

## Book Review

**Vydrin, Valentin F., Yulia V. Mazurova, Andrej A. Kibrik, Elena B. Markus (eds.).** 2017. *Jazyki mira. Jazyki mande [Languages of the World. The Mande Languages]*. Saint-Petersburg: Nestor-Istoria, 1152 pp. ISBN 978-5-4469-0824-0

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The volume under review belongs to the ambitious and long-lasting series “Languages of the World”, which was conceived at the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in the 1970s and whose volumes have been appearing in print since the mid-1990s. The goal of the series is to provide sketch descriptions of the languages of the world (at least of those traditionally belonging to the domain of interest of the Russian linguists) according to a uniform template aiming at cross-linguistic comparability. Up to now several dozens of volumes have been published covering the whole Indo-European family and most of the other language families of Eurasia with the exception of the Sino-Tibetan languages and the language families of South East Asia; with the publication of several volumes on the Semitic languages the coverage has included some languages of Africa as well.

The volume on the Mande languages is outstanding in several respects. To begin with, it is the first comprehensive encyclopedia on this family published in any language, and hence it is bound to become a major reference source, in particular for typologists – at least, for those who can read Russian or are industrious enough to learn it. Second, in contrast to many other volumes of the series, especially to those devoted to the better-known Indo-European languages, the grammatical descriptions included in this volume are often the most detailed, up-to-date and comprehensive of all existing sources. Third, given that most authors of the volume belong to a single team of researchers led by the eminent expert on Mande languages, Professor Valentin Vydrin (Saint-Petersburg/Paris), the main editor and the (co)author of six chapters, the internal coherence of the volume and the ensuing level of comparability of descriptions (including such matters as conventions of transcription and glossing as well as terminology) is certainly higher than average. Fourth, most of the authors of the volume are relatively young linguists (including MA and PhD students) who have received their training in the departments of general linguistics at the universities of Saint-Petersburg and Moscow with a focus on

linguistic theory and typology and often have research experience with languages besides Mande, as different as Kwa, Samoyedic or Kalmyk. This, together with the relatively young age of Mande studies in general, ensures that the volume is to a large extent free of the possible biases of the “local” linguistic traditions and is written with a high degree of typological awareness.

Before discussing the contents of the volume it is necessary to briefly introduce the descriptive template of the series. Importantly, this template has been devised as both rigid so as to require the language expert to cover a number of issues in a particular order, and flexible so as not to impose an aprioristic and possibly euro- or russo-centric structure on the languages described. Each chapter starts with the socio-historical information about the language including its name(s), genealogical affiliation, geographical distribution, number of speakers, sociolinguistic status, writing system(s), level of standardization and involvement in contact with other languages. The bulk of the sketch is devoted to grammatical information, starting with phonology, including suprasegmental features, syllable structure, phonological and morphophonemic processes. The description of morphosyntax starts with the discussion of word classes and the language-internal criteria of their identification. Then follows the onomasiological description of nominal and verbal features arranged by functional-semantic zones rather than by word-classes; thus, deictic categories, such as person, definiteness, and tense, are discussed together and separately from such features as nominal number or the expression of case or transitivity. Morphology proper is presented by sample paradigms of inflected parts of speech as well as by the discussion of the typical morphological structure of words and major patterns of word-formation. Then follows a syntactic description of simple and complex clauses, including minor clausal patterns such as identificational, existential, locational and possessive predications. The sketch is closed by a discussion of lexical borrowings and dialectal differences. The main text of the chapters normally does not contain references, but each is followed by a representative bibliography.

The volume starts with a short preface followed by an introductory chapter by Valentin Vydrin (16–45) describing the whole language family, approaches to its genealogical classification and presenting the most important structural features, and containing a comprehensive bibliography. The following genealogical classification of the Mande family is proposed by Vydrin (2009) on the basis of lexicostatistics (17–25, see also the schema on page 1140):

Western branch:

- Manding (Mandinka, Bamana etc.)
- Mokole
- Vai-Kono

Jogo-Jeri  
 Susu-Jalonke  
 Southwestern group (Mende, Kpelle, Looma etc.)  
 Soninke-Bozo  
 Samogo

South-Eastern branch:

Southern group (Dan, Mano, Tura, Guro, Yaure, Wan etc.)  
 Eastern group (Bisa, Boko etc.)

The bulk of the volume comprises twenty two grammatical sketches of the languages from almost every subgroup of the family with the exception of Vai-Kono and Samogo. The best represented group is the Southern one; the part of the volume devoted to it comprises eleven grammatical sketches on six hundred pages, covering practically all known languages of this division of the family. The reason for this is the fact that it is these languages that the research group led by Vydrin has most intensively worked on, and such a choice is certainly justified given that most members of the Southern group have not been described in any detail before. The data for the sketches mainly comes from the authors' own fieldwork and comprises both elicited and textual examples. Valentin Vydrin's description of Bamana is largely based on the online corpus of Bamana written texts (<http://cormand.huma-num.fr/>) compiled under his supervision, and Maksim Fedotov's sketch of Gban includes many examples from the translation of the New Testament.

The grammatical sketches in the volume fall into three types. First, there are sketches of the size and detail which are average for the series, e.g. Kakabe by Alexandra Vydrina (172–212) or Beng by Denis Paperno and Anna Maloletnyaya (1000–1032). Second, there are shorter sketches about languages on which little data is available, e.g. Jogo by Maria Sapozhnikova (213–220) or Goo by Valentin Vydrin and Ekaterina Aplonova (457–469). Third, and most importantly and exceptionally for the whole series, there is a number of extended grammatical sketches especially rich in detail and coverage. These are Bamana by Valentin Vydrin (46–143), Kpelle by Maria Konoshenko (284–343), Dan by Valentin Vydrin (469–583), Kla-Dan by Nadezhda Makeeva (617–679), Guro by Natalia Kuznetsova and Olga Kuznetsova<sup>1</sup> (765–877) and Gban by Maksim Fedotov (902–999). The inclusion of such detailed descriptions, especially of the previously virtually undocumented languages, is one of the clearest advantages of the volume.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors are not relatives.

The last chapter of the volume (1094–1112), written by Valentin Vydrin and Andrij Rovenchak, describes the indigenous writing systems of the Mande languages, such as the syllabaries of Vai, Mende, Kpelle, Looma and Masaba, the Nko alphabet widely used across the Manding area, as well as the Arabic-based scripts. Like most other volumes of the series, this one contains a set of maps indicating the geographical localization of the Mande languages and their major dialects; all in all, there are eleven maps, starting from the one showing the whole family on the endpaper and going to fairly detailed maps of the individual language groups. All maps have been created by Yury Koryakov at the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

In a review it is impractical and unnecessary to discuss the contents of any let alone all of the individual descriptive sketches. Neither am I in a position, not being a specialist on Mande languages myself, to evaluate the accuracy of the descriptions presented in the volume, beyond saying that all of them – to the extent that the data is available – follow the highest standards of coverage and clarity. Instead, as a typologist, I will highlight a small subset of the properties of the Mande family and its individual members that I consider important for typology and linguistic theory.

In phonology, perhaps the most non-trivial feature of the Mande languages is the prominence of the disyllabic (rarely also trisyllabic) foot, which serves as the basic prosodic and phonotactic unit, in contrast to the syllable whose role is subordinate. The role of the foot is manifested in quite rigid constraints on foot-internal consonants, on the co-occurrence of vowels, on nasalization, and on tonal patterns. Thus, in Kla-Dan (Nadezhda Makeeva, 620–621) the only consonant allowed in the foot-internal position is /l/ with a number of contextually determined allophones; nasalization has the foot as its domain; vowels in both syllables of the foot are either identical or the first one must be high; the tones of all syllables must be either identical or follow very strict co-occurrence constraints. The only language in the family where the foot is explicitly claimed not to play any role is Boko (Elena Perekhval'skaya, 1054). The primacy of the foot as against the syllable in the Mande languages clearly shows that basic phonotactic units are subject to cross-linguistic variation.

All Mande languages are tonal, but the complexity of tonal systems varies considerably across the family, with the most elaborate systems found in the Southern group. Tonal complexity manifests itself in the numerous syntagmatic readjustments affecting the lexical tones as well as in the widespread use of tones for marking grammatical information. Thus, in many languages of the family the head of the possessive phrase receives low tone, cf. Kpelle (Maria Konoshenko, 287): **kóyò** 'leg' (HH) vs. **bélláá** kòyò 'lamb leg' (LL). In Gban (Maksim Fedotov, 973) tone is used to mark tense and aspect; thus, in (1a) the

non-past tense is marked by the low tone on the predicative marker, and the imperfective aspect by the high tone on the verb, while in (1b) the past tense is signalled by the ultra-high tone on the predicative marker and the hodiernal perfective by the ultra-high tone on the verb (see also example (8) below), without any difference in the segmental material.

Gban (Maksim Fedotov, p. 937)

- (1) a. ɪ́            **blé**    bé  
           1SG.NPST bread IPFV\take  
           ‘I am taking bread.’
- b. ɪ́            **blé**    bʔ́  
           1SG\PST bread take:PFV.HOD  
           ‘I took bread (today).’

An important phenomenon on the interface between morphosyntax and tonal phonology of the Mande languages is the so-called “tonal compactness” whereby independent content words assimilate their tonal contour to that of their syntactic environment. This mainly happens with attributive modifiers in the noun phrase (cf. Bamana **jégé** ‘fish’ + **fín** ‘black’ → **jégé** fín ‘black fish’, Valentin Vydrin, 55), but is also attested within the verb phrase (cf. Kpelle **ɓéláá** ‘sheep’ + **kàà** ‘saw’ → **ɓéláá** kàà ‘saw a sheep’, Maria Konoshenko, 288). The phenomenon of “tonal compactness” is a clear instance of a mismatch between phonological and morphosyntactic domains and bears on the debate around the issue of the “word” (Haspelmath 2011). Such mismatches have been recently discussed based on data from morphologically rich (“polysynthetic”) languages, see e.g. Lander (2017) and Bickel and Zúñiga (2017), however, the Mande languages show that considerably more analytic languages are not immune to such discrepancies, either.

In morphophonology, initial consonant mutation is prominent; in some languages, like Soninke, it is triggered by the preceding nasal (Denis Creissels and Anna Urmanchieva, 255), in others it has been morphologized, e.g. Kpelle **káá** ‘see’ vs. **gáá** ‘see me’ (Maria Konoshenko, 293) or Gban **vútù** ‘white’ vs. **fútù** ‘small white’ (diminutive, Maksim Fedotov, 910).

Turning to morphology, the Mande languages are usually believed to be largely analytic. Indeed, they mostly lack words with long strings of affixes and their inflectional systems are at first glance less elaborate than those of the Bantu languages. However, this does not mean that morphologists may neglect Mande, just on the contrary. First, the Mande languages are rich in non-concatenative and tonal morphology; to the examples already given above the nominal paradigms from Soninke in Table 1 can be added.

**Table 1:** Noun inflectional classes in Soninke (Denis Creissels and Anna Urmanchieva, 272).

gloss	non-autonomous	singular indefinite	plural indefinite
type I			
'child'	<b>lémíná-</b>	<b>lémíné</b>	<b>lémúnú</b>
'blacksmith'	<b>tàgà-</b>	<b>tàgé</b>	<b>tàgó</b>
type II			
'chicken'	<b>sélin-</b>	<b>sélinné</b>	<b>sélinnú</b>
'camel'	<b>ñògòn-</b>	<b>ñògómé</b>	<b>ñògòmó</b>
type III			
'field'	<b>tèe-</b>	<b>té</b>	<b>tèenú</b>

Moreover, the Mande languages provide clear evidence in favour of constructionalist and paradigmatic approaches to morphology (see e.g. Ackerman and Stump 2004; Booij 2010). As shown in numerous chapters of the volume, the verbal paradigms in Mande can be quite elaborate and complex, but the formal exponence of aspect, tense, mood and polarity is not bound to the verb but is distributed across several clausal constituents influencing the choice of the predicative marker, of a free-standing particle or auxiliary and of the form of the verb itself. Consider examples (2a–c) from Dan.

Dan (Valentin Vydrin, p. 495, 496, 497)

- (2) a. **Gbàtò** yǝ́      **kó**      dǝ́  
 PN      3SG.EXI house build\NTR  
 'Gbato builds houses.' (neutral aspect)
- b. **Gbàtò** yà      ɣ̃      **ɓā**      **kó**      dǝ́  
 PN      3SG.PRF REFL POSS house build  
 'Gbato has built his house.' (perfect)
- c. **Gbàtò** yáá           **kó**      dǝ́  
 PN      3SG.NEG.IPFV house build  
 'Gbato does not build houses.' (negative imperfective)

A prominent morphosyntactic peculiarity of the Mande languages is the so-called predicative markers — free-standing and usually unanalyzable elements normally occurring between the subject and the object and expressing such clausal features as negation, aspect and mood. In many languages of the family, predicative markers have fused with the immediately preceding subject pronouns into portmanteau



Kla-Dan (Nadezhda Makeeva, 658)

- (5) **dù** **ɸ̀** gú yà lièé sʒʒ gú  
 sorcery person\REF inside 3SG.PRF turn agouti in  
 ‘The sorcerer turned into an agouti.’

The most prominent verbal grammatical domain in the Mande languages is aspect. In addition to perfective and imperfective, many languages of the family also mark progressive, resultative, perfect, habitual and prospective aspects. By contrast, tense is less elaborated, with many verbal constructions lacking a fixed temporal interpretation. However, most languages of the family possess the so-called “retrospective shift” markers (Plungian and van der Auwera 2006: 344), i.e. free standing elements compatible with various verbal constructions and shifting their temporal reference to the past, cf. examples (6a–b) from Susu.

Susu (Andrey Shluinsky, 230, 232)

- (6) a. **ń** **tààrá** **kéédì** **sébé-fèè**  
 1SG elder.sibling paper write-PROG  
 ‘My elder sibling is writing a letter.’  
 b. **ń** **tààrá** nú **kéédì** **sébé-fèè**  
 1SG elder.sibling RETR paper write-PROG  
 ‘My elder sibling was writing a letter.’

Interestingly, Tura distinguishes between the past marker **núú** with a more restricted distribution and the retrospective shift marker (**w**)óó (Dmitry Idiatov and Ekaterina Aplonova, pages 596, 602–604), which can even co-occur, cf. example (7).

Tura (Dmitry Idiatov and Ekaterina Aplonova, 604)

- (7) **è** wóó núú **ɗó-à** **bòí** **ɗè** **tʒʒ'**  
 3SG.EXI RETR PST go-INF field CNJ guest.JNT  
**ɸʒ'** **à** **tà** **ɗè**  
 come\AOR 3SG.NSBJ POSTP EMPH  
 ‘He had almost gone to the field when a guest came to his place.’

An exception to this aspect prominence is again Gban, where a complex tense system with several degrees of remoteness has developed, see pages 937–940. Remoteness marking in Gban is primarily achieved by tonal modification of the verb, cf. examples (8a–c).



Gban (Maksim Fedotov, 939)

- (8) a. **tènǎ́ é tǔ dò** gò  
 boy 3SG\PST cloth one buy[PFV.HOD]  
 ‘The boy bought clothes (today).’ (hodiernal, lexical tone)
- b. **tènǎ́ é tǔ dò** gò  
 boy 3SG\PST cloth one buy\PFV.HEST  
 ‘The boy bought clothes (yesterday).’ (hesternal, ultralow tone)
- c. **tènǎ́ é tǔ dò** gò  
 boy 3SG\PST cloth one buy\PFV.PREH  
 ‘The boy bought clothes (some days ago).’ (prehesternal, mid-raising tone)

The syntax of the Mande languages is characterized by rigid configurationality with word order following the cross-linguistically not very common pattern S(Aux)OVX, where X refers to oblique and adverbial phrases of all kinds, including, e.g. recipients of ditransitive verbs. Permutations of word order for reasons of information structure are mostly disallowed: for instance, topicalization to the left periphery requires the presence of a resumptive pronoun in the core of the clause, cf. example (9) from Wan.

Wan (Tatiana Nikitina, 1049)

- (9) yrē<sub>i</sub> é, è kúnā à<sub>i</sub> gó  
 tree DEF 3SG climb 3SG in  
 ‘That tree, he climbed on it.’

A non-trivial feature of the family is the so-called “passive lability”, i.e. formation of fully-fledged passive constructions without any specific voice morphology by mere change of grammatical relations or transitivity marking (if available), cf. examples (10a–b) from Looma.

Looma (Daria Mischenko, 366)

- (10) a. **kálámó** ∅ **ná** **kálá-gì** bè-gá  
 REF\teacher 3SG.BAS 3SG.POSS reading-DEF stop-PRF  
 ‘The teacher has finished the lesson.’
- b. **kálá-gì** ∅ bè-gá **kálámó** **vè**  
 REF\reading-DEF 3SG.BAS stop-PRF REF\teacher at  
 ‘The lesson has been finished by the teacher.’

The Mande languages exhibit a variety of relativization strategies often co-occurring in a single language. Most of these involve an invariable relativizer and resumptive pronouns, but the details differ across languages. Thus, Gban employs post-nominal head-external relativization with a clause-initial relativizer shown in (11). This strategy seems to be less common for the family than the correlative strategy with the semantic head followed by the relativizer located in the appropriate position in the relative clause and resumed by a pronominal element in the main clause, as shown in example (12) from Guro. Such correlative clauses can, moreover, be embedded into the main clause, as in Kla-Dan, see example (13).

Gban (Maksim Fedotov, 997)

- (11) **ì gbí tá-kà lèní**  
 1SG breast IPFV\walk-CAUS girl  
**[nɛ̀ɛ̀ ní-é sà sɪ à mɔ́] yé.**  
 REL 2SG-IPFV.PREH song IPFV\sing 3SG for with  
 ‘I think about the girl that you sang for.’

Guro (Natalia Kuznetsova and Olga Kuznetsova, 871)

- (12) **[ā búlù â yí kālā jǐ], à tili à**  
 1SG.SBJ bread REL see\PFV bowl in 3SG.NSBJ dirt COP  
 ‘The bread that I saw in the bowl, is dirty.’

Kla-Dan (Nadezhda Makeeva, 677)

- (13) **ḡá wǔ yé [wòŋbòlǎ ké ŋ kà wò**  
 1SG.PRF firewood break old.man REL 1SG.JNT RETR sleep\JNT  
**àḡà kóó lɔ̃] à lɔ̃**  
 3SG.POSS house.inside in 3SG.NSBJ for  
 ‘I gathered firewood for the old man in whose house I had slept.’

Turning to critical remarks, one can certainly complain about the lack of a subject index and especially of a detailed table of contents, which would greatly facilitate browsing through the longer sketches. Text samples would also be very welcome in such an edition. As already mentioned, the volume exhibits a remarkably high degree of internal coherence; however, certain terminological and descriptive inconsistencies can still be observed. Thus, in his description of the phonology of Susu on pages 222–224 Andrey Shluinsky calls “glides” what other authors call “sonorants” and, more importantly, distinguishes between bilabial and labiodental consonants, which in other sketches are lumped together as “labial” (the same distinction is observed in

Dmitry Idiatov and Ekaterina Aplonova's sketch of Tura, page 588). As concerns transcription, though in most sketches nasalization is indicated by the tilde below the vowel in order not to interfere with the tonal diacritics, several authors (e.g. Dmitry Idiatov and Ekaterina Aplonova in their sketch of Tura) nevertheless put the tilde above the vowel. The same authors place the labio-velar consonants between the labiodentals and alveolars in their table of consonants (588), while in most other chapters labiovelars go together with velars. More consistency would be welcome in the presentation of paradigms, which range from mere listing of markers in Denis Creissels' chapter on Mandinka (154) to tables with full word forms or even sentences (e.g. in Andrey Shluinsky's sketch of Susu on page 237 or in Maksim Fedotov's sketch of Gban, 973–975).

Sometimes the general descriptive framework of the series seems to force the authors to repeat information in several places of the sketch or produce strange formulations like “particles do not belong to the syntactic structure of the sentence” (page 61 and passim; peculiarly, Maria Konoshenko in her sketch of Kpelle does not mention the word class “particles” at all) or “other syntactic relations are expressed by adjacency” (663), clearly a relic from the Russian grammatical tradition classifying syntactic (sic!) relations into those of “agreement”, “government” and “adjacency” (Rus. *primykaniye*).

The volume is quite well edited, but certain editorial lapses are found, especially in the chapter on Kakabe by Alexandra Vydrina, which contains numerous typos (some of them inhibit comprehensibility, e.g. “transitiva tantum” for verbs only used intransitively, pages 182–183, or “relative”, Rus. *otnositel'noe*, instead of “conditional”, Rus. *uslovnoe*, on page 185), but also elsewhere, e.g. in the chapter on Bamana by Valentin Vydrin the marker **tùn** is glossed PST in ex. (74) on page 82 and RETR in ex. (82) on page 83. Numbering of examples is wrong on pages 121 and 669. In the sketch of Kpelle by Maria Konoshenko the autonomous 1SG pronoun **ɲáá** is lacking from the table on page 329, despite its existence evidenced by example (211) on page 325. On page 317 of her description of Looma Daria Mischenko refers to “strong telic-stative verbs”, but never explains what this term, coming from Tatevosov (2002), means. Tatiana Nikitina in her sketch of Wan discusses the dental implosive /ɖ/ not included in the consonant chart on page 1035.

Putting these minor and inevitable lapses aside, I would like to reiterate that the volume under review is a pinnacle work of a group of researchers led by Valentin Vydrin, outstanding in many respects and bound to become a major reference source on the Mande family both for the experts in these languages and for the broader community of linguists. Given that many of the members of

the target audience of the volume are not to be expected to learn Russian, I would like to conclude my review with a plea to the leading publishing houses in linguistics to consider investing some of their funds in an English edition of this work.

## Abbreviations

1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
AOR	aorist
BAS	basic pronominal series/predicative marker
CAUS	causative
CNJ	conjunction
COP	copula
DEF	definite
EMPH	emphatic particle
EXI	existential pronominal series/predicative marker
FOC	focus
HEST	hesternal
HOD	hodiernal
IND	indicative
INF	infinitive
IPFV	imperfective
JNT	conjoined predicative marker
NEG	negation
NPST	nonpast
NSBJ	nonsubject
NTR	neutral aspect
PFV	perfective
PN	proper name
POSS	possessive
POSTP	postposition
PREH	prehesternal
PREP	preposition
PRF	perfect
PROG	progressive
PST	past
REF	referential
REFL	reflexive
REL	relativizer
RETR	retrospective shift marker
SBJ	subject
SG	singular

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