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Copulas originating from the imperative of 'see / look' verbs in Mande languages

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Abstract. This paper analyzes Mande data that suggest a grammaticalization path leading from the imperative of verbs 'see / look' to ostensive predicators (i.e. words functionally similar to French *voici*, Italian *ecco*, or Russian *vot*), and further to copulas. Clear cases of copulas cognate with 'see / look' verbs are found in several branches of the Mande family, and there is convincing evidence that they did not develop from the semantic bleaching of forms originally meaning 'is seen/found' (another plausible grammaticalization path leading from 'see' verbs to copulas), but from the routinization of the ostensive use of the imperative of 'see / look'. Comparison of the Mande data with the Arabic data provided by Taine-Cheikh (2013) shows however that this is not the only possibility for imperatives of verbs 'see / look' to grammaticalize into copulas, since in the Arabic varieties in which the imperative form of 'see' has become a plain copula, the most plausible explanation is that a modal/discursive particle resulting from the grammaticalization of the imperative of 'see' has undergone a process of semantic bleaching in the context of an equative or locational predicative construction that initially included no overt predicator.
Keywords. Grammaticalization, ostensive predicator, copula, Mande, Arabic.

1. Introduction

The grammaticalization path leading from the imperative of verbs 'see / look' to ostensive predicators or to copulas is not mentioned in the inventory of grammaticalization processes provided by Heine & Kuteva (2002), and 'see / look' verbs are not mentioned as a possible source of copulas in general accounts of non-verbal predication such as Hengeveld (1992) or Pustet (2003) either. However, French *voici* / *voilà* constitute a well-known example of the grammaticalization of the imperative of a verb 'see' as an ostensive predicator, and additional examples can be found for example among Chadic languages (see Hellwig (2011: 380-382) on Goemai, Jaggar (2001: 468-469) and Newman (2001: 181-182) on Hausa). As regards the possibility that the imperative form of a verb 'see / look' grammaticalizes as a copula, this possibility has been recognized so far in two language families, and in one of these two cases, the first stage in this evolution is the reanalysis of the imperative of a 'see / look' verb as an ostensive predicator:

(a) As discussed by Taine-Cheikh (2013), in Arabic languages, the grammaticalization of the imperative form of verbs cognate with Classical Arabic *raʔā* 'see' has developed in different directions, with the creation of a copula as one of its possible outcomes.

(b) As observed by Westermann (1930), Monteil (1939), Heydorn (1940-1941) Heydorn (1949-1950), Welmers (1974), Creissels (1981), and Tröbs (2003), Mande languages

provide evidence that copulas may result from the evolution of ostensive predicators whose origin is the imperative of a verb 'see'.

This is however not the only possible type of evolution resulting in the creation of a copula or an existential verb from a 'see' verb. Cross-linguistically, the translation equivalents of 'see' may be polysemous verbs expressing the meanings commonly expressed in English as 'find' or 'get', and it is easy to imagine a process of semantic bleaching converting a form meaning 'is found' into a locational copula. As rightly observed by a reviewer, in Sanskrit the root VID 'see/know' (from Indo-European **weid*) in passive form (*vid-ya-te*) was used in the classical language with the meaning 'there is', and more generally, the pathway (IS_SEEN~)IS_FOUND > LOCATIONAL COPULA (or variants thereof)[1] may be more common cross-linguistically than the creation of copulas from the imperative form of 'see / look'.

In this article, after clarifying the notion of ostensive predicator (Section 2) and providing some background information on Mande languages, and in particular on Mande predicative constructions (Section 3), I present comparative data on copulas originating from 'see / look' verbs in Mande languages (Section 4). Section 5 compares the Mande data with the Arabic data provided by Taine-Cheikh (2013). In Section 6, I discuss the details of two possible grammaticalization paths by which the imperative of a 'see / look' verb may be converted into a copula. In Section 7, I discuss evidence against the alternative hypothesis according to which the Arabic and Mande copulas analyzed in this article might have resulted from the pathway (IS_SEEN~)IS_FOUND > LOCATIONAL COPULA. Section 8 summarizes the main conclusions.

2. Ostensive predicators

I define *ostensive predicators* as grammatical words or expressions whose combination with a noun phrase constitutes the core of clauses aiming to draw the attention of the addressee to the presence of some entity in the situation within which the speaker-addressee interaction takes place (speech situation), such as French *voici*, English *here is*, Italian *ecco*, Russian *vot*, etc.

Ostensive predicators are more commonly called 'presentative particles' (Petit 2010), but this term is ambiguous in two respects: on the one hand, 'presentative' is sometimes used as an equivalent of 'existential', and on the other hand, the label 'presentative particle' is sometimes used for words that have a different distribution (in particular, for interjections).

Ostensive predicators entail meanings typically expressed by copulas: identification of a referent, and presence of a referent at some place. They differ from copulas in two crucial respects: the deictic component of their meaning, and syntactic constraints following from the particular illocutionary force they carry. The argument of an ostensive predicator must be located in the speech situation, and ostensive clauses can be neither negated nor questioned, since their function is to draw the addressee's attention to an obvious fact. In this respect, some similarity can be recognized between ostensive clauses and exclamatory clauses.

[1] The same reviewer signals that the pathway APPEAR > COPULA / EXISTENTIAL VERB is unambiguously attested in some varieties of Tibetan, where the reflexes of Classical Tibetan **snang** 'appear' are used as copula and evidential marker (Suzuki 2012).

In addition to their use in clauses that consist of just the ostensive predicator and a noun phrase, ostensive predicators often occur with the same deictic meaning in constructions in which they combine with a complement clause – Ex. (1b), or in constructions that can be described as including a secondary predication (or 'small clause') – Ex. (1c).

(1) French

a. *Voici nos amis.*
OST our friends
'Here are our friends.'

b. *Voici que nos amis arrivent.*
OST COMP our friends arrive
'Behold, our friends are coming.'
lit. 'Here is that our friends are coming!'

c. *Voici nos amis qui arrivent.*
OST our friends REL arrive
'Behold, our friends are coming.'
lit. 'Here are our friends that are coming!'

3. Verbal predication and copulas in Mande languages

3.1. Some background information about the Mande language family

The Mande language family includes about 50-60 languages (depending on whether relatively close varieties are counted as distinct languages or dialects of a single language) whose common ancestor is evaluated as dating back 5-6000 years. The unity of the Mande language family was recognized very early in the history of African linguistics, because of its remarkable typological homogeneity. Its validity as a genetic grouping is uncontroversial, but the nature of its relationship to other language families of Subsaharan Africa remains an open question. The Mande language family was included by Greenberg in the Niger-Congo phylum, but the evidence supporting this decision is rather slim, and the Niger-Congo affiliation of Mande is considered questionable by many specialists – on this question, see Dimmendaal (2011). A simplified version of the current classification of Mande languages is given in (2), with the names of the languages mentioned in this article in italics.

(2) The Mande language family (adapted from Vydrin 2009)

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">South-East Mande</td><td>South Mande</td><td>Dan
Guro
Mano
etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>East Mande</td><td>Bisa</td></tr>
</table>

		San Busa etc.
West Mande	Soninke-Bozo	*Soninke* *Bozo languages*
	Bobo-Samogo	Bobo Dzuun etc.
	Central	*Manding languages* Jogo-Jeri Kono-Vai etc.
	Soso-South-West-Mande	Soso-Jalonka *South-West Mande languages* (Mende, Kpelle, Loma, etc.)

For more details on the internal classification of Mande languages, see Vydrin (2009).

3.2. Verbal predication in Mande languages

In Mande languages, verbal predication can be schematized as S (O) V (X).[2] No variation is possible in the linear order of constituents. Predicative constructions with two or more terms encoded in the same way as the patient of typical monotransitive verbs (so-called 'multiple object constructions') are not possible.

In Mande languages, an important characteristic of verbal predication is the existence of paradigms of grammatical words (or clitics), called *predicative markers* in the mandeist tradition, occupying a fixed position immediately after the subject. They express TAM, transitivity and polarity distinctions, either by themselves or in interaction with morphological variations of the verb. The division of labor between predicative markers and suffixal or tonal verb inflection varies greatly from one Mande language to another.

For example, in Soninke, the paradigm of predicative markers includes (among others) *má* 'completive, negative', *dà* 'transitivity marker', and the locational copula *wá* (negative *ntá*), which in combination with verbs in the gerundive fulfills the function of incompletive auxiliary – Ex. (3). Verb inflexion is limited to the gerundive suffix *-nV́* (where *V* represents a copy of the preceding vowel), and a tonal alternation by which an entirely L contour substitutes for the inherent tonal contour of the verbal lexeme. The slot for predicative markers (immediately after the subject NP) is left empty if one of the following two combinations of values is intended: 'intransitive, completive, positive' or 'intransitive, imperative singular, positive'; in all other cases an overt predicative marker must be present.

[2] S = subject, O = object, V = verb, X = oblique.

(3) Soninke (pers. doc.)

a. *Ké yúgó xàrá.*
DEM man study
'This man studied.'

b. *Ké yúgó má xàrà.*
DEM man CPL.NEG study^{L}
'This man did not study.'

c. *Lémínèn dà í hàabá ŋàrí.*
child-D TR REFL father see
'The child saw his father.'

d. *Lémínèn má í hàabá ŋàrì.*
child-D CPL.NEG REFL father see^{L}
'The child did not see his father.'

e. *Ó wá táaxú-nú dàagó-n kànmá.*
1PL LOCCOP sit-GER mat-D on
'We will sit on the mat.'

f. *Ń dà dòròkê-n qóbó sáxà-n ŋá.*
1SG TR dress-D buy market-D POSTP
'I bought a dress at the market.'

g. *Ń ntá dòròké qòbò-nò án dà.*
1SG LOCCOP.NEG dress buy-GER^{L} 2SG for
'I will not buy a dress for you.'

The rigid constituent order is crucial for the recognition of grammatical relations. In Mande languages, the flagging of core syntactic terms is either totally inexistent, or very marginal. As regards argument indexation, some Mande languages have subject indexes attached or incorporated to the predicative marker (never to the verb itself), the others have no subject indexation at all. A mechanism that can be described as object indexation is found only in some languages in which the third person singular object pronoun has fused with the verb, and in which 'third person singular object' is encoded by a modification of the initial of the verb – see ex. (16) below.

3.3. Copulas in Mande languages

In most Mande languages, non-copular equative or locational clauses (i.e. equative or locational clauses without any explicit predicator) are marginal. Equative predication and locational predicative constructions in Mande languages can be schematized as S COP X. S is an unflagged NP sharing with the subject of verbal predication its obligatoriness and its

clause-initial position. X shares with the obliques in verbal predication the following two properties: it follows the predicative element, and its most common form is that of an adpositional phrase, even in equative predication.[3] The position occupied by the copula is comparable to that occupied by the verb in intransitive verbal predication, and in terms of possible syntactic operations, copular clauses are not different from intransitive verbal clauses. The only difference is that the copulas have no inflexion, and do not combine with predicative markers, which makes it impossible for copular clauses to express the TAM variations expressed by verb inflection and predicative markers in canonical verbal predication. The use of verbs 'become' (in the case of equative predication) and 'be found' (in the case of locational predication) constitutes the usual strategy to bypass this impossibility.

Typically, Mande languages have (at least) two distinct positive copulas: an equative copula and a locational copula. In the negative, they may correspond to two distinct negative copulas, as in Soninke – Ex. (4), but it may also happen that the same negative copula is used in equative and locational predication. As a rule, negative copulas bear no resemblance to their positive counterparts.

(4) Soninke (pers. doc.)

a. *Ké yúgó nì tàgé-n ñà yí.*
DEM man EQCOP blacksmith-D FOC POSTP
'This man is a blacksmith.'

b. *Ké yúgó hètí tàgé yì.*
DEM man EQCOP.NEG blacksmith POSTP
'This man is not a blacksmith.'

c. *Múusá wá kónpè-n dí.*
Moussa LOCCOP room-D in
'Moussa is in the room.'

d. *Múusá ntá kónpè-n dí.*
Moussa LOCCOP.NEG room-D in
'Moussa is not in the room.'

3.4. Copulas in auxiliary function

As already illustrated in Ex. (3e) and (3g) above, it is common in Mande languages that locational copulas in incompletive auxiliary function combine with verbs, in constructions that lend themselves to a straightforward analysis according to which the copula fulfilling this function occupies the slot for predicative markers. In some Mande languages (for example, in Soninke), the distinction between the use of copulas as predicative markers in verbal predication, and periphrases in which the complement of the copula is a nominalized verb, is quite clear-cut, but in some others, this distinction may be more or less problematic. This is

[3] In Mande languages, the second term of equative predication is commonly flagged by means of the posposition that marks 'functive' phrases (i.e. the equivalent of *as*-phrases in English) in verbal predication – see Creissels (2014).

not unexpected, since diachronically, periphrases in which the complement of the copula is a nominalized verb are a source from which constructions with copulas in predicative marker function can develop.

4. 'See / look' verbs, ostensive predicators, and copulas in Mande languages

Ostensive clauses formally analyzable as imperative clauses headed by a 'see / look' verb are common in Mande languages. Clear cases of copulas originating from the imperative of 'see / look' verbs can be found in Southwestern Mande languages and in the Manding dialect cluster. Moreover, there is some evidence that the locational copula of Soninke might have the same origin.

4.1. Copulas originating from 'see / look' verbs in Southwestern Mande

Southwestern Mande is a group of closely related languages including Mende, Loko, Kpelle, Loma, Zialo, and Gbandi. A common root **káa* 'see' can be reconstructed for Proto-Southwestern-Mande (Valentin Vydrin, pers.com.). In Kpelle, *ka* 'see' is also an ostensive predicator, a locational copula and a progressive auxiliary – Ex. (5). A similar situation is found in Looma (Sadler 2006) and Gbandi (Heydorn 1940-1941).

(5) Kpelle (Westermann 1930: 3, 10, 11, 12)

a. *Ku ŋaloŋ ka bɛlɛi mu.*
1PL man see house in
'We saw a man in the house.'

b. *I seŋkau ka!*
2SG money OST
'Here is your money!'

c. *Ɲaloŋ ka bɛlɛi mu.*
man COP house in
'The man is in the house.'

d. *Nɛni ka pai.*
woman PROG come
'The woman is coming.'

In addition to the coincidence between Kpelle *ka* 'see', *ka* ostensive predicator, *ka* locational copula, and *ka* progressive auxiliary, Westermann observed that the behavior of the NP preceding the locational copula *ka* or the progressive marker *ka* is different from the behavior of subjects in other predicative constructions, and the explanation he put forward is that the subject of the locational copula and the subject of verbs in the progressive construction were originally the object of *ka* 'see' in the imperative: "the *ka* in form No 3 [i.e. in the progressive

construction] is perhaps the verb *ka* to see, so that the form really means 'see me coming', 'see him coming', etc." (Westermann 1930: 11). In other words, the grammaticalization path analyzed is this paper was explicitly put forward for the first time in Westermann's description of Kpelle.

4.2. Copulas originating from 'see / look' verbs in Manding

Manding is a dialect cluster included in the Central sub-branch of the Western branch of the Mande family. The analysis of Manding as a single macro-language including some relatively divergent dialects, or as a set of distinct although closely related languages, is debatable. Manding varieties share a root for 'see' found as *yé* or *jé*, depending on the individual varieties, and a root for 'look' found as *félé*, *fɛ́lɛ́*, or very similar forms. As illustrated in the following chart, the use of the imperative of 'look' as an ostensive predicator is pervasive across Manding varieties, and most of them have a similar use of the imperative of 'see'. As will be discussed in Section 5.1.2, in several Manding varieties, *félé ~ fɛ́lɛ́* seems to be involved in an incipient grammaticalization process that could lead to the emergence of a new copula, but in all the Manding varieties for which I have the relevant data, copula-like uses of *félé ~ fɛ́lɛ́* are only sporadic. As regards *yé ~ jé* 'see', there are Manding varieties (for example, Sédhiou Mandinka) in which no grammaticalized use of this verb can be found, but most Manding varieties use *yé ~ jé* either as a locational copula (and incompletive auxiliary), as an equative copula, or both.

	Sédhiou Mandinka	Dantila Maninka	Bamako Bambara	Kita Maninka
'see'	*jé*	*jé*	*yé*	*yé*
'look'	*félé*	*félé*	*flɛ́*	*félé*
ostensive predicator	*félé*	*félé/jé*	*flɛ́ / yé*	*félé / yé*
equative copula	*mú*	*mú*	*dòn / yé*	*lè / yé*
locational copula	*bé*	*bé/jé*	*bɛ́*	*yé*
incompletive auxiliary	*bé*	*bé/jé*	*bɛ́*	*yé*

Kita Maninka illustrates the case of a Manding variety with the maximum range of grammaticalized uses of *yé ~ jé* 'see'. Note that, in Ex. (6), the notation of tone and nasality is phonetic, and only tones contrasting with the tone of the preceding syllable are explicitly noted, which means that *yé* may be transcribed as *yè*, *yé*, *ye*, etc. depending on the context.

(6) Kita Maninka (Creissels 2009: 19, 78, 79, 87, 88)

a. *Sékù dí tùbabu náni ye kunùn.*
Sékou CPL European four see yesterday
'Sékou saw four Europeans yesterday.'

b. *Móngon ɲè!*
mango.D OST
'Here is a mango!'

c. *Nénè yé Kìta.*
cold.D COP Kita
'It is cold in Kita.'

d. *Kóngò ye n na.*
hunger.D COP 1SG POSTP
'I am hungry.' (lit. 'Hunger is in me')

e. *Nònilí yė̀ ku-jogù lè di.*
insult.D COP thing-bad.D FOC POSTP
'Insult is a bad thing.'

f. *Músa ye ɲò sène-la.*
Moussa COP millet.D cultivate-INF
'Moussa cultivates millet.'

g. *Sán nà-dó yè.*
rain.D come-GER COP
'Rain is coming.'

Heydorn (1949-1950) describes a similar situation in Manya (a Manding variety spoken in Liberia), and explicitly states that "Wie im Bandi und verwandten Sprachen ein deutlicher Zusammenhang zwischen 'sein' und 'sehen' besteht, so scheint dies auch im Manya, wo 'sehen' *yę* heisst, der Fall zu sein." (Heydorn (1949-1950: 57)

4.3. The locative copula and the verb 'see' in Soninke

The resemblance between the Soninke verb *wàrí* (or *ŋàrí*, *ŋèrí*) and the locational copula *wá* (also used in incompletive auxiliary function) is not very great, and might be due to mere chance. However, evidence of a possible etymological link is provided by the data of Azer, a now-extinct Soninke variety. Monteil (1939: 42-44) mentions the existence of variants of the locational copula / incompletive auxiliary such as *wari*, *war*, *wri*, and explicitly states that he considers this copula / auxiliary as a grammaticalized form of 'see'.

5. Comparison with the grammaticalization of 'see' in Arabic

In this section, I summarize the data on the grammaticalization of 'see' in Arabic languages that have been presented and analyzed in detail by Taine-Cheikh (2013), emphasizing the commonalities and differences with Mande languages that are directly relevant to the topic of this article. [4]

[4] In addition to Catherine Taine-Cheikh's 2013 article, this paper has benefited from the discussions I had with her about the Arabic data analyzed in her article, and I want to express my gratitude to her.

An important particularity that distinguishes the predicative system of most Arabic varieties from that of most Mande languages is the systematic use of equative or locational predicative constructions including no overt predicators – Ex. (7).

(7) Classical Arabic

a. *al-waladu ṣaġīru-n.*
DEF-boy small-INDEF
'The boy is small.'

b. *al-waladu fī l-madrasat-i.*
DEF-boy in DEF-school-GEN
'The boy is at school.'

The grammaticalization of *raʔā* 'see', in particular in its imperative form, is a very common phenomenon across Arabic varieties. This verb is preserved in literary Arabic, but in most modern Arabic varieties, only grammaticalized forms of *raʔā* have subsisted, and the verb most commonly used in the sense of 'see' is *šāf*. A detailed analysis can be found in Taine-Cheikh (2013). In the present article, I concentrate on the aspects that are directly relevant to the current discussion.

Plain ostensive predicators cognate with *raʔā* are not very common across Arabic varieties. However, Ḥassāniyya (the variety spoken in Mauritania) and a few other varieties illustrate this possibility – Ex. (8) & (9).[5]

(8) Ḥassāniyya (Catherine Taine-Cheikh 2013)

ṛâʿi xṛûv!
OST lamb
'Here is a lamb!'

(9) Yâfiʿ, Yemen (Vanhove 2010: 336-7)

raʿ ar-rābʿeh
OST DEF-jug
'Here is the jug!'

Particles expressing not only simultaneity ('right now'), but also various modal or discursive values derivable from an original ostensive meaning, constitute the commonest outcome of the grammaticalization of *raʔā* across Arabic varieties. Their contribution to the meaning of the clause can be variously rendered in English as 'indeed', 'really', 'certainly' 'don't you see that...?', 'and then', 'this is a fact', 'you must know that...', 'I remember you that...' etc. To the best of my knowledge, this grammaticalization path has no equivalent in Mande languages.

[5] Interestingly, an ostensive predicator **ša** originating from **šāf** (the verb most commonly used in the sense of 'see' in modern Arabic varieties) is attested in Syrian Arabic (Stowasser & Ani 1964: 115).

Equative or locational clauses including an element whose etymon is the imperative of *raʔā* 'see' are common across Arabic varieties, but in most cases, as illustrated by Ex. (10) for a variety from the South of the Arabic Peninsula, it would not be correct to identify this element as a copula, since it is syntactically optional, its presence implies a marked modal or discursive value, and crucially, it can be added with the same value to verbal clauses. Although this is not easy to reflect in the translation of isolated examples, it is clear from the comments in the original source that, in this Arabic variety, *raʿ* cannot be analyzed as an integral part of a particular type of predicative construction, and is rather an optional particle used to emphasize a precise fact or a sudden appearance and to express the reason behind something, or an event's consequences.

(10) Datînah Arabic (Landberg 1909: 486, 485 and 488)

a. *raʿ=nī ʿawaḍ.*
raʿ=1SG ʿawaḍ
('Je suis ʿAwaḍ, moi.')
'Me, I am ʿAwaḍ.'

b. *raʿ=ak fi arḍ ʿöleh.*
raʿ=2SG in country ʿOlah
('[...] c'est que tu [es] dans le pays des ʿOlah.')
'That's because you [are] in the country of the Olah.'

c. *raʿ em=maṭar y-ehđil.*
raʿ DEF=rain 3M.INCPL-drizzle.SG
('Voilà que la pluie tombe fine.')
'There goes the rain drizzling.'

A plain copula originating from the imperative of *raʔā* can only be found in Algerian Arabic, and more precisely in the variety spoken in Algiers. This was already observed by Cohen (1912: 252), and Boucherit (2002) confirms that, in the equative and locational clauses of Algiers Arabic, *ra* does not express the values carried by its cognates in most other Arabic varieties, and can be analyzed as the suppletive present form of a copula whose past form is *kān.*

(11) Algiers Arabic (Boucherit 2002: 62)

ra=ni fi=l=kuzina.
COP=1SG in=DEF=kitchen
('Je suis dans la cuisine.')
'I am in the kitchen.'

6. From the imperative of verbs 'see / look' to copulas

6.1. The grammaticalization path SEE / LOOK$_{imper}$ > OSTENSIVE PREDICATOR > COPULA

This grammaticalization path is strongly suggested by the Mande data, since the creation of ostensive predicators from the imperative of 'see' or 'look' is very common in Mande languages, and in the Mande languages that have copulas cognate with a verb 'see', the same form is used as an ostensive predicator, and has no other use that could constitute an intermediate stage in this grammaticalization path.

6.1.1. SEE / LOOK$_{imper}$ > OSTENSIVE PREDICATOR

As already mentioned in Section 1, the grammaticalization of the imperative or verbs 'see' or 'look' as ostensive predicators is common cross-linguistically.

The creation of ostensive predicators from the imperative of 'see' or 'look' boils down to the routinization of an ostensive use of the imperative of 'see' or 'look'. In this use, *See / look at X!* is not interpreted in its literal meaning of an incitement to see / look at the referent of X, but as expressing awareness of the presence of the referent of X in the speech situation. Since uttering *See X!* or *Look at X!* in their literal meaning entails the presence of the referent of X, the routinization of the ostensive use of the imperative of a 'see / look' verb can be viewed as the semanticization of a pragmatic entailment.

At an early stage of the evolution, there is no formal manifestation of the development of an ostensive reading of the imperative of 'see' or 'look', but subsequent changes may introduce formal distinctions. For example, in French, it is obvious that *Me voici!* comes from a construction whose equivalent in Modern French would be *Vois-moi ici!*, but synchronically, the position of the object index (which in Modern French cannot precede the verb in the imperative positive), and the coalescence of *vois* + *ici* into *voici*, distinguish the ostensive predicator from the imperative of 'see'. However, the persistence of the ambiguity is possible too. For example, in Mandinka (and other Manding varieties), *ŋ́ félé* |1SG look| is ambiguous between its literal meaning 'Look at me!' and the ostensive reading 'Here I am!'.

6.1.2. OSTENSIVE PREDICATOR > COPULA

Ostensive predicators entail meanings typically expressed by copulas: identification of a referent, and presence of a referent at some place. They differ from copulas in two crucial respects:

(a) the argument of an ostensive predicator must be located in the speech situation;
(b) ostensive clauses express a particular type of speech act (drawing the addressee's attention to an obvious fact) distinct from plain assertion, and consequently do not lend themselves to operations such as negation, questioning, or relativization.

Consequently, the relaxation of these constraints, manifesting the loss of the deictic component of ostensive predication and the reinterpretation of ostensive clauses as plain

assertive clauses, is crucial in the evolution from the status of ostensive predicator to that of copula.

Interestingly, in Mande languages, in addition to copulas analyzable as resulting from the grammaticalization of an ostensive marker, it is possible to find ostensive markers that still cannot be analyzed as having grammaticalized into copulas, which however already occur more or less sporadically in contexts implying the weakening of their deictic component or the bleaching of their particular illocutionary force.

For example, contrary to *yé ~ jé* 'see', which has become a copula in many Manding varieties, I am aware of no Manding variety with a true copula cognate with *félé ~ fɛ́lɛ́* 'look'. However, in Kita Maninka, ostensive clauses lend themselves to relativization, which implies the cancellation of the particular illocutionary force normally carried by *hélé* in its use as an ostensive predicator – Ex. (12).

(12) Kita Maninka (Creissels 2009: 82)

a. *Wórì hele!*
money.D look
literal meaning 'Look at the money!' (imperative),
can also be interpreted as 'Here is the money!' (ostensive reading)

b. *Wórì mín hèle, ǒ tà!*
money.D REL look DEM take
'Take the money that is here!'
lit. 'Look$_{imper}$ at which money, take that!'

Note that my consultant for Kita Maninka accepted this use of *hélé* in ostensive predicator function, but rejected other manipulations on ostensive clauses (for example, questioning) which would have been expected to be accepted if ostensive *hélé*-clauses had been fully reinterpreted as plain assertive clauses.

Similarly, in Mandinka, (13) illustrates the sporadic occurrence of *félé* in contexts incompatible with the deictic value normally implied by *félé*: this sentence was extracted from a story about a village very far from the place where the story was recorded, which means that a plain locative copula could substitute for such an occurrence of the ostensive predicator without any difference in meaning.

(13) Mandinka (Creissels & Sambou 2013: 158)

Jálájúw-òo félé lòo-ríŋ jěe hání bĭi.
*jala*_tree-D look stand-RES there even today
'Up to the present day, a *jala*-tree stands there.'
(lit. 'Look at a *jala*-tree standing there even today!')

Similar observations can be made about Soninke *háyí* 'look' and Bozo *xai* 'see'. In Soninke, the imperative of *háyí* is routinely used as an ostensive predicator, but it is also sporadically found in contexts in which its deictic component or its special illocutionary force cannot be maintained, which points to an incipient process whose outcome could be the creation of a

new locational copula. For example, my Soninke consultant accepts the use of *háyí* in interrogative clauses such as those in (14), which force a reading of *háyí* as a mere locational copula.

(14) Soninke (pers. doc.)

a. *À háyí màní ñàa-nà?*
3SG look what do-GER^{L}
'What is he doing?'
lit. 'Look$_{imper}$ at him doing what?'

b. *À háyí sòxò-nó bà?*
3SG look cultivate-GER Q
'Is he cultivating?'
lit. 'Look$_{imper}$ at him cultivating?'

c. *Kó háyí sòxò-nò?*
who look cultivate-GER^{L}
'Is he cultivating?'
lit. 'Look$_{imper}$ at whom cultivating?'

As regards Bozo, Blecke's description of Tigemaxo suggests that, in this Bozo variety, there is a similar relationship between the locational copula *ga* (which incidently might well be cognate with the root **káa* reconstructed for Southwestern Mande) and *xai* 'see'. Blecke (1996: 206 et seq.) not only mentions an ostensive use of the imperative of *xai* 'see', he also repeatedly insists on the possibility of substituting *xai* for the locational copula *ga*.

6.2. The grammaticalization path SEE / LOOK$_{imper}$ > MODAL/DISCURSIVE PARTICLE > COPULA

The grammaticalization path discussed in section 5.1 is consistent with the Mande data, but it does not provide a satisfactory explanation of the Arabic data, since plain ostensive predicators cognate with *raʔā* 'see' are not very common in Arabic. Given the pervasiveness of modal or discursive particles cognate with *raʔā*, it seems more plausible that the copula *ra* found in Algerian Arabic results from the reanalysis of such a particle in equative and locational constructions that initially included no overt predicator.

Across Arabic varieties, irrespective of the presence of an ostensive predicator cognate with *raʔā*, modal or discursive particles cognate with *raʔā* can be added to equative or locational clauses including no overt predicator exactly in the same way as they are added to verbal clauses, with the same semantic implications, as already illustrated by Ex. (10) above. Ex. (15) provides an additional illustration.

(15) Ḥassāniyya (Catherine Taine-Cheikh 2013)

(a)ṛâ=ni *merîḍ.*
(a)ṛā=1SG sick.M.SG
'I remind you that..., remember that I am sick.'

The use of *ra* as a plain copula in Algerian Arabic (illustrated by Ex. (11) above) is most probably due to a process of semantic bleaching that affected *ra* in a construction originally similar to (15), leading to its reanalysis as a plain copula. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that, in Algerian Arabic, *ra* occurs in equative and locational clauses without any particular semantic or discursive implication, but is still found in verbal clauses with values similar to those found in other Arabic varieties.

7. An alternative grammaticalization path from 'see' verbs to copulas

This discussion of the grammaticalization of 'see / look' verbs into copulas would not be complete if another possible grammaticalization path from 'see' verbs to copulas were not evoked and confronted with the Mande data. The point is that, cross-linguistically, as already mentioned in the introduction, the translation equivalents of 'see' may be polysemous verbs expressing the meanings commonly expressed in English as 'find' or 'get'. This means that some forms of such verbs may be found with meanings such as 'is found' or 'is available', i.e. meanings very close to those typically expressed by locational copulas. Consequently, 'see' verbs and copulas can be diachronically related in at least three different ways:

(a) $\text{SEE}_{\text{imper}}$ / $\text{LOOK}_{\text{imper}}$ > OSTENSIVE PREDICATOR > COPULA

(b) $\text{SEE}_{\text{imper}}$ / $\text{LOOK}_{\text{imper}}$ > MODAL / DISCURSIVE PARTICLE > COPULA

(c) (IS_SEEN~)IS_FOUND > LOCATIONAL COPULA

Given the rich verbal morphology of Arabic, and in particular the clear-cut distinction between subject and object indexation, there can be no doubt that the grammaticalized uses or 'see' described by Tain-Cheikh (2013) developed from the imperative form of this verb. For example, in Algiers Arabic, the subject of the suppletive form of the copula resulting from the grammaticalization of the imperative of 'see' is indexed by the suffixes used in canonical verbal predication to index objects, which supports the hypothesis that the subject of the present form of the copula is a former object that has been reanalyzed. By contrast, for Mande languages, it is necessary to discuss the evidence supporting the hypothesis that, as assumed in the previous sections, copulas cognate with 'see' verbs in Mande languages were created according to Path (a) rather than Path (c).

In the case of Southwestern Mande languages (see Section 4.1), conclusive evidence can be found in the systems of consonant alternations affecting the initial of nouns and verbs. The point is that, in Southwestern Mande languages, the boundary between object NP's and verbs in transitive predication is characterized by sandhi phenomena that do not occur at the boundary between subject NP's and verbs in intransitive predication. Consequently, if a copula had been created according to Path (c), its subject would have been already a subject in

the source construction involving a verb 'be found', and it would be therefore expected to behave as a normal subject with respect to its interaction with the initial consonant of the verb. By contrast, if a copula has been created according to Path (a), its subject is historically a reanalyzed object. Consequently, the subject of a copula created according to Path (a) can be expected to retain the type of interaction with the initial of the verb which normally characterizes objects, and this is precisely what can be observed.

For example, in Kpelle, in intransitive constructions in which the verb is immediately preceded by its subject, the third person singular pronoun is realized as a distinct segment, and the initial consonant of the verb does not change – ex. (16a-b). In transitive constructions, with the object NP in immediate preverbal position, the third person singular object manifests itself by a change in the initial consonant (and the tone) of the verb – ex. (16c-f), and the same phenomenon is observed with the third person singular subject of the copula cognate with 'see' – ex. (16g-h).

(16) Kpelle (Westermann 1930: 4, 11, 21)

a. *Kú pâ.*
1PL come
'We came.'

b. *È pà.*
3SG come
'He, she, it came.'

c. *Loa tíe!*
hole dig
'Dig a hole!'

d. *Díe!*
3SG.dig
'Dig it!'

e. *Dì kú kâ.*
3PL 1PL see
'They saw us.'

f. *Dí gà.*
3PL 3SG.see
'They saw him.'

g. *Kú ká bɛ́.*
1PL COP here
'We are here.'

h. *Gà bɛ́.*
3SG.COP here

'He is here.'

This is certainly why Westermann, who was the first to mention the imperative of 'see' as a plausible origin of copulas and incompletive auxiliaries in Mande languages, did not hesitate in putting forward this analysis of the Kpelle data.

Things are less straightforward in Manding, since in Manding languages, the distinction between subjects and objects has no morphological correlate. However, evidence supporting the choice of path (a) can be found in Manding too.

A first observation is that, in Manding, the imperative positive is the only tense in which the verb does not combine with an overt TAM marker (either suffixed to the verb or immediately following the subject). Consequently, the fact that the Manding copulas cognate with 'see' show no trace of TAM marking supports the hypothesis that they originate from an imperative form.

A second observation is that there is no reason why a copula resulting from the semantic bleaching of a verb 'be found, be available' should not have a negative form created in a parallel way from the negative form of the same verb. By contrast, the meaning carried by ostensive predicators makes them incompatible with negation. Consequently, the fact that no negative copula cognate with 'see' is found in Manding supports the hypothesis that the Manding copulas cognate with 'see' were created according to path (a).

8. Conclusion

In this article , I have tried to show that, in the Mande language family, clear cases of copulas cognate with 'see / look' verbs are found at least in Southwestern Mande languages and in the Manding dialect cluster, and I have discussed evidence that they did not develop from the semantic bleaching of forms originally meaning 'is seen/found', but from the routinization of the ostensive use of the imperative of 'see / look'. By comparing the Mande data with the Arabic data provided by Taine-Cheikh (2013), I have tried to show that this is however not the only possibility for imperatives of verbs 'see / look' to grammaticalize into copulas. In the Arabic varieties in which the imperative form of 'see' has become a plain copula, the most plausible explanation is that a modal/discursive particle resulting from the grammaticalization of the imperative of 'see' has undergone a process of semantic bleaching in the context of an equative or locational predicative construction that initially included no overt predicator.

Abbreviations

COMP = complementizer, COP = copula, CPL = completive, D = default determiner, DEM = demonstrative, EQCOP = equative copula, FOC = focus marker, GEN = genitive, GER = gerundive, INDEF = indefinite, INF = infinitive, NEG = negative, L = replacive morphotoneme 'low', LOCCOP = locational copula, M = masculine, OST = ostensive predicator, PL = plural, POSTP = multipurpose postposition, PROG = progressive, Q = interrogative particle, REFL = reflexive, REL = relativizer, RES = resultative, SG = singular, TR = transitivity marker.

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