

Dogon structural case-marking

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Dogon languages are generally SOV (verb-final) for nonpronominal (noun-headed) subjects and objects. Pronominal objects typically occur in the same position as nonpronominal objects. Ordinary (unfocalized) pronominal subjects are expressed variously as “agreement” suffixes on the verb, as verb proclitics or enclitics, or as independent pronouns in the clause-initial subject slot.

The remainder of this piece is primarily about morphological case-marking for subject and direct object.

nonpronominal NP subjects

NPs are morphologically unmarked for subject function in all Dogon languages.

nonpronominal NP objects

Direct objects and to some extent indirect objects (e.g. with ‘give’) can be marked in several languages by a postposition-like **accusative** marker. This marker may be an enclitic attached to the preceding word, and is clearly so (indicated by = boundary) when the marker takes the form of a simple sonorant (nasal or *y*) or is expressed by a modification of the preceding word’s final vowel (addition of final floating L-tone and/or vowel-lengthening).

The accusative clitic is typically NP-final, and may therefore be considered to be a postposition. However, in some languages (such as Tommo So) it precedes the ‘all’ quantifier. The accusative clitic is often “optional,” for example required of definite or specific human NPs (and pronouns) but absent for e.g. inanimate objects, with nonhuman animates in between. In some languages the clitic may be inaudible (floating L after already L-toned vowel), barely audible, or optionally elided, making transcription in texts unreliable. In some languages (Tommo So, Donno So, in part Yorno So) it is homophonous to the ‘it is’ clitic, which usually also doubles as a constituent focalizer.

(1)	language	postnominal accusative	‘it is’/focus marker
	eastern		
	Toro Tegu	[none]	[none]
	Jamsay	[none]	= \dot{y}
	Ben Tey	$ni \sim =n$	= \dot{m} or final L-tone
	Bankan Tey	??	= \dot{m} or final L-tone
	Nanga	= η	= m - (and variants)
	Tommo So	= \dot{j} (Ningari = $\dot{\eta}$)	= \dot{j}
	Donno So	= η	= η
	Yorno So	= \dot{y}	= $y \sim =i:$
	Togo Kan	[none]	= y , = $i:$, or lengthen final vowel
	Tomo Kan	$ni \sim li$	lengthen final vowel
	northwestern		
	Najamba	gi	= $y \sim =i:$
	Tiranige	gi	= $\dot{w}^n \sim =w\dot{o} \sim =y\dot{o}$
	Dogul Dom	= y	??
	Tebul Ure	gi	final L-tone
	Yanda Dom	$-i: \sim -\dot{y}$	vowel-lengthening & final L-tone
	southwestern		
	Bunoge	$\eta g\dot{u}$	lengthen final vowel
	Mombo	??	$b\acute{o}:$
	Ampari	gi	$w\dot{o}$
	Penange	$-\eta \sim -\dot{w}$	= $y\dot{o} \sim =y\dot{e} \sim =(w)\dot{o}$

pronominal subjects

Unfocalized pronominal subjects are expressed variously by “agreement” suffixes on the verb or other predicate, by postverbal enclitics, by preverbal proclitics, or by independent pronouns in the normal clause-initial subject position. 3Sg is usually zero (\emptyset) if part of the suffixal agreement system (with some exceptions in imperfectives), but it is nonzero in clitic and clause-initial positions, which may distinguish human/nonhuman 3Sg. 1st/2nd persons are sometimes treated differently from 3rd persons. Only Tiranige has a structural difference between 1Sg/2Sg (suffixal) and 1Pl/2Pl (proclitic).

There are at least basic six pronominal categories (1sg/2nd/3rd crossed with Sg/Pl). In some languages with suffixal agreement, the suffixal categories may involve minor syncretisms such as 1Pl/2Pl. Other languages show more **global** suffixal syncretisms, for example just a transpersonal binary singular/plural opposition. Suffixal syncretisms of course increase the frequency of clause-initial independent pronouns to reduce ambiguity.

The basic typological patterns for main-clause subject pronouns are in (2), omitting some detail (such as 3Sg imperfective positives). “Suffix,” “proclitic,” and “enclitic” refer to positions in or adjacent to the verb. “Initial” means independent pronoun in clause-initial position.

(2)	language	1Sg/1Pl	2Sg/2Pl	3Sg	3Pl	suffixal syncretisms
eastern						
	Toro Tegu	initial	initial	enclitic	enclitic	(n.a.)
	Jamsay	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	—
	Ben Tey	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	—
	Bankan Tey	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	—
	Nanga	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	—
	Tommo So	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	1Pl/2Pl
	Donno So	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	1Sg/1Pl dialectally
	Yorno So	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	1Pl/3Pl
	Togo Kan	Pl suffix	Pl suffix	∅	Pl suffix	global Sg vs. Pl
	Tomo Kan	initial	initial	initial	suffix	all but 3Pl
northwestern						
	Najamba	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	—
	Tiranige	suffix	proclitic	∅	suffix	—
	Dogul Dom	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	—
	Tebul Ure	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	1Pl/2Pl
	Yanda Dom	suffix	suffix	∅	suffix	1Pl/2Pl
southwestern						
	Bunoge	proclitic	proclitic	∅	suffix	—
	Mombo	proclitic	proclitic	∅	suffix	??
	Ampari	proclitic	proclitic	∅	suffix	1Sg/1Pl
	Penange	proclitic	proclitic	∅	suffix	—

pronominal subjects in nonsubject relatives

Relative clauses include subject relatives (‘the man who saw me’) and nonsubject including object relatives (‘the man who[m] I saw’, ‘the day I saw the man’). In subject relatives, there is usually no pronominal subject marker, since there is always an overt or understood head NP corresponding to the subject. In nonsubject relatives, usually a pronominal subject (‘the man who I/you/he saw’, ‘the day I/you/he saw the man’) is generally not expressed by an agreement suffix. Instead, even in languages that have agreement suffixes on the verb in main clauses, relative clauses have proclitic subject

pronouns adjacent to the verb. The subject pronoun usually has the same form as the corresponding independent pronoun, except that in Jamsay it is L-toned.

pronominal objects

Pronominal objects occur in the regular object slot. This is often adjacent to the following verb, but certain elements may intervene. In particular, subject proclitics (for some languages in main and relative clauses, in others just for relative clauses) always immediately precede the verb.

In most cases, the form of a pronominal object is identical to the independent form of the same pronoun, plus an accusative marker (if the language has one). Irregular pronominal accusatives are in (3).

(3)	language	category	accusative	independent
	Nanga	1Sg	<i>ńjí-ŋ</i>	<i>ĩ.ⁿ</i>
	Togo Kan	1Sg	<i>má</i>	<i>íⁿ</i>