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The origin of antipassive markers in West Mande languages

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1. Introduction

1.1. West Mande languages

According to the most recent proposals about the classification of Mande languages,[1] West Mande is one the two branches of the Mande language family, and the following groups of languages constitute genetic units within West Mande:[2]

– the Soninke-Bozo group,[3]
– the Bobo-Samogo group,[4]
– the Central group,[5]
– the Soso-South-Western group. [6]

1.2. Antipassive constructions and antipassive markers

In the broad use of this term, antipassive constructions can be defined as formally intransitive constructions involving verbs that also occur in the prototypical transitive construction, in which the agent of the transitive construction is encoded as the unique core argument of a intransitive predication, whereas the patient is either incorporated, encoded as an oblique, or suppressed. In the same way as with other

[1] The most recent classification of Mande languages, elaborated by Valentin Vydrine, can be found at http://mandelang.kunstkamera.ru/index/langues_mande/famille_mande/
[2] According to Valentin Vydrine, the separation between the four groups of languages that constitute West Mande occurred very early, in the following chronological order: first the Soninke-Bozo branch separated from a branch including the ancestors of the other three groups; the second separation was between the Bobo-Samogo branch and a Central-Soso-South-Western branch, and the last one was between the Central branch and the Soso-South-Western branch.
[3] Soninke is a single language with a relatively low degree of dialectal variation; Bozo is a dialect cluster within which at least three or four distinct (although closely related) languages must be distinguished.
[4] Bobo is the most important language of this branch of West Mande; Samogo is a generic term referring to several languages that belong to the same branch of West Mande but are too different from one another to be considered dialectal variants of a single language.
[5] The Central branch of West Mande includes the Manding dialect cluster (Bambara, Maninka, Mandinka, Jula, Xasonga, etc.) and several non-Manding languages that have a relatively close relationship to Manding (Kono, Vai, Jeri, etc.).
[6] This branch divides into two sub-branches, Soso-Jalunka (consisting of two languages very closely related) and South Western Mande (Mende, Kpelle, etc.).

types of valency operations, the recognition of morphologically unmarked antipassive constructions may be problematic, but it is not necessary to discuss this point further here, since this paper deals exclusively with antipassive constructions involving overt antipassive markers. A distinction must however be made between fully specialized antipassive markers (occurring only in constructions related to the transitive construction in the way indicated above) and polysemous markers that are also found with functions other than marking patient demotion or suppression (most commonly, reflexive or reciprocal).

Antipassive markers are found in languages belonging to three of the four groups of languages that constitute West Mande: Soninke (Creissels 1991), Bozo (Daget & al. 1953, Blecke 1996), Bobo (Le Bris & Prost 1981), and Mandinka (Creissels & Sambou 2012).

1.3. The organization of the paper

The paper is organized as follows. After briefly presenting the organization of verbal predication typically found in West Mande languages (Section 2) and describing the function of antipassive derivations in West Mande languages (Section 3), I review the antipassive markers attested in Soninke (Section 4), Bozo (Section 5), Bobo (Section 6), and Mandinka (Section 7), and I conclude that they can be divided into two types on the basis of both formal and functional criteria (Section 8). In Section 9, I propose a historical hypothesis according to which one of these two types constitutes the lexicalized vestige of a very ancient middle voice, whereas the second one originates from the grammaticalization of a verb 'make, do' still found in the western varieties of Manding (including Mandinka) and in (at least) one of the Bozo languages, reconstructable as **tin*, which has also grammaticalized as a causative suffix.

2. Verbal predication in West Mande languages

Typologically, West Mande languages are basically well-behaved accusative languages in which the recognition of a grammatical relation 'subject' is supported by a range of constructions comparable to those that provide the classical tests for subjecthood in languages such as English or French.

The following formula (in which S, O, V, and X stand for 'subject', 'object', 'verb', and 'oblique') schematizes the organization of verbal predication in the West Mande languages dealt with in this paper:

S (O) V (X) (X') ...

The linear order of constituents is absolutely rigid. With the only exception of the imperative singular, the subject slot must obligatorily be filled, whereas the presence of an object depends on the valency properties of individual verbs. The subject and the object are neither flagged nor indexed on the verb.

There are two possible positions for TAM markers: immediately after the subject, or suffixed to the verb, and there are also two possible positions for negation markers: immediately after the subject, or in clause final position. The expression of TAM and polarity often involves portmanteau markers in post-subjectal position.

Ex. (1) and (2) illustrate the transitive and intransitive variants of the verbal predicative construction of Mandinka. Note that, in comparison with other West Mande languages, Mandinka makes a particularly systematic use of TAM-polarity markers in post-subjectal position. Note also that, as indicated in the glosses, in Mandinka, some TAM-polarity values are expressed by different markers in transitive and intransitive predication.

(1) Mandinka: transitive predication

a. *Kambaan-óo ye sãa búsá fál-óo la.*
boy-DEF CMP.POS.TR snake.DEF hit stick-DEF OBL
'The boy hit the snake with a stick.'

b. *Kambaan-óo maŋ ber-ôo fáyí palantéer-óo kaŋ.*
boy-DEF CMP.NEG.TR stone-DEF throw window-DEF on
'The boy did not throw the stone into the window.'

c. *Kew-ó ka a téerímâa máakóyí kód-óo to.*
man-DEF INCMP.POS 3SG friend help money-DEF LOC
'The man helps his friend financially.'

(2) Mandinka: intransitive predication

a. *Dendik-óo jaa-tá til-óo la.*
shirt-DEF be/become_dry-CMP.POS.INTR sun-DEF OBL
'The shirt dried up in the sun.'

b. *Kew-ô mâŋ kúmá mus-óo ye.*
man-DEF CMP.NEG.INTR talk woman-DEF BEN
'The man did not talk to the woman.'

c. *Díndíŋ-o ká tootóo jamáajamaa.*
child-DEF INCMP.POS cough often
'The child often coughs.'

In descriptions of Mande languages, TAM-polarity markers in post-subjectal position, such as Mandinka *yé* 'completive positive (transitive)', *máŋ* ~ *mâŋ* 'completive negative', *ká* 'incompletive positive' in Ex. (1-2), are commonly referred to as 'predicative markers'. The grammatical elements occurring in this position as TAM-polarity markers may be fully specialized in this function, but some of them may also occur as copulas in non-verbal predication.

Note that the position of predicative markers immediately after the subject (and consequently, before the object in transitive predication), is crucial for the analysis of the transitivity system of West Mande languages. The point is that, when a transitive verb is preceded by a single NP representing the patient, in the absence of any evidence from flagging or indexing, two alternative analyses could *a priori* be considered: either this NP is in object role in a transitive construction with a null

subject, or it fulfills the subject role in a construction in which the transitive verb is used intransitively. As illustrated by Ex. (3), in such cases, without any exception, the position of the predicative marker rules out the null-subject analysis, leading to the conclusion that, in constructions in which a single NP representing the patient precedes a transitive verb, the transitive verb is used intransitively, and the single NP that precedes it is the subject of an intransitive predication.

(3) Mandinka

a. *Kew-ó maŋ kúlúŋ-o dádaa.*
man-DEF CMP.NEG.TR boat-DEF repair
'The man did not repair the boat.'

b. *Kúlúŋ-o mâŋ dádaa.*
boat-DEF CMP.NEG.INTR repair
'The boat was not repaired.'

c. **Ø máŋ kúlúŋ-o dádaa.*
CMP.NEG.TR boat-DEF repair

In other words, (3b) cannot be analyzed as a transitive construction with a null subject, and must be analyzed as an instance of a typologically uncommon type of transitivity alternation in which the subject of an transitive verb used intransitively without any morphological modification represents a patient undergoing the action of an agent that however cannot be expressed.

Moreover, as illustrated in particular by Ex. (1a) and (2a) above, in West Mande languages, it is not uncommon that TAM-polarity marking formally distinguishes transitive from intransitive predication: in Mandinka, the predicative marker *yé* and the verbal suffix *-tá* carry exactly the same TAM-polarity value (completive positive) but are in complementary distribution, *-tá* being used exclusively in intransitive predication, and *yé* in transitive predication. A crucial observation is that, whenever a transitive verb is preceded by a single NP, irrespective of the semantic role assigned to this NP, predicative markers that have different forms in transitive and intransitive predication invariably show the form characteristic of intransitive predication. This provides additional support to the conclusion that constructions with null subjects or objects are impossible,[7] and that constructions with a transitive verb preceded by a single NP must always be analyzed in terms of transitivity alternations by which one of the two core arguments of the transitive verb is demoted or suppressed, whereas the other is converted into the subject of an intransitive predication.

Ex. (3) above illustrates the conversion of the patient of a transitive verb into the subject of an intransitive construction analyzable as a morphologically unmarked passive construction, which constitutes an instance of a cross-linguistically

[7] The only exception I am aware of is Bobo, which allows null objects with an anaphoric reading. As rightly observed by Le Bris and Prost (1981), this situation is quite exceptional among Mande languages.

uncommon type of P-lability. P-lability of the causative/anticausative type, much more common cross-linguistically, is also very common in Mande languages – Ex. (4).

(4) Mandinka

a. *Máŋk-óo jolón-tá baŋk-óo to.*
mango-DEF fall/drop-CMP.POS.INTR ground-DEF LOC
'The mango fell on the ground.'

b. *Kew-ó ye mur-óo jolóŋ baŋk-óo to.*
man-DEF CMP.POS.TR knife-DEF fall/drop ground-DEF LOC
'The man dropped the knife on the ground.'

By contrast, in Mande languages, A-lability tends to be limited to relatively small classes of verbs. Ex. (5) illustrates the case of a Mandinka verb that can be used transitively or intransitively with the same semantic role assigned to its subject, but in Mandinka, this type of transitivity alternation is limited to a relatively small subset of transitive verbs (about 30), and interestingly, none of the verbs that have this alternation is semantically a typical transitive verb.

(5) Mandinka

a. *Sul-óo sele-ta yír-ôo sánto.*
monkey-DEF climb-CMP.POS.INTR tree-DEF on_top
'The monkey climbed up the tree.'

b. *Í búka yír-óo selé a jamb-óo la.*
2SG INCMP.NEG tree-DEF climb 3SG leave-DEF OBL
'One does not climb a tree by the leaves.'

3. The function of antipassive derivation in West Mande languages

Cross-linguistically, antipassive derivations may have different types of functional motivations.

In languages in which the agent of transitive predication is not accessible to operations such as focalization or questioning (as in some Mayan languages), or in languages in which deletion under coreference is not possible if the coreference relationship involves the agent of a transitive predication and the unique core argument of an intransitive predication (as in Dyirbal), the conversion of the agent into the unique core argument of an intransitive predication makes it possible to get around such constraints.

In other languages, the valency-changing function of antipassive markers interferes with an aspectual function, and some languages have markers currently labeled 'antipassive' that fulfill both a valency-changing and an aspectual function when they combine with transitive verbs, but also have the ability to combine with intransitive verbs with a purely aspectual function.

Nothing similar can be observed in Mande languages. On the one hand, in Mande languages, as far as I know, agents of transitive predications are always accessible to the operations that may necessitate the use of antipassive derivation in the languages in which the operations in question pattern ergatively. On the other hand, Mande antipassives are pure valency operators devoid of any aspectual function. Another type of functional motivation must therefore be invoked for the existence of antipassive derivations in Mande languages, and this motivation can be found in the existence of strict requirements on the expression of the patient of transitive verbs.

As illustrated by Ex. (6) and (7) from Soninke, Mande languages may have A-labile verbs that can be used intransitively with the same participant in subject role as in their transitive use, and P-labile verbs that can be used intransitively with a passive or anticausative meaning. [8]

(6) Soninke

a. *Yúgò-n dà té-n còxó.*
man-DEF TR field-DEF plough
'The man ploughed the field.'

b. *Yúgò-n còxó.*
man-DEF plough
'The man ploughed.'

(7) Soninke

a. *Yúgò-n dà báahè-n tèxé.*
man-DEF TR door-DEF close
'The man closed the door.'

b. *Báahè-n tèxé.*
door-DEF close
'The door closed.' or 'The door was closed.'

However, not all verbs that have the ability to be used transitively lend themselves to such uses. In particular, as already mentioned in Section 2, the kind of behavior illustrated by Ex. (6) is typically limited to a limited subset of the verbs that can be used transitively, and most of the verbs that have the ability to occur in transitive predication cannot be used in their non-derived form in constructions analyzable as transitive constructions in which a non-expressed patient is interpreted as non-specific, or as intransitive constructions with a single core term representing the agent.

Such a situation implies the development of other strategies making it possible not to specify the patient of transitive verbs: transitive constructions with generic nouns

[8] Note that, in Soninke, the absence of overt TAM-polarity marking expresses 'completive, positive', but transitive clauses in the completive positive obligatorily include a transitivity marker (*dà*) also found in the imperative.

in object role, incorporation of generic nouns, periphrases in which a nominalized form of the transitive verb is the object of a verb 'do', reflexive constructions with an antipassive interpretation, and use of dedicated antipassive markers.

For example, in Soninke, the underived form of *pátá* 'cut, harvest' cannot occur in the same intransitive construction as *sòxó* 'plough' in Ex. (6b), but the same transformation can be achieved by means of the antipassive form *pátá-ndì* – Ex. (8).

(8) Soninke

a. *Sòró-n dà yìllê-n pátá.*
people.PL-DEF TR millet-DEF cut
'The people harvested the millet.'

b. **Sòrô-n pátá.*
people.PL-DEF cut
intended: 'The people harvested (the crops).'

c. *Sòrô-n pátá-ndì.*
people.PL-DEF cut-ANTIP
'The people harvested (the crops).'

4. Soninke, a West Mande language with two antipassive markers

In this section, I summarize the description of the detransitivizing derivations of Soninke given in Creissels (1991). The examples quoted in this paper and reproduced here were checked with Yacouba Diagana.

As already illustrated above, Soninke has A-labile verbs that can be used intransitively with the same participant in subject role as in their transitive use – Ex. (6), and P-labile verbs that can be used intransitively with a passive or anticausative meaning – Ex. (7). However, not all verbs that have the ability to be used transitively lend themselves to such uses, and Soninke also has two detransitivizing derivations. For verbs that have transitive uses, A-lability, P-lability, and compatibility with one of the two detransitivizing derivations, constitute (at least at first sight) unpredictable lexical properties.

The two detransitivizing derivations of Soninke differ both in terms of function and productivity. Detransitivization by means of the suffix *-ndì* is relatively productive, and is fully specialized in antipassive function, whereas detransitivization by means of vowel alternations analyzable as resulting from the addition of an underlying *-i* is not productive, and has an antipassive function with some verbs only.

4.1. The detransitivizing suffix *-ndì*

As illustrated by Ex. (8) above and Ex. (9) below, this suffix is a dedicated antipassive marker. It attaches exclusively to transitive verbs that do not have the ability to be used intransitively with a subject representing the agent, and the forms derived by means of this suffix are always intransitive verbs that assign to their subject the same semantic role as the transitive verb from which they derive.

(9) Soninke

a. *Yàxàré-n dà kónpè-n céllà.*
woman-DEF TR room-DEF sweep
'The woman swept out the room.'

b. *Yàxàrê-n céllá-ndì.*
woman-DEF sweep-ANTIP
'The woman did the sweeping.'

An intriguing aspect of this antipassive suffix is its formal similarity with the causative suffix *-ndí* illustrated by Ex. (10).

(10) Soninke

a. *Yíttè-n qénú.*
tree-DEF fall
'The tree fell down.'

b. *Hànké-n dà yíttè-n qénú-ndí.*
wind-DEF TR tree-DEF fall-CAUS
'The wind felled the tree.'

As indicated in the following chart, the causative suffix and the antipassive suffix differ in their tonal properties, but the distinction is neutralized in the case of verbs that have a tonal contour of the LH type.

tonal types of non-derived verbs	*tonal contour of derived antipassives*	*tonal contour of derived causatives*
H	H-L	H-H
HL	H-L	HL-H
LH	L-H	L-H

An explanation of this formal similarity will be proposed in Section 9.

4.2. The detransitivizing suffix *-i*

This suffix leaves unchanged the tonal contour of the verbs to which it attaches, and most of the time fuses with the last vowel of the verb stem. The result of the fusion suggests however that the underlying form of this suffix is *-i*, and this is confirmed by three monosyllabic verbs for which this suffix manifests itself as an additional syllable with an *i*:

tŭu 'know, understand' → *tùyí*
kŏo 'say' → *kòní* ~ *kòŋí*

ñáa ‘do’ → *ñáŋí*

With the other verbs, the result of the suffixation of this *-i* can be described as follows: [9]

a + i → e
e + i → i
u + i → i

Functionally, *-i* is an unproductive detransitivizing suffix whose precise value depends on the individual verbs to which it has the ability to attach: passive – Ex. (11), anticausative – Ex. (12), autocausative – Ex. (13), reflexive – Ex. (14), or antipassive – Ex. (15).

(11) Soninke

a. *Sòró-n dà yìllê-n pátá.*
people.PL-DEF TR millet-DEF cut
‘The people harvested the millet.’

b. *Yìllê-n páté.*
millet-DEF cut.DETR
‘The millet was harvested.’

(12) Soninke

a. *Yúgò-n dà mùkké-n kìñá ká-ŋ ŋà.*
man-DEF TR stranger-DEF lead house-DEF OBL
‘The man welcomed the stranger in the house.’

b. *Kàdáarà-n kìñé.*
first_rains-DEF lead.DETR
‘The first rains arrived.’

(13) Soninke

a. *Yúgò-n dà káccè-n púutú.*
man-DEF TR rope-DEF stretch
‘The man stretched out the rope.’

[9] No verb ending with *e* or *i* has a distinct intransitive form that could result from the addition of this suffix, but historically, it may well be that some of the labile verbs ending with *e* or *i* originally had an intransitive form derived by means of *-i* that became undistinguishable from the underived form when the suffix ceased to exist as a distinct segment.

b. *Yúgò-n púutí.*
man-DEF stretch.DETR
'The man stretched.'

(14) Soninke

a. *Yàxàré-n dà lémínè-n bóorà.*
woman-DEF TR child-DEF undress
'The woman undressed the child.'

b. *Yàxàrê-n bóorè.*
woman-DEF undress.DETR
'The woman undressed.'

(15) Soninke

a. *Yàxàré-n dà máarò-n còró.*
woman-DEF TR rice-DEF cook
'The woman cooked the rice.'

b. *Yàxàré-n còré.*
woman-DEF cook.DETR
'The woman did the cooking.'

With some transitive verbs, the intransitive form resulting from this derivation is ambiguous between two of the possible values enumerated above, for example, passive and antipassive – Ex. (16).

(16) Soninke

a. *Lémúnù-n dà tíyè-n yígá.*
child.PL-DEF TR meat-DEF eat
'The children ate the meat.'

b. *Lémúnù-n yígé.*
child.PL-DEF eat.DETR
'The children ate.'

c. *Tíyè-n yígé.*
meat-DEF eat.DETR
'The meat was eaten.'

Detransitivization markers with such a polysemy are extremely common cross-linguistically. They are found in particular in languages belonging to various branches of the Indo-European family (Romance, Slavic, Germanic, etc.), as the result of the evolution of the Proto-Indo-European reflexive pronoun **se*, which suggests

that the situation observed in Soninke may result from a similar historical scenario. We will return to this question in Section 9.

5. Antipassive detransitivization in Bozo languages

All descriptions of Bozo languages mention the existence of relatively numerous transitive / intransitive verb pairs suggesting that, historically, a suffix *-i* cognate with the Soninke suffix *-i* presented in Section 4.2 was used productively in the ancestor of Bozo languages to intransitivize transitive verbs. For example, Daget & al. (1953) give a list of more than 60 such pairs.

Functionally, the Bozo suffix *-i* is very similar to the Soninke suffix *-i*. The only difference is that the antipassive function of this suffix seems to be more prominent in Bozo languages than in Soninke. Judging from the lists of transitive / intransitive verb pairs provided by grammars and dictionaries of Bozo languages, antipassivization is by far the most common function of this derivation. It is however not its only possible function, and examples of intransitives derived by means of the same suffix *-i* and carrying a reflexive or passive meaning can also be found. See Blecke (1996) for a more detailed account of detransitivization in a Bozo language (Tigemaxo).

6. Bobo, a West Mande language with a vestigial detransitivization marker

Vestiges of a detransitivizing suffix *-i* can be found in Bobo too – Le Bris and Prost (1981: 59). The range of meanings attested by forms attributable to this derivation is comparable to that observed in Soninke and Bozo. For example, *zɛ̀* 'see (intr.)' is functionally the antipassive form of *zà* 'see (tr.)', whereas *dɔ̀rè* 'appear, be shown' is functionally the passive or anticausative form of *dɔ̀rɔ̄* 'show'.

This similarity both in form and meaning strongly suggests an ancient detransitivizing derivation involving a suffix cognate with the detransitivizing suffix *-i* found in Soninke and Bozo. The difference is that, in contrast with Soninke and Bozo, Bobo has just a handful of such transitive / intransitive verb pairs.

7. Mandinka, a West Mande language with an atypical antipassive marker

Mandinka has a suffix *-rí* (with the allomorph *-dírí* in combination with stems ending with a nasal) found exclusively with transitive verbs in constructions in which the P argument is left unexpressed, cannot be identified to the referent of a noun phrase included in the same construction, and is interpreted as non-specific. This distribution makes it possible to analyze *-rí* as a valency operator of the antipassive type. However, in other respects, *-rí* has properties quite unusual for an antipassive marker, since with just one exception (*dómó* 'eat'), *rí*-forms cannot be used as the verbal predicate of finite clauses, and the suffix *-rí* can be used only in the following conditions:

– when the verb is used nominally as an event noun, as in (17c);
– when the verb is used in a non-finite form expressing temporal simultaneity, marked by a suffix *-tôo*, as in (18b);

– in agent nominalization, marked by a suffix *-láa* ~ *-náa*, as in (19b);
– in instrument nominalization, marked by a suffix *-ráŋ* ~ *-láŋ* ~ *-dáŋ*, as in (20b);
– when the verb is the first formative of a nominal compound in which a verb restricts the meaning of a noun, as in (21b);
– in causative derivation: the causative suffix *-ndí* attaches directly to intransitive verb stems, but with most transitive verb stems, it must be preceded by the antipassive suffix, as in (22b).[10]

(17) Mandinka

a. *Mus-óo be maani-túw-o la.*
woman-DEF COP rice-pound-DEF OBL
lit. 'The woman is at the rice-pounding.' → 'The woman is pounding rice.'
(*maaní* 'rice' saturates the P valency of *tŭu* 'pound', and the subject of the copula is identified to the unexpressed A argument)

b. *Maan-óo be tuw-ó la.*
rice-DEF COP pound-DEF OBL
lit. 'The rice is at the pounding.' → 'The rice is being pounded.'
(if none of the arguments of *tŭu* 'pound' is expressed, in the absence of the antipassive suffix, the subject of the copula is identified to the unexpressed P argument)

c. *Mus-óo be tuu-r-óo la.*
woman-DEF COP pound-ANTIP-DEF OBL
lit. 'The woman is at the pounding.ANTIP.' → 'The woman is pounding.'
(the antipassive suffix saturates the P valency of *tŭu* 'pound', and the subject of the copula is identified to the unexpressed A argument)

(18) Mandinka

a. *Ń ŋá mus-óo maani-tuu-tôo jé.*
1SG CMP.POS woman-DEF rice-pound-SIMULT see
'I saw the woman pounding rice.'

b. *Ń ŋá mus-óo tuu-ri-tôo jé.*
1SG CMP.POS woman-DEF pound-ANTIP-SIMULT see
'I saw the woman pounding.'

[10] The use of an antipassive marker in the causativization of transitive constructions, although cross-linguistically uncommon, is fully consistent with the fact that, in the construction illustrated by Ex. (22b), the object slot is filled by the causee, not by the patient of *tŭu* 'pound' (which is left unexpressed in this example, but could also be expressed as an oblique: *Musóo ye díndíŋo tuurindí maanóo la*). The use of the antipassive form as the stem for the attachment of the causative suffix to transitive verbs is also found in Bozo (Lauschitzky 2007: 21).

(19) Mandinka

a. *maani-tuu-láa*
rice-pound-AGNR
'person who pounds rice'

b. *tuu-ri-láa*
pound-ANTIP-AGNR
'person who pounds'

(20) Mandinka

a. *maani-tuu-ráŋ*
rice-pound-INSNR
'rice-pestle'

b. *tuu-ri-láŋ*
pound-ANTIP-INSNR
'pestle'

(21) Mandinka

a. *maani-tuu-dúláa*
rice-pound-place
'place dedicated to rice pounding'

b. *tuu-ri-dúláa*
pound-ANTIP-place
'place dedicated to pounding'

(22) Mandinka

a. *Mus-óo ye dendik-ôo nó-ndi.*
woman-DEF CMP.POS.TR shirt-DEF get_dirty-CAUS
'The woman soiled the shirt.' (lit. made the shirt get dirty)

b. *Mus-óo ye díndíŋ-o tuu-ri-ndi.*
woman-DEF CMP.POS.TR child-DEF pound-ANTIP-CAUS
'The woman made the child pound.'

With the only exception of *dómó* 'eat', the antipassive form of Mandinka transitive verbs cannot be used as the verbal predicate of clauses in which the A argument only would be expressed, but it is commonly found in a functionally equivalent antipassive periphrasis, in which the antipassive form of a transitive verb used nominally is the object of *ké* 'do' – Ex. (23).

(23) Mandinka

a. **Mus-óo ye Ø tuu.* **Mus-óo tuu-ta*
woman-DEF CMP.POS pound woman-DEF pound-CMP.POS
Intended: 'The woman pounded.' – the first sentence is absolutely impossible, and the only possible reading of the second one is 'The woman was pounded.'

b. *Mus-óo ye tuu-r-ôo ké.*
woman-DEF CMP.POS pound-ANTIP-DEF do
lit. 'The woman did the pounding.ANTIP.' → 'The woman pounded.'

Dómó ‘eat’ is the only Mandinka verb with which *-rí* has the usual behavior of antipassive markers, i.e. yields a form also used as a finite intransitive verb form whose subject represents the agent – Ex. (24c).

(24) Mandinka

a. *Díndíŋ-o* *ye* *mbúur-ôo* *dómo.*
child-DEF CMP.POS.TR bread-DEF eat
‘The child ate the bread.’

b. *Díndíŋ-o* *ye* *dómó-r-ôo* *ké.*
child-DEF CMP.POS.TR eat-ANTIP-DEF do
‘The child ate.’

c. *Díndíŋ-o* *dómó-rí-ta.*
child-DEF eat-ANTIP-CMP.POS.INTR
same meaning as (b)

The atypical antipassive marker *-rí* is probably cognate with the canonical antipassive marker *-ndì* found in Soninke, since alternations between *r* and *d* or *nd* are very common in Mande languages. The tonal difference is not a problem, given that the high tone of *-rí* results from a rule of ‘tonal compacity’ that affects the second element of complex lexemes, and therefore has no historical significance.

This atypical antipassive suffix seems however to be also cognate with a nominalization marker found in other Manding varieties as *-lí*, which in its turn is a possible cognate of formally similar nominalization markers found in South Mande languages (Valentin Vydrine, p.c.). The suffix *-lí* found in other Manding varieties yields forms that can never be used as verbs, and do not have the strict relationship with patient demotion observed in Mandinka: *-lí* may be used to mark the nominalization of intransitive verbs, and its presence with transitive verbs used as action nouns does not block the expression of the patient (see for example Dumestre 2003: 74-5 on Bambara *-lí*).

In addition to the probable relationship with the antipassive marker *-ndì* found in Soninke, internal evidence that the Mandinka forms resulting from the suffixation of *-rí* were originally verbal comes from the fact that *-rí* can be followed by derivative suffixes that typically attach to verbal stems to mark simultaneous action, agent nominalization, instrument nominalization, and causativization. In particular, as briefly commented in Footnote 10, the use of *-rí* in the causativization of transitive constructions is fully consistent with the hypothesis that *-rí* was originally used to derive intransitive verbs from transitive ones.

In any case, Mandinka *-rí* is clearly not a nominalization marker, since (as illustrated by Ex. (17) above) the verbal lexemes with which it combines can also be used as event nouns in their non-derived form, with however different valency properties. Moreover, it is easy to imagine how a suffix deriving antipassive forms mainly used as event nouns in a language that does not mark event nominalization can be reanalyzed as a nominalization marker, whereas the conversion of a nominalization marker into a valency operator compatible with suffixes that

otherwise combine with verbal stems does not seem very plausible. This leaves us with the following two possibilities:

– either Bambara *-lí* is cognate with Mandinka *-rí*, which implies that Bambara *-lí* is a former antipassive marker reanalyzed as a nominalization marker, and the formal similarity with South Mande nominalization markers is accidental,
– or the formal similarity between the antipassive marker *-rí* found in Mandinka and the nominalization marker *-lí* found in other Manding varieties is a coincidence due to phonetic changes that have affected in Manding an antipassive marker cognate with Soninke *-ndì* and a nominalization marker whose cognates can be found in South Mande languages.

8. The division of the West Mande antipassive markers into two types

On the basis of both formal and functional criteria, two types of antipassive markers can therefore be distinguished in West Mande:

– a first type found in Soninke, Bozo, and Bobo, with a detransitivizing marker rarely isolable as a distinct segment but analyzable as an underlying *-i* that tends to fuse with the ending of the verb; this type is functionally characterized by the fact that it is never fully productive, and that, in the languages in which it is attested, the same morphological formation also expresses other semantic types of detransitivization: reflexive, autocausative, anticausative, or passive;
– a second type found in Soninke and Mandinka, used exclusively with an antipassive function, but involving a suffix *-rí* or *-ndì* very similar to a causative suffix found in the same languages as *-ndí* and in Bozo as *ní*.

9. A historical hypothesis

9.1. The origin of the detransitivizing suffix *-i*

In other language families, two possible sources have been identified for markers ambiguous between an antipassive function and other semantic types of detransitivization: reflexive pronouns, as in Indo-European languages, or markers of reciprocity / associativity, as in Bantu languages, Oceanic languages, or Turkic languages. In the case of West Mande, a crucial observation is that detransitivization by means of the suffix *-i* is not attested with a reciprocal or associative meaning, but can be found with a reflexive meaning, which suggests that the expression of reflexivity was probably the original function of a Proto-West-Mande suffix that can be reconstructed as **-i*.

The possibility that the ancestor **-i* of the detransitivizing suffixes *-i* found in Soninke, Bozo and Bobo might have resulted from the grammaticalization of a reflexive pronoun in object role must therefore be considered, since *í* is attested in Mandinka and many other Mande languages as a reflexive pronoun – Ex. (25). Moreover, as illustrated by Ex. (26), the reflexive construction involving this pronoun in object role may also have an antipassive function with some verbs.

(25) Mandinka

a. *Mus-óo ye díndíŋ-o kuu.*
woman-DEF CMP.POS.TR child-DEF wash
'The woman washed the child.'

b. *Mus-óo ye í kuu.*
woman-DEF CMP.POS.TR REFL wash
'The woman washed (herself).'

(26) Mandinka

a. *Kew-ó ye jíy-o miŋ.*
man-DEF CMP.POS.TR water-DEF drink
'The man drank water.'

b. *Kew-ó ye í miŋ (jíy-o la).*
man-DEF CMP.POS.TR REFL drink water-DEF OBL
'The man drank (water).'

There is however a serious problem with the hypothesis of a relationship between the reconstructed reflexive marker **-i* and the reflexive pronoun that can equally be reconstructed as *í*. The point is that all Mande languages invariably show a rigid SOVX constituent order, which consequently must be reconstructed at Proto-Mande level. In a language with such a constituent order, a reflexive pronoun *í* is not expected to grammaticalize as a detransitivizing suffix, but rather as a prefix. The hypothesis of an etymological relationship between the West Mande detransivizing suffix **-i* and the reflexive pronoun **í* would therefore imply admitting that, in the evolution of Pre-Proto-Mande, this grammaticalization process preceded a hypothetical change from SVO to SOV constituent order. I have however argued elsewhere that the evidence that such a change in constituent order occurred in the history of Mande languages is rather scanty – see Creissels (2005), and consequently, I prefer to leave this question open.

9.2 The origin of the antipassive suffixes *-ndì* (Soninke) and *-rí* (Mandinka)

The case of the antipassive suffixes *-ndì* (Soninke) and *-rí* (Mandinka) is entirely different, since they fulfill exclusively the function of antipassive markers, which suggests that they did not develop from reflexive or reciprocal/associative markers, and rather grammaticalized directly from some other source as antipassive markers.

The formal similarity with a causative marker found as *-ndí* in Mandinka and Soninke and *-ní* in Bozo has been mentioned. Of course, such a similarity might be purely accidental. But if we could find also a formally similar lexical item reconstructable at Proto-West-Mande level with a meaning that would make it a possible source of both causative and antipassive markers, the hypothesis that precisely the lexical item in question constitutes the common source of the antipassive and causative suffixes just mentioned would become highly plausible.

Verbs with the meaning ‘do, make’ commonly occur in causative periphrases, and constitute a well-known source of causative markers. But such verbs are also very commonly involved in constructions that can be viewed as antipassive periphrases, and can therefore also grammaticalize as antipassive markers, although such constructions are not commonly referred to as antipassive periphrases, and the possibility that verbs with the meaning ‘do, make’ involved in such constructions grammaticalize as antipassive markers does not seem to have been discussed in the grammaticalization literature so far.

For example, French has a causative construction in which *faire* ‘do, make’ combines with the infinitive of the verb expressing the caused event, as in Ex. (27a), but the use of *faire* with an action noun in object role is also a very common strategy not to specify the object of transitive verbs with which the mere omission of the object does not constitute the normal way to simply omit specifying the object, as in Ex. (27b).

(27) French

a. *La femme a **fait acheter** le pain par son fils.*
the woman has made buy the bread by her son
‘The woman made her son buy the bread.’

b. *La femme a **fait des achats**.*
the woman has made some buying
‘The woman did some shopping.’

In most Mande languages, the verbs expressing ‘do, make’ are reflexes of Proto-Mande roots reconstructable as **ma* or **kɛ*, which quite obviously cannot be the source of the antipassive and causative suffixes we are dealing with. But **ma* and **kɛ* are not the only roots reconstructable at least at Proto-West-Mande level with the meaning ‘do, make’. In Mandinka, ‘do’ is commonly expressed as *ké*, but Mandinka also has a verb *tîŋ* ~ *tínnà* ~ *túnnà* ‘cause’, and this verb is probably cognate with Bozo Jenaama *tîn* (compl.) *tînâ* (incompl.) ‘do’. Given the position of Mandinka and Bozo in the genealogical tree of Mande languages, a Proto-West-Mande root **tin* ‘do’ can be reconstructed, and the hypothesis I would like to propose here is that the antipassive suffixes *-ndì* (Soninke) and *-rí* (Mandinka) and the causative suffixes *-ndí* (Mandinka, Soninke) and *-ní* (Bozo) result from the grammaticalization of **tin* ‘do’ in causative and antipassive periphrases.

These grammaticalization processes may have occurred at different periods, and we will probably never be able to reconstruct the details of the constructions in which they occurred and of the phonological processes responsible for the precise forms taken by the suffixes in question, but this hypothesis provides at least a plausible explanation for a formal similarity between antipassive and causative markers that otherwise would remain unexplained.

10. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that West Mande languages provide not only an additional illustration of the well-known grammaticalization path REFLEXIVE > ANTIPASSIVE, but also data supporting the reconstruction of a grammaticalization path VERB 'DO' > ANTIPASSIVE MARKER.

Abbreviations

AGNR: agent nominalizer, ANTIP: antipassive, BEN: benefactive, CAUS: causative, CMP: completive aspect, COP: copula, DEF: definite, DETR: detransitivizer, INCMP: incompletive, INSNR: instrument nominalizer, INTR: intransitive, LOC: locative, NEG: negative, OBL: oblique, PL: plural, POS: positive, SG: singular, SIMULT: simultaneous, TR: transitive.

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