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Bijago (Central, (West) Atlantic)

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5.1 General

Bijago (aka Bidyogo, Bijogo) shows the same problematic relationship to other Atlantic languages as Atlantic does to Niger-Congo. As do most authors (e.g., Williamson 1989:21, Wilson 1989:90, Williamson & Blench 2000:21), Segerer (2002:6) considers Bijago its own sub-branch of the Atlantic group, on a geneological par with the Northern and Southern sub-groups¹. Recent SIL estimates (Gordon 2005) placed the number of speakers at approximately 24,500 people, Lewis (2006) at 29,900², spread throughout a large number of islands which make up the Bijago Archipelago off the West Coast of Guinea Bissau.

The dialect described by Segerer (2002)³ and discussed here is Kagbaaga, spoken on the large centrally-located island of Bubaque. Others dialects include Kapaki, Kajoko and Kamona. With the exception of the latter, these are mutually intelligible. Segerer uses the spelling Bijogo in his 2002 monograph; I follow Childs (2003:220, Appendix 2) in using Bijago, the name also used by SIL⁴.



Map source: World Factbook (CIA)

¹ Segerer acknowledges that Bijago's position in the classification system has been enigmatic, although based on his recent investigations, he considers Bijago "definitely Atlantic. The lexicon makes it closer to the northern branch, especially the Bak languages, while some grammatical points show resemblances with the southern branch", but adds that this last point "needs investigation" (Segerer: p. c.).

² The Joshua Project says 33,000 (www.joshuaproject.net).

³ Abbreviations unique to this chapter: CPT 'centripetal' (= 'movement toward'), CTF 'centrifugal' (= 'movement away from'), SV ("marqueur séquentiel verbal"-- indicates a sequence of actions), PASN 'passé neutre'. The two most common abbreviations which Segerer uses are explained as follows: (1) ACC *accompli*. This is an aspectual term whose meaning may be translated as 'perfective' or 'accomplished'. With certain verbs, the *accompli* could include a Factative meaning (as in Welmers (1973)), or in some cases, a resultative perfect. Generally, wherever this abbreviation appears, I gloss Segerer's ACC as PFV (perfective). (2) INAC *inaccompli*. This term is the opposing aspectual pole whose meaning may be translated as 'imperfective' or 'not accomplished'. Wherever this abbreviation appears, I have glossed Segerer's INAC as IPFV (imperfective). The majority of other abbreviations are class/agreement markers (as the upper-case E- in example (1)). See also fn.5.

⁴ In the archipelago itself, Portuguese speakers use Bijago for either the people, the language, or the islands themselves. Creole speakers may say Bijogo or even Bujugu (Segerer, p.c.).

Bijago is a seven vowel language (with vowel harmony, which appears to work from right to left). The general syllabic structure is (C)V(N)(C), with CV the most frequent (others V, VC, CV(N)C, N). The prosodic system is accent- or stress-, rather than tone-based.

Syntactically, there are several factors which Bijago shares with other Atlantic languages and with the Bantu family. Of all Atlantic languages, Bijago is considered to be the most Bantu-like, or at least, to possess a preponderance of Bantu-like typological features (Seeger 2002:283). These include an extensive noun-class system (Bijago has 14 noun classes)⁵, predominately CVC verbal root structure, a plethora of post-root derivational extensions (of either -V or -VC structure), personal pronominal objects located within the verbal structure, and similar subject pronoun markers.

5.2 Word Order

The default word order in Bijago is S AUX V O X:

- (1) **e-bootji** **ε-bak** **e-we**
 E-dog E.PFV(agreement.aspect)-catch E-goat
 ‘le chien a attrapé la chèvre’ [‘The dog caught/has caught the goat.’] (2002:77)⁶

In the case of multiple objects which follow the verb, the IO is located closer to the verb than the DO (multiple internal pronominal arguments are prohibited).

- (2) **na-ɬapak-ε** **ɔ-g** **ŋu-mpes**
 1s.PFV-borrow-PFV 3s-pro (lui) [‘from him’] ŋO-money
 ‘je lui ai emprunté de l’argent’ [‘I borrowed money from him.’] (2002:77)

First and second-person personal pronominal objects are located within the verb (with others usually external)⁷.

- (3) a **ɔ-na-kpɔnak-ε**
 3s.PFV-1s.OBJ-call (from afar)-PFV
 ‘Il m’a appelé’ [‘He called me.’] (2002:149)
- b **n(a)-anti-nian** / **ni-nian** **ya-g**
 2s.PFV-1p.OBJ-help / 2s.PFV-help YA-pro (les) [‘them’]
 ‘aidez-nous!’ [‘Help us!’] / ‘aidez-les!’ [‘Help them!’] (2002:149)

⁵ The infinitive is formed from the verbal root, preceded by the class prefix **ŋo-** (subject to vowel harmony): thus-**rɔb** ‘planter’ [‘to plant’] > **ŋɔ-rɔb** ‘fait de planter’ [‘the act of planting’] (Seeger 2002:144). Since most citations are from Seeger, I generally provide only date and page numbers.

⁶ I generally use Seeger’s glossing conventions, where the first element is either a person or class marker (the latter represented by upper-case letter(s) E-, NV, ŋO-, etc. Person markers we have glossed as 1, 2, or 3. The verb shows conjoined agreement and aspect marking. With very few exceptions, this agreement is obligatory. (Verbs may be ‘double marked’ aspectually, both on the SM and at suffix (3a)). Because his work is in French, I have supplied translations.

⁷ There are some exceptions: the morpheme **-mɔ-**, the referent of the O-class, can be incorporated (see Seeger (2002:184,185) for other examples).

- c **ni-ria** **mɔ-katɔ** / **ni-ria** **mɔ-g**
 1s.IPFV-take MO-fish / 1s.IPFV-take MO-pro (les) [‘them’]
 ‘je prends les poissons’ [‘I catch/am catching fish.’]
 ‘je les prends’ [‘I catch them’] (2002:73)

Adjectives, numerals and demonstratives always follow their head nouns.⁸ Relative constructions, both subject (*qui* ‘who’) and object (*que* ‘that’), are regularly marked by a post-posed relative particle -ɔ:

- (4) **o-gude** **ɔ-kpɛ-ɔ**
 3s-man 3s.PFV-die-REL
 ‘l’homme qui est mort’ [‘The man who died/is dead.’] (2002:180)

Compare the construction without the relative: **o-gude ɔ-kpɛ** ‘un homme est mort’ [‘A man is dead.’]

In the following example, the relative marker causes the stem-final nasal to be geminated:

- (5) **i-sɛi-na-jɔŋŋ-ɔ**
 E-cow E.IPFV-1sg.OBJ-look-REL
 ‘la vache qui me regarde’ [‘The cow who is looking at me.’] (2002:182)

Generally, adverbs occur sentence-final, although some adverbial items show a certain amount of positional flexibility:

- (6) **ɔ-ria** **kɔ-tɛŋ** **ka-nkoya**
 3s.PFV-take/eat KO-meat KA-morning
 ‘il a mangé de la viande ce matin’ [‘He ate meat this morning.’] (2002:70)

***ɔ-ria ka-nkoya kɔ-tɛŋ** [* ‘He ate this morning meat.’] (2002:70)

ne-enɔŋ e-nobo ɛ-ɛrɛm-e ‘hier il a plu’ [‘Yesterday, it rained.’]

e-nobo ɛ-ɛrɛm-e ne-enɔŋ ‘il a plu hier’ [‘It rained yesterday.’] (2002:69)

Depending on the type, questions may be morphologically unmarked (i.e., indistinguishable from assertive sentences), or may involve question particles such as the invariable, independent, pre-posed question particle **ade** (7a). *What*-questions use a post-posed particle (-ɔ or -ŋɔ) (7b). Other types of *wh*-questions involve various types of post-posed question words (7c).

⁸ Although Heine (1976) identifies type B as the dominant typology of the Atlantic region, Bijago has several characteristics which seem more A- than B-like. Regrettably, many features of Bijago, such as the varying positions of the A markers vis-à-vis the verb, make it difficult to make a definitive judgment about headedness, a critical factor in making a judgment as to type. Heine considers the A type to have been original, with B a development away (ibid:61). See also Creissels (2000:250ff) on the basic word order types in Heine (1976).

- (7) a **ade Pedro ɔ-tupk-ak Antonio?**
 ‘Est-ce que Pedro a frappé Antonio?’
 [‘Did Pedro hit Antonio?’] (2002:80)
- b **mi-ni ŋɔ** ‘qu-est-ce que tu bois?’
 [‘What are you drinking?’ Lit: ‘You are drinking what?’] (2002:81)
- c **m-ba-da ke** ? ‘quand viendras-tu?’ [‘When will you come?’] (2002:80)

5.3 Verb structure

Bijago is an aspect-based language, based on a binary aspectual opposition (*accompli* (= PFV) vs. *inaccompli* (= IPFV)). A minimal Bijago verb consists of three obligatory elements: a subject marker (position 3 in template in example (8) below), a following or fused aspect marker (position 4 in template), and a verbal root (position 9 in the template). Using the first person singular as an example, these alternations may be briefly illustrated as follows:

Table 5.1 Binary aspectual marking at SM in Bijago

ACCOMPLI (= PERFECTIVE)	INACCOMPLI (= IMPERFECTIVE)
ɲ.ɔ-dɔ 1s.PFV-aller [‘go’] ‘j’ai marché’ [‘I went’]	ɲ.i-dɔ 1s.IPFV-aller [‘go’] ‘je vais’ [‘I go/am going’]
ɲ.ɛ-rɛsak 1s.PFV-acheter [‘buy’] ‘J’ai acheté’ [‘I bought’]	ɲ.i-ɛs 1s.IPFV-balayer [‘sweep’] ‘je balaie’ [‘I sweep/am sweeping’]
ɲ.o-oka 1s.PFV-être assis [‘be seated’] ‘je me suis mis...’ [‘I sat/located myself’]	ɲ.i-toj 1s.IPFV-cuisiner [‘cook’] ‘je cuis’ [‘I cook/am cooking’]
ɲ.a-da 1s.PFV-venir [‘come’] ‘je suis venu’ [‘I came’]	ɲ.i-da 1s.IPFV-venir [‘come’] ‘je viens’ [‘I come/am coming’]

Segeer identifies 12 positions in the Bijago verbal structure (2002:269). As mentioned above, three of these positions are obligatory: position 3 (the class-person marker), position 4 (the aspectual marker) and position 9 (the verbal root). Positions 5, 6 and 7 cannot be occupied simultaneously. The general order in which the various morphemes may appear is as follows:

- (8) 1 2 3.4 5 6 7 8 9 10 a,b,c,d 11 12
 (NEGS) (FOC) SM.ASP (A) (A) (A) (OM) ROOT (EXT) (A) (REL)

At 1: At position 1, there are two possibilities:

(25)	9	10a	10b	10c	10d
	ROOT	-ok	-at	-an	-i
		-ak/Vk			-a
					-am

-ok is a valence-reducing suffix ('middle'), according to Segerer etymologically from a verbal root **-ok** 'être là, se trouver, y avoir' ['be there, find oneself'] (2002:211,226). Its use focuses on the agent of the process (2002:225): **raŋ** 'hang' (transitive) > **raŋ-ok** 'hang (self)'/ 'be hanging' (intransitive/middle). Verbs derived using this suffix are generally statives or intransitives.

-ak ~ -Vk is a suffix which focuses on the result of a process. This morpheme has aspectual value, regularly indicating, either alone or in concert with aspectual marking on the SM, *accompli* (perfective or, perhaps, resultative perfect. I prefer the latter and have glossed this morpheme as PFT). See Segerer (2002:222) for details of how this suffix interacts with the aspectual marking on the SM.

(26)	ŋ.i-kat	nɔ-ɔɔɔ	/	ŋ.a-kat-ak	nɔ-ɔɔɔ
	1s.IPFV-throw	NV-stone	/	1s.PFV-throw-PFT	NV-stone
	'je lance une pierre'		/	'j'ai lancé une pierre'	(2002:222)
	['I throw/am throwing a stone.']		/	['I threw/have thrown a stone.']	
	ŋ.i-bit	Luis poŋ	/	ŋ.i-bit-ak	Luis poŋ
	1s.IPFV-ask	Luis pain	/	1s.ask-PFT	Luis bread
	'je demande du pain à Luis'		/	'j'ai demandé du pain à Luis'	
	['I ask Luis for some bread.']		/	['I asked Luis for some bread.']	

-at is an instrumental. An instrumental may also be formed analytically, using preposition **ta** 'with' (both possibly of identical origin (2002:226)). Consequently, the sentence 'The knife gets/is sharpened with a stone' may be expressed in the following ways:

(28)	a	ni-mɛs	n.i-dɛndɔk-at	nɔ-ɔɔɔ
		NV-knife	NV.IPFV-be sharpened-INST	NV-stone
		'un couteau s'aiguise avec une pierre'		
		['The knife is sharpened/gets sharpened with a stone.']		
	b	ni-mɛs	n.i-dɛndɔk	ta nɔ-ɔɔɔ
		NV-knife	NV.IPFV-be sharpened	'with' NV-stone
		'un couteau s'aiguise avec une pierre' (2002:219)		
		['The knife is sharpened/gets sharpened with a stone.']		

-an is an applicative. Again, this morpheme is possibly ultimately from the same source as preposition **an** 'to', 'toward' (2002:226).

(29)	ŋ.a-an-rɛsɛk-an	mɔ-bɛ
	1s.PFV-2sOBJ-buy-APP	MO-plate
	'j'ai acheté des assiettes pour toi' ['I (have) bought plates for you.'] (2002:254)	

-i is a causative. For the source of this morpheme, see Segerer (2002:226):

- | | | | |
|------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| (30) | rak ‘dance’ | > | rak-i ‘make dance’ |
| | ɲand-ok ‘be heavy’ | > | ɲand-ok-i ‘make heavy’ |
| | soɥ-ok ‘be awake(ned)’ | > | soɥ-ok-i ‘wake s.o. up’ (2002:217). |

-a is a deictic-type directional suffix called *centripète* (‘centripetal’) (CTP) by Segerer. The meaning is motion toward something, or location nearby: **ɲuk** ‘enter’ > **ɲuk-a** ‘enter (into something, as a house)’

-am is a directional suffix called *centrifuge* ‘centrifugal’ (CTF) by Segerer. It indicates motion away, or location at a distance. The following examples indicate the two directional affixes (for others, and other meanings, see Segerer (2002:213)).

- | | | | |
|------|---|-----------------------|---|
| (31) | a | oton ‘arriver’ | oton-a ‘arriver (ici)’[‘arrive here’] |
| | | | oton-am ‘arriver (là)’[‘arrive there’] |
| | b | biɥ ‘demander’ | biɥ-a ‘venir demander’[‘come to ask’] |
| | | | biɥ-am ‘aller demander’ [‘go to ask’] |

At 11: There are three possibilities at final (or, if relative **-ɔ** appears, at penultimate): 1. perfective, marked by **-ɛ**; 2. imperfective, marked by **-i**; 3. **-ɛn** (the *passé révolu*) with past value (only with the *accompli* (2002:242)). I have analysed this as a marker of perfect aspect.

- | | | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| (32) | Imperfective (<i>inaccompli</i>) | -i | i-booɥi i-tonɥ-i | ‘The dogs are jumping.’ |
| | Perfective (<i>accompli</i>) | -ɛ | i-booɥi i-tonɥ-ɛ | ‘The dogs jumped.’ |
| | Perfect (<i>accompli</i>) | -ɛn | ɲo-oɥak-ɛn ɲɔkato | ‘I have scaled the fish.’ |

At 12: **-ɔ** relativiser ‘which’, ‘who’, ‘that’ (2002:183).

- | | | | |
|------|--------|--|---|
| (33) | e-we | i-ba-na-kpɛ-ɔ | uraane |
| | E-goat | E.IPFV-virtuel-1sOBJ ¹² -kill- which | tomorrow |
| | | ‘la chèvre que je vais tuer demain’ | [‘The goat will-I kill- which tomorrow’] |

5.4 Multiple verb constructions

These types of predication involve more than one verb. Only the first verb (in a string of a hypothetically unlimited number of verbs, all with the same subject) is inflected. Each following verb in the string bears the marker **#n-** to indicate its sequential status (=SV) and can take an object or other complement as required:

¹² Segerer notes that the subject of the subordinate clause is syntactically and morphologically marked as an object. For more on relative clauses and their syntactic and morphological particulars, see (2003:183ff).

- (34) **ɲ.a-t̥angɔk** **an nɛ-mɛda** **n-dima**
 1s.PFV-stumble on NV-cord **SV-fall**
 ‘j’ai trébuché sur la corde **et** je suis tombé’
 [‘I stumbled over the cord (**and** I) fell down.’] (2002:271)

A second type of predication is like the first, but involves only two verbs, the second of which is regularly (always?) a stative (‘be X’). As above, the inflection appears on the first verb, the sequential marker on the second.

- (35) a. **ɲ-ɛmm-odoŋ** **n-dubaŋ**
 1s-PFT-do again **SV-be sick**
 ‘Je suis retombé malade’ [‘I fell sick again.’] (2002:272)
- b. **ɛ-man** **ɛ-de** **n-kpontok**
 E-rice E-PFV- finish **SV-be harvested**
 ‘le riz est déjà récolté’ (2002:273)
 [‘The rice is /has already been harvested.’]

The next examples involve essentially a main verb plus an infinitive. In the a. examples, there is a preposition, nearly always **ta** ‘de’ [‘of’, ‘concerning’, perhaps ‘to’] between the two verbs. In the b. examples, the ‘plain’ infinitive (with class marker **ŋO**) appears.

- (36) a **ɲ.i-boj** **ta** **n-dɔ**
 1s.IPFV-be able to **ŋ-go**
 ‘Je peux partir’ [‘I am able to go.’/ ‘I can go.’] (2002:274)
- i-ba-bajɔk** **ta (ŋ-)ɛrɛm**
 E.IPFV-‘virtuel’-last to **ŋ-rain**
 ‘il va pleuvoir longtemps’ [‘It is going to rain for a long time.’] (2002:275)
- ɛ-ntanke** **ɛ-deeni** **ta** **ŋ-dɔ**
 E-turtle E.PFV-do slowly to **ŋ-go**
 ‘la tortue va lentement’ [‘The turtle goes/is going slowly.’] (2002:31)
- b **m.i-ani** **ŋɔ-kɛŋɛ**
 2s.IPFV-know **ŋO-trace/write**
 ‘tu sais écrire’ [‘You know (how) to write.’] (2002:278)
- ɲ.i-dik-ak** **ŋɔ-nakam** **eti** **ɛ-ara**
 1s-like-PFT **ŋO-climb** on palms
 ‘j’aime grimper au palmier’ [‘I like to climb palms.’] (2002:278)

5.5 Negatives

There are three, possibly four, negative morphemes in Bijago: 1. word-initial **#a-** used with imperfective (see also examples a. and b. in (9)), 2. **-(n)kV-** with perfective (see also example

(21)), 3. word initial #**nt**, the negator of focused constructions (as in (13)) and possibly, 4. **-ti-** as in (14).

(37) Negation of *inaccompli* (imperfective aspect)

ú-da ‘he/she/it is coming’ vs. **ɔ-da** ‘he/she/it is not coming’ (< **a-ú-da**)

The unspecified vowel of the morpheme that negates the *accompli* assumes the features of the following vowel. The optional nasal appears only if it is preceded by another verbal extension (in these examples, the morpheme **ba-**):

(38) Negation of *accompli* (perfective aspect) (2002:245)

a **ɔ-ba-nka-da**
3s.PFV-‘virtuel’-NEG-come
‘s’il **ne** vient **pas**’ [‘if he doesn’t come’]

b **ka-jɔkɔ** **ka-ba-nko-got**
Ka-house KA-‘virtuel’-NEG-burn
‘si la maison **ne** brûle **pas**’ [‘if the house hasn’t caught fire/isn’t on fire’]

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