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From body to space and time

Hausa gaba and baya.

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It is common in languages of the world to have grammatical words deriving from lexical words, and more precisely adverbs and prepositions deriving from names of body parts.

Hausa is no exception. If we have a look at prepositions, Hausa has few « true » prepositions: **à** (*in, at on*), **ì/yì/wà** (*relatively to*), **gà** (*at*), **dà** (*with*), **dàgà** (*from*), **bisà** (*on*)**.**[2] Pseudo-prepositions are then derived from names of body parts, like **gàban** (in front of), **bāyan** (*behind*), **cikin** (*inside*), **(à) gindin** (*at the bottom of*), derived respectively from **gàbā** (*the chest*); **bāyā** (*the back*); **cik*ì*** *(the inside, the* stomach) and the **gindì (***the buttocks*).

In this paper, we will study the semantic variations that characterize and account for the use of two lexical notions (**bāyā**, *the back* and **gàbā**, (i) *the chest, the front of body of person or animal*, or (ii)*(euphemism) male or femal genital organs*) in different parts of Hausa grammar, and will link those observations with cognitive considerations.

From **bāyā** (m.) are derived **bāya** (adv.) : *behind, backwards*. **bāyan** (prép. & conj.) *(i) : afterÙ; (ii) behind*.

From **gàbā** (m.) are derived : **gàba** (adv.) : *in front, forward, ahead* ; **gàban** (prép.) : (i) *in front of, before* (ii) *beyond, on the other side of.*

1. Body parts

Let us see a few examples of the use of those notions naming body parts. [3]

1.1 bāyā

1.

Da safiya ta yi sai ya karɓe ni daga bayan uwata ya aza ni a kwacciyar sird insa, domin ya ji tausayin uwata da ta ke goye da ni. [S.U., 25]
In the morning, he took me from my mother's back and put me on the pommel of his saddle, because he was having pity of my mother who was carrying me on her back.

2.

Tun da ya kama hanya bai waiwaya ma ya dubi garin ba, sai da ya tabbata a ransa cewa ya ba shi baya da gaske. [S.U., 9]
*When he left, he did not even turn back to look at the town, but he only thought about leaving the town for good. (lit : **bā shì bāyā** = give it (the) back)*

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[2] May be we can iclude **zuwà** (*towards*) although it is derived from the verb **zō/jē** (venir/partir).

[3] The Hausa examples are taken from a short story, *Shehu Umar* (hence *S.U.*), written by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Ɓalewa. It relates the story of a small Hausa boy who, captured and sold a slave to the Arabs, becomes a renowned marabout.

1.2 gàbā

3. **Iyalinsa duk sai suka amsa gaba ɗaya suka ce [...] [S.U., 4]**
   *All his parents answered together and said [...] (lit. **gàbā ɗaya** = one front)*

4. **Gàbansà ya fādì. (Abraham, 277b)**
   He lost heart. (lit. his front fell)

5. **Sun sâ gàbā gabàs. (id.)**
   They turned eastward. (lit. they put front eastward)

1.3 bāya = adverb

When preceded by the preposition **à** (*at*), **bāyā** can be used in a locative sense meaning *on the back*. The final vowel is shortened and the final result is the adverbial phrase **à bāya**.

6. **[...] sai kowace mace ta ɗauki ɗanta ta saɓa a baya. [S.U., 15]**
   *[...] then each woman took her child and put [it] on [her] back. (**à bāya** : at back)*

2. Space

2.1 Adverbs

The first use of **bāyā** and **gàbā** with a meaning that no longer refers to body parts but to space only is in the adverbial derivation.[4] This derivation is characterized by a shortening of the final vowel : **bāyā** > **bāya** ; **gàbā** > **gàba**.

7. **[...] muka kama hanyar gida. Maigidammu yana baya da kwari da baka a rataye, kuma ƙannensa biyu suna gaba da nasu kayan faɗa a rataye. Mu yara da mata muna tsakiyar su. [S.U., 15]**
   [...] we took the way home. Our chief was behind carrying his bow and arrow, his two younger brothers were in front with their own weapons. We, children and women, we were between them.

8. **Suka ce, "Wuce mu tafi."**
   Suka sa shi a gaba suna ta ingizarsa har suka taho da shi kan iyaka. [S.U., 7]
   They said "Let's go."
   They put him in front, they pushed him until they took him to the limit [of the village].

9. **Suka sake yin ban kwana a wurin, Makau ya yi gaba, maharbi ya koma da baya zuwa inda da ya haɗu da Makau. [S.U., 9]**
   There, they said good-bye again, Makau went forward, the hunter went back to the place where he had met Makau.

10. **na gaba ya yi gaba, na baya sai labari. [S.U., 5]**
    The one who is in front goes on; those left behind can only comment. (proverb)

2.2 Prepositions

The prepositions are formed by adding the genitive link to the name of the body part, thus forming a noun phrase with its complement.

[4] Remarquons que dans les exemples (3) et (5), les emplois métaphoriques du nom des parties du corps s'appuient sur l'orientation intrinsèque du corps humain.

2.2.1 gàban

11. Na zo na durƙusa gaban baƙon nan, na miƙa masa ya karɓa ya sha. [S.U., 29]
I went and kneeled in front of the guest, gave him [the drink], he took [it] and drank.

12.
Da za a tashi sai maigidana ya kira ni ya ɗauke ni ya ɗora ni a gabansa a b isa kan raƙuminsa. [S.U., 33]
As we were leaving, the master called me, took me and put me before him on his camel.

2.2.2 bāyan

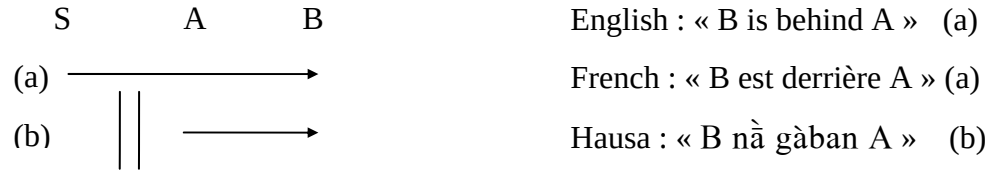
13.
Ba a jima ba sai na fara jin gurnanin wani abu mai ban tsoro a bayan ɗaki . [S.U., 21]
Soon I heard a frightful growling behind the hut.

14. "A'a, ya tafi bayan gari, amma zai dawo gobe."
"No, he went to some villages (lit. behind town), but he will come back tomorrow."

15.
Da ya saka ni a bayansa yayin da zai kwanta, amma da ya fara gwartin na n tsoro ya kama ni [...] [S.U., 21]
He had put me behind him before lying down, but when he started to snore, I was frightened [...]

2.2.3 Orientation

The spatial orientation at work here is obvious, from the orientation of the the human body itself, with the face and the eyes giving a direction. Nevertheless, a diffence between Hausa and European languages like French of English as regards spatial orientation is worth noticing here.[5] If a speaker (S) is looking at two objects (A and B) which he wants to locate, whereas a European speaker would say (a) « B is behind A », or « B est derrière A » (which lexically corresponds to **bāyan** in Hausa), a Hausa speaker would rather use (b) « B nà gàban A » (lit. « *B. is in front of A* », « *B est devant A* »):



This means that, whereas in European languages, this type of spacial location is speaker-centered, in Hausa it is object-centered.

3. Time

The spatial orientation given by the body is reproduced in the representation of time. The orientation of visual perception is parallelled in the representation of time, which is oriented from the "back" to the "front", with « past » in the back of the speaker and « future » ahead.[6]

[5] See (HILL 1982) for more details.

[6] If this is the case for French, English and Hausa, it is not necessarily so for all languages.

We will thus find a rough equivalence between the chest (**gàbā**) and the future on the one hand, and the back (**bāyā**) and the past on the other hand.

3.1 Adverbs

3.1.1 dàgà gàba = nan gàba = in the future

16 Nan gàba, kù riƙà shārè ɗākìnkù!
In the future, you should sweep your room!

3.1.2 à bāya = in the past, previously

17. àbîn dà mukà gayằ à bāya ... (Gouffé 79)
What we said previously...

3.1.3 à gàba = dàgà bāya = later on

However, this general symmetry is blurred with the expression of "later on". Both notions can be used, but with different prepositions : **à**, *at* in the case of **dàgà**, *from* in the case of **bāya**.

18.
To, sai fa ki ɗauki hanƙuri, kin san halin yaron, kullum abin da ya ke so y a yi in ba a bar shi ba sai ya yi kuka, amma idan ana barinsa ya yi abin da ya so a gaba ba zai ji dadi ba. [S.U., 18]
Well, be patient, you know how a child is, the thing he wants to do, if you don't let him do it, he will cry, but if you let him do the thing that he wants to do, later he won't be happy.

19.
Ina so ka yi masa halin arziki, ka lura da shi, ka ba shi gona da wurin da z ai yi gida, domin yana da iyali suna zuwa daga baya. [S.U., 10]
I want you to treat him well, to take care of him, to give him a place to farm and build a house, because he has a family that will come later.

3.2 Prepositions

3.2.1 gàban

This use of **gàbā** is not common. No example is to be found in S.U. One example is found in Abraham's dictionary. (ABRAHAM 1962)

20. Bà à san àbîn dà ya fằru à gàban rân nan ba. (Abraham 62 : 279b)
It is not known what happened after that day. (lit. in front of that day)

NB. **dàgà rân nan**, or **can gàba** (cf. ex. n°16) is preferred to **à gàban rân nan.**

3.2.2 bāyan

21. Bayan wannan suka zauna suka yi ta tadî har [...] [S.U., 18]
After this, they sat down and chatted until [...]

22. "Bayan gaisuwa, ga wannan mutum sunansa Makau [...] [S.U., 15]
After greetings, here is somebody called Makau [...](beginning of a letter)

23.

Sai inna ta fara tsammani a ranta ko Allah ya kiraye ni ne bayan tashinsu daga Kagara. [S.U., 26]
Then, mother started thinking to herself that maybe god had called me back (e.g. I had died) after their departure from Kagara.

24.

Yaron nan dai bayan tashinki da kwana tara, wani ɗan sane ya sace shi. [S .U., 27]
This boy, nine days after you had left, a sorcerer kidnapped him.

In the following example, notice the translation of **bāyan** by « *before* » instead of the usual « *after* ».

25. Ban sake ganinta ba sai bayan shekaru da yawa ! [S.U., 18]
I did not see her again before many years.

3.3 Conjunctions

In conjunctions, there is no equivalent to **gàbā**, and instead, the word **kà̀fin** is borrowed from Arabic :

*3.3.1 *gàban = kà̀fin*

26. Kafin su shirya maharan sun yi nisa. [S.U., 5]
Before they got ready, the raiders had gone far.

27. Tun kafin safiya ta yi Makau ya rigaya ya shirya sarai [...] [S.U., 10]
Before the morning had arrived, Makau was already well prepared [...]

3.3.2 bāyan

bāyan appears regularly as a conjunction meaning « *after (that)...* », and is used to locate a chronological succession of events. The locating event, or locator (following **bāyan**) is in the non-relative tenses (Perfect and Continuous). The located events are in the relative tenses (Relative Perfect and Relative Continuous).

28.

Bayan an gama washe-washen nan duka, sai aka haɗa kayan aka kawo wu rin Sarki. [S.U., 8]
After they had finished ransacking [the house], they gathered the goods and brought them to the emir.

29.

[...] amma manzon Sarki bai tashi zo masa ba sai bayan an yi sallar azahar . [S.U., 10]
[...] but the messenger of the emir did not come to his place until (after) they had done the afternoon prayer.

30. Bayan ta fita kaɗan sai kakata ta cika, [...]
[bāyan tā fìta ...]
Not long after she had gone, her grand-mother died, [...]

31.

Wata rana wajen goshin la'asar bayan Shaihu Umar ya ba da karatu ga al majiransa, , sai wani almajirinsa ya tambaye shi cewa, [...] [S.U., 1]
One day, in the afternoon, after S.U. had taught his pupils, , one pupil asked him, [...]

32.

Bayan wannan ya ƙare, cikin kyakkyawan hali tare da uwata a gidan Mak au, sai ran nan [...] [S.U., 3]

After this was finished, peacefully with mother in Makau's house, when one day [...]

bāyan dà is a variant of **bāyan.** The locator (following **bāyan dà**) is in the relative tenses (Relative Perfect and Relative Imperfect)

33. Bayan da aka gama hira duka Makau shiga gida domin kwanta. [S.U., 9]

After they had finished talking, Makau went home to his bed.

34. Bayan da aka jima amsa mata, [...] [S.U., 10]

After a while, then he answered her, [...]

35. Bayan da mutanen nan suka gama tadi suka huta, tashi, [...] [S.U., 14]

After those people had finished talking and had rested, they got up, [...]

This use may nevertheless look strange if we consider that a « natural » derivation from body parts, would be for **gàba(n)** to refer to the future and **bāya(n)** to the past, if we follow the anthropomorphic orientation. For this type of chronological succession, where one is, as it were, « facing the future », **gàban** is the only choice in so far as conjunctions are concerned. This means that this anthropomorphic explanation does not hold here.

4. Cognitive considerations

An explanation may be found if we examine a metaphorical use of the word **bāyā**, (*back*) meaning in this case *the end, the completion.*

36. Nā ga bāyan aikì. (Abraham, 92a)

I've finished the work (lit. I've seen the back of work)

So, the point of view is not anthropomorphic, but objective. What is considered here is the completion of the event, and the other events are located in relation to that completion. The point of view is aspectual, and not temporal.

Now, we can explain what happens in (18) and (19) where **à gàba** and **dàgà bāya** are both translated as *later on*:

18.

To, sai fa ki ɗauki hanƙuri, kin san halin yaron, kullum abin da ya ke so y a yi in ba a bar shi ba sai ya yi kuka, amma idan ana barinsa ya yi abin da ya so a gaba ba zai ji dadi ba. [S.U., 18]

Well, be patient, you know how a child is, the thing he wants to do, if you don't let him do it, he will cry, but if you let him do the thing that he wants to do, later he won't be happy.

19.

Ina so ka yi masa halin arziki, ka lura da shi, ka ba shi gona da wurin da z ai yi gida, domin yana da iyali suna zuwa daga baya. [S.U., 10]

I want you to treat him well, to take care of him, to give him a place to farm and build a house, because he has a family that will come later.

In (19), the point of view is objective and aspectual. The arrival of the family is located in relation to the actions of the father (farm, build a house). Whereas in (18), « he won't be happy » is located in relation to the speaker. The point of view is anthropomorphic and temporal, which explains the use of **à gàba**.

5. Summary

body parts	space		time		
noun	**adverbs**	**prepositions**	**adverbs**	**prepositions**	**conjunctions**
gàbā *the chest, the front part of body*	**gàba** *in front*	**gàban** *in front of*	**à gàba** *in the future, later on*	(**gàban**) *before*	**kȁfin** *before*
bāyā *the back*	**bāya** *at the back*	**bāyan** *behind*	**à bāya** *in the past, previously* **dàgà bāya** *later on*	**bāyan** *after*	**bāyan** *after*

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