ISOMORPHISM, CONVERSION AND LABILITY IN MANDE VERBAL MORPHOSYNTAX:

BIG CONSEQUENCES OF SMALL CHANGES
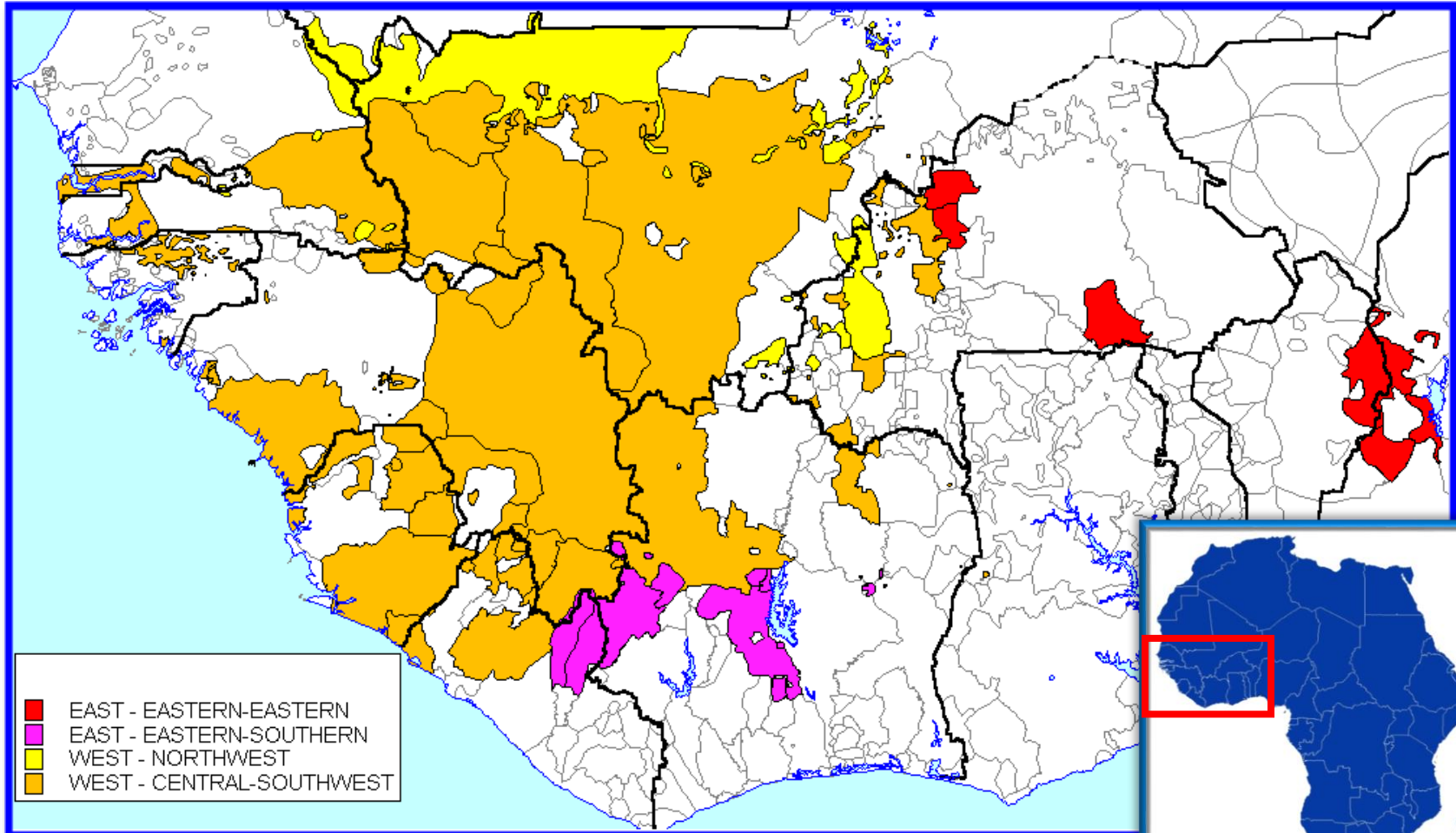
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EAST - EASTERN-EASTERN
EAST - EASTERN-SOUTHERN
WEST - NORTHWEST
WEST - CENTRAL-SOUTHWEST

- limited bound inflectional morphology

- (predominantly) suffixing

- **rigid** S (O) V X order

- TAMP (tense, aspect, mood, polarity) tend to be expressed syncretically but can be distributed across as many as 4 sites within the clause:

$TAMP_0$ S **$TAMP_1$** (O) V-**$TAMP_2$** X $TAMP_3$

- **obligatory S** (except for imperatives)

- in a transitive construction: **obligatory O** (except in Bobo and Boko-Busa cluster)

- minimally, **O slot** is filled with a **dummy 3SG** pronoun (such as *à* in Greater Manding)

- typically, S and O are separated by **TAMP$_1$** marker

- in some languages, detransitivizing and transitivizing **verbal derivational affixes**

isomorphism or "coexpression"

- isomorphism between $V \cong N$:

  - **conversion**: normally $V > N$

    break$_V$ > break$_N$ *walk$_V$ > walk$_N$*

  - only rarely $N > V$: no "omnipredicativity"

- isomorphism between $V_T \cong V_I$:

- **lability**: usually **P-lability** of the decausative and passive types

  The child broke the glass > DECAUS: *The glass broke*
  > PASS: *The glass was broken (by the child)*

- **passive P-lability**, as found in Mande, is said to be typologically highly unusual (cf. Letuchiy 2006, Creissels 2014)

- The two types of isomorphism are **both most prominent** within **one particular subgroup**, viz. **CSWM**.

- Elsewhere, the two types of isomorphism are much more constrained
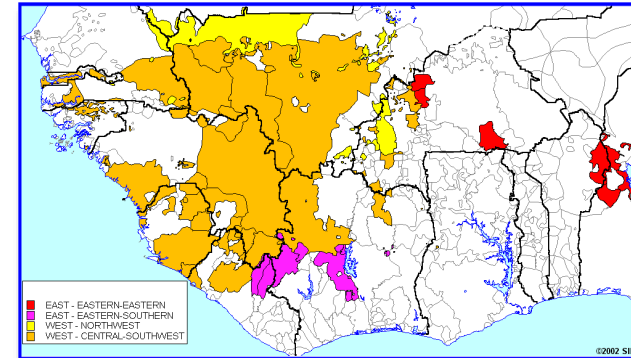
- Bamana, as an example of a CSWM language where both types of isomorphism are particularly prominent

- More constrained situation in the rest of Mande
  - typical types of V > N conversion
  - passive P-lability and what is exactly unusual about Mande languages

- Both types of isomorphism are **endpoints** of an evolution **of the same light verb construction** comparable to do-periphrasis in English.

Bamana (CSWM; Dumestre 2003; Vydrine 1999)

- ■ "verbo-nominaux", "neutrals": any V can be used as N, such as action nominal (while the reverse is not true)
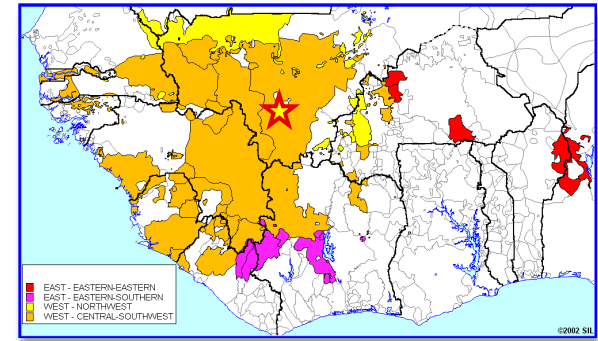
(1) *à*   *fɔ́*   *ká*   *dí*
3SG **say** QUAL⁺ be.nice
'It's easy to say.' (lit.: 'It's saying is easy')

(2) *à*   *tɛ́*   *fɔ́*   *bɔ́*
3SG IPFV⁻ **say** deserve
'There is no need to say it.' (lit.: 'It does not deserve saying')

(3) *táa*   *tɛ́*   *bèn*   *ń*   *mà*
go   IPFV⁻ suit 1SG on
'I am not ok with leaving.' (lit.: 'Going does not suit me')

(4) *ntòri* **fìli** *kójugu* *bɛ́* *à* *táa* *sánfɛ̀*
toad **throw** seriously IPFV⁺ 3SG make.go up
'Seriously throwing a toad will make it go up in to the air.'

(5) **fá** *sògo* *lá* *dón* *bɛ́* *nà*
fill meat with day IPFV⁺ come
'The day that you will fill up yourself with meat will come.'

(6) *kà* *í* *cɛ̀* *í* *fà* *síya* *lá,* **jɔ̀n** *fà* *lá* *dòn*
INF REFL deny REFL father tribe at **humiliate** father at IDCOP⁺
'To deny your father's tribe is to humiliate your father.'

- These action nominalizations do **not** have the **full behavioral potential of regular nouns**:
  - Ban on their use with nominal determiners, such as ART -^{L} or PL -*ẃ*
  - Restriction on their use in Identificational Construction [X *dòn*]

- Very many cases of V>N conversion as entity nominalizations:

  kúma '(vi) speak' > 'speech, things said'
  bàna '(vi) be, fall ill; (vt) make ill' > 'illness'
  dímin '(vi, vt) hurt' > 'pain'
  mùgu '(vi, vt) sprain (leg), dislocate (a joint)' > 'sprain, dislocation'
  dúmuni '(vt) feed' > 'food; meal; eating'

- Much fewer cases of N>V conversion:

  júfa 'corpse of an animal not slaughtered following the rites' (from Arabic *gifa* 'corpse') > '(vi) die, kick the bucket'
  búla 'laundry blue' (from French *bleu*) > '(vt) give a beating (give bruises)'
  dátusunu 'Datsun (a car brand)' > '(vt) give a Datsun car as a present'
  (productive model: [object X] > [give X as a present])

- There are also overt [V > N] NMLZ markers, such as:
  - NMLZ *-li / -ni* action nominalization:

    kúma '(vi) speak' ≅ 'speech, things said', *kúma-li* 'speech; speaking'

    táa '(vi) go, leave' ≅ 'going; departure', *táa-li* 'going'

    ɲègɛn '(vt) draw, paint' ≅ 'drawing, painting (object)', *ɲègɛn-ni* '(process, act of) drawing, painting'

  - INF *kà* (cf. example 6)

  - A range of specific entity NMLZ *-baga, -lan, -ya*, etc.

- V > N **conversion for entity NMLZ** is common but less rampant

  - Typically, V > N conversion gives result or product NMLZ:

    'die' > 'death' (rather than 'the late one')

    'give' > 'gift' (rather than 'giver; sponsor)

    'steal' > 'theft' (rather than 'thief')

  - Especially in NWM, V > N conversion may also give instrument NMLZ

    'grind' > 'grindstone'

    'go out' > 'gate, exit' (next to 'going out')

- **Entity NMLZ with agentive semantics through conversion** is exceptional for plain [V] conversion, but more common for [OV], [OVX] and [VX] constructions

    Tura (SM) *vɛ̋ sɩ̋ yɩ̋ ɓà* 'catch fish from water' > 'bird sp. (Anastomus lamelligerus)''

- V > N **conversion for action NMLZ** is usually **restricted to certain constructions** (one rarely speaks about "verbo-nominaux" in the descriptions)

  - O of a light verb in do-periphrasis style constructions

  - Modifier in Genitive constructions [GEN N_{HEAD}] (typical examples of N_{HEAD} are postpositions originating in nouns or nouns with a rather general semantics, such as 'thing', 'person', 'place', etc.)

  - Oblique X of a control matrix verb marked by a postposition

- All languages also have **overt NMLZ markers**: one or a few for [V > N] action NMLZ and a wider range for entity NMLZ

- **Overt [V > N] action** (and to a lesser extent also entity) **NMLZ markers** tend to have **different sources in WM and SEM**:

  - in SEM, action NMLZ go back to N_{HEAD} **in Genitive constructions** [GEN N_{HEAD}] (such as Tura *-yɛ̀* or *-dɛ̀ɛ̀*)

  - in WM, action NMLZ tend to go back to **a light V in do-periphrasis style constructions** (such as Bamana *-li/-ni)*

Bamana (CSWM; Dumestre 2003; Creissels 2007, 2012, 2014; Vydrine 1994:75-82)

- **Any V_T can be used as V_I** with a DECAUS or PASS-like meaning (while the reverse is not true) with optional oblique argument flagged by postposition *fɛ̀* (basic meaning is proximity in space)
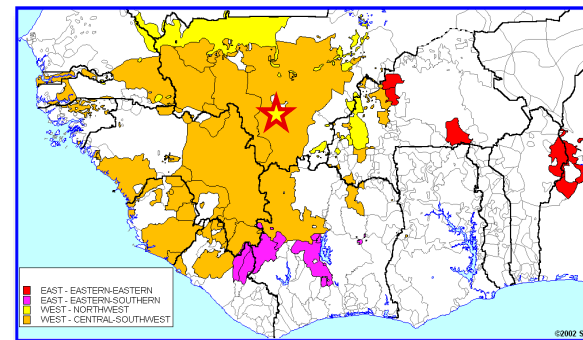
a. *Wùlu   yé   sògo   dún.*
   dog.DEF   PF.POS.TR   meat.DEF   eat
   'The dog has eaten the meat.'

PASS

e. *Sògo   dún-na   (wùlu   fɛ̀).*   f. *Sògo   má   dún   (wùlu   fɛ̀).*
   meat.DEF   eat-PF.POS.INTR   dog.DEF   by   meat.DEF   PF.NEG   eat   dog.DEF   by
   'The meat has been eaten (by the dog).'   'The meat has not been eaten (by the dog).'

Bamana (CSWM; Dumestre 2003; Creissels 2007, 2012, 2014; Vydrine 1994:75-82)

- Any V_T can be used as V_I with a DECAUS or PASS-like meaning (while the reverse is not true)

a. *Jòli*   *bɛ́na*   *sìmi*   *jóona.*   **DECAUS**
blood.DEF   FUT.POS coagulate   soon
'The blood will coagulate soon.'

b. *Fínyɛ*   *bɛ́na*   *jòli*   *sìmi*   *jóona.*
wind.DEF   FUT.POS blood.DEF   coagulate   soon
'The wind will coagulate the blood soon.'

Bamana (CSWM)

- Even when the meaning is PASS, the interpretation of the oblique flagged with *fɛ̀* is not necessarily agentive

(1a) *màraká-ẁ bɛ́ tìga ìn dán jóona*   PASS
  Soninke-PL IPFV$^+$ peanut this plant early
  'The Soninke plant this variety of peanut early in the season.'

(1b) *tìga ìn bɛ́ dán jóona (màraká-ẁ fɛ̀)*
  peanut this IPFV$^+$ plant early Soninke-PL PP
  'This variety of peanut is planted early in the season (by the Soninke / in the Soninke area = chez les Soninké).'

Bamana (CSWM)

- Sometimes, neither the interpretation of the argument structure nor that of the oblique flagged with *fɛ̀* are clear outside of a wider context

(1) *sòlimadén-ẁ   sègin-na   só   syéma   fɛ̀*
    initiated-PL   return-PFV$_I^+$ home initiation.caretaker   PP
    'The initiated returned home with (accompanied by) the initiation caretaker.'
    'The initiated were made to return home by the initiation caretaker.'

Bamana (CSWM)

- There are very few A-labile verbs.

- Across Mande, there are **very few A-labile verbs**.

- In most non-CSWM languages, **the range of P-labile V_T is significantly more limited**

- Many non-CSWM languages have **complex lexical semantic and TAMP types of restrictions** on P-labile use of V_T

- Most Mande languages do **not allow the use of oblique with agentive interpretation** with P-labile V_T when used as V_I or impose strong restrictions on its use and interpretation

- In a cross-Mande perspective, Mande PASS P-lability is **not a PASS "voice"** (argument structure preserving alternation with syntactic demotion of the agent argument).

- It is much more a **valency-decreasing argument-structure reinterpreting derivation**. The patient is promoted to the subject role and the agent is demoted and normally suppressed because the agent is unknown, irrelevant, not sufficiently agentive (e.g., does not control the action), or is simply non-existent.

- passive P-lability, as found in Mande, is said to be **typologically highly unusual** (cf. Letuchiy 2006, Creissels 2014)

- At least Letuchiy (2006) speaks about the rarity of **agentive** PASS P-lability, that is such passive P-lability whereby the agent can be, and often is, expressed:

  The man BUILD a house ≅ The house BUILD by the man

- However, in Mande we normally have **agentless** P-lability, which may have DECAUS and PASS interpretations

- The use of DECAUS forms as **agentless** PASS, i.e. in contexts where some agent must be present in the situation referred to but is not, and often cannot be expressed, is typologically well attested (cf. Creissels 2014:917-918)

  Le vin blanc se boit frais 'White wine is (to be) drunk cold'

  *Le vin blanc est bu frais

- **DECAUS P-lability** is also typologically common

- That is, the occasional use of DECAUS P-labile verbs as agentless PASS is **not particularly unusual** as such

- **What is unusual** (and what needs to be explained) is that in a subset of Mande languages (viz. SWCM) **virtually all V_T are P-labile**.

- Both the convergence of the two types of isomorphism itself and the fact that they are most prominent in the CSWM subgroup are **related phenomena**.

- They are both **endpoints** of an evolution **of the same light verb construction** comparable to do-periphrasis in English.
  - semantically: VFOC > ANTIP > DETR || NMLZ
  - formally: light V > bound suffix > stem alternation & irregular stem pairs > allomorphy resolution in favor of one the two stem forms

- The relevant light verb construction and start of these changes go back to **Proto-Mande**.

- Subgroups differ in **productivity and advancement of the changes**

- There are various **overt action NMLZ markers**, but none is reconstructible to Proto Mande

- V > N **conversion for action NMLZ** is basically **restricted to 2 types of constructions**

  - O of a light verb in do-periphrasis style constructions

  - Modifier in Genitive constructions [GEN N_{HEAD}] (typical examples of N_{HEAD} are postpositions originating in nouns or nouns with a rather general semantics, such as 'thing', 'person', 'place', etc.)

- The number of **P-labile V_T** is **limited**

- NWM languages (Soninke-Bozo, Bobo, Samogo) have at least **two layers of DETR morphology**, an old one and a new one (cf. Creissels 2012)

- Remarkably, both layers of DETR morphology also develop **action NMLZ** uses.

- The **new layer** originates in **do-periphrasis** construction with the verb *tin* 'do, make' (Creissels 2012):

  - Soninke (NWM) -*ndî* ANTIPASS (and related -*ndî* CAUS)

  - Mandinka (CSWM) –*rî* ANTIPASS action NMLZ (and related -*ndî* CAUS)

  - Bamana (CSWM) -*lî* action NMLZ

- The **old layer** is reconstructed by Creissels (2012) as Proto WM suffix ***-i*** which he relates to REFL pronoun *$\hat{i}$*

- The relation to the REFL pronoun is not plausible. To the very least, this relation would involve a violation of SOVX constituent order, which is extremely rigid across the family.

- It is more likely that just like the new layer, the **old layer** originated in a **do-periphrasis** construction

- **Besides DETR uses** mentioned by Creissels (2012), some of the markers of this old layer **also have action NMLZ uses** and **uses that involve O arguments**:

  - Soninke *-i* DETR (ANTIPASS, DECAUS, AUTOCAUS, REFL, PASS) & marks V_T when it incorporates its O

  - Bozo languages *< -i >* DETR (mostly ANTIPASS) & usually the same (occasionally marginally divergent) form of the V is used as action NMLZ and the "derivation base" (Blecke 1996), also for nominal compounds with O in the case of V_T

  - Bobo *< -i >* DETR (ANTIPASS, and at least DECAUS and PASS) & the same form of the V is used in nominal compounds, also for nominal compounds with O in the case of V_T (e.g.: *fuga* 'trap, catch (vt)' *> fìgɛ* (vi): *gbègi-fìgɛ-pérɛ̃nɔ̀* 'dog leash' (dogs-catch\DETR-rope)) (Morse 1976; LeBris & Prost 1981)

  - Dzuun *-i* action NMLZ (Solomiac 2007)

- In many languages, the DETR & NMLZ $<-i>$ has fused with many stems resulting in V_T -V_I **stem alternations**, often **synchronically opaque**

- This **irregular allomorphy is resolved** in favor of one of the two stem forms, V_T or V_I.

- Interestingly, **the surviving V_I allomorph inherits both V_I & V_T** usages as a **P-labile V_T**

  Creissels & Dramé (2015:9) about Soninke: "the vast majority of P-labile verbs end with *i* or *e*, and conversely, it seems that all the verbs that end with *i* or *e* and can be used transitively are P-labile, which raises the question whether this is really P-lability, or perhaps rather vacuous detransitivization, since Soninke has a detransitivizing suffix *-i*."

- Interestingly, the surviving V_I allomorph inherits both V_T & V_I usages as a P-labile V_T

- It is likely that in CSWM languages (unlike the typical situation in Soninke), the same (i.e. inheritance of both V_T & V_I usages as a P-labile V_T) also happened when it was V_T allomorph that survived.

- This virtually made all verbs P-labile V_T in CSWM

- Parallel to this, the same allomorph inherited action NMLZ usage of the earlier V_I allomorph

- $V \cong N$ & $V_T \cong V_I$

- Interestingly, we also find **a few traces of the same marker <-i> in SEM**, the other major branch of Mande:

  - Gban (SM) *yằ* '(vt) put down, make sit down' vs. *yὲ̀* '(vi) sit down'

  - Gban (SM) *nɔ̀* '(vt) give smth (to smb)' vs. *nù* '(vi) come'

  - Tura (SM) *ɓɛ́* '(n) wound' vs. Mano (SM) *ɓá* '(n) wound; (vi) get covered with wounds (about body)'

- The traces in SEM are **much less numerous** than in WM

- So far, the traces are **only rarely nouns**, suggesting that either NLMZ use of <-i> was less common in Proto SEM or rather these NMLZ are later independent cases of V>N conversion following the model of entity NMLZ

- Recall, that in SEM, action NMLZ go back to N_{HEAD} **in Genitive constructions** [GEN N_{HEAD}], while in WM to light verbs

- It is plausible that just like the new layer of DETR&NMLZ markers, the old layer <-i> originated in a do-periphrasis construction

- The possible source is the verb *ɲà 'accomplish, do'

  Soninke (NWM) ɲá '(vt) do; (vi) happen', ɲá.má '(vt) finish, achieve, accomplish, destroy' (vi: ɲé.mê), Souther San of Yaba (EM) ɲā 'do', ɲá 'finish', Beng (SM) ɲã̄ '(vi) finish'