MADA VERBS

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N.B. THE PRESENT PRINTOUT IS IN MADA ORTHOGRAPHY, NOT IPA

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1. The Mada people and their language: Location, Origin and Classification

1.1 Location and Name

The Mada people live primarily in the region between Anjida and Akwanga on and around the road leading from Fadan Karshe to Akwanga in Plateau State, Central Nigeria. Their numbers are hard to estimate but probably now exceed 50,000.

Mada has been classified as part of the Plateau language group (Greenberg 1963) and Williamson (1971), Hansford *et al.* (1976), Gerhardt (1989) and Crozier and Blench (1992) have followed this view. Mada was put together with Ninzam, Ayu, Che, Ninkyop and some other languages as part of Plateau IV. More recently, this group has been christened 'Ninzic' in the light of the numerous languages with a –nin- element in their ethnonym.

The principal modern work on the Mada language is Price (1989)[1]. This work covers the phonology and orthography of Mada spoken in Rija, a village central to Mada country and the dialect chosen for New Testament translation. Mada has an extensive dialect network and there is quite a high level of variation from village to village. Price (1989) gives a valuable comparative wordlist in different dialects, which shows that at least some of them have markedly different phonology from Rija Mada and probably have been influenced by Eggon.

1.2 The Sound System of Mada and its Orthography

1.2.1 Phonology

Rija Mada has twenty consonant phonemes:

	Labial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Velar	Labio-velar
Plosives vls	p		t	k	kp
vd	b		d	g	gb
Fricatives vls		f	s		
vd		v	z		
Affricates vls			ts		
vd			dz		
Nasals	m		n	ŋ	
Laterals			l		
Vibrants			r		
Approximants vls					ʍ
Approximants vd			y		w

There are eight vowel phonemes:

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Close-Mid	e	ə	o
Open-Mid	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

but five corresponding nasalised vowels;

	Front	Central	Back
Close	ĩ		ũ
Open-Mid	ɛ̃		ɔ̃
Open		ã	

In the original orthography of 1985, the symbol ñ was adopted to mark nasalisation following a vowel, but this has been simplified to n. Thus ã is written 'an'.

Mada has three level tones and a rising and falling tone. The orthography marks tones as follows:
high tone is unmarked
/ˉ/ mid tone is shown by a macron
/ˋ/ for a low tone
/^/ for a falling tone
/ˇ/ for the rising tone.

Although appropriate for an orthography this is confusing to external readers and the following substitution has been made in this paper.

/´/ for a high tone
/ / mid tone is unmarked

1.2.2 Orthographic conventions

The Mada alphabet is near-phonemic and is made up of thirty-four letters. These are arranged as follows:

a, b, c, e, ɛ, ə, d, f, g, gb, h, hw, i, j, k, kp, l, m, n, ng, ny, o, ɔ, p, r, s, sh, t, u, v, w y, z, zh.

These correspond to the IPA symbols used in the phonology via the following conventions;

ng	ŋ	
c	ts^y	
j	dz^y	
sh	s^y	
ny	ŋ^y	
h	ʍ	before o ɔ u
hw	ʍ	elsewhere

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2. Verbs and verb-classes

2.1 General

The Mada verbal system is one of its most complex features and one which is the most difficult to describe and capture in a dictionary. Verbs in general have tonal morphology, and changes in tense/aspect and number may be signalled only by tone. Verbs fall into a number of broad classes, but there are numerous exceptions and the class does not appear to be predictable from the citation form. Thus each verb needs to be marked independently.

2.2 Morphology

2.2.1 Verb extensions

Mada verbs are predominantly CV(n/r) and longer forms are more likely to be evidence of fossil compounds than to contain traces of a lost system of verbal extensions. Nonetheless, there are a few examples of verbs that may exhibit such fragments. Table 1 shows what may be a resultative;

Table 1. Verbs exhibiting traces of verbal extensions

tV- suffix	Gloss	Resultative
kyō	to gather	
kyōte	to be gathered	
mə̄r	to chase	
mə̀rtu	to return	
rīn	to extinguish fire	**ywē rīn glo ə tàr** go extinguish the-fire in the-room
rintu	to go out of sight	**nggə̄ kyɛn və̄lɔn mū mâ ndē gu rintu** I looked-at man that until long-time he went-out-of-sight
-m- infix		
shāmān	to be present	to have been fetched and so present
shàn	to fetch	

Table 2 shows some examples of verbs exhibiting reduplication. The exact meaning is still to be determined.

Table 2. Verbs exhibiting reduplication

Redup.	Gloss	Comitative
là	to help	**tekə, yə̀ gu sē bə̄ yə, lə sē yə̀ la man fə̀tsɛ̀** ... thinking, which he is with it, will be of helping then small
ləla	to reciprocate	
kūci	to be first	
kūcici	to lead, to go ahead	**gu kucici nyə̀** he lead came (came first)

2.2.2 Plurality

Mada has only a small number of true plural verbs, marking number in the subject or object of the verb. The plurals are always suppletives (Table 3);

Table 3. Mada plural verbs

s.	pl.	gloss	examples
bān	**vu**	to follow	**yə̄ gu lə dān mə̄nē tswē yə̄ bə lə ban, mə̄nē ywā** RELp 3s FUT tell people place 3p FUT follow people two
bān	**vu**	to take	**Ban yə̄ nə̄ nggə̀**. Take it give me.
kyu	**tsú**	to die	**kyu də̄ te ə kə̄ nə̄mān nzɛn** death if occur at house someone now
ngūn	**nlywe**	to kill	
ywà	**sar**	to slaughter	

2.3 Tense/Aspect

The tense/aspect system of Mada is bound up with the pronominal system, already described in §3.3. The system for intransitive verbs can be summarised as follows (Table 4);

Table 4. The Mada verb phrase in intransitive constructions

T/A	Subject	TAM	Pronoun Recapitulation	Verb	cf. Table
Present continuous	+	**là**	—	concord with subject	Table 5
Future	+	**lə**	—	concord with subject	
Future continuous	+	**lə sə̀**	—	concord with subject	
Uncompleted past	+	**sə̀**	—	concord with subject	**Table 6**
Conditional	+	**də̀**	—	concord with subject	
Completed past	+	**—**	—	concord with subject	

Of these, **sə** and **də** show tonal concord with the number of the subject, while the other TAMs remain invariant.

Table 5 shows a typical present tense marked by the auxiliary **là;**

Table 5. Mada present tense subject pronouns

	pron.	am	writing
2s	**wə**	**là**	**cǎr**
3s	**gu**	**là**	**cǎr**
2p	**gyə**	**là**	**cǎr**
1s	**ŋgə**	**là**	**cár**
1p	**tə**	**là**	**cár**
3p	**bə́**	**là**	**cár**

Mada can express future action in two ways, either;

ŋgə	**lə**	**cár**
I	will	write

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or;

ŋgə	lə	sə̀	cár
I	will	be	write

In both cases, the tone-pattern on the verb follows the pronominal pattern outlined above and the TAM is invariant.

nggə̄	**tse**	**nggǎgyū**
I	beat	dog

However, in the case of the uncompleted past and the conditional, the auxiliaries undergo tone-changes that reflect the verb-stem tone-changes. Table 6 shows the paradigm for the uncompleted past;

Table 6. Mada uncompleted past paradigm: monosyllabic stem

	pron.	was	writing
2s	**wə**	**sə̀**	**cǎr**
3s	**gu**	**sə̀**	**cǎr**
2p	**gyə**	**sə̀**	**cǎr**
1s	**ŋgə**	**sə̄**	**cár**
1p	**tə**	**sə̄**	**cár**
3p	**bə́**	**sə̄**	**cár**

In the case of a polysyllabic stem, comparable changes occur on the second syllable of the verb-stem (Table 7);

Table 7. Mada uncompleted past paradigm: polysyllabic stem

	pron.	was	escaping
2s	**wə**	**sə̀**	**gbojùn**
3s	**gu**	**sə̀**	**gbojùn**
2p	**gyə**	**sə̀**	**gbojùn**
1s	**ŋgə**	**sə**	**gbojún**
1p	**tə**	**sə**	**gbojún**
3p	**bə́**	**sə**	**gbojún**

The conditional, which inserts the auxiliary **də** between pronoun and verb, follows the same pattern of mimicking the verb-stem tones (Table 8). Thus;

Table 8. Mada conditional

ŋgə	**də**	**cár**
I	if	write
wə	**də̀**	**cǎr**
You	if	write

Table 9 shows the transitive system as far as it is presently understood.

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Table 9. The Mada verb phrase in transitive constructions

T/A	Subject	Object	TAM	Verb	Pronoun Recapitulation	cf. Table
Present continuous	+	+	là	invariant	+	
Future	+					
Future continuous	+					
Uncompleted past	+					
Conditional	+					
Completed past	+	+	—	invariant		

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