

Observations on tonal processes in Bangime

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This paper explores the phonological and phonetic tonal processes in Bangime, a language isolate spoken in the Bandiagara Escarpment in Mali. The phonology and morphosyntax of Bangime has been thoroughly described by Hantgan (2013), Heath & Hantgan (2018). The tonal system of Bangime is reported to have either two (H and L) or three (H, M and L) tone levels, which are involved in different processes related to tone sandhi, tone terracing and tone ablaut (Hantgan 2013, Heath 2017, Heath & Hantgan 2018). Alongside the above-mentioned descriptions, there is also an audio collection available on Bangime, compiled by Abbie Hantgan from 2008 to 2012 and Vadim Dyachkov in 2023. This corpus largely consists of discourse data, with a smaller part of elicited (in isolation) lexicon and phrases. On the basis of these audio collections, as well as their visual representations in Praat, I will demonstrate different tonal processes such as tone raising, tone spread, tone shift and floating tone attachment. For instance, I will offer an supplementary analysis of the toneless plural clitic =*nde*, that Hantgan (2013), Heath & Hantgan (2018) suggest receives its tone through tonal polarization, as illustrated in (1). I propose that this marker may not always receive its tone by inserting a tone opposite to that of the preceding one. Instead, the plural clitic =*nde* may also acquire its tone due to tone spread and tone shift from the preceding root, as demonstrated in (2).

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| (1) | bùrǎndé | (2) | ŋǎmbáràndè |
| | bùrǎ = ndé ¹ | | ŋǎmbárà = ndé |
| | stick = PL | | sheep.SG = PL |
| | 'sticks' | | 'sheep (pl.)' |

These and other processes will be illustrated with nouns that carry various lexical tonal melodies and are used with different nominal modifiers. My observations will be supported by materials I collected during a few elicitation sessions with Adama Dicko, a Bangime speaker, in Dakar in June 2024.

This talk will provide preliminary observations and some hypotheses that will require further refinement and discussion.

References

- Hantgan, Abbie. 2013. Aspects of Bangime Phonology, Morphology, and Morphosyntax. Indiana University dissertation.
- Heath, Jeffrey. 2017. Bangime tone audio tour. Introduction to Bangime (language isolate, Mali) tones and tonology, pdf with audio clips. Deep Blue Repositories, University of Michigan (Available online at <http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/140062>, Accessed on 2024-08-27.)
- Heath, Jeffrey & Abbie Hantgan. 2018. Grammar of Bangime: Language isolate of Mali. (Mouton Grammar Library.) Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

¹Vertical bars |a| represent a morphophonological transcription.