

Grammar and grammaticalization in Manda

An analysis of the wider TAM domain in a Tanzanian Bantu language

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Abstract

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This dissertation offers a grammatical description and analysis of Manda (N.11), a Bantu language spoken along Lake Nyasa (Lake Malawi) in southern Tanzania. The study focuses on the “wider” TAM domain, i.e. on how tense, aspect, mood but also modality and negation are expressed in the language, offering a description of the form and function of the various markers employed. In addition, this work sets out to unravel the historical background of these markers and the diachronic processes of change - particularly grammaticalization - through which they have evolved. As Manda is a basically undescribed language, the thesis also includes a brief socio-historical account - focusing on the issues of contact - as well as a grammar sketch describing the fundamentals of the language.

This study draws on a combination of methods consisting of both more prototypical field work as well as methods facilitating grammatical reconstruction. The vast bulk of the Manda data have been collected in the field. Hypotheses of change – but also of retention – are based on the synchronic variation found in this data, in comparison to the data of existing older sources as well as from neighboring languages. Furthermore, the Manda data has been compared to Proto-Bantu reconstructions and cross-Bantu as well as cross-linguistic generalizations on functional and formal change.

The study shows that Manda in many ways adheres to the general traits of an (Eastern) Bantu language. Fundamentally, the language is highly agglutinative, with e.g. an elaborate noun class system and a rich set of both prefixes and affixes on the verbal word, marking nominal indexation, derivations as well as TAM. With regard to TAM, the study argues that much of the synthetic linguistic material found in Manda can be traced to Proto-Bantu and thus most likely is inherited. In contrast, many innovations and indications of ongoing change are displayed in the periphrastic constructions of the language. These include a set of auxiliary constructions used for expressing aspect, modality but also (non-standard) negation, a borrowed persistive marker and two particles being employed as standard negators.

Keywords: Manda, Bantu, southern Tanzania, grammaticalization, grammar, linguistic description, reconstruction, tense-aspect-mood, modality, negation, auxiliary