

## **Nominalization in Mwan<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Summary**

The paper provides a descriptively oriented analysis of morphosyntactic devices to create nouns from verbs in Mwan, a Southern Mande language. Three main strategies are under discussion: a) combination with a semantically empty word of the target class; b) combination with suffixoids; c) addition of affixes. It is shown that the strategies a) and c) are the most common devices of nominalization in Mwan. Language-specific nominalization operations in Mwan are displayed. Within the first major type, i.e. participant nominalization, the following subtypes are discussed: 1) agent nominalization; 2) non-human participant of action; 3) location nominalization; 4) reason nominalization; and 5) manner nominalization.

The second major type, i.e. action nominalization (gerund or the name of action) is argued to be an inflectional form completely grammaticalized and totally productive and predictable in meaning. The hybrid character of the gerund is shown.

*Keywords:* Nominalization, Mwan, Southern Mande

### **Sociolinguistic background**

Mwan (Mona) is a relatively small language of the Southern Mande group spoken in the Kongasso subprefecture in central Côte d'Ivoire. According to Ethnologue-14, there were about 17,000 ethnic Mwan in 1993. So, the actual figure must be about 20,000 people. A significant part of the Mwan live in urban centers outside the Mwan region (mainly in Buafle and Abidjan). The internal immigration of

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<sup>1</sup> The article is written in the framework of the project A11 "Missing links for the Proto-Niger-Congo reconstruction" supported by the Foundation for Fundamental Linguistic Studies. The author expresses her grateful acknowledgment to all members of the Mande language seminar and also to the anonymous reviewer of the present article.

Mwan has dramatically increased during the period of the civil war in 2003-2007, as the traditional Mwan territory was near the front line between the rebels and the loyalist forces. Many Mwan, in particular young people, have left their villages and settled down in urban centers. Mwan people have no ethnic communication network in the cities and have no chance to create there a Mwan-speaking community; interethnic marriages are the norm for urban Mwan. Those Mwan who are born in the cities rarely have speaking abilities in their ethnic language. The series of recent military confrontations in Côte d'Ivoire may have a most drastic negative effect on the Mwan communities.

The majority of Mwan living in villages also speak Guro and Jula, which are big and prestigious languages; some of them, mainly males, speak some French. Numerous Jula people settle down in the Mwan villages; they are not particularly prone to learn Mwan. Instead, the Mwan use Jula (or French) language in their communication with the Jula. The principal money-winning occupation of the Mwan is nowadays cashew nut planting, all the commercial interactions with dealers being carried out in Jula or French. The considerable decay of agricultural economy and the decrease of income with village families made the internal immigration attractive for young people of both sexes in Mwan villages.

Mwan was never an officially written language, it was never used in mass media. Only two books were ever published in Mwan; a book of folk tales (20 texts) and a recently accomplished translation of the New Testament.

### **The Mwan language**

Typologically, Mwan displays many properties characteristic for isolating languages: tones, tendency to single metric foot words, a fuzzy border between inflection and derivation, as well as between compound words and combinations of free words, and so on. There are three level tones and two contour tones in Mwan. A significant part of the inflectional morphology is tonal. One of the features typical for a South Mande language is a great number of pronominal series marked for polarity, focus and grammatical relations. Like other languages of the Southern Mande group, Mwan grammar uses mostly analytical technics, some elements of the agglutination being also present. There are instances of fusion.

At the same time, Mwan presents certain features which are untypical for an "ideal" isolating language. It concerns the absence of a regular (or quasi-regular) verbalization/substantivation via conversion. A Mwan verb cannot be converted into noun without any marker: a verb cannot be used in the syntactic positions of NP; it cannot be modified by adjectives, article or other determinants. The same is true for nouns which cannot function as verbs in Mwan.

The regular inter-class conversion is rather widespread crosslinguistically, cf.: English: *how to father a child; to go for a walk*. Many languages of the Mande family, especially Manding, also display a great number of cases of a “clear” conversion, cf.: Bamana *bàná* ‘to fall ill’ → ‘illness’, *démé* ‘to help smb’ → ‘help’, *kànú* ‘to love smb’ → ‘love’ (Dumestre 1994, Vydrin 2008). The widespread occurrence of conversion in the Manding languages led to the claims about the absence of nouns and verbs as separate parts of speech (Tomchina 1978).

### Word-class-changing strategies in Mwan

As Mwan does not resort to the interclass conversion, it recurs to other strategies in order to put verbs in syntactic positions characteristic for NPs or to use nouns predicatively. The three main strategies of word-class-changing are:

- combination with a semantically empty word of the target class;
- combination with suffixoids;
- addition of agglutinative affixes.

#### I. Combination with a semantically void word of the target class

A word which has to undergo a class-changing procedure may be combined with another word of the target category. The latter is often fully or considerably desemantized and works mainly as a category carrier.

It is worth noting that many actions are expressed by nouns in Mwan. To be predicates they have to be combined with verbs: *wó* ‘to do’, *klē* ‘to make’, *dē* ‘to kill’ and some others. A large amount of meanings denoting actions which are expressed by verbs in other languages are expressed by combinations “noun+verb” in Mwan, cf.: *yē wō* ‘to work (lit. “work+to do”)', *bàlò klē* ‘to chatter (lit. “chatter+to make”)', *yī dē* ‘to sleep (lit. “sleep+to kill”)', *blā sā* ‘to run (lit. “running+to raise”)'.

This strategy is also used in the process of nominalization of verbs. Verbs are combined with nouns which tend to be significantly desemantized, but not completely void of meaning: *pē* ‘thing’, *yrē* ‘place’, *gbēē* ‘way, manner’, *zā* ‘cause’ and some others. These nouns retain their morphosyntactic characteristics, cf.: *lò pē* ‘purchase’ (to buy+thing); *bàà gbeyā* ‘fashion, style’ (to dress+manner).

#### II. Combination with suffixoids

I denominate suffixoids the semi-morphologized elements which have not yet lost the etymological connection with the motivating lexemes. They differ from the suffixes proper because they coincide with the existing nouns. As the border between free compositions of words and the compound items is rather unclear in Mwan, there are borderline cases cf. *nē* ‘child’ vs *-nē* ‘diminutive suffixoid’;

*biē* ‘elephant’ + *nē* → *biē nē* ‘baby elephant’ (*nē* is a free word);

$p\bar{e}$  'thing' +  $n\bar{e}$   $\rightarrow$   $p\bar{e}n\bar{e}$  'little thing', 'something small' ( $-n\bar{e}$  is a diminutive suffixoid).

Consider the following example:

(1)  $\acute{O}$   $w\bar{a}\bar{a}$   $p\bar{e}-n\bar{e}$   $d\bar{5}c\bar{i}\acute{e}-l\bar{a}$ .  
1PL 1PL.POSS thing-DIM cook-PRF

'We cooked some food'.

Here the element  $-n\bar{e}$  is obviously not a separate noun, still it can hardly be called a true suffix as it can be separated from the modified word by other elements. These items will be referred to as suffixoids.

### III. Affixation

This strategy supposes the use of grammatical markers which are true affixes. To be recognized an affix, an element has to fit the following conditions:

- they have no proper lexical meaning;
- they cannot be used independently;
- they are not identical with any lexical item;
- they cannot be separated from the verb by any other element.

The set of Mwan true affixes is not particularly large. I have counted just seven, of which five are verbal suffixes. One of them (perfective marker) is fused, and the other four are added agglutinatively.

All the three presented strategies are used in making nouns out of verbs, the most current being the combining with partly desemantized nouns and the affixation.

### Nominalization in Mwan

I will regard nominalization<sup>2</sup> as a range of grammatical means that allow a verb to act as a noun (Comrie and Thompson 1985; Koptjevskaya-Tamm 1993, 2003, 2005; Lehmann 1982). Nominalization will be regarded as a secondary or compressed predication in a NP position which is able to acquire morphological noun markers.

#### I. Participant nominalization

1. Nominalization «action  $\rightarrow$  participant of action» is usually carried out by the strategy of the combining the corresponding verb with a noun (I will follow the list of semantic roles as given by Payne (1997)).

If the participant of action is human, it is nominalized with the help of the elements:  $-m\bar{i}$ ,  $-l\bar{e}$ ,  $-m\bar{u}$ .

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<sup>2</sup> As it was widely pointed out, the term *nominalization* is used to define the process of a transcategorial operation as well as the result of this process. I will use it in the first sense.

The suffix denoting a human participant of an action *-mī* points out at a non-female or a gender neutral participant. It is a suffix which is not used as a separate word though its connection with the noun *mēē* ‘person’ is obvious for a Mwan speaker. In certain cases they may vary: *dīṅmēē* ~ *dīṅmī* ‘neighbour’ etc.<sup>3</sup>

The suffix *-mī* is in a paradigmatic relation with the suffixoid *-lē* which refers to a female participant, and also with the plural marker *-mū* which in this case may also be regarded as a suffixoid denoting the plurality of participants – males or mixed males and females. In (2a) *mū* cumulatively expresses meanings of the agent of action (male or irrelevant) and the plurality of participants:

(2a) *yēwōmī* ‘worker’ (lit. work+to do+agent) – *yēwōmū* ‘workers’;

(2b) *yēwōlē* ‘working woman’ (lit. work+to do+woman) – *yēwōlēmū* ‘working women’.

In (2b) the suffixoid *-lē* points out at the female agent; the marker *mū* behaves as a usual plurality marker.

The suffix *-mī* may denote a female as well as a male if the sex of the person in question is obvious, unknown or inessential, cf.: *vīṅdōmī* ~ *vīṅdōlē* ‘co-wife of a polygamous man’. Consider also ex. (3) where the suffixoid *-mī* refers to a female:

(3) *Ī jìè yàà kwléē-nrē-mī gblā lé.*  
 1SG grandmother RETR cotton-spin-AGNT large INSTR  
 ‘My grandmother was a great spinner’.

Many nominalized forms of this type are lexicalized: *gòṅlṛémī* (car + to drive + *mī*) ‘driver’, *tróómī* (to raise + *mī*) ‘educator, tutor’; *yìpómī* (wood + to cut + *mī*) ‘woodcutter’; *pēgōmī* (thing + to sell + *mī*) ‘merchant, shop assistant’ and so on.

2. When the aim of the nominalization is a non-human participant of action (animals included) it is carried out by the suffixoid *-pē* ‘thing’: *bàà-pē* (to dress up+thing) ‘festive garment’; *yìlà-pē* (to lie down+thing) ‘sleeping mat’; *gō-pē* (to sell+thing) ‘article of trade’ etc.

Forms with suffixoids *-mī*, *-lē*, *-mū* and *-pē* may have all the semantic roles typical of NPs (agent, patient, beneficiate, experiencer, instrument etc.).

In fact, the presented forms morphologically do not differ much from compound nouns common in Mwan. There is a significant difference, though. Nominalized forms of this type may express a compressed predication. Cf. the following examples:

(4) *Lēnè é yòò blè píí glòò-zí zìè-klē-pē lé.*  
 lady ART 3SG>3PL peanut powder rub-PROG sauce-do-thing INSTR

<sup>3</sup> Though *dīṅ* is not a verb, this example shows the still existing semantic link between the noun *mēē* ‘person’ and the suffix of the agent *mī*.

‘The woman is grinding peanuts for the sauce.’

- (5) *Mlèsīēnú dō ná ń nī, á sō é yí-sráà-pē lé.*  
 needle a give 1SG DAT 1SG>3SG cloth ART in-sting-thing INSTR  
 ‘Give me a needle to mend my cloths’.

- (6) *Nē é yà náàgwīēē klàà gbú ā*  
 child ART 3SG>3SG elder.brother put-PRF self POSS  
*zàblā-pē-klē-mī lé.*  
 entertain-thing-make-AGNT INSTR

‘The child asked his elder brother to make a toy for him’ (lit. ‘the child put his elder brother as a toy-maker’).

When followed by the comitative / instrumental postposition *lé*, these nominalized verbs represent a compressed predication meaning the purpose of action: *zìē-klē-pē lé* ‘in order to make sauce’; *á sō é yí-sráà-pē lé* ‘in order to mend my cloths’; *gbú ā zàblā-pē-klē-mī lé* ‘so that he would fabricate a toy for him (for the subject of the main predication)’.

The nominalized verb construction in the example (4) may, of course, be interpreted just as a compound noun. It is not so easy with the constructions presented in (5) and (6). For one thing, they retain certain verbal characteristics: in both constructions verbs have direct objects.

These constructions are clearly modeled by the same rules as the left-side relative clauses [Perekhval'skaya 2007, Vydrin 2008b]. In (6) the subject of the compressed predication *náàgwīēē* ‘elder brother’ is fully named as a direct object in the main clause, being substituted by the agent suffixoid *mī* in the nominalized construction. The whole complex *gbú ā zàblā-pē-klē-mī* could be regarded as a multi-component noun ‘his.personal-toy-maker’. Such an approach is not valid though, for the forms of this type are constructed on need according to the current model and therefore are not a part of the lexicon<sup>4</sup>.

The following example (7) proves that the constructions in question are not compound nouns for the first component of the construction, the direct object, has a plural marker which cannot normally be integrated inside a compound:

- (7) *À nē é gòlí ná-à à nī*  
 3SG.NSBJ child ART money give-PRF 3SG.NSBJ DAT  
*lààné-mū-lò-pē lé.*  
 medicine-PL-buy-thing INSTR

<sup>4</sup> Whether these forms should be regarded as “constructional lexemes” [Kasevich 1988] is under discussion.

‘The son gave his mother some money to buy medicine (lit. as medicine.PL buying thing)’.

Here the suffixoid *-pē* forms an instrumental construction denoting the “medium of payment”. It is almost completely void of lexical meaning.

3. The nominalization of the type «action → place of action» is carried out by the noun *yrē* ‘place’: *wī-dē-yrē* (animal + to kill + place) ‘hunt, hunting’; *yī-mí-yrē* (water + to drink + place) ‘drinking place, pond’; *pwé-yrē* (to go out + place) ‘way out’; *fě-yrē* (to wash + place) ‘washing place’ etc.

Nominalizations of this type followed by the postposition *nɔ̀̀* ‘in’ form constructions with compressed predication. The nominalized forms point out at the perfective past or at the immediate future depending on the temporal-aspectual form of the finite verb used in the sentence. With the copula they express the meaning of the durative present. See the following examples:

- (8) *Ó*        *jà*        *mángròó ká yrē nɔ̀̀*, *ó*        *gbē sùà*  
 1pl.EXCL go-PRF mango cut place to 1PL.EXCL hand can.PRF  
*ké-mū-lá*        *mā, mú*        *lè gè.*  
 3SG.NSBJ-PL-REL on 3PL.ANAPH PCOP here  
 ‘We have just gone to gather mango, here is what we could get.’

In (8) the construction *mángròó ká yrē* (mango + to cut + place) could be easily interpreted as “place where they cut mangos”, therefore, the first part of the phrase would have the direct meaning ‘we went to the mango cutting place’. One may presume that the particular place was spoken about. The second part of the phrase makes it clear that the action has just taken place as its results were presented at the time of speech. However, in other cases the direct interpretation of the construction in question is more difficult or completely impossible, cf.:

- (9) *Ò*        *jà*        *bé*        *là*        *mótó*        *là*        *sí yrē nɔ̀̀.*  
 3PL go.PRF 3SG.ANAPH under motorbike FOC take place in

‘They took then motorbike, that’s what they did’ (Too Yegbe I.025).

In (8), the interpretation of the *mótó là sí yrē* (motorbike + FOC +to take + place) as “place of taking away the motorbike” is impossible as this is a story of the bandits’ occupation of the village. The only reasonable interpretation should be as follows: “they have taken motorbike”. The result of the situation still kept an actuality for the speaker in the moment of speech; otherwise he could use the perfective form of the verb *sí* ‘to take’: *ò móto síà* ‘they took motorbike’.

Constructions VERB + *yrē nōḍ* when used with transitive verbs denote the secondary predication whose agent is syntactically the direct object of the primary predication. In this case it is not coreferential with subject like in (10):

(10) *Ī Zāā yà Zèzù séwé lā-pē yrē nōḍ.*

1SG Jean see Jesus paper under-say place in

‘I saw Jean reading the Bible’ (lit. in the place of reading the Bible).

The same construction can be used with an intransitive verb, and then the agent of the secondary predication is coreferential with the subject of the finite verb:

(11) *Mēē é tē-lē ò gblè dīī é yí à nā*

person ART reach-GER COP baobab tree ART in 3SG.NSBJ wife

*mā-gbē yrē nōḍ.*

wait place in

‘The man is leaning against the baobab waiting for his wife’.

In both cases the construction with *yrē nōḍ* designates a concomitant action and could be regarded a means of taxis.

4. A verb nominalized by means of the noun *zā (zà)* ‘cause, affair’ denotes the cause or the fact of the action expressed by the verb: *dē-zā* (to kill + cause) ‘a cause of killing’; *bèè-zā* (to heal + affair) ‘the fact of healing’ etc.

A nominalized verb behaves as a compound NP retaining certain verbal proprieties like it was the case with the constructions discussed above. In (12) the nominalized verb *wlá-zā* governs the direct object *yāā yō mū é* ‘his fetishes’:<sup>5</sup>

(12) *È bē yé-lē kée bē pūbō-lè é-gbènè*

3SG 3SG.ANAPH see-NMLZ when-3SG 3SG.ANAPH greet-MOD PREF-large

*lé yāā yō mū é wlá-zā é yí kpáá é lâ.*

INSTR 3SG.POSS fetish PL ART enter-reason ART in shed ART under

‘On seeing him he (the spirit) thanked him a lot because he put his (spirit’s) fetishes under the shed’ (Gogbe 1.015).

Like other nominalized forms, the forms with *zā* can express a secondary predication which in this case has the meaning of the cause of the action. The construction in question is as follows: VERB + *zā yí*. It has to be noted that not all the constructions in question are completely grammaticalized, so certain semantic features of the original noun stems are obviously retained. Constructions with *yrē nōḍ* describe an action “on the stage” which is normally simultaneous with the main action. An action expressed by the construction with *zā yí* is regarded as the one

<sup>5</sup> This construction can be interpreted as an NP with a noun modifier, for the discussion see (Perekhvalskaya 2010).

which is to happen in future. Consequently, this future action is the cause of the action of the main verb, cf.:

- (13) *È yri gbē é kpá-zīí ékē tā kpàràkpàrà*  
 3SG tree branch ART put-PROG each.other on handbarrow  
*tá zà yí.*  
 weave reason in

‘He is putting together the branches (for the reason) to weave a handbarrow’.

- (14) *Ò klà-à ékē bā yē é wó zā yí.*  
 3PL put-PRF each.other inside work ART do reason in

‘They have gathered in order to make a work’.

In (13) and (14) the actors do something in order to make their future activity possible. So this activity is regarded as the cause of the present action. In (13) the supposed process of weaving a traditional handbarrow makes the artisan to gather tree branches. In (14) the necessity to do a cooperation work made people to gather.

5. Nominalization in the direction «action → mode of action» is carried out through the means of the nouns *gbē*, *gbēyā* ‘way, manner’. The noun *gbēyā* is derived from *gbē* ‘hand’, ‘side’, ‘manner, way’ by the suffix *yā* denoting abstract nouns. Both nouns can be used to nominalize verbs: *kpō-klē-gbēyā* (pot+to make+mode) ‘way of cooking’; *yē gbē* (to see+mode) ‘the way of seeing’, etc.

Like the other types of nominalized verbs, constructions containing the nouns *gbē*, *gbēyā* and followed by the postposition *gbēē* ‘in this way, so’ can be heads of compressed predications. The NP so formed may play a role of a compressed or a secondary predication:

- (15) *Kóōné fē é dō-lē sà-à bē gbú ā*  
 hummingbird house ART stand-NMLZ begin-PRF 3SG.ANAPH self POSS  
*pē fē dō-gbē-yā é gbēē;*  
 thing house stand-hand-ABSTR ART in.manner

‘Hummingbird began to build the house by his own method’ (Hummingbird and Magpie.015).

It is necessary to note that all the abovementioned constructions with verbs nominalized by means of combination with nouns are not used with the negation; in the latter case they are substituted by subordinate clauses:

- (16) *Sàà é dū-lē ò gè, wāā glù yé-lē fē gwē*  
 mat ART hang-GER COP here 3PL.NEG hole see-SPN house wall

é yí b́é zà yí.  
ART in 3SG.ANAPH cause in

‘The mat has been hung here so that the hole in the wall would not be seen’ (lit. they would not see the hole in wall, for that purpose).

An affirmative sentence would contain a compressed predication *yé zà yí* (to see + cause + in) ‘in order to see’. If one needs to build a negative sentence, the situation would be expressed by a finite verb (*wāā glù yé-lē f́é gwlē é yí* ‘they do not see the hole in the wall’) and then it would be repeated by the anaphoric pronoun *b́é* (*b́é zà yí* ‘for this reason’). The strategy used here is similar to the strategy of the split focalized constructions.

Table 1. Participant nominalization in Mwan

Marker	Source	Semantics of nominalized construction
<i>-mī</i>	<i>mēē</i> ‘person’	non-female or gender neutral human participant of action
<i>-lē</i>	<i>lē</i> ‘woman’	female human participant of action
<i>-mū</i>	‘plural marker’	plural human participants of action
<i>-pē</i>	‘thing’	non-human participant of action
<i>yrē</i>	‘place’	place of action
<i>zā</i>	‘cause, affair’	cause or fact of the action
<i>gbē,</i> <i>gbēyā</i>	‘way, manner’	mode of action

## II. Gerund or the name of action.

Mwan also possesses the true “name of action”, or gerund. This is a regular non-finite verb form which is used to name an action beyond the syntactic context: *glàà-lē* ‘to drag’, *nīnà-lē* ‘to come back’ and so on. Cf.:

*wī-dē-yrē* (animal+to kill+place) ‘place of hunting → hunting (action)’;  
*wī-dē-mī* (animal+to kill+Actor) ‘hunter’;  
*wī-dē-lē* (animal+to kill+Nmlz) ‘hunting, to hunt’.

Morphologically, the gerund marker in Mwan is an agglutinative suffix. The suffix *lē* itself has, most probably, evolved out of a postposition, as it almost always seems to be the case with Southern Mande languages [Nikitina 2011].

I consider the gerund to be an inflectional form completely grammaticalized. Unlike the discussed above forms nominalized through the means of nouns or

suffixoids retaining nominal characteristics, the form of Gerund can be derived from any verb in a regular way, and the meaning of the derived form is utterly predictable:

<i>nū</i>	‘come!’	<i>nūlē</i>	‘to come, coming’;
<i>lrè</i>	‘be nice!’	<i>lrèlē</i>	‘to be nice, nice, fact of being nice’;
<i>à gǔ</i>	‘sell!’	<i>gǔlē</i>	‘to sell, selling’;
<i>à pē</i>	‘say!’	<i>pēlē</i>	‘to say, saying’;
<i>tā-ká</i>	‘cut off!’	<i>tā-kálē</i>	‘to cut off, cutting off’;
<i>yē wō</i>	‘work!’	<i>yē wōlē</i>	‘to work, working’.

Crosslinguistically, the typical function of a nominalized verb is that of a matrix verb argument, especially of a matrix phase verb. This function is performed by the gerund in Mwan. Examples (17a) and (17b) present two different strategies of marking a verbal argument:

(17a) *È yàà fě dǔ-lē lé.*  
 3SG finish.PRF house put-GER INSTR

(17b) *È fě dǔ-lē yàà.*  
 3SG house put-GER finish-PRF

‘He finished building a house’.

A verbal argument may formally be an indirect object followed by the instrumental postposition *lé* (as in 16a). It also may be a direct object of the matrix verb (as in 17b). Both sentences are fully grammatical as the verb *yǎ* ‘to finish’ is labile: it can be either intransitive or transitive. As transitive, it acquires the additional meaning ‘to finish something that has been started’.

The gerund combines verbal and nominal proprieties.

1. Verbal proprieties of the gerund. It is involved in the dependent predication and retains the sentential government of arguments, cf.:

(18) *Í kǔ-lē yrī mā, ké gbèèsáà í páà-lé.*  
 1SG grab-GER tree on when wasp 1SG pick-MOD

‘When I got hold of a tree, I was stung by a wasp.’

(19) *È jàrà gbètè é yé-lē ké è slìŋ-lé gblà*  
 3SG lion big ART see-GER when 3SG be.paralyzed-MOD fear  
*é kóó.*  
 ART AG

‘On seeing a big lion he was paralyzed with fear.’

In examples (18) and (19) *lē*-forms play the role of the head of the dependent predication which has the usual set of arguments. The gerund of the transitive verb *yé*

‘to see’ governs the subject and the direct object, and the gerund of the intransitive verb *kŭ* ‘to grab’ has the subject and the postpositional NP which both are obligatory.

The gerund does not express aspectual or temporal meaning. It has to be mentioned, however, that when used as a predicate, a *lē*-form expresses the action previous to the action of the main clause (the actions form a cause-and-effect chain), so it is one of the taxic tools of the language. Using Lehmann’s “Desententialization Scale” [Lehmann 1988] we come to the conclusion that the Mwan gerund is somewhere in the middle of this scale: It has lost: a) illocutionary elements; b) mood / modal elements; c) tense and aspect. It retains d) complements; f) verbal government. So, the Mwan gerund, when used in a dependent predication, shows the loss of some essential verbal features while preserving sentential government of arguments. The government is the same as in the corresponding independent sentences. It can be concluded that we deal with a non-finite inflected verb form.

2. Nominal proprieties of the gerund in Mwan are as follows: it may occupy nominal syntactic positions of subject, direct or indirect object; it goes together with the referential article *é* and with postpositions. The examples (20) – (22) show the usage of the gerund in the typical NP positions:

### Subject

- (20) *{Sró kpá-lē pégēē sró tá-lē} sō à nī.*  
 dance put-GER and dance weave-GER like.IPF 3SG.NSBJ to  
 ‘He likes dancing and singing.’

### Direct Object

- (21) *Mēē kpé {yà fâà wó-lē} dō.*  
 person all 3SG.POSS theft do-GER know.IPF  
 ‘Everybody knows that he steals.’

### Indirect Object

- (22) *È nùà {ŋ lú ā gwlē-nā yāà-lē é} léé.*  
 3SG come.PRF 1SG daughter POSS male-LOC sit-GER ART before  
 ‘She came before my daughter’s wedding.’

The gerund in Mwan does not go together with the verbal negation particle *lāā*. However, it lacks many features characteristic of nouns. The gerund cannot be used as substantive modifier (“possessor” in genitive constructions); it cannot be modified by adjectives; it cannot collocate with the plural marker and does not acquire nominal suffixes and suffixoids.

Table 2. The main verbal and nominal features of the gerund in Mwan

	YES	NO
Verbal properties	retains complements	has no illocutionary elements
	retains personal conjugation	has no mood/modal elements
	retains verbal government	has no tense and aspect elements
Nominal properties	can be modified by the referential article	cannot be used as substantive modifier
	can depend on a postposition	cannot be modified by adjectives
	does not construe with verbal negation particle <i>lāā</i>	cannot collocate with the plural marker
		does not acquire nominal suffixes and suffixoids

3. Nominal and verbal governing. A very important feature that draws a clear borderline between nouns and verbs in Mwan is the type of government. It is ambivalent with the gerund and depends on the construction in which it is involved. Thus, the word combination *siklētí mí-le* can be regarded as a verb with the direct object ‘smoking a cigarette’ or as two NPs forming a genitive syntagme: ‘cigarette smoking’.

Constructions with the gerund may keep sentential government while working as a NP in the sentence. Examples (23a) and (23b) illustrate the similar government in the independent clause (23b) and in the construction with the gerund (23a).

(23a) {*Zāā bō-lē é bā*} ò *é-glòò lé*.  
 argument put-GER 2SG at COP PREF-hard INSTR

‘It is hard to argue with you (lit. “having arguments with you is hard”).’

(23b) *Í zāā bō é bā*.  
 1SG argument put.IPF 2SG at

‘I argue with you.’

In these examples the constructions with the gerund act as NPs, but internally they are constructed sententially. They have the same types of arguments. However, another interpretation is also possible. Consider the following example:

(24a) *Wà é tā dùtî é {(wà é tā mēē gwē mū é*  
 village ART on chief ART village ART on person old PL ART  
*ékē lē-yé-lē) yī} dù-à*.  
 REC lip-see-GER day fix-PRF

‘The chief of the village fixed the day of the village elders meeting.’

Here the direct object *yī* ‘day’ is modified by a left side relative clause *wà é tã mēē gwē mū é ékē lè-yélē* (lit. «village-on-old-people-each-other-in.front-seeing»). The predication of this clause *lè-yélē* ‘to meet’ is expressed by a gerund. The actors *wà é tã mēē gwē mū é* ‘the elders of the village’ and the formal direct object *ékē* ‘each other’ are *in situ* so that the government may be considered sentential. Compare with (24b) where the relative clause is transformed into a full sentence. It presents the same chain of elements with the only difference that the gerund is substituted by a finite verb.

(23b) *Wà é tã mēē gwē mū é ékē lè-yē.*  
 village ART on person old PL ART REC lip-see.IPF  
 ‘Elders of the village meet.’

At the same time, the chain of the elements in the relative clause may be considered a compound that is constructed according to the noun compound model. Cases like (21), (23a) and (24a) do not allow us to prefer any of the two possible interpretations. There are, though, at least two contexts where the verbal and nominal types of government show the explicit difference. These are: a) subject and non-subject 3sg pronouns, and b) construction with “alienable” possession.

3sg subject pronoun encodes the semantic role of agent under the sentential (verbal) government, as in the example given above (19). Non-subject pronoun is characteristic for the possessive (nominal) government, see (25):

(25) *{À yāà-lē} yàà yrì kpū tã.*  
 3SG.NSBJ sit-GER COP.PRF tree trunk on

‘He was sitting on a tree trunk.’

Constructions with the gerund have different internal governing depending on the type of predication they are involved in. Constructions presented in (19) contain the subordinate predication which maintains “more verbal” properties. Resultative constructions (25), left-side relative constructions (24a), as well as the cases where gerund expresses the name of action (20) have nominal (possessive) government.

#### 4. The gerund also shows properties characteristic of adjectives.

It can occupy the syntactic position of a noun modifier. This is a usual way of ascribing a quality expressed by a qualitative verb to a substantive:

*lrè* ‘to be beautiful’ → *gblà lrè-lē* ‘a beautiful girl’;  
*tróó* ‘to be high’ → *fé tróó-lē mū* ‘high houses’;  
*d55* ‘to be straight’ → *zī d55-lē* ‘a straight road’;  
*fléé* ‘to be clean’ → *dūnè fléé-lē* ‘clean cloths’.

In this case the gerund follows the modified noun like an adjective. Compare phrases with the gerund (26a) and with an adjective (26b):

(26a) *Ò gòṅ pléé-lē mū gḡ Rivera.*  
 3PL car be.expensive-GER PL sell.IPF Riviera

‘They sell expensive cars in Riviera <a district of Abidjan>’.

(26b) *Ò gòṅ pú mū gḡ Rivera.*  
 3PL car **white** PL sell.IPF Riviera

‘They sell white cars in Riviera’.

Like adjectives, gerunds can occupy the so-called “pseudo-nominal” position in a copular sentence. This construction is highly characteristic for adjectives and expresses the meaning a temporal quality. The parallel constructions with a gerund and an adjective are given in (27a) and (27b):

(27a) *Yī ò é-nrā-lē lé.*  
 water COP PREF-be.good-GER INSTR

‘Water is good’.

(27b) *Yī ò é-pú lé.*  
 water COP PREF-white INSTR

‘Water is clear’.

It is often difficult to give the only interpretation of a concrete construction. As it was shown above, many constructions can be interpreted as having either a verbal or a nominal government. The same can be said about certain constructions with the gerund in the adjective function. Consider example (28):

(28) *Íḡ {māā gwlēē wè-lē} mā-à.*  
 1SG chicken male cry-GER hear-PRF

The gerund *wè-lē* ‘to shout, shouting’ can be interpreted as *nomen actionis* (verbal noun); in this case the translation would be: ‘I heard rooster’s singing’. At the same time *wè-lē* can also be understood as an adverbial adjective (active participle), then the translation of the phrase in question would be: ‘I heard a singing rooster’. Both translations describe the same situation, so one cannot base on the context, and the problem of the syntactic interpretation of these forms remains controversial.

Other types of nominalization. There seem to be other types of verb nominalization in Mwan. They are rare and probably marginal. However they match with certain strategies attested in other Southern Mande languages, especially in

Wan<sup>6</sup>, which is the closest neighboring language for Mwan. The system of nominalization in this language was presented in [Nikitina 2009]. According to Nikitina, there are two types of action nominalization in Wan. One of them is carried out by the suffix *-wā* which is attached directly to the verb stem. “The suffix *-wa* is a general marker that not only derives action nouns from verbs, but also participated in the derivation of nouns referring to abstract properties from adjectives and other nouns” [Nikitina 2009, 19]. The suffix discussed is functionally equal to the Mwan suffix *-yā*, which also is a marker of abstract nouns derived from nouns and adjectives.

I found two cases of verb nominalization with the suffix *-yā*, cf.:

- (29) *Gwlē é ké ó blā-sàà à lèè wóò*  
 war ART when 1PL.EXCL run-raise.PRF 3SG.NSBJ before 1PL.EXCL.COP  
*yāà-lē-yā yí bē.*  
 sit-GER-ABSTR in here

‘The war, we ran away from it, and now we are sitting (lit. “we are in an abstract state of sitting”) here (Too Yegbe III.007).

- (30) *Donc, yéē yāà lrè lá wō bē*  
 well, 3SG.EMPH RETR be.beautiful REL do 3SG.ANAPH  
*lrè-lē-yā é sòj kpāà yéē mā.*  
 be.beautiful-GER-ABSTR ART harm put-PRF 3SG.EMPH on

‘So he was really beautiful, and this beauty caused him a great harm’ (Amos Gogbe Tale).

The situation in Mwan is, of course, quite different from the nominalization type in Wan. Most importantly, the suffix *-yā* is attached not to the verb stem but to the gerund: (20) *yāà-lē* ‘sitting down’; (30) *lrè-lē* ‘being beautiful’. These forms could be regarded as cases of a complete lexicalization, but in the broader perspective they probably should be interpreted as a special type of nominalization expressing the idea of an abstract action.

Nikitina has also pointed out a free standing nominalizer in Wan [Nikitina 2009, 20–21]. It is the maker *é*, identical in form with the article and, obviously, derived from the latter. In Wan, this marker cannot be omitted in nominalizing constructions “even in contexts where the action noun is neither definite nor specific” [Nikitina 2009, 21].

<sup>6</sup> Wan is spoken in Kounahiri and west Beoumi subprefectures; the number of speakers is about 22,000 (1993).

In Mwan, the article *é* also can refer to a nominalizing construction, cf. example (12), where the construction *yāā yō mū é wlá zā é* syntactically behaves as a NP governed by the postposition *yí*.

However, I cannot consider *é* to be a specialized free standing nominalizer as it happened in Wan. The article is not obligatory in these constructions and is used only when the situation it refers to is definite, as in (31). In other cases it can be omitted.

**Conclusion.** According to Koptjevskaya-Tamm, languages of the world rarely use several distinct types of verbal nominalization [Koptjevskaya-Tamm 2005]. Languages which use nominalized finite verbal forms or nominalized clauses very seldom have true verbal nouns. Indeed, Mwan does not have specialized nouns derived from verbs which would designate an action or a process *per se*, like English *a walk*, or French *une marche*. Still, Mwan uses extremely broad spectrum of nominalized forms. Therefore, Mwan may be one of rare languages which have more than one type of verbal nominalization.

### **List of Abbreviations**

ABSTR – suffix of abstract nouns

AG – agentive postposition

AGNT – agentive suffix

ANAPH – anaphoric

ART – article

COP – copula

DAT – dative postposition

DIM – diminutive suffix

EXCL – exclusive

FOC – marker of focus

GER – gerund

INSTR – instrumental postposition

IPF – imperfective

LOC – suffix of locative noun

MOD – suffix of modal form

NEG – negation

NSBJ – non-subject series

PCOP – presentative copula

PL – plural

POSS – possessive

PREF – prefix

PRF – perfective

PROG – progressive

REC – reciprocal marker

REL – relativizer

RETR – retrospective marker

SG – singular

SPN – suffix of supin

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