20

Supyire (Senufo, Gur)

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20.1 General

This chapter discusses Supyire, a member of the Northern branch of the Senufo language group. Estimates of speakers of Senufo languages vary from around 1.5 million to well over 2 million, in Côte D’Ivoire, Mali and Burkina Faso. Senufo can be divided into different branches, the northern one, to which Supyire belongs (also Sicit and Marmara), the central (e.g., Cebaara and Syenara) and the southern one. The Senufo languages are geographically contiguous with Mande languages and share several features with them.

The Supyire are said to number between 350,000 (SIL 2007) and 621,000 (the Joshuaproject); they are located in southeastern Mali in the region of Sikasso. Published sources on Supyire are very few: we rely on Carlson’s recently published grammar (1994). Carlson’s grammar is based on functional-typological theory. The spelling is phonemic and follows the cited grammar in its conventions, which in turn follows standard conventions according to the Direction Nationale d’Alphabétisation Fonctionelle et de Linguistique Appliquée4.

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1 This chapter was written in collaboration with Christa Beaudoin-Lietz.
2 Abbreviations used in this chapter refer to terms used in Carlson’s grammar and include: IP ‘intransitive prefix’; FP ‘future prefix’ (see §20.3.1 for details); ND ‘non declarative’; REM(P) ‘remote (past)’; REC(P) ‘recent (past)’; SC ‘serial connector’; SSC ‘subjunctive serial connector’; EXCL (‘exclamative particle’); INDEF (‘indefinite pronoun or determiner’).
3 For example, the type of word order in which one argument (direct object) precedes the verb while others (the indirect object, etc.) follow the verb. Not only is lexical borrowing from Mande languages heavy, there is evidence for syntactic and typological influence as well. Carlson (1994:2) notes evidence of grammatical constructions borrowed from Bambara, as well as typological influence: Supyire is predominately SOV (as are Mande languages), rather than the more typical SVO (as in NC in general).
4 Generally IPA, to be noted y = [j], j = [dʤ], c = [ʧ], zh = [ʒ], sh = [ʃ], h = [ɬ]. In spelling, a nasalized vowel is indicated by an ‘n’ after the vowel, [r] = flap variant of /d/ medially before unstressed vowel, but written as r. /g/, when flapped before unstressed vowel, = [R].
Supyire has seven oral (/i, e, a, u, o, ë/) and five nasalized (/ĩ, ë̃, ũ, ū, ð/) vowels. All vowels may be either short or long (indicated by doubling the vowel in orthography). Vowel harmony (which works from left to right) with unstressed vowels is pervasive, though certain morphemes do not harmonize (e.g. the definite noun suffix).

Supyire is a tone language of high complexity. There are four phonemic tones: high (‘), low (‘), and two mid tones—strong mid (Ms) and weak mid (Mw). The mid tones are unmarked in spelling. The symbol (‘) indicates a sequence of two tones: HL (as in the morpheme nũ that marks “Recent Past”). Floating tones also exist (see examples under Negation). Tonal rules can apply across several (closely syntactically-linked) items in the sentence (e.g., DO and V).

There are no closed syllables in Supyire: syllable structure is CV or CVV. A few words, for example some pronouns, can consist of a V-initial syllable. Verb roots may have the following shapes: CV, CVV, CVVC, CVVCV, or CVVCVC. Most lexical roots are stressed on the first syllable. Affixes, clitics, and most other grammatical morphemes do not have stress by themselves, but many acquire stress in compounds. Most verbs are di- or tri-syllabic with stress on the initial syllable (Carlson 1994:32). Supyire has a noun-class system, marked on the noun at suffix (as in Kisi and Fula).

### 20.2 Word Order

Word order is S AUX DO V O(ther) (see examples in (15)). Sentences without AUX occur as in (1) with a copula, though most verb phrases contain at least one AUX, and several AUXs can co-occur.

1. mũi ɲyɛ yĩũ núŋi
   1s be 2p mother.DEF
   ‘I am your mother.’ (1994:238)

In (1) the copula is followed by a predicate nominal; the element following the verb, if present, could also consist of a postpositional phrase (e.g. dative, locative) or adverb. The schema does not mean to imply that elements cannot occur before the S. For example, focused constructions, heavily stressed, occur at the beginning of the sentence (see also §20.6.3). The following is such an example of an affirmative declarative simple sentence:

2. sigé e u a kårɛ
   bush.DEF to 3s PFT go
   ‘It is to the bush that 3s has gone.’ (1994:468).

For a declarative sentence (without serial verbs or complement clauses), the basic word order seems to be:

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5 There are four nasal consonants which Carlson treats as phonemic. He says “they are not as well established as some others.” Vowels are automatically nasalized following nasals (not written).

6 Other items could include (indirect) objects and adverbs, in that order if co-occurring.
S: As stated above, items can occur before S, as in example (2).

NEG: Generally the copula that is glossed as NEG is at the left boundary of the verb phrase. However, the persistive AUX translating as ‘still’ (with imperfective V) or ‘again’ (with perfect) or ‘no longer’ can occur before the element glossed as NEG as in (4). (The full verb phrase is indicated by square brackets). See also the examples in §20.7.

(4) \( \text{wà [sàhà ñye a bwàn] li nà mé} \)
   INDEF [AUX NEG PFT hit] it on NEG
   ‘One did not again touch it.’

In many tense/aspect forms, the initial NEG at AUX can also be indicated by a floating tone, occurring with AUXs with high tone. The negative occurring with the future AUX illustrates this pattern (see examples in §20.7). The negative generally occurs before the PRG or the PFT or one of the copulas (see examples under Negation). The NEG morpheme at the end of the clause is obligatory.

AUX: Several aspectual AUXs can co-occur as the following examples show, depending on the type of AUX. The tense auxiliaries \( \text{ñù ‘Recent Past’ (P₁)} \) and \( \text{ñà ‘Remote Past’ (P₂)} \) combine with either the base form of the verb or the perfective form. Combinations of copula verbs with AUXs can create lengthy VPs (see §20.8). Clauses with \( \text{m/pyí} \) in (6) and (7) could be analyzed as clauses with serial verbs. Carlson describes the verb \( \text{pyí ‘do, make, become} \) as “an auxiliary in the making”; its exact function needs more investigation: it could be seen as a ‘shifter’, as it moves the time frame back a step. Alternatively, given its meaning, it could be emphasizing the ‘process’ involved. Notice that the maximum number of verbal morphemes appears to be four.

7 What is glossed as NEG is the copula \( ñye ‘be’ \), which is used with PFT or PRG as an indicator of negation early in the sentence.

8 The main verb ‘hit’ has the meaning of ‘touch’ in a sentence without DO as the one above.
**DO:** This position is important in the VP structure: marking is required on the verb in most cases when the DO position is not filled (for details see §20.3). Marking on the verb also obtains when the DO has moved, i.e. fronted to focus position at the beginning of the sentence, as in the following set of examples (where zero symbol [ Ø ] indicates original position of moved object):

(8) $\text{pi na kuru pǐke pyi ‘bogo’}$  
3p PRG this.EMPH drum.DEF call bogo  
‘They call this drum “bogo”.’ (1994:469)

(9) $\text{kuru pǐke pi ñye na Ø m-pyi ‘bogo’}$  
this.EMPH drum.DEF 3p be PRG IP.call bogo  
‘It is this drum which they call “bogo”.’ (1994:469).

**V:** Many verbs can be used transitively or intransitively, whereby a change in meaning might result (see example (4) and footnote (9)).

**Other:** The label covers a variety of items, for example objects and adverbs, in that order when co-occurring.

### 20.3 Verb Structure

The verb template is as follows:

(10) Prefix-root-suffix

#### 20.3.1 Prefix

In initial position, only two prefixes may occur: in Carlson's terminology IP and FP. The IP (‘intransitive prefix’) is used if the verb is not immediately preceded by its direct object (applies to transitive verbs also). It is a phonologically conditioned toneless nasal, occurring only on verbs with a voiceless stop ($p$, $t$, $k$ and $ʃ$). Otherwise, there is no form.

The FP (‘future prefix’), a low-weak MID nasal, is used only with an AUX with future time reference (such as the AUX $\text{sf}$), and/or irrealis modality, and is not phonologically conditioned. Its segmental support disappears in transitive clauses with direct objects. Low tone remains. The FP survives as tone only where the DO precedes the V. Thus future time reference is doubly marked. These prefixes mark information concerning the preceding DO position on the verb: “[IP] is required by most tense-aspect auxiliaries when they immediately precede the verb” (1994:127). With the TA markers for perfect and Recent Past, the verbs do not require a prefix. Examples of the FP verb prefix follow (see (9) above for the IP prefix):

(11) $\text{ku sf ñh-bə}$  
it FUT FP-kill  
‘It will be killed.’ (1994:129)

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9 When the tense-aspect is present-progressive, the copula ($\text{ñye}$ in this example) is inserted before the aspect. With other aspects in the affirmative this marking is not required.
20.3.2 Root

As indicated above, the verbal root may have the following shapes: CV, CVV, CVCV, CVVCV, or CVCCVCV. If the root has no prefix, one may assume that there will be a perfect or Recent Past auxiliary (see examples (2), (4), (6) and (7)).

20.3.3 Suffixes

There are three possible suffixes: imperfective, causative, plural/intensive. The last, which is marked by –IV, may be termed a “pluractional”, as it indicates that the same action is performed more than once (by the same actor or different actors). It is not productive -- nor is the causative, which is marked by -gV, with a great deal of morphophonemic irregularity and applying only to a small group of verbs (about 20). The imperfective, marked by -li and several allomorphs (-ni, -re, -ge) and changes in tone, is productive. Examples follow:

(13) base fágá ‘grab’ imperfective fágá-li ‘grabbing’
     cyé ‘be small’ cyé-gé ‘being small’
     yige ‘take out’ yigè ‘taking out’

20.4 Tense, Aspect, Mood (see also §20.6)

Supyire has both tense and aspect. There are two past tenses, both expressed as independent lexical items. There is only one future. All futures, the potential and the subjunctive appear with the ‘future prefix’. In the TAM category, the basic aspectual distinction is one of perfective, the unmarked category, and the imperfective, the latter (as above) morphologically marked by suffixation on the verb. In addition to suffixation, TAM distinctions are achieved by AUXs and serial verb constructions. The present is not marked.

Besides the imperfective, the TAM morphemes are the following (using mostly Carlson’s labels). The information in brackets indicates whether a prefix is required on the verb under certain conditions, and whether the form can co-occur with the perfective, i.e. the basic root, or the imperfective form of the verb. All are exemplified below:

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ná</td>
<td>Remote Past (P₂)</td>
<td>[IP; PFV]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nǐ</td>
<td>Recent Past (P₁)</td>
<td>[Ø;PFV]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>[IP;IPFV]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>màha</td>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>[IP;PFV/IPFV]</td>
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<tr>
<td>à</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
<td>[Ø;PFV]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sáhá</td>
<td>Persistive</td>
<td>[IP;PFV] (‘still, again, no longer, not yet’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>sí</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>[FP;PFV]</td>
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10 The translation in English shows a passive that is not morphologically evident in the original form.
11 Pronouns in declaratives: 1s nú, 1p wǎvu, 2s nu, 2p yì (used as pronouns and determiners).
cáá\(^{12}\) Future [FP;PFV] (no apparent meaning difference)
kú Potential [FP;PFV]
bú/bá Remote [IP;PFV]
sí Narrative/Sequential [IP;PFV]
ká/(a)há Conditional [IP;PFV]
sí Subjunctive [IP;PFV]
a Imperfective Subjunctive [FP;IPFV]
ká/há Negative Subjunctive [FP;PFV]
ta Imperfective Imperative [IP;IPFV]

Examples:

(14)  a  Imperative (mood) [PFV]

\textbf{nté  kyaàre  kwôn}  
this  meat.DEF  cut.PFV
‘Cut this meat!’ (a small amount of meat to cut)

b  Imperative (mood) [IPFV]

\textbf{ta  ñté  kyaàre  kwùnn\(^{13}\)}  
IMP.IPV  this  meat.DEF  cut.IPV
‘Cut this meat!’ (a lot of meat to cut)

(15)  Progressive (aspect) [IPFV] (ongoing action with present time reference, or iterative, or on occasion separate events but the “ongoingness” is stressed, also habitual, and, in some cases, Future)

a  \textbf{u na dùfinimè  bëë-li}  
she\(^{14}\)  PRG  potash  evaporate-IPFV
‘She is evaporating potash.’ (1994:312)

b  \textbf{u na pingke  bwùnn}  
he  PRG  drum.DEF  hit.IPV
‘He is beating the drum.’ (1994:312)

(16)  a  Habitual (aspect) [PFV] (a series of habitual events occurring together, generic)

\(^{12}\) Carlson sees no clear meaning difference between the two future markers, though \textbf{sí} is far more common (1994:335).
\(^{13}\) When the root is CV, the [l] of the Imperfective -\textit{li} is elided; the suffix vowel, if it is [-front], assimilates (1994:133).
\(^{14}\) Rather than saying 3s, we have kept the gloss as presented in Carlson, where the gloss gave only he or she; cultural information included would be lost by using numerals.
mu māha yirì, maá ’ faáyi taana a kwùulu
2s HAB rise and.NARR rock.DEF line.up SC circle
‘You get up and place the stones round in a circle.’ (1994:317)

This form is occasionally used to introduce formal narratives in the first clause. This “Formal Past” usage is perhaps similar to “Once upon a time”…

b Habitual (aspect) [IPFV] (showing duration, simultaneity)

tire māha lè-nil cení f
3p.EMPH HAB put-IPFV calabash.DEF in
‘…they are put in the calabash’(1994:317)

(17) Remote Past (tense)

u ná ní-pá motöŋi shwò à pa
3s P₂ IP-come motorcycle.DEF buy it come
‘He finally bought a motorcycle and brought it.’ (1994:332)

(18) Recent Past (tense) (generally earlier the same day or emotionally closer)

a mìì nìì mu pyì di yé
1s P₁ 2s tell how Q
‘What did I tell you (earlier today)?’ (1994:333)

b u nì pa
3s P₁ come
‘3s came earlier today.’(1994:340)

(19) Perfect (prototypical perfect)

mu a peè
2s PFT be.fat
‘You are fat/you have gotten fat.’ (1994:340)

(20) Persistives (‘still, again, longer, not yet’)

a u sahá na lyí
3s still PRG eat.IPFV
‘3s is still eating.’

b mu sahá à pa
2s again PFT come
‘You have come again.’
Future

a  \[ \text{pi sí ù bò} \]
\[ 3p \text{ FUT FP.him kill} \]
‘They will kill him.’

b  \[ \text{pi sè bá mu bwón} \]
\[ 3p \text{ FUT.FP remote 2s hit} \]
‘They will beat you tomorrow (*today).’ (1994:336)

c  \[ \text{mu cáà kapii cè kuru cânŋké e} \]
\[ 2s \text{ FUT.FP act.bad know that (EMPH) day.DEF in} \]
‘You will know (i.e. experience) a bad deed on that day.’ (1994:336)

d  \[ \text{mù cáá nì-pà mu wíí} \]
\[ 1s \text{ FUT FP-come 2s look} \]
‘I’ll come see you.’ (1994:335)

e  \[ \text{u gü jì-jà n-tiri mè} \]
\[ 3s \text{ POT FP-be.able FP-grind NEG} \]
‘She wouldn’t be able to grind.’

In sum, we find Supyire to have both tense (Remote Past, Recent Past, Future) and aspect (PFV, IPFV (HAB, PRG), PFT, etc.).

20.5 Serial verbs

Lengthy serial verb constructions (with three or four verbs) are not uncommon though “the most frequent serial constructions have two verbs” (1994:289). Certain aspects are expressed by serial verbs, exemplified in the following four types of constructions, of which the inceptive is the most common (48% of all serials are of this type):

(22) Inceptive (‘come/go’) construction.

a  \[ \ldots \text{mà pà a zàntùŋò bwùùn} \]
\[ \ldots \text{and come PRG hyena hit.IPFV} \]
\[ \ldots \text{‘and [the bush people] began [past from initial clause] to beat Hyena’} \]

b  \[ \text{u a sà a byànhärè kànhè na} \]
\[ 3s \text{ PFT go PRG approach.IPFV village.DEF at} \]
‘3s was getting near’ (lit: ‘went and was approaching’)
(\Sa, a reduced form of \text{shya} ‘go’, cannot occur by itself.)

(23) Future serial construction
(24) Subjunctive serial construction

u gú ëtjá ëtíri me
she POT FP-be.able FP-grind NEG
‘She wouldn’t be able to grind.’ (1994:291)

(25) Realis serial construction (occurs with a variety of tense-aspects with past time reference, with habitual and conditional).

20.6 Other categories

20.6.1 Voice

There is no morphological passive construction in Supyire. A passive interpretation depends on the thematic role of the NP in subject position and the aktionsart of the verb. Carlson translates intransitive sentences where S has the thematic role of the patient as passives, based on use and function (see example (11)).

20.6.2 Mood

The imperative has both a perfective and an imperfective form (see examples in (14)). The subjunctive also shows the distinction of perfective (sì) and imperfective (a) and what Carlson calls the “zero subjunctive”. The “zero subjunctive” is found, for example, in sentences such as the following, which is considered more polite than the “bare” imperative:

(26) a ma taha na fyè e
2.ND follow my.ND footprints in
‘Follow me (lit. follow in my tracks), please!’

b ma a ma
2.ND SBJ.IPFV come.IPFV
‘Come, please!’
For prohibitive sentences, the negative subjunctive (kà) is used. In the following example, one of the allomorphs, há, appears:

(27)  ma  há  mì-bwàñ  li  nà  mè
     2.ND  PROHIB  FP-touch  it  on  NEG
    ‘Don’t touch it!’

The subjunctive is also used in complement clauses:

(28)  mìi  à  yaa  mìi  í  ɲ-kårè  Sukwoo  na
     1s  PFT  must  1s  SBJ  IP.go  Sikasso  at
    ‘I must go to Sikasso.’ (1994:421)

The conditional (auxiliary) is kà [IP.PFV]: (1994:375, but see 570ff)

(29)  tépi  kà  mì-pá  ɲ-ká
     tea.DEF  CND  IP-come  IP-boil
    ‘When the tea comes to a boil….’

20.6.3 Focus

Supyïre marks two main types of focus: contrastive and “marked topic” focus. Both are indicated by moving the focused noun phrase from its ordinary place to initial position in the sentence. Carlson mentions both “strong” and “weak” focus. Here, we discuss only the more common “strong” type.

Three elements mark an affirmative focused construction: fronting, heavy intonational stress and a slight pause before the rest of the utterance (30a); in the negative, a copula or “quasi-copula” appears as in (30b, where bà ‘it is not’ fulfils this function):

(30)  a  sigé  e  u  a  kårè
     bush.DEF  to  3s  PFT  go
    ‘It is to the bush that 3s has gone.’ (1994:468).

b  sigé  e  bà  u  a  kårè  mè
     bush.DEF  to  AUX  3s  PFT  go  NEG
    ‘It isn’t to the bush that 3s has gone.’ (1994:468).

Carlson indicates (1994:469) that the clause that follows the preposed focused item receives no special marking except in one instance: if the aspect is present progressive (with the AUX na), the copula jye appears before the auxiliary:

(26)  nà  mu  í  mìi  jye  na  yu
     with  you  with  1s  be  PRG  speak.IPFV
    ‘It is with you that I am speaking’
Encoding of a focused direct object is by preposing and the use of the IP prefix (which indicates that the object has been moved from its “typical” position) (32b).

(27)  a unfocused direct object

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pi} & \quad \text{na} \quad \text{kuru} \quad \text{pi} \text{ŋke} \quad \text{pyi} \quad \text{‘bogo’} \\
3p & \quad \text{PRG} \quad \text{this.EMPH} \quad \text{drum.DEF} \quad \text{call} \quad \text{bogo} \\
\text{‘They call this drum “bogo”.’} \quad (1994:469)
\end{align*}
\]

b focused direct object

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kuru} & \quad \text{pi} \text{ŋke} \quad \text{pi} \quad \text{ŋye} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{Ø} \quad \text{m-pyi} \quad \text{‘bogo’} \\
\text{this.EMPH} \quad \text{drum.DEF} \quad 3p \quad \text{be} \quad \text{PRG} \quad \text{IP.call} \quad \text{bogo} \\
\text{‘It is this drum which they call “bogo”.’} \quad (1994:469)
\end{align*}
\]

Adverbs of time, place and manner may be focused:

(33)  \[
\begin{align*}
\text{wan} & \quad \text{mii} \quad \text{à} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{vàỳnyi} \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{there} \quad 1s & \quad \text{PFT} \quad 1s \quad \text{cloth.DEF} \quad \text{find} \\
\text{‘It was there that I found my clothes.’} \quad (1994:472)
\end{align*}
\]

Apparently, it is not possible in Supyire to focus the verb per se by clefting. Rather, verbal focus is achieved by the use of an exclamatory particle \textit{dé} placed after the verb:

(34)  \[
\begin{align*}
\text{u} & \quad \text{a} \quad \text{kà̀rè} \quad \text{dé} \\
3s & \quad \text{PFT} \quad \text{go} \quad \text{EXCL} \\
\text{‘S/he has left!’}
\end{align*}
\]

20.6.4  \textit{Relatives}

Relative clauses in Supyire are all of the “restrictive” type. The most common method for indicating a relative clause is by preposing it to the main clause. In this sense, Relatives are similar to focus constructions. They differ, however, in that they are “embedded”, in that they follow the pre-posed noun they modify, and must be followed by a clause-final relative marker \textit{ké} (or \textit{gé}):

(35)  \[
\begin{align*}
\text{yaagé} & \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{ù} \quad \text{bò} \quad \text{ké} \quad \text{mu} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{kùrù} \quad \text{cé} \\
\text{thing.DEF} & \quad \text{it} \quad \text{PFT} \quad 3s \quad \text{kill} \quad \text{REL} \quad 2s \quad \text{PFT} \quad \text{it.EMPH} \quad \text{know} \\
\text{‘You know the thing that killed him.’} \quad \text{(lit: ‘The thing it has killed him, you know it.’)}
\end{align*}
\]

Coreferentiality is signalled both by a definite pronoun in the main clause and the use of an emphatic pronoun (here, \textit{uru}):
20.7 Negation

Negation is marked with an obligatory clause-final negative particle and in most tenses and aspects marking also takes place in the AUX position. The main clause-final marker is mé, with mà or mà “principally used in questions” (1994:377). The negative politeness marker is mò.

The two major negative markers that occur in AUX position can be a segmental element ṣye (examples (37) and (38), or a floating low tone which occurs to the left of the AUX and docks onto it (examples (39-44). The markers are tense-aspect specific and some types of tense and aspect do not take these markers. In narratives/sequentials negation does not occur, and conditionals demand a very complex structure to express negation (not listed above). Some examples follow:

(37) m̀̀ ṣye à yaaga ta mé
    1s NEG PFT thing get NEG
    ‘I didn’t get a thing.’ (1994:379)

(38) wùù ṣye na jìnà ɲàà mé
    1p NEG PRG jinn see.IPFV NEG
    ‘We don’t see (a) jinn.’ (1994:379)

Low tone is used with auxiliaries that express TA marking and are high-toned without negation, such as future markers sì, càà. Remote Past nà, Recent Past mì, ‘still, yet’ sàhà, ‘be here’ náhà, ‘be there’ wá:

(39) yi sì jì-jà ʊ̀rù jyìle mé
    3p NEG.FUT FP-be.able it.EMPH cross NEG
    ‘They (the bush cows) won’t be able to cross it (the river).’ (1994:381)

(40) wàràŋi sijérëŋi nà fyìïnna à
    Wara.DEF celebration.DEF NEG.P2 cancel NEG.Q
    ‘Wasn’t the celebration of the Wara cancelled?’

(41) u mì pà mé
    3s NEG.P1 come NEG
    ‘He didn’t come (earlier today).’

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15 See Carlson (1994:726) for cultural information concerning the “Wara”.
(42)  wùù sáhá    sá à no à  
1p  NEG.yet  go  SC arrive  NEG.Q
‘Haven’t we arrived yet?’

(43)  mii sáhá  nyé à  ñéna à  jwo mé  
1s  still  NEG  PFT  agree  SC  say  NEG
‘I didn’t any longer try (agree) to speak.’

(44)  ù  nàhá  ·  náhá  mé  
3s  NEG.be.here  here  NEG
‘3s isn’t here.’ (1994:382)

There is no marking at all with certain auxiliaries: HAB (màha), what Carlson calls Potential (kú), and Past (mpyi).Clauses with these markers contain presupposed information.

20.8 Auxiliaries

20.8.1 ‘Be’ auxiliaries

There are five verbs which are used as copulas, two of which have other functions. According to Carlson, all of these verbs are highly grammaticalized as AUXs. They are nyé ‘be’, pyi/mpyi ‘do, belong’, used in the non-present forms, sii (emphatic) from the verb meaning ‘begin’, náhá ‘be here’, and wá ‘be there’. Only the progressive auxiliary can be used with nyé. Mpyi is used to indicate past, while pyi is also used in other tense-aspects. Examples:

(45)  kuru  bá  na  nyé  kàn-bwéhô  
that .EMPH  even  PRG  be  village.big
‘That even is a big village.’

(46)  ku  sî  nì-pyi  wùù  á  sîlège  
it  FUT  FP.be  us  to  shame
‘It will be a shameful thing for us.’

(47)  kâshì  a  sî  ya-pege  dë  
war  PFT  be.EMPH  thing-bad  EXCL
‘War is a really bad thing!’

The last two copulas include deictic information for náhá (see (44)). Their use with predicate nominals is relatively rare.

20.8.2 Other TAM auxiliaries

Most of the auxiliaries that mark various tense, aspect and mood categories have transparent etymologies, many from verbs. These include inceptive aspect marker pa, from the verb pa ‘to come’, habitual AUX màha, from a verb màhànà ‘to go around in circles’, future marker cáá from a productive verb cáá ‘to want’ and future AUX sí, a reduced form of shya ‘to go’.
Progressive AUX na is related to the preposition na ‘at’ or ‘on’; Persistive sáhá is identical to an adverb meaning ‘still’, ‘not yet’.

**References**
