans
 She ate *beans*. ~ She *ate beans*.

- (35) Did he bring the table or did he send it?

ú-tí **ū-sàlá-kù.**
 3sg.PF-take 3sg.PF-go-with
 He *sent* it.

- (36) Did the woman buy fruits?

ńń, ú-yè.
 yes, 3sg.PF-buy
 Yes, she *did*.

The morphological coding device for *ex-situ* non-subject focus constructions with the non-subject taking sentence-initial position consists of the optional morpheme **nà** postposed to the focussed constituent. Here again, as in questions for the object and in *in-situ* focus constructions, only the simple paradigm can be used.

- (37) **àkábí** **áwǒdí** **(nà)** **ùlòkú** **ómò** ś-dī.
 Beans raw (CNJ) woman DEM 3sg.PF-eat
 The woman ate *raw beans*.

- (38) The boy is eating a banana.

kùtú **(nà)** **ònàabì** **ómò** òǒ-dī.
 Orange (CNJ) boy DEM 3sg.IPF-eat
 The boy is eating an *orange*.

- (39) Did she buy the bananas?

óòwò, **búyū** **(nà)** ú-yù **nyà.**
 no, INF.steal (CNJ) 3sg.PF-steal CL
 No, she *stole* them.

In sum, the relative paradigm, on the one hand, is bound to the subject but on the other hand not every subject triggers this paradigm. We conclude that the relative paradigm is not required just by the syntactic subject function but by (additional) information structural considerations. The simple paradigm on the other hand seems to be used as default in all other occurrences, i.e. in main as well as in subordinated clauses where the subject does not take a special information-structural function.

3.2 INFORMATION STRUCTURE AND THE RELATIVE PARADIGM

From this distribution the question arises why in some environments the subject is treated in a special way such as to require the relative paradigm?

As claimed in Fiedler et al. (to appear), the special status of focused subjects is conditioned by information structure: Subjects in canonical sentence-initial position are prototypically interpreted as topics (i.e. they are anti-focal). Therefore, if a subject is in focus, this conflicts with its primary topical status and results in a non-canonical construction (i.e. the relative paradigm).

Accordingly, we suggest that sentences with a topic-comment structure make use of the simple paradigm. In these utterances, the focus is situated within the comment (see Schwarz 2009: 190 with a parallel observation in Konkomba). Note that

if the word order is changed in order to focus part of the comment and the non-subject constituent occurs in sentence-initial position, the simple paradigm (cf. non-subject *ex-situ* focus) and optional clausal conjunction **nà** is also employed. If, on the other hand, the focus lies outside the comment and the sentence-initial subject is involved as in subject and sentence focus constructions, the subject does not represent the topic of the sentence and the utterance does not display a topic-comment structure anymore. Because of the non-topical status of the subject in all three occurrences mentioned, i.e. in same subject relative clauses, wh-questions for the subject, subject (and sentence) focus, the simple paradigm is no more available in the grammar of Lelemi, and the non-canonical sentence type with the relative paradigm must be used.

3.3 GRAMMATICALIZATION OF CLAUSAL CONJUNCTION

In some of the examples just presented an element **nà**⁹ occurs in different environments which seem to serve on first sight different functions:

- It occurs as clausal conjunction **nà**, used with sequential events ‘and (then)’ as shown in example 40;

(40) The youngest child went ...

nà	<u>ū-tī</u>	ùlū	gèè	ómò.
CNJ	3sg.STAT-take	road	right	DEM

and he took the right road.

- In *ex-situ* non-subject focus constructions, **nà** arises at the beginning of the non-focal part of the sentence. This function is called by Allan “emphasis” (cf. examples (32, 37-39).
- And it occurs within the relative paradigm in the perfective (affirmative and negative), here, however, with deviant high tone **ná** (cf. examples 31, 33).

As we have claimed elsewhere (Fiedler and Schwarz 2005, Schwarz and Fiedler, 2007), the origin of the morpheme in all these environments is always the same, namely the clausal conjunction. In example (40) the use of **nà** as conjunction is evident. In the *ex-situ* non-subject focus constructions (examples (37) to (39)) the non-focal clause is formally completely identical with the narrative clause shown in (40).

In its third function within the relative paradigm, on the other hand, *nà* has already been grammaticalized into a subject prefix in the perfective but shows high tone. We analyse this prefix as a conglomeration of the conjunction **nà** (with inherent Low tone) plus a high tone which is borne by the subject pronoun in the simple perfective. Such development from a conjunction denoting the accomplishment of actions to a past marker was also shown by Hopper (1979) for Malay, an Austronesian language.

CNJ	→	Subject Prefix in Relative Perfective
nà		ná (← nà + ´)

⁹ It is quite possible that this morpheme might be borrowed from Akan.

4. CONCLUSION

To sum up, we have shown that Lelemi has a similar dichotomy in the verb system as reported for several West African languages from different language groups (Hausa, Buli, Fulfulde, etc.) where the verb paradigm used in focus constructions shows similarities to those in relative clauses (cf. Bearth 1993, Frajzyngier 2004, Jaggar 2006 etc.).

In Lelemi, this dichotomy is more restricted as the relative paradigm is mainly confined to subject related constructions. These include:

- (1) relative sentences with the subject as head,
- (2) wh-questions asking for the subject,
- (3) constructions including the subject within the focus domain (subject or sentence focus).

The common basis for these occurrences is the non-topical status of the subject in these utterances. The relative paradigm is typically employed when the subject is not having topic status.

A further result of our analysis is that the element which looks at first sight like a focus marker in non-subject focus constructions is better analysed as a more general pragmatic particle that occurs not only after the focus constituent in ex-situ constructions but also at the beginning of narrative clause in narration where it acts as clausal conjunction. Furthermore, this particle has been grammaticalized into a subject prefix for the relative perfective verb form.

ABBREVIATIONS

CL	class concord marker	PF	perfective
CNJ	conjunction	pl	plural
COMPL	complementiser	poss	possessive
DEM	demonstrative pronoun	PTL	particle
FUT	future	REL	invariable verb prefix of relative paradigm
INDEF	indefinite pronoun	sg	singular
INF	infinitive	STAT	“stative”
IPF	imperfective	SUBJ	subjunctive
NEG	negation (marker)	TAM	tense-aspect-mood

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