

Quotative marker *lē* in Guro (South Mande): issues of synchronic classification and diachronic origins

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The study discusses the non-verbal quotative predicator *lē* in Guro (< South Mande < Mande < Niger Congo). I address the following issues:

- (a) morphosyntactic and phonological properties of this unit;
- (b) its distinction from several other homonymic grammatical markers *lē*;
- (c) possible origins of the Guro quotative;
- (d) comparison of the Guro quotative with the situation in cognate South Mande languages.

The data on Zuénula Guro have been collected in field by the author in 2006-2008, and online in 2016 and 2021, with several additions from the data collected by Olga Kuznetsova in different periods from 2006 to 2020 and from her glossed corpus of Guro narratives (O. Kuznetsova 2022).

The conception presented here is explicated in detail N. Kuznetsova (2023). It differs both from that presented by N. V. Kuznecova and O.V. Kuznecova (2017) and the one underlying the glossing principles in O. Kuznetsova (2022). The main answers to the issues listed above can be summarised as follows.

(a) The Guro quotative is predicative but not identical to the homonymic identificational copula *lē* (contrary to Kuznecova & Kuznecova 2017). The copula can have only contrastive personal pronouns as its pronominal subject (1), while quotative typically has basic subjective pronouns (2). Additionally, the copula cannot have any arguments in postposition to it, while the quotative can (e.g. a noun phrase expressing the addressee of communication or a temporal adverb). By the sum of its syntactic properties, the quotative can be considered an independent lexeme and an idiosyncratic part of speech. This can give some support to the observed cross-linguistic tendency that reported speech generally constitutes its own syntactic domain in the language (Spronck & Nikitina 2019).

(b) Guro quotative *lē* is also not identical to the complementiser *lē* ‘that’ (contrary to the glossing system in O. Kuznetsova 2022), first of all because the two can be combined in one sentence (2). The complementiser *lē* ‘that’, apart from introducing the reported discourse, can also introduce various other types of complement and optative/purpose clauses. While the quotative is interchangeable with the finite verbs of speech, the complementiser (in the modal constructions of necessity) is interchangeable with another complementiser *bēlē* ‘so that’.

(c) Guro quotative might originate from the identificational copula *lē*, along the evolutionary path of type V outlined by Guldeman (2008): from “foregrounding devices and presentationals”, e.g., ‘it is’, ‘there is’. Its origin from a speech verb is less likely because it does not share any phonological or morphosyntactic features with any verbs in Guro.

(d) Among the South Mande languages reported in Vydrin et al. (eds., 2017), the Guro quotative as a non-verbal predicator non-identical to copulas, finds the only parallel in the most closely related cognate language Yauré (Kušnir 2017). In Yauré, however, the quotative *lǎǎ* does not seem to be homonymic to any conjunction or copula, unlike in Guro, so the problem (b) does not seem to exist for Yauré. However, the quotative predicator homonymic to the complementiser ‘that’ exists in a more distant Mande language Kakabe (Nikitina & Vydrina 2020). In the latter, however, the two can directly follow each other, which does not seem to be the case in Guro.

- (1) *Bī būú, yì lē.*
 man that 3SG.CTR IDCOP
 'That person is him'.
- (2) *È lē é lā lē lē,*
 3SG.SBJ QUOT 3SG.RFL wife for that
bâ é à gū-lâ lū lâ-pá-lâ.
 hey LOG.SG EXCOP go-LOCN grass on-put-LOCN
 'He_i told his_i wife that, hey, he_i is going for a hunt'.

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