The Hausa Negative Markers

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1. Introduction

Modern standard Hausa marks negation in six different ways, five involving some variant or variants of the morph ba(a), the sixth employing the morph kâdâ. In traditional treatments of Hausa these variants are listed individually as the negative of one or another affirmative construction. No previous attempts have been made to relate these variants to one another nor to explain their similarities and differences. The aim of this paper is to provide a systematic account of the negative markers found in modern Hausa in terms of their historical derivation from a reconstructed negative marking system. While the historical analysis presented in this paper has implications for synchronic studies of negation in Hausa, it does not purport to be a generative/transformational description of the language as it now stands.

2. Hausa Negative Types

The Hausa negative (henceforth 'Neg') markers are as follows:

1. bàa...bá e.g. shìi bàa sàrkì fi bà nèe 'he is not chief'
2. bà...bá e.g. gìwàa bà tà jàa bá 'the elephant didn't pull it'
3. báa... e.g. báa yàa fìfàa 'he is not going out'
4. báa... e.g. báa sù ìì kòomèe 'they do not have anything'
   báa mìyàa 'there isn't any soup'

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(Note: The tonal sequence High-Low in the same syllable is realized as a fall, i.e. bâà = [\].)

(5) bâabù... e.g. bâabù mîyàa
'there isn't any soup'

(6) kâdà... e.g. kâdà kà mân'tâa
'don't forget'

Neg type (1) is used to negate equational sentences, individual words, and sentences as a whole (i.e. 'It is not the case that...'). Neg type (2) is used with verbal sentences in all tenses except the continuous and the subjunctive. It co-occurs with a short unmarked preverbal pronoun set. In addition to the past (illustrated above), Neg type (2) is used in the future, the second future (or potential), and the habitual. Neg types (1) and (2) are the only ones in Hausa that use discontinuous markers. In both cases, the initial marker (Neg₁) goes at the beginning of the sentence and the final marker (Negᵢ) goes at the end. Neg type (3) is used with a long/low pronoun set to form the negative of verbal sentences in the continuous. Some speakers also use this Neg type in preference to Neg type (4) in "have" sentences, e.g. bâa swàâ dà kôomî 'they do not have anything'. Neg type (4) is used in two different constructions. First, it occurs with the high tone "object" pronoun set in "have" sentences and in the parallel sentences with gà, e.g. bââ mú gà sàrkî 'we are not with (i.e. partisans of) the chief'. In northern dialects of Hausa, this construction replaces Neg type (3) as the normal means of forming the negative of the continuous, e.g. bââ shî fîtâa 'he is not going out'. Secondly, Neg type (4) functions as a negative existential marker equivalent to Neg type (5) in sentences with overt complements. It is never used by itself, i.e. one may say bââ kûdîî 'there isn't any money' but not ??bââ 'there isn't any'.

2 The double question mark ?? is used to indicate ungrammaticality. The asterisk * is used in accordance with standard practice in historical linguistics to indicate reconstructed or hypothetical forms.
(5) functions solely as a negative existential marker meaning 'there is no...'. It may be used either with a complement or by itself, e.g. the complete sentence bàabù 'there isn't any'. Neg type (6) kàdà serves as the negative of the subjunctive and the imperative. It co-occurs with the short pronoun set normally used in the subjunctive. Unlike the Neg₁ ba(a) markers, kàdà can optionally be separated from its pronoun and shifted in front of the subject, e.g.:

(7) ...yàaròo kàdà yà fìtà = ...kàdà yàaròo yà fìtà
    'lest the boy go out'

(8) Cf. yàaròo bàa yàa fìtàa ?? bàa yàaròo yàa fìtàa
    'the boy is not going out'

Syntactic facts such as the one just described plus the obvious phonological difference between ba(a) and kàdà suggest that the two forms are etymologically distinct. Therefore, in the historical discussion that follows, Neg types (1) to (5), which make use of the morph ba(a), will be treated as a group while Neg type (6) kàdà will receive separate treatment.

3. The reconstructed proto-form

The proto-form from which the five Neg types (1) to (5) are historically derived can be reconstructed as *bàa...bà. This reconstruction embodies three claims:

(a) The proto-Hausa Neg in all morpho-syntactic environments was discontinuous and included a Neg₁ in addition to a Neg₁. This Neg₁ was *bà.

(b) The vowel of Neg₁ in the proto-language was long.

(c) The tone of Neg₁ in the proto-language was low.

Claim (a) is based primarily on comparative evidence from other languages in the Chadic family to which Hausa belongs.³ Throughout Chadic, one finds two common Neg marking systems, namely (i) Neg₁... Neg₁, and (ii) ...Neg₁. In addition to Hausa, languages with discon-
tinuous Neg markers include Kanakuru, where Neg$^{i}$ and Neg$_{f}$ are indicated by variants of the same morph (wói...(w)u), and Jegu, where Neg$^{i}$ and Neg$_{f}$ morphs are distinct (báâ...dó). A larger number of Chadic languages (e.g. Bolewa, Ngizim, Angas, Ron (Bokkos), Gisiga, and Higi) make use of only a single Neg marker at the end of the sentence. Neg marking by the use of a single Neg at the beginning of the sentence--such as is the case with Hausa Neg types (3), (4), and (5)--is not found elsewhere in Chadic. It thus must represent a Hausa innovation rather than an archaic feature. The most likely explanation is that the anomalous Hausa Neg types (3), (4), and (5) came about through the loss of the Neg$_{f}$ component of what at an earlier time was a discontinuous morpheme. As far as the shape of Neg$_{f}$ is concerned, there seems to be no reason to reconstruct it other than as *bá.

The Neg$^{i}$ is reconstructed as *bàâ with a long vowel for both internal and comparative reasons. The internal reason is that all of the present-day Neg$^{i}$ markers except one are long. Moreover, the environments in which the long vowel Neg$^{i}$'s are found are too disparate to lend themselves to a general lengthening rule whereas the short Neg$^{i}$ is limited to an easily specifiable environment. The comparative evidence is provided by Sura and Kanakuru, two languages closely related to Hausa that also have discontinuous Neg markers. In both of these languages the Neg$^{i}$ marker is long, i.e. Sura báâ...kás and Kanakuru wói...(w)u.

The reconstruction of Neg$^{i}$ as *bàâ with low tone is based primarily on the discovery of what I believe to be the historical change that in some environments resulted in the original low tone being replaced by high. This rule is presented in (17) below.

4. Derivation of the Hausa negative types (1) to (5)

Given the reconstructed proto-form *bàâ...bá, we are now ready to derive the Neg variants found in present-day Hausa.

(9) *bàâ...bá > bàâ...bá

Neg type (1), used in equational sentences, has retained the form of the proto Neg marker without change.
In modern Hausa most tenses are formed with the help of a set of short vowel pronominal prefixes (n₁, kₐ, k₁, sh₁/yà, tà, mù, kù, sù, 'à'). The historical shortening of *bàa to bà took place when and only when the initial *bàa was attached to an immediately following pronominal suffix, e.g.:

(10) *bà-a...bà > bà...bà / [CV]pp

[pp = pronominal prefix]

Although ultimately derived from a sequence of a pronominal prefix plus a tense marker àa, the continuous tense forms (nàa, kàa, kyàa, etc.) had already coalesced into inseparable pronouns by the time of the Neg shortening rule and thus the Neg marker occurring with them was not affected by it, i.e.:

(11) *bà-a tà fì-tà bà > bà-tà fì-tà bà
    'she did not go out'

(12) *bà-a mú kàn fì-tà bà > bà-mú kàn fì-tà bà
    'we don't go out'

(13) *bà-a nàa (< n₁ + à) fì-tà bà > bà-nàa fì-tà bà
    'I will not go out'

Interestingly, Kanakuru has a synchronic Neg shortening rule which is remarkably similar to the Hausa rule (10), namely:

(15) wòl ==> wo (with polar tone) / pronoun

E.g.:

(16) èmûná wòl nènè ù = èmûná wò-shìlî nènè ù
    'the chief is not there'

gùnyòi wòl pòrà-tà ù = gùnyòi wò-shëë pòrà-tà ù
    'the girl did not go out'

'The low tone in the underlying representations is automatically raised to high under certain conditions. A detailed study of Hausa preverbal pronouns by Russell Schuh and myself is now in preparation.'
(Use of the pronoun after the noun subject is optional, but if chosen, the shortening of the Neg marker is obligatory.)

An apparent failing of rule (10) is that it does not account for the use of the short Neg_i with the standard Hausa future construction in which the Neg_i is separated from the pronominal prefix by an intervening tense marker zàa, e.g. bà zàa tà fîtà bá 'she will not go out'. One would not, however, expect to explain the use of bà...bá with the zàa future by rule (10) since it is unlikely that this form of the future even existed at the time the rule was in operation. The future construction formed with zàa plus a pronominal prefix (e.g. zàa tà fîtà 'she will go out', bà zàa sù yàrdá bá 'they will not agree') appears to be a very recent innovation limited to standard Nigerian Hausa. While it has established itself with great success throughout this dialect area, it has failed so far to spread to northern and western dialects. Considering the young age of this tense construction, the form of the Neg used with it must have been adopted from the other tenses that form negatives with bà...bá rather than being derived from proto *bàa...bá via a historical shortening rule:

(17) *bàa...bá > bàa...ô > báa...

Condition: Blocked in equational sentences.

Except in equational sentences, Negs with an initial long *bàa (i.e. those not having undergone rule (10) ) underwent a complex change in which the final Neg was dropped and the tone of the Neg marker was raised, e.g.:

(18) *bàa mwàa dáfàawáa bá > báa mwàa dáfàawáa
    'we are not cooking it'

(19) *bàa shì dà dòökíli bá > *báa shì dà dòökíli
    'he doesn't have a horse'

(20) *bàa dà rùwàa bá > *báa dà rùwàa
    'there isn't any water'

The subsequent change of the Neg_i from bàa to báa in the latter two examples will be accounted for below (cf. (21) - (26) ).
Rule (11) is proposed to account for what I think is a non-accidental correlation in Hausa, namely that Neg₁ is absent in just those cases where Neg₁ is long and has an initial high tone. At this point, I have no explanation as to why the Negᵣ was dropped nor why the deletion failed to take place in equational sentences. The claim I wish to make is that when the Negᵣ was dropped, its high tone survived and was shifted to the initial *bàa, the resultant bàa in effect constituting a compressed Neg₁/Negᵣ marker.

Neg type (4) is presumed to have undergone rule (11) along with Neg type (3), thereby ending up with a high tone Neg₁ and no Negᵣ. What remains to be accounted for is the change from the hypothetical form *bàa to the present form bàa. Here I would suggest that there was not one derivation, but two—the change *bàa to bàa occurring independently in the case of the two distinct Neg (4) constructions. The first:

(21) *bàa > bàa / ___ [CV]₀p

Under the influence of an immediately following high tone "object" pronoun, the Neg₁ marker *bàa weakened to bàa. It is assumed that this change was due to a depressing effect exerted by the pronoun set in question on the length component of the preceding *bàa. This process also explains the future tense and locative constructions formed with zàa plus this same pronoun set, e.g.:

(21) *bàa shì dà dōokli > bàa shì dà dōokli
'he doesn't have a horse'

(22) *bàa mú gà sārkli > bàa mú gà sārkli
'we are not partisans of the chief'

(23) Cf. *zàa nī gīdāa > zàa nī gīdāa
'I'm going home'

While the second:

(24) *bàa dá > bàa

In modern Hausa the negative existential markers bàa and bāabù
are generally regarded as replacements for the corresponding affirmative forms da and 'akwa. Historically, existential sentences in Hausa were undoubtedly negated like all other sentence types by being enclosed in *bàa...bà. After the loss of the Neg f by rule (17), negative existential sentences would still have been formed by Neg i + S, e.g. *bàa da ruwáa 'there is no water' vs. da ruwáa 'there is water'. The claim embodied in the above rule is that the marker da was not actually deleted in negative sentences, but rather that it fused with the Neg i marker. The low tone on the second mora of bà thus represents the contribution of the underlying da to the present day portmanteau negative-existential marker, e.g.:

(25) *bàa da ruwáa
    > bà ruwáa
    'there is no water'

(26) *bàa da kóowáa yanzú
    > bà kóowáa yanzú
    'there is no one now'

Now, consider Neg type (5):

(27) *bàa + *àbù > *bàabù

The negative existential form bàabù 'there is not/are not' is historically derived from a fusion of the Neg i marker *bàa with the noun *àbù 'thing'. This rule must necessarily have followed the

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5This analysis was prompted by comparative evidence from other Chadic languages, e.g. Bolewa: ga dodo 'there is money' vs. ga dodo sa 'there isn't any money', Kanakuru: ayim yikil 'there is water' vs. woi ayim yik-u 'there isn't any water', Tera: a nde 'there is (some)' vs. a nde bà 'there isn't (any)'. Eulenberg [1971] correctly came to this same analysis on internal, synchronic grounds.

6As far as I am aware, this traditional analysis of bàabù as being derived from *bàa plus *àbù has always been thought of in historical terms. When Eulenberg [1971] purports to challenge this analysis—suggesting instead "that bàa is a contracted form of bàabù"—it is not clear whether he is questioning the historical facts or whether he has mistakenly attributed a synchronic significance to the analysis never imputed by its adherents.
incorporation of da into the Neg form baa described above. Originally baaabu was probably in complementary distribution with baa, the former being used in place of the latter only when there was no overt complement following the negative, i.e. (a) baa naamaa 'there is no meat', or (b) baaabu 'there isn't (any)', but not (c) ??baaabu naamaa. The use of baaabu in constructions with a complement, such as in the now grammatical sentence (c), must be the result of a subsequent innovation.\(^7\)

5. The negative type (6)

The remaining Neg type to be accounted for, type (6), is the construction with kada, which is used in the subjunctive (including the negative imperative), e.g.:

\[(28)\] kada k\(\_\)a sh\(\_\)g\(\_\)a
'don't enter'

\[(29)\] naa b\(\_\)uy\(\_\)a kada y\(\_\)aaro y\(\_\)a b\(\_\)i n\(\_\)
'I hid lest the boy follow me'

From a synchronic point of view, this construction is peculiar in two ways: (i) it makes use of an entirely unrelated morph kada instead of the normal Neg ba(a); and (ii) it lacks a Neg\(_f\). Neither of these factors, however, seems particularly strange or unusual when Hausa is compared with other Chadic languages. In fact, the present-day kada negative construction lends itself to a straightforward explanation when related to a reconstructed West Chadic negative construction of the form *LEST...Neg\(_f\).

It was pointed out in section 3 that Chadic languages generally have one of two Neg types: (a) Neg\(_i\)...Neg\(_f\), and (b) ...Neg\(_f\), the

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\(^7\)This analysis provides a natural historical explanation for some of the questions concerning baa and baaabu raised by Eulenberg [1971], specifically (a) why doesn't baa occur without a complement? and (b) why does baaabu permit a complement without the normal changes associated with N + N constructions? The answer to (a) is that baa should no more occur by itself than the affirmative existential marker da, of which it is composed, or a preposition such as gaa. When not generated with any other complement, baa came to take the non-specific noun
latter being the more common. However, in the negative subjunctive and the negative imperative, even languages that have no Neg₁ use some kind of marker at the beginning of the sentence in addition to the Neg₁ occurring at the end. This marker, which I will label LEST (a term by which it can often be translated), is structurally a type of adverbial-conjunction. Though inherently semantically negative, it is not a true Neg marker. The existence of such negative adverbials is common in Chadic and their usage is similar wherever they are found. Although the forms match closely in terms of syntactic function, they vary widely in terms of phonological shape, cognate forms being the exception rather than the rule. In the following examples drawn from closely related West Chadic languages, sentences of the form LEST...Neg₁, used in the negative subjunctive and imperative, are contrasted with negative sentences in other tenses which do not use the adverbial.

(30) Bolewa:
ka basa su sa
  'you didn't shoot them'
sa = Neg₁
kobo ka bese su sa
  'don't shoot them'
kobo = LEST

Ron (Fyer):
yi hwali naat
  'I didn't hear it'
naat = Neg₁
...kada ti nyi door naat
  '...lest she be annoyed'
kada = LEST

èbù 'thing' as its obligatory, space-filling complement. Similarly, in Angas the existential marker di always requires a complement. If a specific complement slot, e.g. am di 'there is water', or nyi di 'there is (some)', but not ??di. The answer to (b) is that while bääbù historically developed from bää + èbù, it has long since been reinterpreted as a monomorphemic negative-existential marker equivalent to bää and thus in modern Hausa functions accordingly.

kòbò is an older form. Nowadays kàdàa (sic), borrowed from Hausa, is more commonly used.
Angas:

ma met ka
'm they have not gone'
ka = Neg₁
manta a met ka
'don't go'
manta = LEST₃

Sura:

baa wan ka na kas
'I haven't seen it'
baa = Neg₁, kas = Neg₁

†aji wu sat pwoo kas
'don't say it'
†aji = LEST

It should be obvious by comparison with the above that Hausa kádâ is also a LEST adverbial syntactically corresponding to kobo, kaďa, manta, and †aji, and not an anomalous Neg₁ marker. The examples from languages such as Bolewa that do not use a discontinuous Neg show clearly that the use of LEST is completely independent of the existence of an underlying Neg₁. The examples from Sura, which like Hausa normally employs a discontinuous Neg, point to a basic incompatibility between LEST and Neg₁ and suggest that proto-Hausa (like Sura and modern Hausa) also had a rule that prevented the use of Neg₁ whenever LEST was present, i.e. LEST Neg₁...Neg₁ ===> LEST...Neg₁. Hausa's use of a LEST marker (kádâ) in the negative subjunctive and imperative is thus typical of the Chadic subgroup to which it belongs.

A second peculiarity of the Hausa kádâ construction is the absence of the final Neg marker. A possible explanation would be to relate the deletion of ba after kádâ to the historical deletion of the final Neg₁ from Neg types (3), (4), and (5) described earlier. However, there is evidence which indicates that the two deletions represent independent historical changes, the loss of ba after LEST being simply a Hausa manifestation of a tendency found elsewhere in Chadic. In all of the languages cited in (30) above, for example, the use of Neg₁ in sentences with LEST is reported to be optional [indicated by ( ) in (31) below]:

³manta has a short variant man. In addition to the normal Neg₁ marker ka, Angas also has a special Neg₁ marker ka† which can only be used in the negative subjunctive.
It seems clear then that the use of Neg_f with LEST must have already been optional in proto-Hausa times. The Hausa innovation thus consisted not in the development of a new rule but rather in the change in status of an already existing rule from optional to obligatory, with subsequent historical consequences. The sequence can be diagrammed as follows:

(32) Inherited rule  

LEST...Neg_f  ===========> LEST...

New synchronic rule  

LEST...Neg_f  ===========> LEST...

Resultant historical rule  

LEST...Neg_f  LEST...

In the above sections, there has been a conscious attempt to avoid referring to the morph kàdà except when specifically discussing modern-day Hausa. While the construction type *LEST...Neg_f can be reconstructed for proto-Hausa with confidence, it is at present not possible to reconstruct the proto-form of that LEST marker nor even to hypothesize whether kàdà might be a reflex of it.

6. Summary

Negation in proto-Hausa was indicated in all environments excluding the subjunctive by means of a discontinuous morpheme *bàà...bá. The various means of marking negation in present-day Hausa are all derived from that proto-form. For the negative of the subjunctive and imperative, proto-Hausa employed an inherently negative adverbial LEST in addition to the normal Neg_f marker *bá. The use of this Neg_f was optional. The phonological shape of the LEST morpheme in proto-Hausa has not been reconstructed.

10In my own materials, só was invariably used in imperative constructions, but was commonly deleted in embedded "lest" clauses.
REFERENCES


