

## THE HAUSA NEGATIVE MARKERS<sup>1</sup>

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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 *káà*. 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) <i>bàa...bá</i> | e.g. | <i>shíi bàa sárkíi bá nèè</i><br>'he is not chief'   |
| (2) <i>bà...bá</i>  | e.g. | <i>gíiwáa bà tà jáa bá</i><br>'the elephant didn't pull it'  |
| (3) <i>báa...</i>   | e.g. | <i>báa yàa fítáa</i><br>'he is not going out'  |
| (4) <i>báà...</i>   | e.g. | <i>báà sú dà kóoméè</i><br>'they do not have anything'<br><i>báà míyàa</i><br>'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. *báà* = [↘].)

- (5) *báabù*... e.g. *báabù míyàa*  
'there isn't any soup'
- (6) *kádà*... e.g. *kádà kà mántáa*  
'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 (Neg<sub>i</sub>) goes at the beginning of the sentence and the final marker (Neg<sub>f</sub>) 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. *báa swàa dà kóoméé* '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. *báà mú gà sárkíi* '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. *báà shí fítáa* '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 *báà kúdfi* 'there isn't any money' but not *??báà* 'there isn't any'.<sup>2</sup> Neg type

<sup>2</sup>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 báabù 'there isn't any'. Neg type (6) kádà 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 Neg<sub>i</sub> ba(a) markers, kádà can optionally be separated from its pronoun and shifted in front of the subject, e.g.:

(7) ...yáarò kádà yà fítá = ...kádà yáarò yà fítá  
'lest the boy go out'

(8) Cf. yáarò báa yà fítá ≠ ?? báa yáarò yà fítá  
'the boy is not going out'

Syntactic facts such as the one just described plus the obvious phonological difference between ba(a) and kádà 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) kádà 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...bá. This reconstruction embodies three claims:

- (a) The proto-Hausa Neg in all morpho-syntactic environments was discontinuous and included a Neg<sub>f</sub> in addition to a Neg<sub>i</sub>. This Neg<sub>f</sub> was \*bá.
- (b) The vowel of Neg<sub>i</sub> in the proto-language was long.
- (c) The tone of Neg<sub>i</sub> 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.<sup>3</sup> Throughout Chadic, one finds two common Neg marking systems, namely (i) Neg<sub>i</sub>...Neg<sub>f</sub>, and (ii) ...Neg<sub>f</sub>. In addition to Hausa, languages with discon-

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<sup>3</sup>For the composition of the Chadic family and Hausa's position in it, see Greenberg [1963], Newman and Ma [1966], and Hoffman [1971].

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 ( $báà...dó$ ). 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  $*bàa$  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  $bàa...kás$  and Kanakuru  $wói... (w)u$ .

The reconstruction of  $Neg_i$  as  $*bàa$  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  $*bàa...bá$ , we are now ready to derive the Neg variants found in present-day Hausa.

(9)  $*bàa...bá > bàa...bá$

Neg type (1), used in equational sentences, has retained the form of the proto Neg marker without change.

- (10) \*bàa...bá > bà...bá / \_\_\_[CV]<sub>pp</sub>  
 [pp = pronominal prefix]

In modern Hausa most tenses are formed with the help of a set of short vowel pronominal prefixes (nì, kà, kì, shì/yà, t̀à, mù, kù, sù, 'à).<sup>4</sup> 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.:

- (11) \*bàa t̀à fìtá bá > bà-t̀à fìtá bá  
 'she did not go out'
- (12) \*bàa mú kàn fìtá bá > bà-mú kàn fìtá bá  
 'we don't go out'
- (13) \*bàa náà (< ní + à) fìtá bá > bà-náà fìtá bá  
 'I will not go out'

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.:

- (14) \*bàa swàa fìtáa bá / ?? bà-swàa fìtáa ba  
 'they are not going out'

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

- (15) wóí ==> wo (with polar tone) / \_\_\_pronoun

E.g.:

- (16) ámná wóí néné ù = ámná wó-shìi néné ù  
 'the chief is not there'
- gúnyòì wóí pórà-tá ù = gúnyòì wò-shée pòrà-tá ù  
 'the girl did not go out'

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<sup>4</sup>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<sub>1</sub> with the standard Hausa future construction in which the Neg<sub>1</sub> is separated from the pronominal prefix by an intervening tense marker *záa*, e.g. *bà záa tà fítá bá* 'she will not go out'. One would not, however, expect to explain the use of *bà...bá* with the *záa* 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 *záa* plus a pronominal prefix (e.g. *záa tà fítá* 'she will go out', *bà záa 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...ò* > *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<sub>1</sub> marker was raised, e.g.:

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

(19) *\*bàa shí dà dóokìi bá* > *\*báa shí dà dóokìi*  
'he doesn't have a horse'

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

The subsequent change of the Neg<sub>1</sub> from *báa* to *bàa* in the latter two examples will be accounted for below (cf. (21) - (26)).

Rule (17) is proposed to account for what I think is a non-accidental correlation in Hausa, namely that  $Neg_1$  is absent in just those cases where  $Neg_1$  is long and has an initial high tone. At this point, I have no explanation as to why the  $Neg_f$  was dropped nor why the deletion failed to take place in equational sentences. The claim I wish to make is that when the  $Neg_f$  was dropped, its high tone survived and was shifted to the initial \*bàa, the resultant *bàa* in effect constituting a compressed  $Neg_1/Neg_f$  marker.

Neg type (4) is presumed to have undergone rule (17) along with Neg type (3), thereby ending up with a high tone  $Neg_1$  and no  $Neg_f$ . What remains to be accounted for is the change from the hypothetical form \*bàa to the present form *bàà*. Here I would suggest that there was not one derivation, but two--the change \*bàa to *bàà* occurring independently in the case of the two distinct Neg (4) constructions. The first:

(21) \*bàa > bàà / \_\_\_\_ [CV]<sub>op</sub>

Under the influence of an immediately following high tone "object" pronoun, the  $Neg_1$  marker \*bàa weakened to bàà. 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 *záà* plus this same pronoun set, e.g.:

- (21) \*bàa shí dà dóokìi > bàà shí dà dóokìi  
'he doesn't have a horse'
- (22) \*bàa mú gà sàrkíi > bàà mú gà sàrkíi  
'we are not partisans of the chief'
- (23) Cf. \*záa ní gfdáa > záà ní gfdáa  
'I'm going home'

While the second:

(24) \*bàa dà > bàà

In modern Hausa the negative existential markers *bàà* and *bàabù*

are generally regarded as replacements for the corresponding affirmative forms *dà* and 'akwai. Historically, existential sentences in Hausa were undoubtedly negated like all other sentence types by being enclosed in \*bàa...bá.<sup>5</sup> After the loss of the Neg<sub>f</sub> by rule (17), negative existential sentences would still have been formed by Neg<sub>i</sub> + S, e.g. \*báa *dà* *rúwáa* 'there is no water' vs. *dà* *rúwáa* 'there is water'. The claim embodied in the above rule is that the marker *dà* was not actually deleted in negative sentences, but rather that it fused with the Neg<sub>i</sub> marker. The low tone on the second mora of *báa* thus represents the contribution of the underlying *dà* to the present day portmanteau negative-existential marker, e.g.:

- (25) \*báa *dà* *rúwáa* > báà *rúwáa*  
'there is no water'
- (26) \*báa *dà* *kóowáa yànzú* > báà *kóowáa yànzú*  
'there is no one now'

Now, consider Neg type (5):

- (27) \*báà + \*àbù > \*báabù

The negative existential form *báabù* 'there is not/are not' is historically derived from a fusion of the Neg<sub>i</sub> marker \*báà with the noun \*àbù 'thing'.<sup>6</sup> This rule must necessarily have followed the

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<sup>5</sup>This 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 yiki* 'there is water' vs. *woi ayim yik-u* 'there isn't any water', Tera: *a nde* 'there is (some)' vs. *a nde ba* 'there isn't (any)'. Eulenberg [1971] correctly came to this same analysis on internal, synchronic grounds.

<sup>6</sup>As far as I am aware, this traditional analysis of *báabù* as being derived from \*báà plus \*àbù has always been thought of in historical terms. When Eulenberg [1971] purports to challenge this analysis--suggesting instead "that *báa* is a contracted form of *baabù*"--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 *dà* into the Neg form *báà* described above. Originally *báábù* was probably in complementary distribution with *báà*, the former being used in place of the latter only when there was no overt complement following the negative, i.e. (a) *báà náamàa* 'there is no meat', or (b) *báábù* 'there isn't (any)', but not (c) *?báábù náamàa*. The use of *báábù* in constructions with a complement, such as in the now grammatical sentence (c), must be the result of a subsequent innovation.<sup>7</sup>

#### 5. The negative type (6)

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

(28) *kádà kà shìgá*  
'don't enter'

(29) *náa búuyá kádà yáarò yà bíi nì*  
'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 *kádà* instead of the normal  $Neg_i$  *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 *kádà* negative construction lends itself to a straightforward explanation when related to a reconstructed West Chadic negative construction of the form *\*LEST...Neg<sub>f</sub>*.

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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<sup>7</sup>This analysis provides a natural historical explanation for some of the questions concerning *báà* and *báábù* raised by Eulenberg [1971], specifically (a) why doesn't *báà* occur without a complement? and (b) why does *báábù* permit a complement without the normal changes associated with N + N constructions? The answer to (a) is that *báà* should no more occur by itself than the affirmative existential marker *dà*, of which it is composed, or a preposition such as *gà*. When not generated with any other complement, *báà* 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 Neg<sub>i</sub> use some kind of marker at the beginning of the sentence in addition to the Neg<sub>f</sub> 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...Neg<sub>f</sub>, 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 = Neg<sub>f</sub>

kobo ka bese su sa 'don't shoot them'

kobo = LEST<sup>8</sup>

Ron (Fyer):

yi hwali naat 'I didn't hear it'

naat = Neg<sub>f</sub>

...kada ti nyi door naat '...lest she be annoyed'

kada = LEST

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

<sup>8</sup>kóbò is an older form. Nowadays kádàa (sic), borrowed from Hausa, is more commonly used.

Angas:

m̄a m̄et ka

'they have not gone'

ka = Neg<sub>f</sub>

manta a m̄et ka

'don't go'

manta = LEST<sup>9</sup>

Sura:

baa wan k̄e na kas

'I haven't seen it'

baa = Neg<sub>i</sub>, kas = Neg<sub>f</sub>

taji wu sat pwoo kas

'don't say it'

taji = LEST

It should be obvious by comparison with the above that Hausa *kádà* is also a LEST adverbial syntactically corresponding to *kobo*, *kaða*, *manta*, and *taji*, and not an anomalous Neg<sub>i</sub> 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 Neg<sub>i</sub>. The examples from Sura, which like Hausa normally employs a discontinuous Neg, point to a basic incompatibility between LEST and Neg<sub>i</sub> and suggest that proto-Hausa (like Sura and modern Hausa) also had a rule that prevented the use of Neg<sub>i</sub> whenever LEST was present, i.e. LEST Neg<sub>i</sub>...Neg<sub>f</sub> ==> LEST...Neg<sub>f</sub>. Hausa's use of a LEST marker (*kádà*) in the negative subjunctive and imperative is thus typical of the Chadic subgroup to which it belongs.

A second peculiarity of the Hausa *kádà* construction is the absence of the final Neg marker. A possible explanation would be to relate the deletion of *bá* after *kádà* to the historical deletion of the final Neg<sub>f</sub> 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 *bá* 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 Neg<sub>f</sub> in sentences with LEST is reported to be optional [indicated by ( ) in (31) below]:

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<sup>9</sup>*manta* has a short variant *man*. In addition to the normal Neg<sub>f</sub> marker *ka*, Angas also has a special Neg<sub>f</sub> marker *kat* which can only be used in the negative subjunctive.

- (31) Bolewa: kóbò...(sá)<sup>10</sup>  
 Ron (Fyer): kádà/kátà...(nàát)  
 Angas: (manta)...(kat) [Either or both may be used.]  
 Sura: tájì...(kás)

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... $Neg_f$	optional =====>	LEST...
New synchronic rule	LEST... $Neg_f$	obligatory =====>	LEST...
Resultant historical rule	LEST... $Neg_f$		LEST...

In the above sections, there has been a conscious attempt to avoid referring to the morph  $kádà$  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  $kádà$  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 \*bàa...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.

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<sup>10</sup>In my own materials, sá was invariably used in imperative constructions, but was commonly deleted in embedded "lest" clauses.

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