

## Focal aspects in the Lelemi verb system

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In our presentation we will outline the verb system of Lelemi and concentrate on certain “focal” aspects which are of primary interest to us. Lelemi has two TAMP paradigms: one constituting the so-called “simple tenses”, the other the so-called “relative tenses” (Allan 1973), although not every “simple tense” has a counterpart in the “relative tenses”. The simple paradigm is formed by subject prefixes (prefixed pronouns for 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person and noun class pronouns for 3<sup>rd</sup> persons) and the verb form whereas the relative paradigm is build up by the obligatory use of an external subject noun, an invariable verb prefix, and the verb form. While the simple paradigm is used in quite a lot of syntactic environments the relative paradigm only shows up in relative clauses with the subject being the head as well as in subject and sentence focus constructions including questions concerning the subject.

We will show some interesting interactions between the grammatical expression of focus and the verb system and sketch the grammaticalisation path of the morpheme *nà*.

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## 1. Lelemi and the Balemi

### 1.1 General information

Lelemi is a language spoken by the Balemi people in about 17 communities near the Ghana-Togo border, in the Buem area (cf. map of Buem Area in the appendix (Höftmann & Berger 1965: 141). In 2003 it was spoken by about 49.000 speakers (Gordon 2005).

Lelemi belongs to the na-Togo group of the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages within the Kwa language group of the Niger-Congo family. (cf. Heine 1969, Heine & Nurse 2000).

Niger Congo – Volta-Congo – Benue-Kwa – Kwa:



Our data presented here was mainly elicited by ourselves with Lelemi speakers from Baglo and Borada during our field research in 2004 and a guest invitation in 2005. Only at some points we are relying to two grammatical sketches about Lelemi (Höftmann 1971, Allan 1973).

### History of research:

- older literature concerning GTM languages: wordlists, short grammatical sketches (cf. Christaller 1898, 1895, Seidel 1898, Funke 1909, 1910, 1911, 1920, Westermann 1922, 1933, ...)
- discussion of their genetic relationship to other language groups in the area and of their internal organisation (Westermann 1905, 1922, 1927, 1940, Westermann/Bryan 1952, Migeod 1911, Struck 1912, Johnston 1919/22, Greenberg 1954, Blench 2001...)
- **for Lelemi merely:**
  - 1910 Westermann, D. Die Lefanasprache in Togo. Sprachstudien aus dem Gebiet der Sudansprachen. In *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 13: 39-57. Berlin: Reimer.  
(phonetics, grammatical scetch, proverbs, glossar Lelemi-German)
  - 1911 Migeod, F.W.H. The languages of West Africa. 2 vols. London.  
(some numbers, collection of 101 sentences in Lelemi)
  - 1952 Bertho, J. Les dialectes du Moyen-Togo: Lelemi-Lefana. *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique noire* 14:1046-1107.  
(with comparative wordlist)

- 1966 Höftmann, H. Die Nominalklassen im Lelemi. *Neue Afrikanistische Studien*. J: Lukas (ed.). Hamburger Beiträge zur Afrika-Kunde, vol. 5: 100-108. Hamburg.  
(description auf nominal system, incl. suffixes, no description of class concordance)
- 1971 Höftmann, Hildegard. *The structure of Lelemi language*. Leipzig: VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie.  
(short introduction of phonology, structure of nominals and verbs, sentence structure, with texts and glossar)
- 1973 Allan, Edward Jay. *A grammar of Buem: The Lelemi language*, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London: PhD Thesis.  
(detailed grammar of Lelemi)
- 1967 Kropp, Mary E. Comparative African Wordlists No. 3. *Lefana, Akpafu and Avatime with English Gloss*. Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana.  
(vocabulary, short phonological and grammatical notes)

According to the Ethnologue (Gordon 2005) (and our observations during the field research in the area, too) the language is vigorous and used in all domains of every day life, even though one can observe some incorrect use of the concord system in the speech of younger people. There is some bilingualism with Twi (Northern communities) and Ewe (Southern communities) (Gordon 2005, Höftmann 1971, Ring 1982).

Ethnologue (Gordon 2005): “*Language development* Literacy rate in first language: below 1%. Literacy rate in second language: 5% to 15%. NT: 1995.”

(Some material published by Rev. A.O. Dogli, 1928/9 and 1957)

## 1.2 Typological traits

- **word order**: strict SVO, possessor - possessum
- **vowel system**: 7 phonemic vowels (Allan states 9 underlying vowels) – vowel harmony, i.e. two sets of vowels differentiated by the tongue position (+/-ATR) which works on the level of the word  
radical [-ATR] vowels *a, ε, ɔ* cause open vowels *a, ε, ɔ* (in prefixes)  
radical [+ATR] vowels *e, o* cause closed vowels *u, e, i* (in prefixes)
- **tone** language with tones having lexical and grammatical function: number of tonemes unclear due to inexistent systematic tone analysis – there are five surface tones: H, M, L, LH, HL
- Complex **noun class system** marked by prefixes

noun class prefixes and allomorphs (Höftmann 1971)

a-, e-  
ɔ-, o-  
ba-, be-  
ka-, ke-  
kɔ-, ku-  
le-, li-, le-  
m-,n-

“Regarding the differentiation of number, there is no opposition between pairs of classes to be found. [...] Concerning the meaning of these prefixes it is obvious that only a classification in two main groups is possible: one “animate group” (persons and animals) and one “inanimate group”.” (Höftmann 1972: 37)

Noun class system (Allan 1973), in comparison to Heine 1968)

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

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

- Höftmann (1971: 38-40) and Allan (1973: 117 ff.) identify some suffixes which are partly borrowed
- Subject concord is expressed on the verb

## 2. Lelemi verb system

### 2.1 Earlier treatments of the verb system

#### Höftmann 1971:

- very rough description: basic syntax of verbal predicates, remarks on probable functions of a few verbal suffixes, examples with a few auxiliaries, remarks on relevance of grammatical tone (on auxiliary, verb) (p. 33, including table)

#### Allan 1973:

- systematic description of the verbal aspect system on the basis of theories of the 60s and early 70s
- verb consists of : “finite verb prefix” + verb stem (p. 236)
- finite verb prefix: “verbal concord marker” or “relative marker” [of subject] + “tense marker” + “optional modality node”

→ i.e. it combines subject agreement and TAMP

- referents expressed by noun class concord prefixes (p. 239) on the verb
- distinguishes between:
  1. “Simple and Relative tenses”: Past, Past Progressive, Present, Present Progressive, Future, Subjunctive, Imperative (p. 242ff.) = tense marker
  2. “Aspect”: negation, certainty, customary action, motion away from the speaker, motion towards the speaker = modality node
- identifies 5 verb suffixes which are no longer productive (-A: stative verbs; -I; -O, -LÀ, -LI/-MI/-NI) (p. 246f.), suffix vowel harmonizes

## 2.2 Our analysis

Structure of the verb and the verb phrase

- order of verb elements
  - o first and obligatory: subject prefix
  - o second and +/- overt: TAMP
  - o third: verb (form)
  - o object in nominal or pronominal form follows the verb
- aspectual system
- grammatical verb tone: can occur on all three parts of the verb phrase – subject prefix, TAMP, verb stem
- we don't regard further specification of the verb here which can be added to the aspectual forms: certainty, customary action, motion away from the speaker, motion towards the speaker (Allan 1973: 291 ff.)

### 2.2.1 Simple paradigm in affirmation

#### (a) Perfective

- Allan's „*simple past*“
- perfective of dynamic verbs with temporal past interpretation

(1) ðnà̀nà òŋvò ú-tì ù̀lòkù̀bì òŋvò ù̀ŋwè̀nìjì.  
man DEM 3sg.PF-take girl DEM pen  
'The man took the girl's pen.'<sup>1</sup>

(2) bé-yè èjìbì.  
3pl.PF-buy fruits  
'They bought fruits.'

(3) kāmáđì ní, lí-nù kòkùn kóđì.  
yesterday TP, 1sg.PF-hear noise INDEF  
'Yesterday, I heard some noise.'

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<sup>1</sup> The tonal marking in our examples is as follows: (ˊ) high tone, (ˋ) low tone, (ˉ) mid tone, (ˆ) falling tone.

**(b) Stative – Perfective?**

- Allan's „*simple present*“ (of verbs of state)
- with stative verbs and verbs describing one's physical position (only about three dozen of verbs)
- possibly complementary used to form (a)

(4) n̄-jī                      ká            sūè kū    ágnès bé-yè            tòyòtá kū    bēns.  
1sg.STAT-know COMPL Sue CNJ Agnes 3pl.PF-buy Toyota CNJ Benz.  
'I know that Sue and Agnes bought a Toyota and a Benz.'

(5) dīī            nī,    ùlòkú    ódī    ó-cà  
some.time TP    woman INDEF 3sg.PF-exist

nà    ùlòkú    ɔ́mɛ́nī    ù-bō                      bébì    ètè.  
CNJ woman DEM 3sg.STAT-have children three  
'Once there was a woman and this woman had three children.'

**(c) Unclear function**

- = Allan's „*past progressive*“
- Allan (1097: 256): „... the affirmative Past Progressive asserts that the past action has effects continuing till some subsequent time, usually the present.“,
- it does not assert a punctual event in the past, it does not display a special form for negation but uses instead the negative form of the perfective, and it doesn't display a relative form of its own
- we suggest that what we are dealing with here is probably not a tense-aspect-differentiation but rather another category linked to IS, possibly to denote focus on the verb – this still needs further investigation

(6) lɛ̀ɛ-ɸ̀̀            líbí    lém̀̀    lí-tè            mīnà    ɔ̀̀tì.  
1sg.??-wash car DEM CL.PF-give 1sg.poss father  
'I have washed the car for my father.'

**(d) Imperfective**

- Allan's „*simple present progressive*“
- used to express events in the present as well as habitual, momentary actions (for dynamic verbs)

(7) m̀̀̀ɔ̀̀-ɸ̀̀̀            líbí    lém̀̀    lí-tè            mīnà    ɔ̀̀tì.  
1sg.IPF-wash car DEM CL.PF-give 1sg.poss father  
'I'm washing the car for my father.'

**(e) Future**

- Allan's „*(simple) future*“
- formed by subject prefix + lu/du? + bo (probably of verbal origin “to come”) + VN (prefix BO) > nominal periphrase

- (8) ð-dūbò bòḍī.  
3sg.FUT INF.eat  
'He will eat.'

**(f) Subjunctive**

- Allan's „*subjunctive*“
- clearly modal defined > (possibly with imperative)

- (9) mò-bòmōḍī ñ-ñiyà lèlèmì lèḍī.  
1sg.IPF-try 1sg.SUBJ-learn Lelemi language  
'I'm trying to learn the Lelemi language.' (Allan 1973: 271)<sup>2</sup>

→ There are different pronominal forms for 1<sup>st</sup> person singular used in different aspects: *LE*, *N*, *MO* → which one of them can be seen as basis / original?

- We suggest it is the nasal due to his frequent occurrence.
- What about 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronouns in neighbouring languages?

**2.2.2 Simple paradigm in negation**

- in some aspects changes of 1sg pronoun (no explanation at the moment)
- two basic negation markers (TA, (L)A)
- optional tonal distinction between negation of IPF and FUT

**(a) negative perfective**

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

**(b) negative stative**

- (11) lèè-ñī kàbá kāménī.  
1sg.STAT.NEG-know family DEM  
'I do not know this family.'

- (12) óòwo, ðò-dī ùbìḍī nà ú-yè èjībì ú-tè.  
no, 3sg.STAT.NEG-be.qual child CNJ 3sg.PF-buy fruits 3sg.PF-give  
'It is not her child that she bought the fruits for.'

**(c) negative imperfective**

- (13) nàà-kāñī ká ...  
1sg.IPF.NEG-think COMPL  
'I don't think that ...'

<sup>2</sup> In this and subsequent examples taken from Allan 1973 we have adapted the tonal marking. As far as the first verb form of this example is concerned, following the glosses of Allan, the subject prefix should have a long vowel, otherwise it has to be treated as relative form.

- (14) óòwo, bèlòkúbì ínyò bà-là-kā òkū.  
no, girls two 3pl.IPF-NEG-read book  
'No, the two girls are not reading a book.'

**(d) negative future**

- (15) ù-là-dī.  
3sg.FUT-NEG-eat  
'He will not eat.'
- (16) è-lé-bō kùdí kùdí lénò.  
2sg.FUT-NEG-come never also  
'You will never come again.'

**(e) negative subjunctive**

- (17) ù-tà-dù.  
3sg.FUT-NEG-kill/bite  
'He should not kill/bite.' (Allan 1973: 314)<sup>3</sup>

Synchronically, there is no hint which supports a verbal origin of the negation element (for instance, no other (new) subject agreement at the main verb, no VN as main verb).

**2.2.3 Relative paradigm in affirmation**

- no subject agreement
- obligatory: nominal subject or disjunct pronoun

**(a) Relative Perfective**

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

**(b) Relative Stative**

- (20) 'Whose child has the ticket?'  
mīnà òkpàná ùbīdī m-bō tīkèfī ómò.  
1sg.poss friend child REL.STAT-have ticket DEM  
'My friend's child has the ticket.'

<sup>3</sup> "The paradigms for Mid and Low tone verbs are identical; ambiguities are resolved by the context." (Allan 1973: 314)

**(c) Relative Imperfective**

(21) ùcúfī óní m̀-̀nū bècúfī lèl̀ ìṅv̀ ñí ...  
 person CL.MI REL.IPF-look people on DEM TP  
 ‘The person who is looking for the people ...’ (=stewardess)

(22) bí m̀-̀lē mé?  
 what REL.IPF-happen here  
 ‘What is happening here?’

(23) ébí ánỳ ù m̀-̀cúī nā ùl̀ ñt̀.  
 car two REL.IPF-burn in road middle  
 ‘Two cars are burning in the middle of the road.’

**(d) Relative Future**

(24) òpīà ǹ-̀dū ònà̀ òm̀.  
 spear REL.FUT-kill man DEM  
 ‘It’s a spear that will kill that man.’ (Allan 1973: 331)

The pronoun of 1<sup>st</sup> person singular of the simple paradigm seems to be used in most cases in order to fill the gap of the syntactical necessary subject prefix. Generally (affirmative) REL is characterised by the obligatory spelling out of the external subject position and, contrary to the simple paradigm, with the absence of agreement on the subject prefix.

**2.2.4 Relative paradigm in negation**

- combination of subject prefix from affirmative relative and negative marker from simple negative (exception: negative relative IPF – subject prefix MO doesn’t seem to be allowed in negation)
- no data for relative “Perfective” with stative verbs in Allan (1973)

**(a) Negative Relative Perfective**

(25) ó-̀dī nā bār óní ná-tá-̀ k̀yē kēm̀.  
 3Sg.PF-eat in bar CL.MI REL.PF-NEG-be\_ costage price inside  
 ‘She ate in a cheap restaurant.’

**(b) Negative Relative Imperfective**

(26) búb̀ bí ǹ-̀sā ù-̀b̀ álákpá éné áṅv̀.  
 INF.have what REL.NEG.IPF-finish 3sg.STAT-have thing four there.Q  
 ‘Does he has four things?’ (lit: What does not get finished he has four things there?)

**(c) Negative Relative Future**

(27) l̀pīà ǹ-̀d̀ ònà̀ òm̀.  
 spears REL.FUT.NEG-kill man DEM  
 ‘Spears won’t kill that man.’ (Allan 1973: 332)

### 2.2.5 Summary<sup>4</sup>

Simple	Affirmation					Negation				
	LEX <sub>Subj</sub>	PRO <sub>Subj</sub> <sup>-</sup>	TAMP-	stem		LEX <sub>Subj</sub>	PRO <sub>Subj</sub> <sup>-</sup>	TAMP-	stem	
Perfective	(X)	LÉ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ó ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...		(low)		(X)	Ñ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ò ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...	TÁ <sub>1</sub>	(identical with lexical verb tone)	
Perfective? „Stative“	(X)	N ( <i>1sg</i> ) O ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ... (identical to lexical verb tone)		(identical to tone of 1 <sup>st</sup> syllable of the verb)		(X)	LÈ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ò ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...	: (low)	(mid)	
unclear	(X)	LÉ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ó ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...	: (identical to tone of 1 <sup>st</sup> syllable of the verb)	(identical to tone of 1 <sup>st</sup> syllable of the verb)						
Imperfective	(X)	MÒ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ò ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...	: (opposite to lexical verb tone)	(identical to lexical verb tone)		(X)	Ñ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ò ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...	(L)A <sub>(1)</sub> (opposite to lexical verb tone)	(identical with lexical verb tone)	
Future	(X)	Ñ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ò ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...	(L)Ū	(B)Ò	+VN (with lexical verb tone)	(X)	Ñ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ò ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...	(L)A <sub>(2)</sub> (identical to tone of 1 <sup>st</sup> syllable of the verb)	(opposite to lexical verb tone)	
Subjunctive	(X)	LÈ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ò ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...		(opposite to lexical verb tone)		(X)	LÈ ( <i>1sg</i> ) Ò ( <i>3sg, cll</i> ) ...	TÀ <sub>2</sub>	(low)	

<sup>4</sup> Concerning the marking of tones in the table we follow for the moment Allan 1973, who claims that lexically there are only mid and low tones on the verb stem.

Relative	Affirmation					Negation				
	LEX <sub>Subj</sub>	PRO <sub>Subj</sub> <sup>-</sup>	TAMP-	stem		LEX <sub>Subj</sub>	PRO <sub>Subj</sub> <sup>-</sup>	TAMP-	stem	
Perfective	X	NÁ < CNJ		(opposite to lexical verb tone)		X	NÁ < CNJ	TÁ <sub>1</sub>	(opposite to lexical verb tone)	
Perfective? „Stative“	X	N < Isg (identical to lexical verb tone)		(identical to tone of 1 <sup>st</sup> syllable of the verb)		X	?	?		
?										
Imperfective	X	MÒ < Isg		(identical to lexical verb tone)		X	Ñ < Isg	(L)A <sub>(1)</sub> (opposite to tone of 1 <sup>st</sup> syllable of the verb)	(identical to lexical verb tone)	
Future	X	N < Isg	(L)Û	(B)Ò (identical to lexical verb tone)	(+VN / verb?)	X	Ñ < Isg	(L)A <sub>(2)</sub> (identical to tone of 1 <sup>st</sup> syllable of the verb)	(opposite to lexical verb tone)	
Subjunctive										

## 2.3 Dichotomy of simple and relative paradigms - summary

major syntactic difference between “simple” vs. “relative” TAMP:

- simple paradigm is always encoded **on the verb** by a prefix (irrespective of existence of preverbal lexical subject constituents)  
→ full **verb-internal** subject agreement paradigm
- relative paradigm is always encoded **before the verb** by a lexical subject constituent – an invariable verb prefix fills the gap at the verb, often constituted by a generalized 1sg pronominal form, sometimes by a clausal conjunction.  
→ **verb-external** encoding

## 3. The relative paradigm

### 3.1 Distribution of the relative paradigm

- Allan concerning relative forms (p. 324ff.) mentions that  
“In addition to their use in “same-subject” relative clauses [i.e. in sentences where the subject of the relative clause is also its head – AS, IF] relative verb forms are used to express emphasis, generalizations, historical facts, or statements of habitual or customary action”.
- > he doesn’t offer any linguistic explanation
- > our data confirms only the occurrence concerning the relative clause with the subject as head and the occurrence concerning focal subjects incl. wh-interrogatives

#### (1) First occurrence: “same subject relative clauses”

Comparing restrictive relative clauses with subject respectively non-subject head:

Common component in both types of relative constructions is the determination of the relativised element by an identifier pronominal form that consists of a noun class concord for the preceding relativised noun and morpheme *-ní*. If the subject is relativised a “relative” TAMP form is used, i.e. the TAMP form with invariable prefix at the verb. If a non-subject constituent is relativised the simple TAMP verb form, i.e. including subject prefix, occurs.

Subject restrictive relative clause

(28) èbùò ū-nyē.

animal 3sg.STAT-stand  
‘There is an animal there,

ńzù èbùò óní n̄-nyē v̄ ò-ḍì ònàànjúé.  
but animal CL.NI REL.STAT-stand there 3sg-be cattle  
but the kind of animal that is over there is a cattle.’

Non-Subject restrictive relative clause

(29) òklámá óḡvò ó-ḍū trouzis óní ònàabì óḡvò ó-cà.

dog DEM 3sg.IPF-bite trousers CL.NI boy DEM 3sg.PF-wear  
‘The dog bites the trousers which the boy wears.’



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

ú-tì      ū-sàlá-kù.  
3sg.PF-take 3sg.PF-go\_with  
'He SENT it.'

- (36) Did the woman buy fruits?

ńń, ú-yè.  
yes, 3sg.PF-buy  
'Yes, she DID.'

*ex-situ* non-subject focus (non-canonical, optional use of clausal conjunction *nà*)

The morphological coding device for *ex-situ* non-subject focus constructions consists of optional morpheme *nà* postponed to the focussed constituent. Here, the simple paradigm is used.

- (37) àkábí áwōdí (nà) ùlòkú ómò ó-dì.  
beans raw (CNJ) woman DEM 3sg.PF-eat  
'The woman ate RAW BEANS.'

- (38) S: 'The boy is eating a banana.'

A: kùtú (nà) ònàabì ómò òḡ-dì.  
orange (CNJ) boy DEM 3sg.IPF-eat  
'The boy is eating an ORANGE.'

- (39) 'Did she buy the bananas?'

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

The simple paradigm seems to be used everywhere else: in main as well as in subordinated clauses, i.e. in several syntactic environments.

The relative paradigm, on the one hand, is bound to the subject but on the other hand not every subject triggers this paradigm. We conclude that the relative paradigm is not required just by the syntactic subject function but by (additional) information structural considerations.

### 3.2 Information structure and the relative paradigm

Why is the subject treated in some environments in a special way such as to require the relative paradigm?

Our hypothesis:

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

⇒ Canonical sentences make use of the simple paradigm, i.e. they have a topic-comment structure.

- ⇒ Within topic-comment structure the focus is situated within the comment (cf. object *in-situ* focus).
- ⇒ If the focus lies outside the comment and the sentence-initial subject is involved (subject focus, sentence focus) then the non-canonical sentence with relative paradigm is used.
- ⇒ On the other hand, if the focus is on a non-subject constituent in sentence-initial position the construction with clausal conjunction *nà* and the simple paradigm (cf. non-subject *ex-situ* focus) is used.

In sentences with a non-topical subject the predicate is encoded as relative clause, however, just as an appositional relative clause without the “identifier” pronoun *X-ni*.

→ use of same relative paradigm in same subject relative clauses, wh-questions for the subject, subject (and sentence) focus

### 3.3 Grammaticalization of clausal conjunction

An element *na*<sup>6</sup> occurs in different environments - on first sight with different functions:

1. it occurs as clausal conjunction *nà*, used with sequential events (“and (then)”) (ex. 40)
2. in *ex-situ* NSF, *nà* occurs at the beginning of the non-focal part of the sentence (Allan “emphasis”) (cf. examples (32, 37-39))
3. it occurs within the relative paradigm in the perfective (affirmative and negative), here, however, with deviant high tone *ná* (cf. examples 31, 33)

We claim that the origin of the morpheme in all these environments is always the same, namely the clausal conjunction.

(40) ‘The youngest child went ...’

*nà*    *ū-tī*                      *ùlū*    *gèè*    *ómò*.  
 CNJ 3sg.STAT-take road right DEM  
 ‘and he took the right road.’

In ex. (40) the use of *nà* as conjunction is evident. In the *ex-situ* non-subject focus constructions (ex. (37) to (39)) the non-focal clause is formally completely identical with the narrative clause shown in (40). Accordingly morpheme *nà* in both functions is considered a conjunction by us.

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

CNJ	→	Subject Prefix in Relative Perfective
<i>nà</i>		<i>ná</i> (← <i>nà</i> + ´)

<sup>6</sup> It is quite possible that this morpheme might be borrowed from Akan.

#### 4. Conclusion

We have shown that Lelemi

- has a similar dichotomy in the verb system as reported for several West African languages from different language groups (Hausa, Buli, Fulbe, etc.)
- the relative paradigm is restricted to subject related constructions and concerns:  
(1) relative sentences with subject as head,  
(2) wh-questions asking for the subject,  
(3) constructions including the subject within the focus domain (subject or sentence focus)
- the relative paradigm occurs when the subject is non-topical, i.e. in Lelemi the subject-topic correspondence has been grammaticalised to a certain extent (cf. Bantu)
- a single clausal conjunction has been grammaticalised into a subject prefix for the relative perfective

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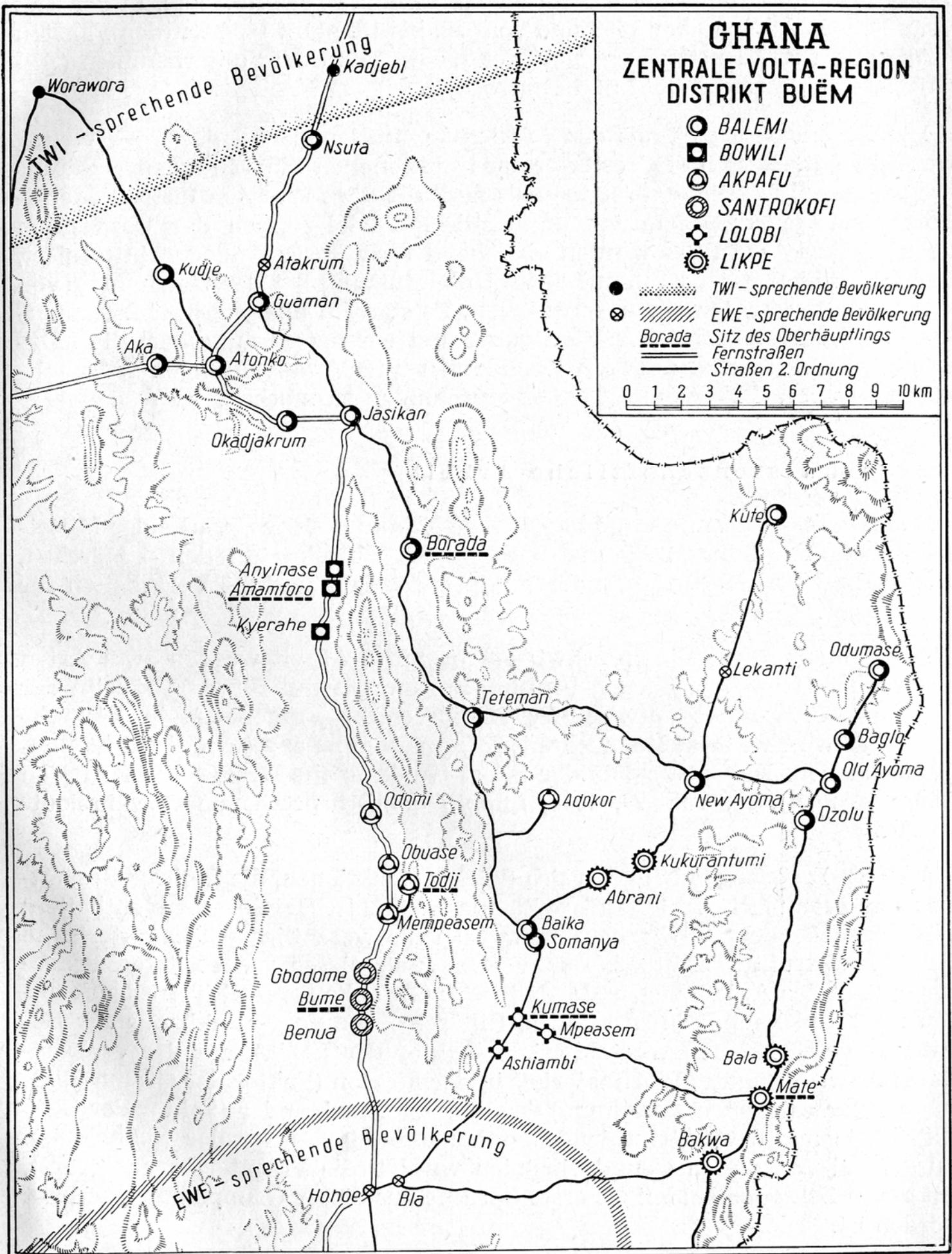
### Abbreviations

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

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