

THE CONTROL MARKER *nā* ~ *nāw* IN SAMBA LEKO, A LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN CAMEROON – NIGERIA

Gwenaëlle Fabre

Laboratoire ligérien de linguistique CNRS —
Universités d'Orléans et Tours —Bibliothèque nationale de France
gwenaelle.fabre@univ-orleans.fr

Abstract: The term *nā* ~ *nāw* can only appear clause-finally in Samba Leko. Depending on the instance, it belongs to paradigms of either locative postpositions or expressive particles and must therefore be considered polyfunctional in the terminology of Robert (2003). *nā* ~ *nāw* is identified by speakers as identical in all its attestations and is always glossed as 'in hand'. The interpretation of *nā* ~ *nāw* as an expression of control would need to be supported by further ethnolinguistic investigation but is still helpful for explaining its range of uses. The analysis of this term given in another paper is first summarized, and its implications in the wider context of Adamawa languages in general are then discussed.

Key words: grammaticalization, polyfunctionality, body part, postposition, expressive particle

1. Introduction

Samba Leko (Glottocode Samb1305) is classified as Adamawa 2 in the Niger-Congo family according to Greenberg (1966) and as Central Adamawa/ Samba Duru/ Southern Samba Duru/ Sambaic/ Samba-Leko–Perema–Mumbake by Glottologie.¹ It is spoken in Cameroon and Nigeria by 10,000 people according to Fardon (1988). The data used to describe this language were collected during fieldwork in North Cameroon, on the Nigerian border, between 1998 and 2000.

¹ <https://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/samb1305>

Typologically, Samba Leko is a language with a very limited inflectional morphology, and uses SVO or S Auxiliary O VN word order. It has several essentially locative postpositions and a single preposition.

A relevant feature for our present topic is the strong constraint on the final units of non-verbal and verbal clauses (cf. Fabre 2003: 268–269). Specifically, sentences cannot end with a lexical item other than a cardinal number, an ideophone or an adverb. Otherwise, the final term of a sentence must be grammatical. Various grammatical categories may appear in final position, including in this strict order: (locative) postpositions, expressive particles, negation and modality markers. Postpositions have noun phrases as their scope, are mutually exclusive, and may be used before other grammatical items that may appear in final position and have a wider (predicate or clause) scope. Expressive particles (at least some of them) may combine with one another. They scope on the predicate and convey values such as aspect (durative, frequentative), similarity, etc. It has not been possible to test all combinations of expressive particles, but the texts collected show this capacity, which differentiates them from the other elements allowed in final position. Thus, this paradigm is larger and less homogenous than the others, is more difficult to identify, and may contain different subcategories. The negative marker generally follows the expressive particle. Hence, among the set of possible clause-final grammatical morphemes, some may not always appear in the absolute final position (e.g. a postposition or an expressive particle may be followed by a negation marker). All postpositive particles, like some expressive particles and predicate negation, have two forms: one for use in the absolute final position and the other for use in the prefinal position (the so-called internal form). This is the case with the term discussed here which takes the form *nāw* in absolute final position and the form *nā* elsewhere. Modality markers in turn are mutually exclusive, appear only in absolute final position and are of two types: interrogation or positive assertion/injunction. The positive assertive/injunctive marker *a* (with a low tone following verbonominal as in (5),

with a high tone elsewhere) is a kind of a wild card: it occurs only if there is no other item that could occupy the very last position in the sentence. That is why it is called the neutral CM (neutral clause marker). Therefore, some tests aimed at determining the meaning of a sentence-final term are based on finding contexts where that term can contrast simply with the neutral CM *a*.

In Samba Leko, one finds a term *nā̃ ~ nā̃w* which always appears clause-finally. Depending on the instance, it belongs to paradigms of either locative postpositions or expressive particles. *Nā̃ ~ nā̃w* is identified by native speakers as being identical in all its attestations, and is always glossed ‘in hand’ (‘en main’ in French, the language in which the study was conducted). Despite this, it can be assigned to apparently unrelated senses. I will argue here that the notion of control is central to the semantics of this term in all its uses. As a postposition, it seems to imply that the subject of the sentence is “under the control” of the referent of the noun it governs. Likewise, when its scope is the predicate and it functions as an expressive particle, it is apparently used to indicate that the process is “under the strict control of the agent”. This interpretation makes it possible to explain the recognition of *nā̃ ~ nā̃w* as a single polysemic term (rather than as homophones), and to identify the syntactic parameters that intervene in the construction of its meanings. This needs to be supported by further ethnological and linguistic investigation, though the field is unfortunately not currently accessible.

The analysis of the behaviour and values of *nā̃ ~ nā̃w* in different syntactic contexts will suggest possible grammaticalization chains of ‘hand’, which are previously unreported in the literature on Adamawa languages.²

² A paper with a similar topic has been accepted by JALL, but my perception of the topic has changed enough to justify this new paper. I would like to thank the reviewers warmly for their remarks and helpful advice.

2. The polyfunctional morpheme *nā* ~ *nāw*

The expression of control is clearly a common semantic feature of all uses of *nā* ~ *nāw*. As a member of the paradigm of postpositions, it governs an animate noun (or pronoun) whose referent exercises control over the inanimate or animate non-human entity denoted by the clause subject. Associated with the preposition *kə* ‘with’, it indicates some particular control exercised by an agent (grammatically the clause subject) over an inanimate object or an animate non-human (the noun governed by the preposition) other than an instrument. And, as an expressive particle, it scopes the process itself and seems to present it as specially under the control of the subject.

These three cases will be presented in turn:

— the locative-attribute (non-verbal) construction where *nā* ~ *nāw* appears governing a noun phrase in a postpositional phrase and where it belongs to the paradigm of postpositions;

— non-verbal and verbal constructions where *nā* ~ *nāw* appears after a prepositional phrase (governed by *kə* ‘with’); *nā* ~ *nāw* here belongs to a small paradigm and its syntactic status is not clearly established in this context;

— verbal constructions where *nā* ~ *nāw* applies to the predicate and belongs to the paradigm of expressive particles.

2.1. *Nā* ~ *nāw* as a postposition

The attributive construction consists of a subject (NP), a copula (absent in relative clauses and incompatible with negation) and a phrase that cannot be an NP (the attribute, cf. Fabre 2003: 291–298). When the attribute is a postpositional phrase, the proposition has a locative value since all postpositions have this value; this is the locative-attribute construction. Here, the postposition cannot be omitted or replaced by the neutral CM *a* since /copula NP/ is not accepted as well-formed.

As a postposition, *nā* ~ *nāw* is attested only in locative-attribute constructions where it is used to situate the referent of the subject in relation to the referent of a noun phrase governed by the postposition.

It then contrasts with the other three postpositions: *bā* ~ *bā*, *dá* ~ *dú* (or *á* ~ *ú* after a consonant), and *sān* ~ *sānú*. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of these postpositions, according to the +/- animate character of the referent of the governed noun.

Table 1

The postpositions

Ani- mate	Internal form	Final form	Gloss	Examples
+/-	<i>dá, á</i>	<i>dú, ú</i>	‘at, in’	<i>gbāl tá bōd ú</i> hyena COP behind at ‘Hyena is behind.’ (‘behind’ is a noun)
	<i>bā</i>	<i>bā</i>	‘on’	<i>ɲɛlám tá ʔám dún bā</i> (Elicited) blood COP 2SG spear on ‘Blood is on my spear’ ‘There’s blood on my spear.’
+	<i>sān</i>	<i>sānú</i>	‘by, at N’s’	<i>Ø tá gād sānú</i> (Elicited) 3SG COP chief by ‘He’s at the chief’s.’
	<i>nā</i>	<i>nāw</i>	‘in hand, under N’s control’	(see §2.1)

In these constructions, *nā* ~ *nāw* presents the referent of the subject as under the control of the referent of the noun it governs who is literally the “holder” of the referent of the subject. This corresponds to the “Location Schema” of possession according to Heine (1996:16), in which “the possessor is presented as a location”.

Thus, (1) is taken from a tale where Hare and Toad fight over a horn. Toad has hidden the horn in his cheek so that Hare cannot find it. Both characters are empty-handed.

- (1) *bàsə wà bə gà? wà ʔōbān nā sé? [...]*
 toad small that horn small LOG in_hand NEG
 ‘Little Toad says he doesn’t have the little horn. [...]

(Lit. ‘Little Toad [says] that the little horn is not in his own hand.’)

?ō gúsŭm á ! gà? wà ā tǎ ?ō nāw !
 3SG lie CM horn small this COP 3SG in_hand
 ‘He [Toad] is lying! He [Toad] is the one with the little horn!’
 (Lit. ‘[Hare speaks] He [Toad] is a liar! That little horn is his
 [Toad’s] hand!’)

2.2. *Nā ~ nāw* in *kà...nā* ‘with... in hand’

The sequence *kà...nā* appears in two different contexts. Firstly, in the associative-attribute construction, another subtype of attributive constructions in which the final constituent is prepositional. This construction is used to relate an entity (the referent of the NP governed by *kà* ‘with’, the only preposition in the language) to the domain of the subject referent. This construction is used for inalienable possession: the animate referent of the subject is presented as ‘having’ or ‘being with’ the referent of the governed noun phrase which denotes family ties (2) or body parts (3).

(2) *bá má bè tǎ kà kēm tōorā*
 father 1SG CON COP with wives three
 ‘My father has three wives.’ (Elicited)

(3) *∅ tǎ kà gú? běnsù á*
 3SG COP with mouth small CM
 ‘He has a small mouth.’ (Elicited)

Inserting *nā ~ nāw* instead of the neutral CM *á* in (3) (**∅ tǎ kà gú? běnsù nāw*) would mean ‘He is carrying (someone’s) small mouth’. Indeed, *nā ~ nāw* after the NP governed by the preposition *kà* ‘with’ in associative-attribute constructions is used only for alienable possession, as in (4).

(4) *gàad tǎ kà díŋ nāw*
 chief COP with spear in_hand
 ‘The chief has/owns a spear.’ (Elicited)

The relativization of an attributive construction eliminates the copula (5).

- (5) *néŋ* *ā* *kà* *nà* *nā* *rā*,
 human this with cow in_{hand} ANAPH
nàa *kwób* *ń* *dá* *tā* *ǎ* *kà* *yāa* *léb-ń* *à*
 cow ten 2SG FUT FOC DIST with horse buy-VN CM
 ‘Anyone with cattle will pay 10 cows for a horse.’
 (Lit. ‘Someone who has cows, it’s 10 cows you will buy a horse with’)³

In the possessive associative-attribute constructions (4) and (5), *nā* ~ *nāw* cannot be omitted (i.e. it cannot alternate with the neutral CM *á* in 4) or replaced by another postposition.

The kind of association expressed by this construction is not, however, limited to inalienable and alienable possession: the illustrative expressive particle *kīn* ~ *kīnī* in such a construction can express a comparison (6) while the morpheme *tá* ~ *tá* is used to express accompaniment (7).

- (6) *ĩn* *dā* *tá* *kà* *kěŋ* *kīn*,
 thing ANAPH COP with bracelet ILL
bá *páa* *dūn* *dú*, *bá* *nā* *tā*
 1PL.E put foot in 1PL.E ride FOC
 ‘This thing is like a bracelet, we put a foot in it and that’s [how/when] we ride [the horse].’
- (7) *vēnéb* *tá* *kà* *ʔōbān* *tá*
 God COP with LOG ACC
 ‘[Hyena says] God is with him.’

Thus, in the associative-attribute construction, *kà* ‘with’ by itself seems to express a natural, inherent and inseparable association (i.e. alienable possession such as body parts or family ties), whereas

³ On the use of the 2nd person here, see Fabre (2004).

— *nā ~ nāw* converts this association into alienable possession, with the idea of control exercised by the subject's referent over the referent of the noun governed by *kà* 'with';

— *kīn ~ kīnī* converts this association into comparison whereby the referent of the governed noun is asserted to resemble the referent of the subject;

— *tá ~ tá* converts this association into a comitative: the referent of the governed noun accompanies the referent of the subject.

In this usage, Samba Leko differs from other African languages in that the associative morpheme *kà* 'with' alone cannot express alienable possession.

The same prepositional phrase (a noun governed by *kà* 'with'), followed or not by one of these three elements (*nā ~ nāw*, *kīn ~ kīnī* or *tá ~ tá*), can appear in verbal clauses. Here, the preposition *kà* introduces an adjunct to the predicate which is associated with the verb process. Semantically, in the absence of *nā ~ nāw*, *kīn ~ kīnī* or *tá ~ tá* (or with the neutral CM at the very end of a positive assertion), this adjunct has an instrumental role (entity or substance used in the process, cf. (8)).

- (8) *nēb* *ā* *yēe*, *bà* *ʔēm* *à* *ì* *kà* *yā*,
 people this there 3PL go DIST EFF with horse
yā *bà* *wá* *ì* *gáʔ*,
 come 3PL arrive EFF CONJ
bá *tàl* *kú*, *kà* *síd* *á*
 1PL.E shoot_a_lot FREQ with arrow CM
 'These people [the Fulani], they came on horseback, and when they arrived, we shot arrows at them.'

The use of *nā ~ nāw* at the end of a sentence containing a prepositional phrase specifically indicates that the referent of its governed noun is held (9) or carried (10) by the referent of the subject and is not an instrument of the process.

- (9) Ø *yā* *à* *kà* *yā* *nāw*
 3SG come DIST with horse in_hand
 ‘He came with a horse as a present.’
 ‘He came with a horse on a lead.’ (Elicited)
- (10) *wà* *dê* *pát* *ʔèm* *à* *kà* *sě̀n* *zəm* *nāw*
 child each all go DIST with abroad flour at_hand
 ‘Each of the children leaves with flour for the journey.’
 (Lit. ‘Each and every child leaves with flour for [the trip] abroad
 in hand.’)

Just as in attributive clauses, a prepositional phrase (governed by *kà* ‘with’) may be followed by the illustrative expressive particle *kîn* ~ *kínī* for a comparison (11) or the morpheme *tá* ~ *tá* for accompaniment ((13) below where the governed noun ‘bone’ is an inanimate copatient of the process).

- (11) *lē?* *zòŋ* *bóo* *dáŋ* *kà* *līgà* *zòŋ* *kínī*
 field place also measure with courtyard place ILL
 ‘The field is as big as the courtyard.’

These examples show that, in verbal clauses as in associative nominal clauses, the sequence *kà* ... *nā* ~ *nāw* belongs to a system also containing *kà* ‘with’ alone, and *kà* with two other possible postposed elements. In both cases (associative-attributive and verbal clauses), the semantic role of these elements is similar: they modify the nature of the association expressed by *kà* ‘with’, as shown in Table 2.

Of these three postposed elements, only *tá* ~ *tá* is not attested without *kà*. Indeed, both *nā* ~ *nāw* (vd. §2.3 below) and *kîn* ~ *kínī* are attested without a prepositional phrase, as expressive particles. This leads us to the conclusion that *kà*...*tá* ~ *tá* could be a discontinuous adposition, while we withhold judgment on the syntactic status of *kîn* ~ *kínī* and *nā* ~ *nāw* in these instances. Indeed, in the phrases *kà*... *kîn* ~ *kínī* and *kà*... *nā* ~ *nāw*, it might be assumed either that *kîn* ~ *kínī* and *nā* ~ *nāw* are also the second constituents of as many

Table 2

The prepositional phrase, alone and followed

	Associative-attribute nominal clause	Verbal clause
<i>kə</i> ‘with’ (+N)	Inalienable association (ex. 2, 3)	Instrumental argument (ex. 8)
<i>kə...tə</i> ~ <i>tá</i> ‘together with’	Accompaniment (ex. 7)	Accompaniment: copatient (ex. 13), coagent
<i>kə...kîn</i> ~ <i>kînī</i> ‘similar to, like’	Comparison (ex. 6)	Comparison (ex. 11)
<i>kə...nā</i> ~ <i>nāw</i> ‘under the control of [the subject]’	Alienable possession (ex. 4, 5)	With something carried along or held, neither an instrument nor a coparticipant (ex. 9, 10)

discontinuous adpositions, or rather that they are expressive particles modifying a prepositional phrase or the predicate as a whole. A more detailed analysis and specific tests would perhaps make it possible to decide this question, which we leave open.

My interest here is not *kîn* ~ *kînī*, so a single example of this type is given in (12), taken from a tale in which Hyena thought it had caught big game, but discovers that its prey is only a bat. Here *kîn* ~ *kînī* refers to that moment where the storyteller mimics Hyena’s disappointment.

- (12) *kò* Ø *ʔèg* *kînī*. *yád* *ì* *á*. *kìm* *sé?*
 catch 3SG look ILL broad EFF CM large NEG
 ‘[Hyena] catches [the bat] and looks [at it] like this. It’s broad [but] not big.’

2.3. *Nā* ~ *nāw* as an expressive particle

In the introduction, it was stated that expressive particles can be identified by their position relative to the other elements that may

appear at the end of a clause (postposition/expressive particle/negation/modality) and by their ability to combine with one other. In this section, we will focus on the semantic contrasts resulting from the presence or absence of *nā ~ nāw* in the attested uses.

Nā ~ nāw is often attested with verbs that express processes in which the hand plays an important role ('take', 'collect', 'seek'...). In a situation where the process involves the hand, as in (13), the native speaker often feels that *nā ~ nāw* could be replaced by the neutral CM without strongly affecting the meaning. Furthermore, while our language assistant glossed *nā ~ nāw* as 'in hand' in (13) when the text was discussed with him, the translation he proposed for the utterance as a whole made no mention of the hand (the process expressed by the verb implying in any case a gesture of the hand).

- (13) Ø *pú à gòg bēd nāw, kà ʔin níŋsá bēd tá*
 3SG pick DIST meat PL in_hand with thing bone PL ACC
 'He picked up the meat (together) with the bones.'

This type of use, where the verb implies handling and *nā ~ nāw* is felt to convey little information, is by far the most frequent one. Since many processes involve the hand, it can be assumed that controlling such a process implies controlling the hand, and this can explain the many cases where *nā ~ nāw* is considered synonymous with a neutral CM.

In a strictly material interpretation of this term, one could, of course, consider that *nā ~ nāw* has an instrumental connotation, the instrument being the hand (13), but this interpretation is countered by the facts mentioned above.

First of all, the role of an instrument is expressed by a prepositional phrase constructed with the only preposition in the language, *kà* (8), excluding the use of *nā ~ nāw* with the same sense.

Secondly, the use of *nā ~ nāw* after a prepositional phrase assigns its referent precisely to a role that cannot be instrumental (9), (10). It follows that *nā ~ nāw* cannot be considered an instrumental marker,

in constructions with *kà* at least. *Nā ~ nāw* is much more easily conceived as adding the semantic feature of being under the control of the agent so that the agent controls both the process and the referent of the prepositional phrase. In this use, the scope of *nā ~ nāw* is unclear (noun alone or the whole predicate?).

Thirdly, the sense of *nā ~ nāw* when used with the verb *pī* ‘give’ also weakens the idea of an instrumental interpretation for this term. The ‘giving’ process essentially conveys the idea of the transmission of an alienable object (hence controlling it), iconically by an action of the hand. But in the particular case of the verb ‘give’, switching from *nā ~ nāw* to final *á* is not felt by native speakers to preserve meaning. They say that this switch would remove the idea that the object is important. Indeed, *nā ~ nāw* is used with this verb only in texts in which the transmitted object will have an importance later on, when under the recipient’s control. For instance, in example (14), Ostrich makes a gift to some children which will turn out to save them. It is a plant that will be planted and, when grown, allow the children to make an escape.

- (14) *núyì gbǎ bə Ø pī bə gān nāw*
 ostrich big dig_up 3SG give 3PL remedy in_hand
 ‘Big Ostrich dug up the [plant they will use as a] remedy and gave it to them.’

The particle *nā ~ nāw* also appears in the closing formula of tales, which says ‘My whitest little calabash, I give it to the next storyteller’.

This feature of control entails a solemnity such that the thing given takes on a singular importance, making ‘giving’ more like ‘entrusting, offering up’. The process itself is thus highlighted as being particularly controlled.

Lastly, *nā ~ nāw* is also attested with verbs whose processes do not necessarily involve a hand gesture (15)–(17). In these cases, replacement with the neutral CM also strongly impacts the meaning of the sentence. In my corpus, all the examples of this type involve two processes that take place concurrently or in close temporal proximity

and imply a transfer of control from one agent to another or a shift of control from one process to another. In these attestations *nā̃ ~ nā̃w* marks only one of the two processes, creating a contrast between them, and presenting the marked one as requiring firmer control. In (15) and (16), removing *nā̃ ~ nā̃w* would cancel out the other process mentioned earlier in the text.

Example (15), where *nā̃ ~ nā̃w* cannot be interpreted as referring to the hand, is taken from a text on a hunting expedition. A group of hunters follows the game while the others can remain in one place.

- (15) *nēb* *ā* *bà* *lā* *dō* *kò?*,
 people this 3_{PL} stay ANAPH also
bà *wá* *sī?* *nā̃* *gá?*
 3_{PL} move body in_hand NEG
 ‘[As the trackers advance,] those that remain, they do not move.’

Example (16) is taken from a tale in which a young girl repeatedly rejects a toad that comes back again and again. There, *nā̃ ~ nā̃w* presents the toad’s return as a reaction to her rejection.

- (16) *bàsà* *wà* *jnāgəl* *bíd* *à* *nā̃* *ní*,
 toad small crawl go_back DIST in_hand INT
há *yā* *à* \emptyset *wá* *ì* *á*
 until come DIST 3_{SG} arrive EFF CM
 [Again, the girl pushed Little Toad away.]
 ‘[And yet,] Toad crawled back until he reached [her].’

As in (16), the process marked by *nā̃ ~ nā̃w* in (17) is presented as a reaction or even a resistance to another process, which is expressed in the previous clause.

- (17) \emptyset *dèd* *má* *kú*, *má* *tēb* *wōŋ* *nā̃w*
 3_{SG} ask 1_{SG} FREQ 1_{SG} chill speech in_hand
 ‘He asked me, but I refrained from answering.’ (Elicited)

In (18), switching to the CM would mean simply ‘he will work’ and what is translated as ‘at the same time’ – that is, any reference to another process taking place simultaneously – would be lost. It is assumed that here too the marked process (working) is subject to more control by the agent than the other process (conversing).

- (18) \emptyset *dá* *tù?* *mà-ñ* *nāw*
 3SG FUT work do-VN in_{hand}
 ‘He’ll work at the same time [as he talks to you].’ (Elicited)

The examples given in this section differ from the earlier ones in several ways. First, from a syntactic point of view, *nā* ~ *nāw* does not necessarily follow a noun and, if it does, does not seem to govern it. In (15) and (17) above, considering *nā* ~ *nāw* as a postposition would mean extracting the noun before *nā* ~ *nāw* from its essential status as the direct complement of the verb. In (15), the noun *sī?* ‘body’ expresses reflexivity; ‘move the body (they have) in or at their hand’ would be senseless. In (17), *tēb wōŋ* ‘hush’ is a kind of idiomatic expression, the meaning of which would be nullified by such restructuring.

Second, from a semantic point of view, while the sense of *nā* ~ *nāw* as a postposition or after a prepositional phrase is quite stable, different values can be associated with *nā* ~ *nāw* as an expressive particle. We could imagine an instrumental connotation in some examples, though this is rejected by several strong arguments given under example (13). In other examples, *nā* ~ *nāw* seems to modify the process (the case of ‘give’) or to structure a relationship between several processes which have the particularity of being both in close temporal proximity and in some measure of conflict. In all these examples, *nā* ~ *nāw* scopes the propositional content, or even the utterance as a whole.

Table 3 summarizes Section 2. On a syntactic plane (top part of the table), the three uses correspond to at least two categories: postposition on the left, expressive particle on the right. I use “unclear”

Table 3

The uses of *nā* ~ *nāw*

Postposition (Part 2.1)	unclear (Part 2.2)	Expressive Particle (Part 2.3)
Only in a non-verbal locative-attribute construction	Following a prepositional phrase in a verbal or non-verbal clause	In a verbal clause Verbs involving 'hand' <i>pī</i> 'give' Other verbs
'under the control of' [the governed noun]	'under the strict control of' [the subject]	
Localization of an object in relation to its "possessor"	Alienable possession; inclusion in the verb process of an alienable transportable (animate or inanimate) object (≠instrument, ≠ co-participant)	Importance or seriousness of the alienable object transmitted
		Contrastive association of different processes – sharing of the agent's control over the processes, with one process under stronger control – feedback, conflict, opposition – temporal proximity, synchronicity

for the middle column, because for now, the arguments for either of the two contrasting interpretations (last part of a discontinuous adposition or expressive particle) are of comparable force and further study is needed to make a decision. The lower part of the table deals with semantics. We note that, as has already been affirmed, *nā* ~ *nāw* evokes control in all uses.

3. Conclusion

If we look at words for ‘arm, hand’ in other Adamawa languages, we find that several of them have nouns of the form na(C). For example, Bohnhoff et al. (2018) mention *nāg* for Dii (Duru) and the RefLex database lists *náá* ~ *ná* for Mumuye, *ná* (pl. *náro*) for Kpařam, *ná* for Yoti, *nák* (pl. *nái*) for Yendař, *nāq* for Pěre or *nāā* for Burak. In this database, outside Samba Leko *nēn*, only Bali Chamba, spoken by earlier raider populations split off from Samba Leko speakers since the 19th century (Fardon 1988), attests a term of the form ne(C): *ne* (pl. *nero*). Kleinewillinghöfer (2014) mentions a root *ne-* in some Yungur languages and Boyd (1978) citing Meek (1931) reports *neme* in Kam. Thus, *nā* ~ *nāw* ‘in hand’ is in all likelihood cognate with the root for ‘arm, hand’ in other related languages. However, the hypothesis of a common origin for *nēn* ‘arm, hand’ and *nā* ~ *nāw* ‘in hand’ still needs to be substantiated: do both terms come from the same root? What, then, is the relationship between them? Should the fact that the polyfunctional *nā* ~ *nāw* seems more conservative than the current noun for ‘hand’ lead us to assert that an earlier grammaticalization of the noun in *nā* ~ *nāw* led to the introduction of a new root for ‘hand’, represented by the current *nēn*? Whatever the case, the comparative data support the idea that the current form *nāw* shows a component cognate with a widespread root for ‘hand’ followed by a locative component *ú*. In the current polyfunctional term *nā* ~ *nāw*, the final form *nāw* still shows the locative component *ú* while the internal form *nā* has lost it.

While the grammaticalization of nouns naming body parts is relatively frequent in Niger-Congo languages, often as locative markers

(cf. Roulon-Doko 2003) but also as case markers or numerals (see Heine 1996; Kuteva et al. 2019; Hyman 2017), this process is not well documented in the Adamawa branch. Moreover, from what is known of Samba Leko, *nā* ~ *nāw* seems to be one of a kind. Other body part nouns can be used to refer to a part of an object other than the body, but they remain strictly nominal, unlike the uses of *nā* ~ *nāw* as a postposition or an expressive particle.

Ruelland (1998) looks at the use of body part nouns to express abstract notions in Tupuri (Adamawa 6, Glottologue Tupu1244)⁴ where *dɔɔ* ‘hand, arm’ with locative tone marking gives a grammatical term *dɔɔ* used to introduce an agent, a motive, an explanation or a cause of a process. The author sees the notion of power as central to the semantics of these different uses. This fits well with our analysis of Samba Leko, even if the senses of the terms found in each of these languages are not entirely identical. She also shows that the Tupuri grammatical term is constructed from two components: the noun for ‘hand’ and a locative tonal marker.

Ruelland’s (1998) analysis of Tupuri supports the hypothesis of a complex origin of *nā* ~ *nāw*, formed by the association of a locative morpheme *dú* ~ *ú* with the noun for ‘hand’. In this association, the presence of a locative component can easily explain the grammaticalization into a locative postposition to situate an object in relation to its possessor. We may note that, on the pragmatic level, detachable, mobile, temporarily reattachable, transmissible entities, i.e. alienable objects, are the primary ones to be so situated. This corresponds to what Heine (1996) calls the “Location Schema” and seems to be well represented in African languages (Kono, Bambara, Ewe, Zande, cf. Kuteva et al. 2019: 221). Given the erosion of the locative component in the current internal form *nā* and the fact that possession is expressed by *nā* ~ *nāw* alone in the locative-attribute construction (cf. 2.1), this construction is likely to have developed earlier than the other expression of possession in Samba Leko, the associative construction. The associative

⁴ <https://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/tupu1244>

construction used for possession corresponds to Heine's (1996) "Companion Schema", though this term is rather inappropriate to Samba Leko where (i) two components are involved: *kà* establishing an association and *nā ~ nāw* specifying this association as possessive; and (ii) this construction differs from the comitative *kà...tá ~ tá*. As mentioned above, *kà...nā ~ nāw* is restricted in the associative construction to the expression of alienable possession conveying the ideas of transferability, controllability and temporariness of association that we can also find in *nā ~ nāw* as expressive particle. In verbal clauses, the sequence *kà...nā ~ nāw* signifies that the governed element is controlled, but is neither a participant in the process (vs. *kà... tá ~ tá*) nor an instrumental adjunct (expressed by *kà* alone). All this is consistent with the locative component in *nā ~ nāw* having as much weight in the semantic value of this element as the controllable nature of the governed element, and as the agentive and controlling notions associated with the lexical component 'hand'. Kuteva et al. (2019: 221) mention the grammaticalization of 'hand' to agent markers (often in passive constructions) in Coptic, Manding and Zande as a "result of a metonymic transfer, whereby the human hand is used to refer to the person as a whole". The notion of agent marking is easily extended to control exercised by an agent over alienable objects or animals (Ruelland's 1998 "power"), a value better adapted to Samba Leko since it covers uses of *nā ~ nāw* both as postposition (the governed noun is not really an agent) and as expressive particle. In addition, the presence of a locative component in *nā ~ nāw* places it in the paradigm of postpositions and in addition requires that it appears proposition finally where locative adjuncts are normally found in this language.

It would be reasonable (though unprovable) to assume that possession came to be expressed by *nā ~ nāw*, originally a postpositive locative expression, as a first phase of grammaticalization. Later this component of the clause-final sphere would have spread to the expression of agentivity associated with the hand, perhaps further distancing itself from a purely locative sense, and become a predicate modifier (expressive particle) with the meaning 'under control' that we

can observe today. Finally, with regard to the uses of the noun for ‘arm, hand’ *nēn*, we must stress that it is not allowed as an equivalent of *nā* ~ *nāw* and that the postpositional phrase *nēn tēm ú* {hand heart in} (cf. (19)) is used to designate properly a spatial reference point involving the hand: ‘in the hand’.

- (19) *ʔí dá pāgn nēn tēm ú*
 2PL FUT grind hand heart in
 ‘You will reduce [it to powder] in [your] hand.’

The phrase *nēnú* /hand in/ is grammatically acceptable but does not appear as such in our corpus. We find only an idiomatic expression where *nēn* has the sense ‘manner, way’ and must be modified by a relative clause specifying the ‘(way) of’ as in (20). The form *dá* of the locative marker appears in the relative clause as a verbal adjunct: ‘V+in (such a way)’. This is the normal form of relatives whose verb takes a locative adjunct, cf. (21).

- (20) *∅ gāb nēn ā ∅ dá mà-ñ dā dā sé?*
 3SG know hand this 3SG FUT do-VN in ANAPH NEG
 ‘She doesn’t know what (~ how) to do.’

- (21) *∅ gāb*
 3SG know
zəŋ ā ∅ dá ʔəm-ñ bā dā sé?
 place this 3SG FUT do-VN ON ANAPH NEG
 ‘She doesn’t know where to go.’

This structure is related to the idiomatic demonstrative *nēn dā dā ní* [*nēndárēní*] {hand in ANAPH INT} ‘only like this, only in this way’ where the initial deictic marking a relative clause (*ā*) is absent but the tonic form of the locative is retained despite the preceding consonant. This expression indicates that what is to be done is rather fairly and simple. It is often accompanied by quick hand gestures suggesting ease of realization. This expression displays some features

of enunciative particles (in the sense of Ameka 1998), but differs from Samba Leko expressive particles insofar as it is not assigned a fixed position in the utterance, attenuates illocutionary force, and connects with the speaker's gestures and the communicative situation. A specific study of its uses would help to verify these "first impressions", but this has yet to be done. For the time being, we will limit ourselves to the hypothesis that agentivity is again central to this abstract use of 'hand' where the speaker goes so far as to embody this feature in accompanying gestures.

Further investigation of the notion of localization, or the sense of the "default" locator *dú* ~ *ú*, might help to shed more light on the behaviour of both *nēn dā rā ní* and the polyfunctional *nā* ~ *nāw*. More broadly, a study of cases of grammaticalization of nouns for 'arm, hand' in other Adamawa languages should provide information to help us deal with this phenomenon in greater depth.

Abbreviations

ACC – accompaniment marker	INT – intensive particle
ANAPH – anaphoric modifier	Lit. – literal translation
CM – clause marker	LOG – logophoric
CON – connective	NEG – negative marker
CONJ – conjunction	NP – nominal phrase
COP – copula	pl., PL – plural
DIST – distanciative marker	VN – verbonominal
EFF – effective marker	1PL.E – 1 st person plural exclusive
FOC – focalizer	2SG – 2 nd personal singular
FREQ – frequentative	3PL – 3 rd person plural
FUT – future	3SG – 3 rd person singular
ILL – illustrative particle	NP – nominal phrase

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