This volume contains articles on aspects of phonology, morphology, and syntax of Zina Kotoko, a Chadic language of far northern Cameroon. The introduction presents an overview of the language, providing background information for the articles. David Odden describes verbal tone, which involves phonological interaction between an underlying ‘melody’ for each tense-aspect and the presence of depressor consonants in the stem.

Berit-Anne Bals and Helene Norgaard Andresen examine reduplication in progressive verbs and show that there are two different reduplicative constituents, whose selection depend on the presence of ‘infixed’ object pronouns.

Mark Andrew de Vos gives an overview of noun morphology with special attention to plural formation and focus constructions. Girma A. Demekke analyzes the complex system of definiteness and agreement in DPs and shows how agreement works with different classes of nominal modifiers.

Florin Oprina gives an overview of VP syntax, analyzing relations between particular verb forms and objects constructions, negation, and aspect.

Bodil Kappel Schmidt describes the tense/aspect system with an analysis of aspectual forms as complex, complementary to ‘pure’ tense forms.

Anders Holmberg gives a description and analysis of prepositions and PPs as complex constructions, consisting of a Relator with a Place complement.

Some aspects of the grammar of Zina Kotoko

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1. Introduction: the prepositions

Most adpositions in Zina Kotoko have two parts, both of which precede their complement, forming a complex preposition.

(1) fà kwèkè só: dé mè gną tèbèl
they cut meat race on table
"They cut the meat on the table."

This is the case for all prepositions denoting location or direction. Two part prepositions are found in other Chadic languages as well, for instance Hausa and Gude (see Hoskins 1983:77). It may also be an areal phenomenon, languages as genetically diverse as Yoruba (Kwa, spoken in Nigeria), Bubu (Grassfields Bantu, spoken in North West Cameroon), 153ff, Remmessen 1997). The second part of the Zina Kotoko prepositions may originally have been nouns, perhaps typically denoting body parts. Thus for instance gną in (1) is probably derived from gñedú 'head', and ñëd 'behind' most certainly from ñëdò 'back of (a person)' Indeed as a rough characterization, the second part of the complex preposition denotes a place, while the first part serves to relate the place to some other entity denoted by a constituent of the sentence. I will refer to the two parts as the Place and the Relator, respectively.

(2a) is a list of simple prepositions, (2b) of two part prepositions, and (2c) a list of citation forms.

(2) a. dà
   kà
   “with”, “for”, “to”

b. má jì
   má gñá
   má mwa
   ñá ñóò
   ma ñà
   “in”, “under”, “under”, “near, next to (a person)”, “near, next to (a thing)”, “behind”, “in front”

ët
   “among”

c. má
   ñóò
   “from” or null
   ñóò
   “to”
   ñà
   “at”

[1] Thanks to Rodolfo Kappel Schmidt and Peter Svenonius for their comments on the paper, and special thanks to Habì for being an excellent informant.

[2] That a preposition ‘out’ is derived from the word for head is very common cross-linguistically.
The same Relators appear with the locative wh-word ghwina ‘where’ (Zina Kotoko) has no wh-movement):

(7) a. Tô rûtu ghwina?
you go (to) where
“Where are you going?”

b. Tô bra má ghwina?
you come from where
“Where do you come from?”

c. Âmî dé a ghwina?
water DEF at where
“Where is the water?”

d. Tô lábbô hi dâ Ádâm má ghwina.
you talked PRT with Adam where
“Where did you talk to Adam?”

They also appear with the locative adverbs meaning ‘here’ and ‘there’:

(8) a. Nà ‘dvâ kârâ dé kû fiedê.
I put cards DEF (to) here/there
“I put the cards here/there.”

b. Nà gyinâhá má kû brâ nà bu fiedê.
I left from here and I went (to) there
“I went from here to there.”

c. Hábi a kû fiedê.
Habì at here/there
“Habì is here/there”

d. Tô ‘dâm cikârá dé má kû fiedê.
they ate chicken DEF here/there

2. Is the Place a noun or a preposition?

As mentioned, the Place-words in Zina Kotoko are possibly all derived from nouns. Are they, in fact, nouns? If they are, they are clearly not prototypical nouns, since they are not constructed with determiners or, with one exception, the genitive marker ca (see Demele, this volume). The exception is fikâ ‘front’.

(9) Nà fîn Ádâm mà fikâ ca mafi dé.
I saw Adam in front GIS tree DEF
“I saw Adam in front of the tree.”

On the other hand the Place is not a prototypical preposition, either, since it needs the help of a Relator, to function as a locative preposition. A comparison with English might be instructive: (10) contains three examples of complex prepositional expressions in English.

(10) a. We met at the back of the house.

b. The statue is in front of the town hall.

c. He came out from under the table.

In (10a), back is quite unambiguously a noun, as it takes a determiner as well as the genitive marker of. In (10c), most would probably agree that under is a preposition, since it takes neither a determiner nor genitive of, and furthermore, under occurs in other constructions without a ‘Relator’, as in I saw him under the table. In (10b), front cannot be constructed with a determiner, but must take genitive of, and furthermore, it cannot occur as a locative head (a Place) without the help of the ‘Relator’ in.

With the exception of fikâ, the Place-words in Zina Kotoko are more preposition-like than front, since they do not need the genitive marker. On the other hand, they are less preposition-like than under, since they never occur without a Relator (given that directional PPs such as (3a) are analyzed as having an empty Relator). Whether we want to classify these items as nouns or prepositions is ultimately a matter of definitions. Assume a defining characteristic of prepositions is that they are two-place predicates, denoting a relation (a spatial relation in the case of locative prepositions) between a place and an object or between a place and an event (see below). Assume that, correspondingly, a defining characteristic of a large class of nouns, including nouns meaning ‘head’, ‘front’, ‘back’, etc., is that they are one-place predicates, where the role assigned to the argument is Higgensbotham’s (1985) role R, which is often interpreted as possessor, and which is always optional. We are then led to conclude that the heads gômá, môtó, fikâ, etc. in Zina Kotoko are nouns, not prepositions, needing the help of a Relator to provide a second argument, and thus be able to denote a relation between two objects or an object and an event. Correspondingly, English front is a noun, since it needs the Relator in to provide a second argument, while under is a preposition, since it can manage without a Relator.

I will, however, assign gômá, môtó, fikâ, etc. to a lexical-syntactic category of their own, which I will simply call Place, which may or may not be classified as a subcategory of nouns.3

3. Existential PPs

I have glossed the Relator a as ‘at’, the most neutral English locative preposition. The assumption is that locative-existential sentences consist of a subject, an abstract copula, and a PP headed by the Relator a.

3 Another possibility, following recent work by Josefsson 1997 among others, is that (a) the place-words are bare roots, and (b) roots do not belong to any lexical-syntactic category (such as noun or verb etc.). Only when the root combines with a functional category do we get a lexical-syntactic category. In the case at hand, the place-word would be a bare root which combines with a Relator to derive a preposition. In this view the complex PPs are analogous to transitive VP in the theory where a transitive VP is a complex structure with two heads: the verb V, which encodes all the lexical, semantic features, and an abstract ‘light verb’ v, which encodes transitivity in the sense that it takes an agent argument and assigns accusative Case to the object (following Hale and Keyser 1993 and Chomsky 1995, among others). In the complex PPs in Zina Kotoko the place-head would correspond to V and the Relator would correspond to v. I will refrain from elaborating this hypothesis in the present paper, though, as we want to remain theory-neutral, to some degree. See Ayyaro 2001 for a theory of PPs as complex phrases with a functional, a lexical, and a nominal layer.
Nouns denoting places, such as Paris or Norway, also do not take an argument, and therefore require a prepositional Relator to be interpretable as predicates (as in John is in Paris). Nouns denoting body parts take an (optional) argument, denoting the 'possessor' of the body part. Together with this argument, the noun can denote a place (for instance 'my head'). This place-denoting noun phrase does not, however, take another argument, so in order to use the place-denoting noun phrase as a predicate, a Relator, which in Zina Kotoko is a, is required in order to introduce a second argument, which can be moved to specIP, to yield the predication configuration. Note the crucial assumption that the Zina Kotoko Place-words gmd, mvd, fls, etc., retain the nominal property of being strictly one-place predicates. If they had undergone a complete transition to prepositions, that is, two-place predicates, there would be no need for the Relator a in existential-locative sentences.

When the possessor is expressed by a lexical DP, for instance a proper name, a is in construction with the genitive marker ca. As in the case of the possessive pronoun, the Relator a is the only overt signal of sentential status in this case.

(17) a. Giiká dé a ca Ádam.
    knife DEF at GIN Adam
    "The knife is Adam's."

    b. giiká dé ca Ádam
    "Adam's knife"

Note that the genitive marker is not a preposition, but rather a pronoun (see Demeke, this volume). Therefore the Relator is, again, needed to construct a predicate relation.

As will be shown in section 7, there is another 'have-construction' in Zina Kotoko, more common than (13) or (17), in which the possessor is the subject.

4. Directional PPs

Consider again the directional PPs in (18) (= (3)):

(18) a. Dá ‘dvá kátá dé gmd táblí.
    he put cards DEF to on table
    "He put the cards on the table."

    b. Dá váli kátá dé má gmd táblí.
    he took cards DEF from on table
    "He took the cards from the table."

The Relators má and 0 can also be combined with place-denoting DPs, with the meaning 'from' and 'to', respectively.

(19) a. Hábi brá má Ngaundere.
    Habit comes from Ngaundere

    b. Hábi bá stó Ngaundere.
    Habit went FRT (to) Ngaundere

    c. Ců zál lákwitá Oslo.
    she sent letter (to) Oslo
Cases like (19b,c) support the analysis according to which there is a phonetically empty preposition in (18a), as well: The meaning 'to' is regularly encoded by a null morpheme, a phonetically unrealized Relator, in Zina Kotoko. Sometimes the Relator for 'to' is ma instead of null.

(20) a. Na bu ma mwa tabal de. I went to under table DEF "I went under the table."

b. De bu gbaru na jf lisáu de. he jump in to in river DEF "He jumped into the river."

The choice between na and null depends neither on the Place-word nor on the object of the Place-word. Presumably it depends on a selectional feature of the verb, which may be quite idiosyncratic. Compare (20a) and (21):

(21) Na rwu mwa tabal de. I go (to) under table DEF "I go under the table."

The only difference other than na vs. null is the verb form, two suppletive verb forms of the verb 'go'. (20a) has the past tense form bu, necessarily in construction with na, while (21) has alone is not crucial: It is the case that present tense correlates with null. I conclude that the choice between na and null is due to an idiosyncratic lexical selection feature of the verb.

5. Adverbial locative PPs

When the locative PP is neither directional nor existential, the Relator is ma.

(22) a. Na fin Ádám ma jf msáli. I saw Adam in mosque

b. Tá dám cálla da ma mwa mafú. they ate chicken DEF under tree

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c. Tá kovich i: ni dé má gána tabal. they cut meat DEF on table "They cut the meat on the table."

Again this extends to wh-questions and the locative proforms 'here/there':

(23) a. Ádám gáha hláfa má ghwiná. Adam catch fish where "Where did Adam catch fish?"

b. Má dám cálla da má ki we ate chicken DEF here

Insofar as directional PPs are generally, perhaps always, argumental (with verbs such as put, take, go, come, give, send, sell, steal, etc. etc.), the generalization can also be stated as follows: When the locative PP is an adverbial (an adjunct) the Relator is ma.

Clearly ma does not mean ‘from’ in these examples. However, I defer to the next section the question whether there are two lexical items /d/ or just one.

6. The structure of complex PPs

Consider first existential PPs, arguably the simplest case.

(24) a. Kára dé a gána tabal. cards are on table

b. PP

As discussed, the second head of the complex PP belongs to a category of its own, called Place, which is unlike a noun in that it takes a direct argument with no need for a genitive marker (with one exception, namely /d/ 'from'), but like a noun and unlike a preposition in that it does not take a second argument. A second argument is introduced with the help of the Relator a. A second argument is needed for the sentence to express a spatial relation between two objects, more precisely, an object and a place (syntactically encoded as a PlaceP). The PP functioning as the second argument is merged as a specifier of a, but moves to specIP (where I in this case is null). I assume that the sentential head I contains a phonetically unrealized tense-feature which receives the default interpretation Present.
Consider next the slightly more complicated case of directional PPs:

(26) a. Də váts kárta dé má gnah tábl.
   he took cards DEF from on table

(27) Wáñir yi Ngaundere brám.
    bus GEN Ngaundere came
    "The bus from Ngaundere/the Ngaundere bus has arrived."
    The same holds true of the Relator 0 'to'.

(28) Wáñir yi Ngaundere bá sné
    Bus GEN Ngaundere went PRT
    "The bus to Ngaundere/the Ngaundere bus has left."

It looks like these Relators can express the meanings 'from, and 'to', respectively only in construction with verbs of the right kind. The suggestion here is that they must be abstractly incorporated in the verbs in question. This may indicate that má and null are underspecified Relators (as suggested by Peter Svenonius, personal communication). If so, this might explain why má appears in adverbial PPs, where apparently it serves a purely formal function, not contributing to the meaning of the expression, or at most contributing with a general locative meaning (redundantly, given that the Place is locative as well). The directional prepositions má an null would be assigned their specification by the selecting verb: 'to' if selected by such verbs as 'dóv' put' or 'zal' send', but 'from' if selected by verbs such as váts 'take' or bá 'come'. When it heads an adverbial PP, má is not selected at all, hence would remain unspecified.

Consider (29), an example of an adverbial PP:

(29) a. Tá kwíc chí Asi dé má gnah tábl
    they cut meat DEF on table
    "They cut the meat on the table."

b. PP má
    tá kwíc chí Asi dé PPR má Place DP
    gnah tábl
The preposition in adverbial PPs relates an an individual to an event (see Parsons 1990, Barbiers 1995, Nilsen 1999). (29) can be paraphrased as 'They cut the meat, and this event took place on the table'. Following Kayne 1994, Barbiers 1995 and Nilsen 1999, I assume that this is mapped quite directly into syntactic structure in that the preposition takes a DP as complement and a VP (the exponent of an event) as specifier. The complete derivation of (25) must include raising of the subject to specIP and the verb to I. The typical order, the adverbial PP following the VP, follows directly under this analysis. The Relator is required here because the Place in Zina Kotoko is a noun-like one-place predicate, in need of a Relator to license the event argument.

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"As expected (25) is vague as regards whether they were on the table when they cut the meat or whether just the meat was on the table, the latter interpretation preferred, in this case, for pragmatic reasons."
In adverbal PPs the Relator is always mâ, regardless of the choice of Place. This indicates that mâ itself does not contribute any meaning. A not implausible hypothesis is that mâ contributes nothing but the formal property of taking a vP argument. The locative interpretation would then derive exclusively from the Place. Alternatively mâ has a general locative feature.

It is cross-linguistically common that ablative expressions undergo a change where they become locative expressions.7 MacKenzie 1978 discusses a number of such cases of 'ablative-locative transfer', from the Romance, Germanic, and Slavonic languages, as well as from Hebrew and the two Austronesian languages Fijian and Sosorol-Tobi. See also Bennett 1989 on South Slavic. Thus for instance the French locative prepositions dans, devant, dessous, and dessus are all originally complex prepositions. This strongly suggests that mâ at one point was a purely directional Relator meaning 'from', which, at some point in the history of Kotoko, underwent ablative-locative transfer in contexts where it is not selected. As a result there are now two morphemes mâ. One is a Relator with the meaning 'from' (or ablative), which must be selected by a directional verb with compatible features. The other, I propose, is an expletive Relator, with the property of taking a vP specifier as its only distinguishing feature. In this view, ablative-locative transfer is not substitution of a locative feature for an ablative feature, but merely the loss of the ablative feature. The locative interpretation of the PP derives exclusively from the Place.

This will also account for (30) (compare (27)). Ablative mâ must be selected by a directional verb.

(30) aWâr mâ Ngaundere brâm.
    bus from Ngaundere came.

7. Simple prepositions

The preposition dâ 'with' is used as an instrumental preposition:

(31) Dâ 'dâm dâ frâkîn. (instrumental)
    he ate with hands

Just like English with, dâ is also used as a comitative preposition:

(32) Dâ 'dâm dâ Adâm. (comitative)
    he ate with Adam

It is also used as a possessive marker; This is the unmarked sentential possessive construction (compare (13)).

(33) Falmâtâ dâ wâïîr. (possessive)
    Falmata with car
    "F. has a car."

The simple prepositions in Zina Kotoko are regular prepositions, taking two arguments, either an event and an individual, as in (31) and (32), or two individuals, as in (33). The derivation of (33) is similar to the derivation of existential-locative constructions, except that in this case there is no need for a Relator. The subject is the underlying specifier of the preposition, moved to specIP, where I have an abstract Tense feature assigned Present as a default value.

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1 Thanks to David Bennett for drawing my attention to this phenomenon.

(34) [p Falmâtâ I [p r [p-dâ wâïîr]]]

The preposition ko is a benefactive preposition, corresponding to 'for' in some of its uses. It is optionally doubled by a benefactive pronoun.8

(35) Dâ zâl (nââhâ) lakwita ko Adâm. (benefactive)
    he sent for.him letter to Adam

(36) Dâ jâgô (nââhâ) ko Hâblî.
    he cooked for.her for Habibi

(37) Falmâtâ jam (nââhâ) ko Adâm nanke dâ jâgô sâkînâ.
    Falmata asked for.him for Adam that he cook chicken
    "Falmata asked Adam to cook chicken."

Compare (35) with (17c), repeated here as (38): In (35) the preposition is benefactive, in (38) the (phonetically unrealized) proposition is directional.

(38) Dâ zâl lakwita Oslo.
    he sent letter Oslo
    "He sent a letter to Oslo."

Summary

Zina Kotoko has a small set of simple prepositions and a larger set of complex propositional expressions made up of two heads, a Place and a Relator. The Place is a noun-like category crucially taking only one argument. Therefore it requires a Relator in order for the complex to denote a relation between an individual and a place (in the case of existential PPs), or an event and a place (in the case of adverbial PPs), or in order to form a complex predicate together with a verb, and thus denote a relation between an agent, an individual, and a place (in the case of directional PPs).

The two uses of the form mâ, one where it occurs in construction with verbs such as vâta 'take' and bâra 'come' in the sense 'from', and one where it occurs as a generalized head of adverbial PPs, was claimed to be the result of a language change whereby the ablative feature of the directional Relator mâ 'from' is lost in unselected contexts, an instance of a process which in the literature has been called ablative-locative transfer.

References


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8 The benefactive pronoun is made up of nâ, presumably a cognate of the directional Relator nâ, plus a pronoun.
Pronouns

Helene Norgaard Andreassen

In this article we will give an overview of the pronominal patterns in Zina Kotoko. The overview includes descriptions of the various personal pronouns, demonstratives, interrogatives, relatives and pronouns in conjunctions and disjunctions.

1. Subject pronouns

(1) ná skweł nsi
I want.pres.egg
‘I want an egg’

tò kwicɔ cákbwá de
youn.tem cul.past chicken def
‘You cut the chicken’

kò zàkà cákbwá de
you.masc kill.past chicken def
‘You killed the chicken’

dò lâbɔ lâbɔ
he tell.past story
‘He told a story’

cò gali-gali ʃi
she red.3-pl prog prt
‘She is lying’

mà wàŋgi ghìlɔ
we buy.pres knife
‘We buy a knife’

mà wàŋgi-wàŋgi ghìlɔ
we red-buy.prog knife
‘We are buying a knife’

wá wál ʃi
you.3-pl give.past money
‘You gave money’