

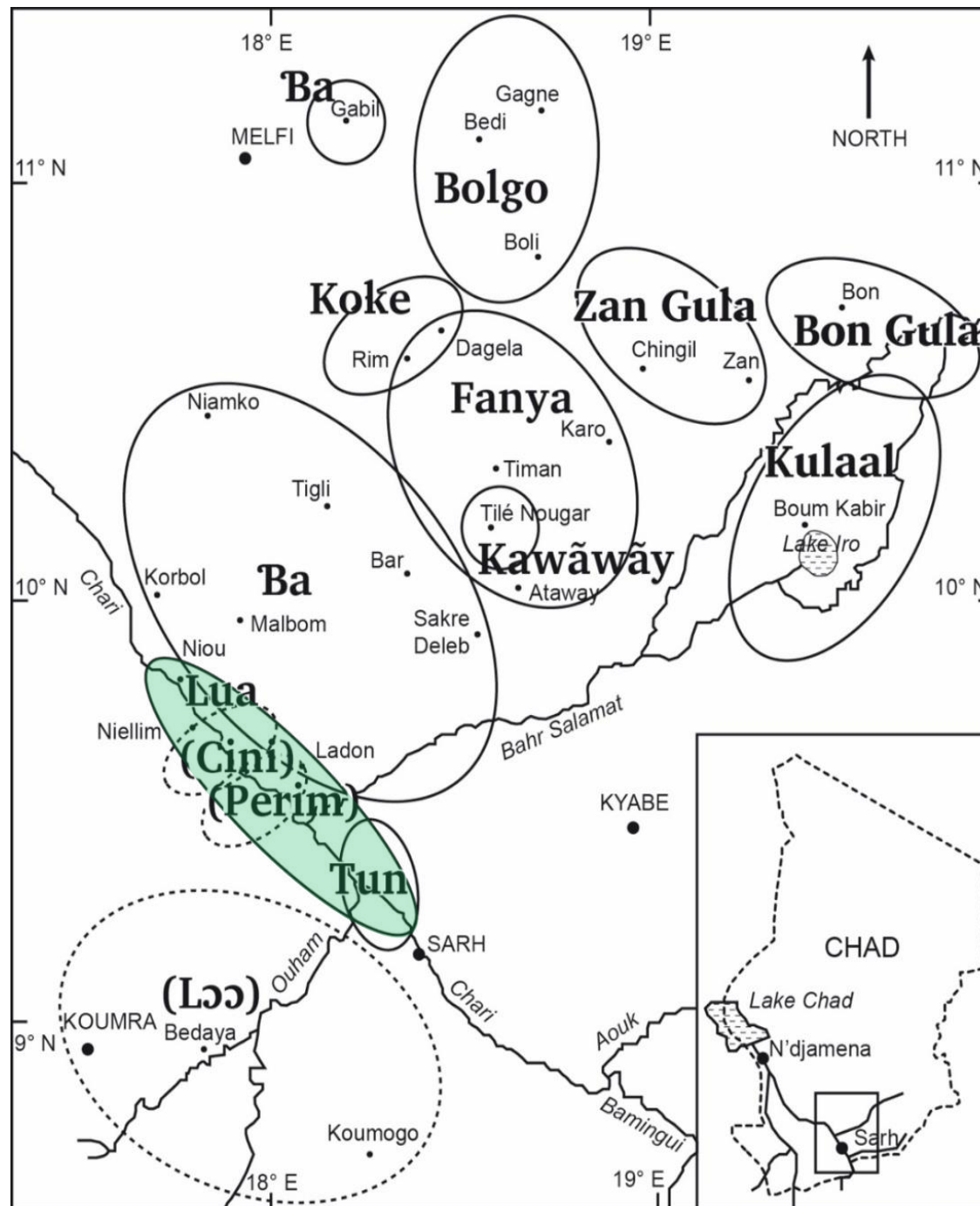
The verb system of Lua (a ‘Bua’ language of Chad)

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Bua languages
 (Adamawa 13)
 and position of Lua



Outline

- Preamble: data, noun number, personal pronouns, homophones
- Verb classes (indicative/subjunctive moods) and Infinitive
- Core verb phrase
- Modality constructions (Obligatives)
- Auxiliary constructions (Durative, Future, Obligative)
- Adverbial constructions (Durative/Imminent, Necessity)
- Satellites (Dubitative, Remansive, Completed, Negation, Interrogative & Question)

Data

- Collected during a two-year stay in Chad (Fort Lamy/N'djaména 1973-75)
- Toolbox lexicon (2600 entries)
- Several elicited questionnaires (Bouquiaux & Thomas 1971): nouns, verbs, sentences
- Spontaneous speech productions (5 tales, transcribed, glossed, and translated)
- Interest in old data revived within the *Bua languages comparative group* (Boyeldieu, (Kastenholz), Kleinewillinghöfer & Lionnet, since 2017)

N.B. Illustrations are elicited unless identified by a text reference (T-XX.nn)

Noun number

Various processes of noun plural marking (if any): apophony (‘Umlaut’) and suffixes, mainly representing relics of a former noun class system whose cognates are still active in only one of the Bua languages: Kulaal (BKKL 2018: 74-79)

Sg.	Pl.	
piāg	pēg	‘shoulder’
súl	súrí	‘head’
tílā	térī	‘tree, wood’
tuāy	tōy ~ tóygī	‘peanut’
dàā	dēg	‘arm’

Table 1. Types of noun plural formation

Personal pronouns

	Emphatic	Subject	Object, preposition-governed, and possessive	Self
1S	ɲìñ	ñ	ń	mǎn
2S	ɲìṁ	ṁ	ṁ	mǎm
3S	ɲír	́	́	mǎr (animate) màr ~ mày ~ màni (inanimate)
LOGS	ɲìr̄	̀	̀	mār (màr ?)
1PE	ɲìníí	í	í	mǎy
1PI	ɲìi	ì	ì	mày
2P	ɲíí	í	í	mǎy
3P	ɲáá	á	á	mǎ ~ màná (anim.+ inanim.)
LOGP	ɲàà	à	à	?

Table 2. Personal pronouns

Homophones

1.a	wò /pl. bì	noun	‘human being, person, (pl.) people’
b	wò {DUR}	auxiliary (invar.)	‘Durative, Imminent’
c	wò {SIT}	copula (invar.)	‘Situative, be at, exist’
2.a	ḡḡ {FUT}	auxiliary (invar.)	‘Future, Virtual, Optative’
b	ḡḡ {QUOT}	quotative	‘Quotative, Introducer of reported speech’
3.a	tī (inf. tīm)	verb (cl. 4)	‘sit, stay, be, become’
b	tī	preposition	‘at, in, on’

Table 3. Noteworthy homophones

Verb classes (indicative/subjunctive moods) and infinitive (1/2)

2 finite forms ({IND.V}, {SBJ.V}) vs 1 infinite form ({V.INF})

Indicative mood: ‘realis, factual’

Subjunctive mood: ‘necessity, wish, order’

Class	Indicative	Subjunctive	Infinitive	
1	ɓàn	ɓān	ɓān	‘hang, hold onto’
3	ɓōn	ɓōn	<i>ɓuààn</i>	‘dance’
4	mōg	móg	<i>móglī</i>	‘contract, make a fist’
4	lōy	láy	<i>lóóm</i>	‘lie, sleep’
4bis	sūrí	súrí	sūrí	‘laugh at’
5	tóó	tōō	<i>túúlā</i>	‘pound, crush’

Table 4. Verb classes and infinitives: some illustrations

Verb classes (indicative/subjunctive moods) and infinitive (2/2)

Class	Indicative	Subjunctive	Infinitive (main processes)	Lexical tokens
1	L	ML	M, LM; 2 suffixes	343
1bis	LH	\widehat{MLH}	LH	15
2	L	H	M; 1 suffix	4
3	M	ML	LM = \widehat{LMM} ; mostly suffixes	34
3bis	MH	\widehat{MLH}	MH	1
4	M	H	M, HM, LM; some suffixes	182
4bis	MH	H	MH	6
5	H	M	HM; mostly suffixes	24
invariable	16
irregular	3
Total				628

Table 5. Verb classes and infinitives – tone patterns (counts updated 2023)

Formalisation of mood markers? (1/2)

- Verb tones are both lexical and grammatical, e.g.:

IND *tōn* / SBJ *tōñ* ‘forge’ (cl. 3) vs IND *tón* / SBJ *tōn* ‘send’ (cl. 5)

- Does one mood represent the marked form of the two?

Note the following ambivalent tone patterns:

Class	Indicative	Subjunctive	Lex. tokens
1	L	ML	343
1bis	LH	M̂LH	15
2	L	H	4
3	M	ML	34
3bis	MH	M̂LH	1
4	M	H	182
4bis	MH	H	6
5	H	M	24

Table 6. Moods and tone patterns: cases of ambivalence

Formalisation of mood markers? (2/2)

Two paths of research:

- Consonants? (thank you, Raymond!)

In contrast to the frequencies observed in the general lexicon, cl. 3 verbs reveal a relatively high number of the initial glottalised stops *b*- and *d*-, while cl. 5 verbs show a markedly high frequency of the initial voiceless stops *t*- and *c*-. Implications however not obvious.

- Former polar tone? Initially marking SBJ?

Possibly inherited from a likely historical *L/H tone system (BKKL 2018: 100 ; Lionnet 2023)?

Core verb phrase : [(S) IND/SBJ. Verb (O)]

- (1) **í** **ḃōw** **̀** **ḃuà̀y**
 3S IND.tie LOGS goat
 ‘(S)he *ties/tied* his/her (own) goat!’
- (2) **tōŋ** / **tōŋ** **lǒl**
 IND.end IND.end NEG
 ‘It is *finished.*’ ‘It is not *finished.*’
- (3) **ḃíím** **ḃōw** **à** **ḃuà̀y**
 child.PL SBJ.tie LOGP goat
 ‘The children *should tie* their goat!/*Let* the children *tie* their goat!’
- (4) **ḃōw** **̀** **ḃuà̀y** !
 SBJ.tie 2S goat
 ‘*Tie* your goat!’

Modality constructions : [Mod (S) SBJ. Verb (O)]

• *kííní* {OBLIG} ‘Obligative’

- (5) [...] búrū mà̀y jà̀à g̀ì r̀ páā b̄ n̄r g̀ì ì kuá̄r ndōw ndōw
 one even IND.say to 3S mate QUOT SBJ.paddle for 1PI dugout close close
kííní ì **l̄g** bì t̀t̀t̀n !
 OBLIG 1PI SBJ.see person.PL DEM.PL

‘... one said to his mate : paddle for us quite close, we *must see* these people!’ (T-III.16)

Potentially functioning as a subordinator of purpose:

- (6) ẁàn jà̀à : [...] r̀ b̄ t̀m̄n̄ t̄ á luà **kííní** á **k̄** ẁá̀j̀n̄ á
 chief IND.say LOGS FUT send.INF at 3P bottom OBLIG 3P SBJ.do what? 3P
h̄n̄ ...
 SBJ.come

‘The chief said : ... I will send (a message) after them (saying that) they *must do* what? (they *must*) *come*. (T-IV.26, 28)

>>> ‘The chief said... I will send (a message) after them *so that* they *will do* what? (*so that* they *will*) *come*.’

- *ká* ~ *kí* {OBLIG} ‘Obligative’ (also Auxiliary, see above)

(7) **kí** **í** **tí** **ʔín** !

OBLIG 3S SBJ.stay thus

‘Let him/her *stay* like this!’

(8) [...] **sòòn** **ṛ** **páā** **kuār** **páā** **ḅḅ** **ʔuá** **ká** **nī** **sī** **ì**
 IND.call LOGS mate young_man some QUOT SBJ.stand_up OBLIG 1PI.EMPH SBJ.go 1PI

lḅg **ʔī** **nènēy** !

SBJ.see woman DEM.DEF

‘(He...) calls some mate (and) says: get up! we *must go* (and) *see* this woman!’ (T-III.75)

Potentially functioning as a subordinator of purpose:

(9) **ḅḅ** **í** **ná** **ń** **ndúū** **ká** **ń** **nī** ! **í** **ná** **ń** **ʔààr** **ndúū** **ká** **nī** !
 QUOT 2P SBJ.give 1S water OBLIG 1S SBJ.drink 2P SBJ.give 1S horse water OBLIG SBJ.drink

‘(She) said: give me water, I *must drink*, give water to my horse, (he) *must drink*!’ (T-IV.76)

>>> ‘(She) said: give me water *so that I drink*, give water to my horse *so that* (he) *drinks*!’

(10) **yāàr** **ń** **ká** **ń** **sō**
 SBJ.help 1S OBLIG 1S SBJ.lift

‘Help me, I *must lift*!’ >>> ‘Help me *to lift*!’

Auxiliary constructions : [(S) AUX (**gì** Beneficiary) (O) **Verb.INF**]

- (11a) á **kà** gì wàṅ círá
3P IND.do for chief work
'They *do/did* (a) work for the chief.'
- (11b) á **ḃḃ** gì wàṅ círá **kààr**
3P FUT for chief work do.INF
'They *will do* (a) work for the chief.'
- (12a) ñ **tén** í tī ʔùūl
1S IND.find 3S on road
'I *found* him/her on the road.'
- (12b) ñ **ḃḃ** í **tīnā** tī ʔùūl
1S FUT 3S find.INF on road
'I *will find* him/her on the road.'

wò {DUR}

• ‘Durative’

- (13) [...] ɓ̄ l̄g r̄ w̄ɲ h̄ām t̄ r̄ wò j̄abl̄i
 QUOT SBJ.see LOGS thing IND.get_lost then LOGS DUR look_for.INF
 ‘... (she) said: see! my cloth got lost, that’s why I *am looking for* (it).’ (T-II.20)

• ‘Near Future, Imminent’

- (14) [...] m̄l̄m m̄ j̄à: b̄ t̄ ɓ̄r̄i h̄as̄ l̄l̄ ē ī ʔ̄n t̄ sīāl
 marabout ANPH IND.say well! IND.be good now here DEF place IND.be night
 t̄én ná r̄ wò síl̄i
 already SUCC LOGS DUR go_back_home.INF
 ‘... the marabout said: well, that’s good, now, here, night has come (lit. the place is
 already night) and I’m *going to go back home*.’ (T-III.52)

b̄ {FUT}

• ‘Future’

- (15) [...] *r̄* **b̄** *sā́ál* *ḃáá* *ʔíī* *m̄* *nā* *cāw* *ḃīr*, *păy* *á* **b̄**
 LOGS FUT go.INF child woman ANPH with marry.INF ask.INF INTERR 3P FUT
gì *r̄* **kuăy** *ḃèé* *á* **b̄** *gì* *r̄* *ḃáá* *ʔíī* *m̄* *nā* *ā?*
 to LOGS refuse.INF or 3P FUT to LOGS child woman ANPH give.INF Q
 ‘... I *will* go and ask for the girl(’s hand), *will* they *refuse* (her) to me or *will* they *give*
 me the girl?’ (T-I.10)

• ‘Virtual/Potential’

- (16) [...] *ʔààr* *nă* *hínā* *kúnă* *m̄* **b̄** *ʔààr* *hínā* **pār** *m̄* **b̄** *ʔààr* *hínā* **pār**
 horse CONN2 tail as_if 2S FUT horse tail catch.INF 2S FUT horse tail catch.INF
 [*the python is pursuing a flying horse*]
 ‘... the tail of the horse is as if you [python] *would catch* the horse’s tail, you *would*
catch the horse’s tail.’ (T-IV.70)

b̄ {FUT} (cont.)

• ‘Possible/Feasible’

- (17) [...] *ɾ* *jàà* *b̄* *ɲĩ̀* *mār* *wāɲ* *nè* *ɾ* *tén* *lǒ(1)* *lá*
 3S IND.say QUOT LOGS.EMPH LOGS.SLF thing DEM LOGS IND.find NEG also
ɾ ***b̄*** ***síli*** *lǒ(1)* *lá*
 LOGS FUT go_back_home.INF NEG also

‘... she says (to herself): I, myself, did not find my thing (i.e. cloth) and I *will* not *be* able to go back home.’ (T-II.14)

• ‘Optative/Deontic’

- (18) *málĩm* [...] *lèg* *ɾ* *súl* *ʔín* *jàà:* *luààr* *nèn* *ná* *ɲĩ̀*
 marabout IND.look_at LOGS head thus.long IND.say village DEM SUCC LOGS.EMPH
b̄ ***b̄*** *jō* *liā* *jō* *tá* *ɾ* *bò* *lǒl* *ná* [...]
 FUT move.INF only and if then LOGS IND.move NEG SUCC

‘The marabout... thought about (lit. looked at his head) for a long time (and) said (to himself): this village, I simply *have to move* and, if I don’t move...[sth. bad will happen]’ (T-III.4)

ká ~ kí {OBLIG}

- ‘Obligative’ *stricto sensu* (very limited use in the positive sense)

(19) á **ká** (~ **kí**) **hínā**
 3P OBLIG come.INF

‘They *have to come/they must come.*’

- ‘Prohibitive’ (most instances by far appear in a negative context, and address a second person subject, sg. or pl.)

(20) **ń** **bàà** **tààm** **ḃē** **ń** **ká** **ḃúgrī** **túrī** **lǎl**
 1S father IND.want QUOT 1S OBLIG mushroom eat.INF NEG

‘My father doesn’t want me to eat mushrooms.’ (lit. my father wants that I *don’t eat* mushrooms)

(21) [...] **ḃāḃ-gā** [...] **ḃīn** **ʔuā** **ń** **wò** **tī** **yàál** **á** **tá** **m** **ká** **ń**
 when 1S.EMPH IND.stand_up 1S SIT at run.INF SUCC then 2S OBLIG 1S
hūl **ḃīb** **nā** **m** **ḃāḃ** **lǎl** [...]
 stomach hit.INF with 2S leg NEG

[*the flying horse is warning its rider*]

‘... when... I will start to run, *don’t hit* my stomach with your legs!...’

(T-IV.61)

Adverbial constructions : [(S) wò/tī Prep. (gì Benef.) (O) Verb.INF]

- *wò tī* {SIT[UATIVE]/at} > ‘durative/imminent’

(22) káy m ʔángāl tī jāā nè á wò tī gí m jāā !
 SBJ.put 2S attention at speech REL 3P SIT at to 2S tell.INF
 ‘Pay attention to what people *are telling* you !’

(23) [...] m jàà [...] bō m báá ʔī wò tī wò bōr kúúlā ē? [...]
 2S IND.say QUOT 2S child woman SIT at person male marry.INF eh?
 ‘... you tell... that your daughter *is about to marry* a man eh? ...’ (T-I.42)

- *tī lé* {IND.stay~be/for~aiming} > ‘deserve/need’ (elicited examples only)

(24) r tī lé dīb
 3S IND.be for beat.INF
 ‘(S)he *deserves beating* (to be beaten).’

(25) tī lé gí r jāā lōl
 IND.be for to 3S tell.INF NEG
 ‘It *is not necessary to tell* him (lit. it does not *deserve to be told* to him/her).’

Satellites (various orders and positions)

- *mã* {DUB} ‘maybe (random), Dubitative’ (preposed/postposed, limited instances)

(26) **mã** í **hĩnā** liāālí
 DUB 3S IND.come yesterday
 ‘*Maybe he came yesterday.*’

(27) **mã** ndìlà **ḃō** juāṅ ~ ndìlà **mã** **ḃō** juāṅ
 DUB rain FUT rain.INF rain DUB FUT rain.INF
 ‘*Maybe it will rain.*’

(28) **mã** í **ḃō** hínā ~ í **ḃō** hínā **mã**
 DUB 3S FUT come.INF 3S FUT come.INF DUB
 ‘*Maybe (s)he will come.*’

Potentially functioning as a marker of indirect question:

(29) ñ jàà **mã** í **ḃō** hínā
 1S IND.say DUB 3S FUT come.INF
 ‘I say *maybe (s)he will come.*’ >>> ‘I wonder whether (s)he will come.’

- *dãñ* {REM} ‘still, (not) yet, Remansive’ (preposed/postposed, limited instances)

(30) **dãñ** ò **tī** ngáá ~ ò **tī** ngáá **dãñ**
 REM 1S IND.be strong 1S IND.be strong REM
 ‘I *am still* strong.’

(31) **dãñ** í sì lǒl ~ í sì **dãñ** lǒl
 REM 3S IND.go NEG 3S IND.go REM NEG
 ‘(S)he did not go yet.’

(32) í wò wāñ **tūrī** **dãñ**
 3S DUR thing eat.INF REM
 ‘(S)he *is still* eating.’

(33) í bàà m mǎnì nǎ ʔààr nè tuāānì **dãñ** í **tī** ʔáá cāl ʔín
 3S father ANPH 3S.SELF CONN2 horse REL before REM 3S IND.be child young thus
 tã í wò huāān tī súl ʔín déd-déd, [...]

 then 3S DUR ride.INF on top thus long
 ‘The very horse of her father that formerly, (as) he *was still* a young child like that, he
 had been riding on top like that for a long time...’ (T-IV.43)

- *tèén* ‘already, Completed’ (postposed)

(34) [...] bì tòtôn-ī á hīnā á **lòg** nìr ?ùn **tèén** nē`?
 person.PL DEM.PL-DEF 3P IND.come 3P IND.see LOGS.EMPH place already eh?
 ‘... these people came (and) *already saw* my place, eh?’ (T-III.24)

(35) bǎá ?īī [...] **lòg** bǎá kuār m **tèén** gáná, tī nè tā í
 child woman IND.see child young_man ANPH already then IND.be DEM then 3S
jàà gì ò bàà **tèén** bō bǎá kuār nè jō nìr tààm
 IND.say to LOGS father already QUOT child young_man DEM FOC LOGS.EMPH IND.want
 í kúúlā ē? pǎy kōy?
 3S marry.INF eh? INTERR what?
 ‘The girl... *had already seen* the young man (and) then, he was the one she *had already told* her father he was the young man she wanted to marry, eh?, isn’t it?’ (T-IV.22-23)

- *tèén* (cont.)

N.B. *tèén* ‘already, Completed’ may also modify an adjective:

- (36) *í* *bàà* *jàà* *ḃō* *wāṅ* *nè* *tā* *ʔààr* ***hìiní*** ***tèén*** *tā* *ṅīm* *ḃáá* *nènēy*
 3S father IND.say eh! thing DEM then horse old already then 2S.EMPH child DEM.DEF
tī *ḃáá* *kuār* *m̄* *lōg* *á* *ʔèrgì* *māán* *tī* *wàá* [...]
 IND.be child young_man 2S SBJ.look_at 3P horse.PL proper IND.be how?
[the chief disapproves the daughter who chose an old horse while her new husband and his mates ride young horses]
 ‘Her father said: eh! this thing, the *already old* horse, you, this child is a young man, look, how are their own horses?...’
(T-IV.44)

- *lǒl* {NEG} ‘Negation’ (postposed)

- (37) [...] í lèg wò ?ín tī wò 6̄r lǒl lá ?í lǒl lá pǎy
 2P IND.see person thus IND.be person man NEG also woman NEG also INTERR
 í lèg wò nīn ā?
 2P IND.see SIT présent Q
 ‘... did you (ever) see such a person (that he/she) *is not* a man, *nor* a woman, did you
 (ever) see (that) it exists?’ (T-I.56)
- (38) [...] í jàà : nīm nè m ?ùnà jāā dúpā nàrì ná m ká
 3S IND.say 2S.EMPH DEM 2S IND.know speech life a_lot SUCC 2S OBLIG
dūgā sāál tī m luààr hūl lǒl liā m tí tī nīr mār
 go_back.INF go.INF at 2S village inside NEG but 2S SBJ.stay in LOGS.EMPH LOGS.SLF
 gēr hūl [...]
 earthen_house inside
 ‘... he said : you, since you know a lot about life, you *must not go back* to your village
 but you have to stay in my own earthen house...’ (T-I.64)

- *pǎy* {INTERR} ‘Interrogative’ (preposed) and *ã*{Q} ‘Question’ (postposed)

The function of Interrogative *pǎy* is to introduce a question. It is sometimes used in the context of Wh-questions, as in (39), but is more systematically required in presence of a polar question marked by *ã*, as in (40):

- (39) *b̃* [...] *bèé n̄r̄* *b̃* *g̃ɛ̃n* *nā* *í* *j̃ɛ̃ŋ-g̃ũn̄* *túúlā* *ná*
 QUOT or LOGS.EMPH FUT stay.INF with 3S broken_millet_grains pound.INF SUCC
pǎy *̀r̄* ***b̃*** *w̃ɛ̃n* ***t̄nā*** ***b̃áy*** *tā* *̀r̄* *b̃* *túr̄i?*
 INTERR LOGS FUT thing find.INF where? then LOGS FUT eat.INF
 ‘(The dog) said : ... or, if I stay pounding the broken millet grains, *where shall I find*
something to eat?’ (T-II.49)
- (40) [...] *á* *jàà* *g̃i* *í* *b̃* *m̃ám* *bàà* *kà* *m̄* *kúm* *nā* *g̃i* *m̄* *d̄f̄blā*
 3P IND.say to 3S QUOT 2S.SLF father IND.do 2S affection IND.give to 2S a_lot
ē *nā* *g̃i* *m̄* *nd̄in̄i* *m̃áy* *ē* ***pǎy*** ***nā*** *g̃i* *m̄* *ɓ̄ij̄im̄* *ʔin̄* ***ā?***
 eh? IND.give to 2S nice really eh? INTERR IND.give to 2S ugly thus Q
 ‘... they tell her : yourself, (our) father has a lot of affection for you eh?, (he) gives you
 very nice (things) eh?, *did he ever give you ugly (things)?*’ (T-II.12)

Summary of the verb system

	Core	+ Modality
Finite verb constructions	IND 'Realis'	–
	SBJ 'Necessity/Imperative'	<i>kíini</i> – 'Obligative (+ 'so that')' <i>ká ~ kí</i> – 'Obligative (+ 'so that')'
Infinitive constructions		– <i>wò</i> – 'Durative/Imminent'
	Auxiliary	– <i>ḃā</i> – 'Future/Virtual~Potential/ Possible~Feasible/Optative~Deontic'
		– <i>ká ~ kí</i> – '(Obligative)/Prohibitive'
	Adverbial	– <i>wò tī</i> – ('be at') 'Durative/Imminent' – <i>tī lé</i> – ('be for') 'deserve/need'

Satellites: *mā* 'maybe (random), Dubitative'
dāñ 'still, (not) yet, Remansive'
téen 'already, Completed'
löl 'Negation'
păy 'Interrogative'
a 'Question'

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Infinitive constructions	– <i>wò</i> –	'Durative/Imminent'
	Auxiliary – <i>ḃā</i> –	'Future/Virtual~Potential/ Possible~Feasible/Optative~Deontic'
	– <i>ká ~ kí</i> –	'(Obligative)/Prohibitive'
	Adverbial – <i>wò tī</i> – ('be at')	'Durative/Imminent'
	– <i>tī lé</i> – ('be for')	'deserve/need'

Satellites: *mā* 'maybe (random), Dubitative'
dāñ 'still, (not) yet, Remansive'
téen 'already, Completed'
löl 'Negation'
păy 'Interrogative'
a 'Question'

Abbreviations & glosses

1PI	1 st person plural inclusive	inf., INF	infinitive
1S	1 st person singular	INTERR	interrogative
2P	2 ^d person plural	invar.	invariable
2S	2 ^d person singular	LOGP	logophoric plural
3P	3 ^d person plural	LOGS	logophoric singular
3S	3 ^d person singular	NEG	negation
ANPH	anaphoric	OBLIG	obligative
CONN2	connective 2 (<i>nǎ</i>)	pl., PL	plural
DEF	definite	Q	question
DEM	demonstrative	QUOT	quotative
DUB	dubitative	REL	relative
DUR	durative	REM	remansive
EMPH	emphatic	SBJ	subjunctive
FOC	focalizer	SIT	situative
FUT	future	SLF	self
IND	indicative	SUCC	successive

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