Proto-Senufo noun phrase syntax and morphology

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This paper proposes a reconstruction of proto-Senufo noun phrase syntax which can account for noun phrase syntax in contemporary languages as well as much of noun morphology. Certain elements of NP syntax and noun morphology can with confidence be reconstructed for proto-Senufo. It is clear, for example, that proto-Senufo had a noun class system with 8 classes arranged in 5 genders: three genders consisting of pairs of singular and plural classes, and two single-class genders. This system has been reduced in some languages as a result of phonological erosion, but can confidently be reconstructed for the protolanguage. Other items that are present in all languages and can be reconstructed for the protolanguage are: genitive N order (e.g. Minyanka *kɔ́rpùŋò faŋa* 'a tortoise's grave' (Cauvin 1980, 533), the existence of a possessum pronoun *wo-* (which took noun class suffixes agreeing with an antecedent) (e.g. Cebaara *mɔ wó-ʔo* 'yours', lit. 'your POSS-G2S' where the antecedent of the possessum pronoun is a gender 2 singular noun (R. Mills, *wó- ad loc.*), indefinite determiners of the form *Ca(a)* (where C = a consonant marking noun class) which were postposed to the noun (e.g. Kar *pũũ waa* 'a (certain) dog', Wichser 1994, 289), interrogative determiners which followed the noun (but for which a single set of forms cannot be reconstructed—only the basic construction) (e.g. Supyire *pwun ŋ̀gìré* 'which dog?'), and the order N REL (where REL = either a special relative determiner or a simple demonstrative) (e.g. Minyanka *kor' lemu la toro Kujakã̀ʔã na ke* … 'the road which leads to Koutiala', lit. road / REL / it.PERFECT / pass / Koutiala.town / at / RELATIVE MARKER).

In other areas of NP syntax and morphology there is more variation, and reconstruction is thus more difficult. All current Senufo languages for which I have data have a grammaticalized system of marking definite nouns, but definite marking cannot be reconstructed to a single form in the protolanguage. Some languages have definite articles of the form *Ce* or *Ci.* This paper proposes that these articles can be traced to an original anaphoric demonstrative determiner. Judging from the description in Laughren 1973, this demonstrative probably had a form similar to what Laughren calls "particules de rappel" (p. 38) in Cebari. It is likely that the anaphoric demonstrative determiner could either follow or precede the head N in proto-Senufo, most likely depending on discourse-pragmatic factors. In view of the fact that most languages with definite articles place them after the noun (Minyanka, Pilara, Nyarafolo), this was probably an "unemphatic" position. Kar and Tenyer, on the other hand, place the definite articles before the noun. The "particules de rappel", which are more pragmatically marked than the definite

suffixes in Cebari, are also placed before the noun (e.g. *we ʃõũ* 'that person' (mentioned in the preceding discourse), Laughren 1973, 39). An "emphatic" form of the anaphoric demonstrative pronoun (with a suffix *-re*) can probably be reconstructed for the protolanguage. Significantly, in those languages where this "emphatic" form can be used as a determiner, it precedes the noun rather than following it (e.g. Supyire *uru shiɲí* 'that person').

Other languages have developed definite suffixes rather than articles. This paper proposes that these definite suffixes developed from a postposed *exophoric* demonstrative. In most current languages, the exophoric demonstratives have a nasal prefix and a HL tone melody (NCê). In some languages there is a distinction between proximal and distal demonstrative, but this difference has been lost in most language. The definite suffix in most current languages displays evidence of the nasal prefix of the original demonstrative (e.g. Nanderige *wɔ̂-ŋê* 'the snake', from **-Nwe*,), though in at least one language (Cebaara) neither the current definite suffix nor the current exophoric demonstrative have any trace of a nasal, (e.g. *lóó-lì* 'the shea tree' *lóó-lèè* 'that shea tree', E. Mills, to appear, p. 67).

From this variation, is can be proposed that the protolanguage had various means of indicating definiteness in specific discourse contexts by means of at least two types of demonstrative determiners (anaphoric and exophoric), but that a fully grammaticalized system had not yet developed. Moreover, there was likely variation in the placement of the demonstrative determiner, governed by discourse-pragmatic factors, with the preposed position being more "emphatic" or attention-drawing, and the postposed position being less salient.

The current distributional facts of the determiners (both definite and demonstrative) is instructive: some languages (e.g. Cebaara) place all determiners after the head N; others (e.g. Minyanka, Supyire, Cebari) place definite markers (whether articles or suffixes) after the N, but demonstratives (both anaphoric and exophoric) before the N. Still others (e.g. Kar, Tenyer) place the definite article and the anaphoric demonstrative before the N, and the exophoric demonstrative after the N. In keeping with the general preference for suffixation in Senufo, from a morphological point of view only suffixes and no prefixes have developed from proto-determiners.

There are numerous gaps in the data. Most of the written sources are quite minimal, and quite often authors do not address the matters dealt with in this paper. Several sources give no tone information at all, which, given the importance of tone in all current languages, is bound to

have a detrimental effect on reconstructions. It is hoped that by the time of the conference at least some of the gaps in data will have been filled.

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