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ON THE “ATYPICAL” IMPERATIVE VERB FORM IN MANDA

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This paper accounts for the atypical Imperative verb form found in Manda, a Bantu language spoken along the shores of Lake Nyasa in southern Tanzania. Unlike the vast majority of Bantu languages, Manda lacks a reflex of the so called “morphologically specialized” imperative. Instead, Imperatives (as well as other directives) are expressed with the suffixation of a marker of the form *-ayi*. Based on the form-meaning variation found both language-internally and in comparative data, this study reconstructs the functional and formal pathways of change leading to the highly unusual situation encountered in today’s Manda. The study shows that the Manda Imperative originates from a construction consisting of a reflex of the pre-final morpheme **(n)g-*, an imperfective marker originally recruited into the directive domain to add pragmatic overtones of emphasis. However, at some point in time the meaning of this erstwhile emphatic construction became neutralized and conventionalized as the regular imperative, while the marker itself became decategorized and morphophonologically opaque.

1. INTRODUCTION

Manda (N11, ISO 639-3: mgs)¹ is a small, under-described Bantu language spoken by roughly 30,000 speakers along the eastern shores of Lake Nyasa (Lake Malawi) in southern Tanzania (see Figure 1 for a map of Manda and its closest neighbours).² As is typical of Bantu languages it has a rich set of synthetically encoded TAM (Tense-Aspect-Mood) markers. However, Manda is unusual from a cross-Bantu perspective, given the fact that, in contrast with almost all other Bantu languages (Devos & Van Olmen 2013), it appears to lack a reflex of the imperative construction

1 Bantu languages are classified in zones and groups following a system initially developed by Guthrie (1971). Notice that these groupings are not meant to be genealogically based and that this is especially true for Manda (as further explained in Section 5.2).

2 The majority of the data presented in this paper was collected by the author during fieldwork in the Manda speaking area. See Bernander (2017) for a detailed account of the methods used, as well as a general description and analysis of the Manda language, with a special focus on its verbal system. The specific results presented in this paper are based on a presentation given at the conference “The semantics of verbal morphology in under-described languages”, which took place at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2–3 June 2017. I wish to thank the organizers of this conference, Dr Malin Petzell and Dr Hannah Gibson, and the audience for their valuable comments. Many thanks also to the two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful remarks on an earlier draft of this paper, to Mary Chambers for proofreading, and to Ulf Sandberg for creating the map. My deepest gratitude goes to my Manda language consultants. The usual disclaimer applies.

consisting of the verbal base and a final suffix *-a*. This is the case even though the imperative has been described as a “deeply entrenched” verb form (Devos & Van Olmen 2013: 21) and as constituting one of the most fundamental types of Bantu verbal structure (Nurse 2008: 28). Instead, second person commands in Manda are conventionally expressed with a suffix *-ayi* attached to the verbal base.

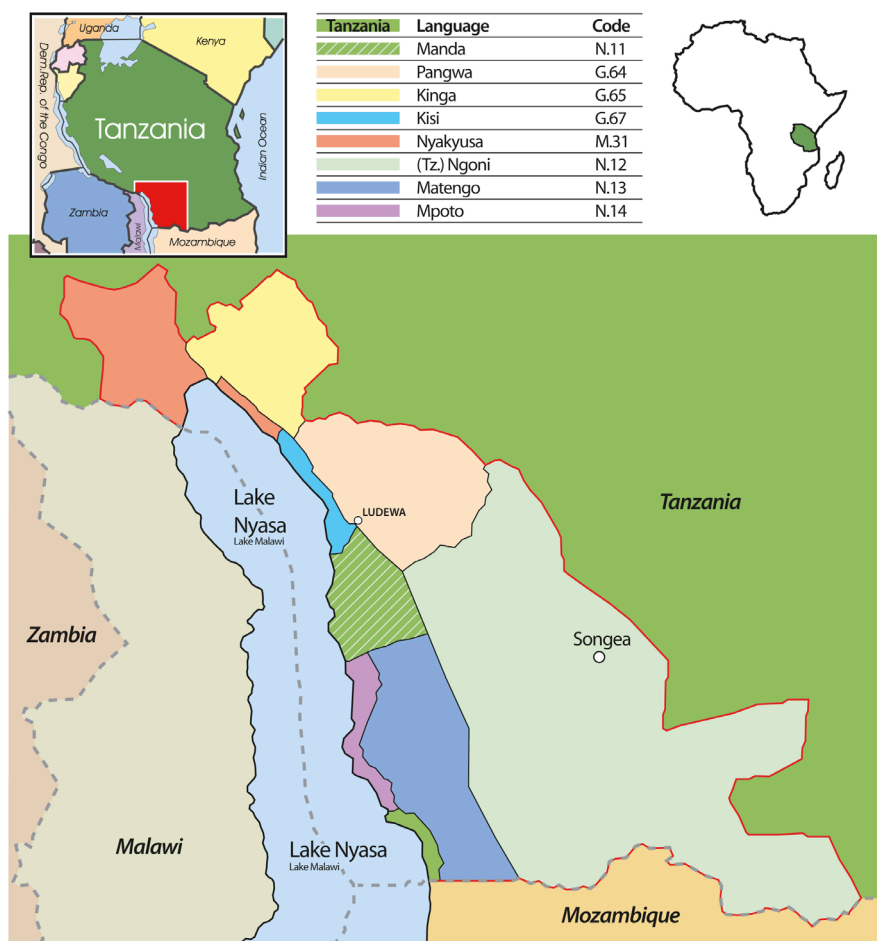


Figure 1 Map of Manda and its closest neighbours (© Rasmus Bernander 2017)

The purpose of this study is to account for the pathway of change, both functional and formal, that has resulted in Manda having this atypical feature synchronically. Based on synchronic variation, the existing historical data, and comparisons with micro-variation in the neighbouring languages, this study argues that the suffix *-ayi* is (partly) a reflex of the reconstructed Proto-Bantu imperfective morpheme **-a(n)g-* occurring in the “pre-final” position of the verbal word (Sebasoni 1967; Nurse & Philippson 2006; Nurse 2008: 130). Although prototypically an aspectual morpheme, this marker is often additionally used to mark intensity and exclamation in Bantu languages (see Devos & Van Olmen 2013; see also Miede 1989 for an account of East African Bantu languages in particular). This is still the case for many of Manda’s neighbouring languages, where there is a complementary distribution between the regular imperative and an

intensive construction formed by the addition of this pre-final suffix. As will be argued in this paper, Manda used to have this system as well, but, at some point in time, the sense of intensity of this marker was neutralized while the original imperative construction disappeared, leaving the construction with *-ayi* as the dedicated marker for second person directive speech acts. Thus, what this paper ultimately sets out to show is that this synchronically atypical imperative is, in fact, not so atypical from a diachronic point of view, but can be accounted for as the result of various typologically generalizable stages of change.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces how the imperative and other directives are typically encoded in Bantu, exemplified with Swahili (G42, ISO 639-3: swa). Section 3, in turn, presents the divergent Manda data. Section 4 offers a background to the pre-final suffix **-a(n)g-*, while Section 5 and the initial part of Section 6 concentrate on the functional and formal indications which allow this marker to be linked to the Manda Imperative suffix *-ayi*. The final part of Section 6 addresses the question of the final vowel constituting this marker, that is, the /i/ of *-ayi*. Does it originate from the subjunctive **-é* as the result of subjunctive-imperative hybridization, a phenomenon affecting many languages in the area where Manda is spoken? Or is it, in fact, a reflex of the original **-a* of the common Bantu imperative? Although the answer turns out to be indecisive, the latter scenario is considered to be the most likely one. Following this discussion, Section 7 offers a summary of the article and adds some concluding remarks.

2. THE BASIC ENCODING OF IMPERATIVES (AND OTHER DIRECTIVES) IN BANTU

Before embarking on the presentation of the imperative construction found in the Manda data, a brief introduction to the basic encoding of imperatives and other directives in the Bantu family is warranted. This study follows the work of Mauri and Sansò (2011) in regarding the imperative as a kind of a “directive”, that is, as a form encoding directive situations.³ According to these authors, directives form a paradigm which encompasses all sorts of constructions and markers that express the wish of the speaker (the commander) for an event to hold true, conveyed as an appeal to the addressee(s) (or the performer(s)) to make this event true. Mauri and Sansò (2011) additionally claim that a directive expression typically conveys the commander’s expectations of an immediate realization, a semantic factor they often found to be at play in the recruitment of new directive markers.

As pointed out by Van Olmen and Heinold (2017), Mauri and Sansò’s (2011) conceptualization of a directive paradigm is a remnant of the hortative-imperative domain described in van der Auwera, Dobrushina and Goussev (2005), and of the set of so called “canonical” and “non-canonical” imperatives discussed in Aikhenvald’s (2010) study. Within these works, the label “imperative” refers specifically to second person directives, that is, to those expressions where the expected performer of the event coincides with the addressee(s), for example “Go to bed!” Other types of directives, which involve other performing participants than merely the addressee(s), are instead categorized with other names. They are exclusively referred to as “hortatives” in van der Auwera, Dobrushina and Goussev (2005) and as “hortatives” and “jussives” in Aikhenvald (2010: 48), the former referring to orders involving both the speaker and the addressee and the latter to

³ Thus, the term “directive” in Mauri and Sansò’s (2011) study refers not merely to a function but also to a formal category (or rather a form–meaning pair).

orders involving a third party. An example of a non-imperative directive is the co-hortative “Let’s go to bed”, involving both the speaker and the addressee as expected performers.

Across the Bantu speaking area, we find examples of an extremely typical marker of imperative expressions, namely what Nurse and Devos (2019) refer to as the “morphologically specialized” imperative. As many as 97 of Devos and Van Olmen’s (2013) sample of 100 Bantu languages (based on Nurse 2007) have a reflex of this construction as part of their inventory of TAM constructions. In fact, the whole form has been reconstructed for Proto-Bantu by Meeussen (2014; see also Nurse & Devos 2019), in a fashion similar to the schematic formula given in (1).

(1) *B-*a* [+ polar tones]

The common Bantu imperative is the most segmentally reduced Bantu verb form. That this is a reduced form becomes more obvious when comparing the template in (1) with the one in (2), which represents the complex synthetic structure of the verbal word and the rich possibilities of morphological concatenation as posited for Proto-Bantu (see Meeussen 1967; Nurse 2008: 231) and as typically reflected in the make-up of Bantu languages of today.

(2) *pre-SM = SM - TA - (OM) - B - pre-final - FV = post-FV

The common Bantu imperative is characterized by the omission of the (otherwise obligatory) subject marker (SM), and consists only of the “default” final vowel (FV) *-a* suffixed on the lexical verb base (= B). Devos and Van Olmen (2013) conclude, based on Aikhenvald (2010), that this segmental reduction corresponds to a general cross-linguistic pattern where the imperative construction tends to be formally reduced, typically corresponding to a bare verb stem or verb root. In addition to its reduced segmental composition, however, it should be noted that the reconstructed Bantu form also carries a complex tone pattern with polar tones – that is, a tone melody which shifts depending on the tonal pattern of the lexical base. This feature, however, will not be further elaborated on here, as Manda and the other languages in the area where Manda is spoken do not have polar tones because they do not have contrastive lexical tones on verb stems/roots. These languages make use of so called melodic tones only, that is, tone patterns associated with particular verb forms.⁴

The Bantu imperative typically occurs together with the subjunctive within the domain of directives. Like the imperative, the subjunctive, which usually also has other functions outside of the directive domain, constitutes an extremely common verbal construction across the Bantu speaking area (Nurse & Devos 2019; Nurse 2008: 261–262). Devos and Van Olmen (2013: 15) note, with regard to their cross-Bantu study, that “[a]ll languages in our sample possess a form that can be considered subjunctive”. The subjunctive has also been reconstructed for Proto-Bantu by Meeussen (2014), as in the formula given in (3).

(3) *SM[H]-B-*é*

As seen in (3), the reconstructed subjunctive differs formally from the imperative in several aspects, including its supra-segmental make-up. Firstly, it includes a subject marker, which carries a high tone (marked as [H]). In addition, it contains a high-toned mid-front final vowel /*é*/ instead of /*a*/. The typical functional division of labour between the imperative and the subjunctive in a Bantu language may be exemplified with Swahili as in (4), with the verb *-kimbi-* ‘run’.

4 The reader is referred to Bernander (2017: 54–56) for more information on the tonal system in Manda and on the notion of “restricted” or “predictable” tone languages in the Bantu family.

(4) Swahili (G42, ISO 639-3: swa)

a. <i>kimbi-a</i>	b. <i>tu-kimbi-e</i>	c. <i>u-kimbi-e</i>
run-FV	1PL.SM-run-SBJV	2SG.SM-run-SBJV
‘run!’	‘let’s run!’	‘(please), run’

As the Swahili examples show, the subjunctive commonly helps to fill the gap in the directive (imperative-hortative) paradigm, allowing the formation of directives which include other performers than the second person(s). Thus, in example (4), the Subjunctive is inflected with a first person plural subject marker to express a co-hortative, simultaneously directed towards the speaker and the addressee(s).⁵ However, there is typically also a pragmatic division of labour between the imperative and the subjunctive, where the latter is often presented as being a milder, more polite, face-saving directive (Devos & Van Olmen 2013; Nurse 2008: 28; Nurse & Devos 2019), representing “weaker manipulation” (Ngonyani 2013). This is indicated in (4), where the subjunctive is used as a second person directive to convey a less face-threatening command. The subjunctive and the imperative may be conflated in other regards as well. For example, an imperative proposition expressed with an object marker is obligatorily formed with the Subjunctive in Swahili, as illustrated in (5).

(5) Swahili (G42, ISO 639-3: swa)

<i>m-kimbili-e</i>
OM1-run.APPL-SBJV
‘run to him/her!’

Furthermore, in many Bantu languages, imperatives directed towards plural addressees are often additionally marked with a post-final suffix, reconstructed for Proto-Bantu as **Vni* and most likely derived from a second person plural pronoun (see Van de Velde & van der Auwera 2010; Devos & Van Olmen 2013; Nurse 2008: 39). This may once again be illustrated with Swahili, as in (6).

(6) Swahili (G42, ISO 639-3: swa)

<i>kimbieni</i>
<i>kimbi-a-ini</i>
run-FV-PL
‘run (you people)!’

Finally – and as already touched upon – a reflex of the suffix **-a(n)g-* is also often found as an additional marker in directives across Bantu (although this is not the case in Swahili). This marker will be discussed extensively later in this paper. For now, it suffices to conclude that the common Bantu imperative and subjunctive form the core of the directive domain in the Bantu languages.

⁵ In Swahili, the Subjunctive is additionally used in sequences of commands to a second person addressee(s) after an initial Imperative.

3. THE IMPERATIVE (AND OTHER DIRECTIVES) IN MANDA

As described in the previous section, second person directives are commonly expressed with a reflex of the morphologically specialized imperative across the Bantu language family. Interestingly, however, this is not the case in Manda, which lacks a reflex of this construction entirely. Instead, an imperative proposition is formed with the suffix *-ayi*, as illustrated in (7) and (8) below.⁶

- (7) *tyesemúláyi!*
tyesemól-ayi
 sneeze-DTV
 ‘sneeze!’

- (8) *víkáyi ntyímbu ápa, niwúyúli*
vík-ayi mu-tyimbu apa ni-wuyul-i
 put-DTV NCP3-calabash PROX.DEM16 1SG.SM-clean-SBJV
 ‘put the calabash here, so I can clean (it)’

In fact, not only the Imperative but all kinds of directives may be marked in this way in Manda (this motivates the glossing of the suffix as DTV). The only formal difference between the Imperative and other directives is that the latter category requires a subject marker. The requirement for an obligatory subject marker also holds for a command directed towards a plurality of performers, that is, a second person plural directive. Consider (9).

- (9) *muvíkáyi muwátu uváha*
vik-ayi mu-watu u-vaha
 2PL.SM-put-DTV LOC18-NCP14.canoe ACP14-big
 ‘put (the net) in the big canoe!’ (said to a group of fishermen)

The Imperative form with *-ayi* also forms the basis of more formally and functionally complex directive constructions. Thus, as illustrated in (10), this suffix forms a part of the Itive, a directive involving spatial movement away from the deictic centre (see Rose, Beaudoin-Lietz & Nurse 2002: 47; Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuga 1994: 320; Botne 1999).

- (10) *kaséngulayi*
ka-sengol-ayi
 ITV-thank-DTV
 ‘(go and) say thanks!’

Moreover, the inherently negative verb *-kotok-* ‘stop, leave (off)’ is also inflected with the suffix *-ayi* when functioning as a prohibitive auxiliary (11). See Bernander (2018) for an extensive treatment of this auxiliary verb and its grammaticalization pathway in Manda.

⁶ The Manda orthography used is adopted from Swahili. The mid-high vowels which do not exist in Swahili are written with the relevant IPA symbols, viz. <ɨ> and <ɔ>. All other graphemes have been adopted from Swahili (although their corresponding phonemes may occur in other phonological contexts than they do in Swahili). High tones are marked with an acute accent <’>, whereas low tones are left unmarked. See Bernander (2017: 45–56) for more on the phonology and orthography of Manda.

- (11) *kotúkáyí kukóva lufyólo*
kotok-ayi ku-kov-a lu-fyolo
 stop~NEG-DTV INF-hit-FV NCP11-whistle
 ‘don’t whistle!’

There are some further characteristics of the Imperative and other directives in Manda that need to be explained in order for us to fully comprehend the internal reconstructions suggested in Section 5.1, as well as in Sections 6.1 and 6.3. Notice, to begin with, that there does exist a reflex of the common Bantu subjunctive in Manda (albeit with a final vowel raised to a high *-i*), as apparent in the second clause in example (8) above, here reiterated as (12). In this example, however, the Subjunctive is used to mark a subordinate purposive clause rather than a directive.

- (12) *víkáyí ntyimbu ápa, niwúyúli*
vík-ayi mu-tyimbu apa ni-wuyul-i
 put-DTV NCP3-calabash PROX.DEM16 1SG.SM-clean-SBJV
 ‘put the calabash here, so I can clean (it)’

Secondly, as seen in (13) and (14), directive constructions may – typically in more rapid speech – be truncated, resulting in the omission of either the final vowel or the whole final syllable. However, this is not a feature particularly limited to directives; reductions affecting the final syllable of the verbal word take place in several contexts in Manda (Bernander 2017: 53).

- (13) *támáy’*
tam-ayi
 sit-DTV
 ‘sit down!’
- (14) *himbá’ mbátáta*
himb-ayi mbatata
 dig-DTV NCP10.sweet.potatoes
 ‘dig (up) the sweet potatoes!’

Thirdly, non-root vowels of the verb base are raised from second degree high to first degree high when suffixed with *-ayi*. This is illustrated in (15) below, where the applicative derivational morpheme *-il-* is realized as */il/*. See also examples (7), (10), and (11) above. Example (15) additionally illustrates the fact that when a verb is inflected with an object marker, the tone pattern of this construction shifts from high tones on the antepenult and the penult to a single stem-initial high tone.

- (15) *ting’kómilay’ngéne uyú*
ti-mu-kom-il-ayi mu-gene uyú
 1PL.SM-OM1-beat.to.death-APPL-DTV NCP1-guest PROX.DEM1
 ‘let us kill (him) that guest!’

Notice, however, that there are no formal differences – including no tonal differences – between the expression of imperatives and other directive expressions, except for the inclusion or omission of a subject marker.

Having presented these comparatively unusual features within the realm of directive expressions in Manda, the remainder of this paper attempts to reconstruct the diachronic functional and formal pathway of change leading up to this synchronic state. This reconstruction shows that what at first glance appears to be atypical can be explained, in a relatively straightforward fashion, as the results of functional and formal changes. The analysis is based on a comparison of both intra- and inter-linguistic form-meaning variation. This means that internal variation in present day Manda, together with diachronic variation found in the existing historical data, is compared with a) neighbouring Bantu languages, b) patterns across the Bantu family, c) Proto-Bantu reconstructions, and d) cross-linguistically induced generalizations of conceptually (semantic and functional) and structurally motivated patterns of grammatical change. The proposal argued for is that the suffix *-ayi* of the Manda Imperative is a (partial) reflex of the pre-final imperfective morpheme **-a(n)g-*, which at a certain point in time became a conventionalized and obligatory part of the Imperative (and other directives) in Manda. The following section offers a more general introduction to this morpheme, going on to explain why it should be considered as a likely candidate in the development of the Manda Imperative.

4. THE ETYMOLOGY OF **-A(N)G-* AND ITS USE IN DIRECTIVES

As illustrated in the schematic representation in (16), the morpheme **-a(n)g-* has been reconstructed for Proto-Bantu as occurring in a “pre-final” position within the verbal template (Nurse 2008: 31, 40; Meeussen 1967). The term “pre-final” refers to the dedicated syntagmatic position of this morpheme directly before the final vowel suffixes (FV), including the “default” final vowel **-a* of the imperative or the subjunctive vowel **-é*.

(16) **SM-B-a(n)g-FV*

With regard to the function of **-a(n)g-*, Nurse and Philippson (2006: 190) claim that this morpheme originates from a “repetitive” derivational extension, which, at some point in history, was reanalysed as a marker of a “range of imperfective aspectual meanings” (see also Schadeberg 2003). The origin of this marker as an extension would explain its uncharacteristic position between the verbal base and the final vowel, which is typically reserved for extensions. In fact, there are often two instantiations of this morpheme in a single Bantu language, one being a dedicated derivational marker and the other a dedicated imperfective marker. This functional division may also be formally divided based on whether the nasal is present or absent. Bena, spoken in a region not far from Manda, is a case in point (17).

(17) Bena (G63, ISO 639-3: bez; Nurse & Philippson 2006: 191)

ndi-laa-gul-ang-ag-a

1SG.SM-FUT-buy-REP-IPFV-FV

‘I will be buying in quantities’

However, it is also common across the Bantu languages that reflexes of **-a(n)g-* co-occur with the Imperative (or the Subjunctive) in order to modify directive expressions in some manner (Rose, Beaudoin-Lietz & Nurse 2002; Devos & Van Olmen 2013). In these cases, the reflex of **-a(n)g-* is typically included to add “empathic” pragmatic overtones to a directive. In the Bantu literature, the addition of **-a(n)g-* to directives has been described as marking a “heightened sense of urgency” (Rose, Beaudoin-Lietz & Nurse 2002: 40, 41), “intensity”, and (by

extension) as an “exclamatory suffix” (Miche 1989: 30) or a “reinforcer” (Meinhof 1948: 101; Sebasoni 1967). Two examples of languages where the addition of a pre-final marker makes a command more emphatic are Tumbuka (18) (where the nasal variant *-ang-* is the imperfective marker, unlike in Bena above) and Sangu (19), both spoken near to Manda.

- (18) Tumbuka (N21, ISO 639-3: tum; Rose, Beaudoin-Lietz & Nurse 2002: 40)

lut-ang-a

go-IPFV-FV

‘Go then, make sure you go!’

- (19) Sangu (G61, ISO 639-3: sbp; Meinhof 1948: 101; Devos & Van Olmen 2013: 12)

vux-ag-a

go-IPFV-FV

‘Go, then!’

It should be noted that the use of imperfective marking in commands is also in accordance with more general cross-linguistic tendencies (Mauri & Sansò 2011; Aikhenvald 2010: 104). Mauri and Sansò (2011: 3509) even illustrate this fact with the English use of the (present) progressive in expressions such as: “You’re coming with us. Now.” According to Mauri and Sansò (2011), the conceptual motivation to involve imperfective markers in commands is to create overtones of urgency and imminence, as described for Bantu above. That the event is marked as already being in progress conveys the speaker’s (or commander’s) expectation of an imminent actualization to the addressee (or performer).

With this said, however, a word of caution is needed, as it appears that reflexes of **-a(n)g-*, as well as imperfective markers in other languages, may equally be used in directives as a mitigating device (see Devos & Van Olmen 2013; Nurse & Devos 2019; Aikhenvald 2010: 104–106). Thus, they may be used to provide a pragmatic effect in many ways opposite to the one just described. Aikhenvald (2010: 104) claims that imperfective markers have a “deferential” reading, as they convey that less attention is given to the completion of an event. This would, in turn, motivate their recruitment as polite directives cross-linguistically. Kela is an example of a Bantu language where the reflex of pre-final **-a(n)g-* is used to form more polite commands (20).

- (20) Kela (C75, ISO 639-3: kel; Nurse 2008: 192)

kend-a

vs.

kend-ak-a

go-FV

go-IPFV-FV

‘go’

‘please go’

However, as will become clear in the discussion in Section 5, it is reasonable to posit for Manda that the pre-final initially functioned to reinforce and not to mitigate the Imperative.⁷ In addition, it should be stressed that what is most important for the analysis in this paper is that imperfectives in general, and the Bantu pre-final in particular, frequently get recruited to

7 For similar reasons it is considered unlikely that the pre-final morpheme was recruited in Manda to mark the plurality of participants rather than the plurality of actions encompassed by an imperfective. See Devos and Van Olmen (2013), who suggest that marking the plurality of participants is another plausible way for this suffix to break into the directive domain.

modify imperatives. The exact motivations behind this recruitment and the precise pragmatic-semantic range of imperfectives in directives is beyond the scope of this paper.

Regardless of the pragmatic overtones they convey, as imperfective markers are involved in directive speech acts, they are also frequently reanalysed and conventionalized as new, dedicated directives cross-linguistically (Mauri & Sansò 2011). However, although it appears to be quite common that a reflex of the pre-final petrifies as a semantically empty morph in other TAM constructions (Rugemalira 2010), it is highly unusual for it to become an obligatory part of the imperative in a Bantu language.

There are reports of some rare cases where a directive with **-a(n)g-* has become the dedicated Imperative (Devos & Van Olmen 2013). One example of a Bantu language with such a rare dedicated imperative is Kele, exemplified in (21).

(21) Kele (C55, ISO 639-3: khy; Meeussen 2014: 30–31; Nurse & Devos 2019: 220)

kel-ák-á
do-IPFV-FV
‘do!’

As will be argued in the following two sections, Manda is also one of the languages with this cross-linguistically rare dedicated imperative form. The discussion in Section 5 starts by describing the functional motivations for this change and goes on to examine the formal mechanisms behind the scenario.

5. FUNCTIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

Based on both cross-linguistic and cross-Bantu generalizations, it is possible to sketch a diachronic pathway of change for constructions with the imperative (and other directives) together with the imperfective **-a(n)g-* in some Bantu languages. This neutralization pathway, or the context-induced reinterpretation and conventionalization of a specialized directive into a neutral imperative strategy, can be divided into three major stages, as summarized in Figure 2 below. (Recall that B = base and FV = final vowel.)

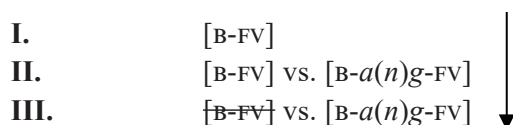


Figure 2 Stages of pre-final imperative neutralization

Stage I is represented by languages which use only the original morphologically specialized imperative (in alternation with the subjunctive). One example of such a language is Swahili (see Section 2). In stage II, **-a(n)g-* is incorporated into the regular imperative construction to modify the expression in some manner, whether to reinforce or to mitigate it. Thus, an Imperative formed with **-a(n)g-* occurs in complementary distribution with the original imperative construction. In the final stage (stage III), the original imperative disappears, while at the same time the specialized reading of the construction with **-a(n)g-* is bleached. This, in turn, leads to the construction with a reflex of **-a(n)g-* becoming the regular marker for commands. There are indications both from the Manda-internal data and from the comparative data that Manda has gone through these stages of change and reached the final stage. Thus, the

construction *B-ayi* is the reflex of a neutralized imperative inflected with the pre-final suffix.⁸ The remainder of Section 5 addresses the functional indications that suggest that the “atypical” imperative in Manda stems from a neutralized variant with the imperfective pre-final suffix, starting with the language-internal evidence before considering the evidence derived from the comparison of the Manda data with data from the neighbouring languages.

5.1 Indications from internal (variation in the) Manda data

With regard to the language-internal data there are indications that the original imperative construction did exist in Manda – thus as remnants of stage I and II – as there are retentions of what appear to be the original “morphologically specialized” imperative still lingering on as archaisms in the language. Archaisms, which form a valuable kind of synchronic evidence for the reconstruction of change as they provide an insight into earlier productive structures in a language, are typically retained in more ritualized discourse genres and more formulaic expressions (see, e.g. Dimmendaal 2011: 101).

One example of what appears to be a remnant of the original imperative in a formulaic expression is the collocation *lola Bambo!* ‘behold the Lord!’ This collocation appears in both of the two oldest sources of Manda, namely the New Testament (1937) and *Missa Mbalafu* (n.d.), a selection of Anglican hymns, but it also occurs in my collection of Manda language data as spoken today. In this phrase, expressing a second person directive, the verb appears without a subject marker and with only the final vowel *-a* suffixed to the verbal base (viz. *-lol-* ‘see’) – and is thus identical to the common Bantu imperative in form. It should also be pointed out that this example cannot be considered to consist of a truncated version of *-ayi* (as illustrated in (13) and (14), in Section 3), as there are differences with regard to the realization of tone. That is, this particular collocation is pronounced as /lólá bámbo/ and not /lólá bámbo/, the latter of which would be expected if a truncated pre-final were involved.

In addition to these remnants of the original imperative construction, there is internal synchronic variation which suggests a less neutral usage of *-ayi* for all kind of directives, a situation that is a remnant of stage II. Thus, although most speakers only use the construction (SM-)B-*ayi* for directives, some older speakers of the coastal variety of Manda use both (SM-)B-*ayi* and the subjunctive SM-B-*i* (used regularly by all Manda speakers in subordinate clauses, as shown in example 12) as directives. When asked to compare the two constructions, speakers tend to ascribe to the longer form, with *-ayi*, the qualities of being more expressive or more emphatic. Furthermore, a punctual verb like ‘kiss’ is described as having more of an iterative~continuative reading when suffixed with *-ayi* (22), but only a singleton or semelfactive reading with *-i* (23).

- (22) *ninúmayi*
ni-num-ayi
 1SG.OM-kiss-DTV
 ‘kiss me (over and over, or for a long time)’

8 Given the neutralization of the pre-final suffix in directives, one would expect that new strategies for forming more empathic directives would have emerged in Manda. Such variants presented in neighbouring languages include the use of the comitative pre-initially in Nyakyusa (Persohn 2017: 272), and the addition of *-nde* (< *-tend-* ‘do’?) in post-final position in Ngoni (Ebner 1939: 45). However, there are no examples of similar constructions in the Manda data, and when asked, speakers consider such constructions unacceptable.

- (23) *uninúmi*
u-ni-num-i
 2SG.SM-1SG.OM-kiss-SBJV
 ‘give me a kiss (i.e. one kiss)’

This indicates that there is some persistence of the original meaning of the directive with *-ayi* for some speakers of Manda, consisting of both emphatic overtones and even remnants of the original imperfective meaning.

5.2 Comparative indications

This section takes into account the comparative evidence of the variation found in the neighbouring languages. As further explained in Bernander (2017: 21–26, 135–137; see also Nurse 1988; Gray & Roth 2016), the genealogical status of Manda is ambiguous as it is at the centre of an area in which Bantu languages from different, albeit relatively closely related, sub-groups converge. As a consequence, comparative inferences are better drawn following an areal approach, looking at variation in Manda’s closest neighbours rather than in any putative set of closest genealogical relatives (see the map of Manda and its closest neighbours on p. 23 above).

Table 1 summarizes the functional extension of the imperative and the pre-final suffix in the languages neighbouring the Manda area. As a point of reference, Manda itself is also included at the bottom of the table. A “yes” indicates that a certain form-meaning pairing is attested for a particular language. Question marks indicate that a certain form-meaning pair seems to exist but that the description is not specific on this matter.

The data from the neighbouring languages illustrates patterns which also, by implication, seem to corroborate the suggested direction of development from stage I to stage III. Firstly, none of the languages which has a reflex of the original (morphologically specialized) imperative reconstructed for Proto-Bantu uses **-a(n)g-* in directives with a neutral/regular meaning. Secondly, the opposite also holds true: those languages which lack the original imperative form – namely Manda and Mpotó – make use of the construction with a reflex of **-a(n)g-* as a neutral marker for imperative commands (i.e. second person addressee directives). Furthermore, in those languages with both the original imperative and with the imperative inflected with a reflex of **-a(n)g-*, the meaning of the construction with the pre-final suffix has a more specialized reading, most often explained by these authors as being more emphatic or expressive. This strongly suggests that the initial function of the imperative plus the pre-final suffix was a more emphatic complement to the regular imperative in Manda as well. In this sense, it is telling that Nyakyusa apparently even retains the imperfective source meaning, which, as described by Persohn (2017: 269), “can shade over to an urge to initialize or continue the said action”, that is, similar to the urging to imminent action proposed by Mauri and Sansò (2011).

There are also some additional (“Other” in Table 1) functions found in the neighbouring languages worth pointing out.⁹ In connection with the discussion in Section 4 of what the pre-final suffix may be used to modify, Persohn (2017: 269) notes for Nyakyusa that the pre-final suffix is not exclusively used for creating overtones of urging but can be used for mitigation as well. In fact,

9 The “yes” in the “Other” slot found for Matengo reflects the fact that Yoneda (2016) claims that the pre-final suffix may be used in the directive domain as a conjoint marker (i.e. to mark term focus). As this is not the case in Manda nor of importance to the analysis in this paper, it will not be discussed further.

Table 1 Imperative constructions and their functional range in Manda and its neighbours

Language	Code	Original imperative	Meaning of imperative + <i>*(n)g-</i>				Sources
			(Stage I) >	> (Stage II) >			
			IPFV	Emphatic	Other	Neutral	
Nyakyusa	M31; nyy	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	Nurse 1979; Persohn 2017: 266–269
Kisi	G67; kiz	yes	no	yes (?)	yes	no	Gray <i>forthcoming</i> : 116; Ngonyani 2011: 131
Ngoni	N12; ngo	yes	no	yes	no	no	Ebner 1939: 27; Moser 1983: 108; Ngonyani 2003: 63
Pangwa	G64; pbr	yes	no	yes	no	no	Stirnimann 1983: 116–118
Matengo	N13; mgv	yes (?)	no	yes	yes	no	Dennis Kayuni pers. comm. (17 Jan. 2016), Yoneda 2000; 2016: 429
Mpoto	N14; mpa	no	no	no	no	yes	John Oswald Makwaya pers. comm. (16 Jan. 2016); Botne 2019: 720–721
Manda	N11; mgs	no	no	no	no	yes	-

one of the mitigated expressions with the pre-final suffix discussed for Nyakyusa – namely *isaga* ‘welcome ~ come here (and greet me)’ – has been borrowed into Manda, albeit without any further morphological adaption. In addition, in both Nyakyusa and Kisi, the pre-final suffix is used with monosyllabic verb stems to fill the minimality condition requiring words to be disyllabic. This only concerns a very small set of verbs. However, this could arguably be a borderline case between stage II and III, in the sense that the pre-final suffix is bleached of any specialized reading in these constructions, similar to the development in Manda.

6. FORMAL RECONSTRUCTION

Having described the functional indications that Manda’s atypical imperative is a neutralized variant of an erstwhile emphatic construction, and suggested a historical pathway of reconceptualization that has led to its neutralized status today, this section sets out to account more robustly for the formal evidence. Thus, on what morphophonological grounds can the suffix *-ayi* in Manda directives be linked to the pre-final **(n)g-*? To start with, two fundamental issues raised in Section 4 regarding the pre-final marker have to be addressed.

Firstly, it was mentioned in that section that Bantu languages often have two formal instantiations of the pre-final **(n)g-*: one aspectual marker with the readings discussed in this paper and another form used as a derivational marker. Manda has an instantiation of the pre-final suffix as a “repetitive” derivational marker, which occurs in the form *-ang-* (see Bernander 2017: 105). As a consequence, it can safely be assumed that the reflex of the pre-final with an

aspectual, imperfective meaning in Manda is a reflex of the variant without a nasal, namely $^{\circ}$ -ag- rather than $^{\circ}$ -ang-.

Secondly, I also described in Section 4 how the pre-final suffix has been reconstructed for Proto-Bantu as occurring in a morphologically dedicated position within the verbal word, directly preceding the final vowel. However, as argued in Bernander (2017: 151), Manda no longer has such a dedicated morpheme slot as part of its verbal morphotaxis. Instead, the pre-final position has fused with the final position and they are not individually analysable.

Taking these two facts together suggests that the suffix *-ayi* in the Imperative, as well as in other directives (and other imperfective TAM constructions) in Manda, was a) historically dimorphemic, and b) of the specific form /ag/ plus a final vowel. Example (24) illustrates this reconstructed form.

(24) (SM)-B-*ayi* < $^{\circ}$ (SM)-B-*ag-FV*

The remainder of this section provides further evidence, both from Manda (in Section 6.1) and the neighbouring languages (in Section 6.2), which corroborates this hypothesis. Section 6.3 focuses on the final vowel, discussing two plausible scenarios for its origin – either from a subjunctive-imperative hybrid form or from the original imperative form with a raised final vowel – opting for the latter explanation as being the most plausible.

6.1 Internal indications

It is possible to link the final *-ayi* of the Manda Imperative to the pre-final $^{\circ}$ -a(n)g-, given other structural characteristics found within the language. From a more general point of view, the palatalization or lenition of /g/ > /j/ <y> not only adheres to a universal sound law, but also to a common pattern in Manda, where /g/ is often weakened inter-vocally to /ɣ/ <gh> and /j/ <y>. Compare, for example, *vagéni* ~ *vayéni* ‘guests’ and *maghéya* ~ *mayéya* ‘lies’.

More specifically, as seen in (25), there is a morpheme formally identical to the imperative suffix *-ayi*, which is used to convey an imperfective meaning in Manda.

(25) *tayogiláyi mumáchi*
ti-a-yog-il-ayi *mu-ma-chi*
 1PL.SM-PST2-bathe-APPL-IPFV LOC18-NCP6-water
 ‘we used to bathe in the water’

What this example also illustrates is that the suffix *-ayi* not only has the same formal realization as the suffix found in the imperative, but that it also triggers a similar raising of the preceding non-root vowel (i.e. the applicative extension in this case). In addition, there are both language-internal and external data which strongly suggest that the consonant of this imperfective suffix was realized as a /g/. This is further illustrated in (29), Section 6.3.1.

The formal correspondence between the Manda Imperative and a construction expressing imperfective aspect, in relation to the fact that the pre-final element is reconstructed with imperfective denotations, is a strong language-internal indication that the Imperative originates from $^{\circ}$ -a(n)g-.

6.2 Comparative indications

That *-ayi* originates from the pre-final suffix **-a(n)g-* becomes even clearer by comparing Manda with the neighbouring languages. As seen in Table 2, a contiguous weakening of the velar of the morpheme *°-ag-* can be seen when comparing the phonetic variation in the reflexes of the imperative and other directives in the neighbouring languages.¹⁰

Table 2 The formal realization of the imperative and other directives + **-a(n)g-* in the languages neighbouring Manda

Language	Code	Directives with <i>°-ag-</i>	Reflex of <i>°/ag/</i>	Source
Pangwa	G64; pbr	SM-B- <i>ake</i>	/ak/	Stirmimann 1983: 116–118
Nyakusa	M31; nyy	B- <i>aga</i> , SM-B- <i>ege</i>	/Vg/	Nurse 1979; Persohn 2017: 268, 270
Kisi	G67; kiz	B- <i>agha</i> , SM-B- <i>aghe</i> ~SM-B- <i>aye</i>	/agh/	Gray <i>forthcoming</i> : 116; Ngonyani 2011: 106, 130
Ngoni	N12; ngo	(SM)-B- <i>age</i> ~(SM)-B- <i>aye</i> ~(SM)-B- <i>ayi</i>	/ag~ay/	Ebner 1939: 27; Moser 1983: 108; Ngonyani 2003: 63
Matengo	N13; mgv	(SM)-B- <i>aje</i>	/aj/	Dennis Kayuni pers. comm. (17 Jan. 2016); Yoneda 2016: 429; Zimmer n.d.: 12
Mpoto	N14; mpa	(SM)-B- <i>ayi</i> ~ (SM)-B- <i>aa</i>	/ay/	John Oswald Makwaya pers. comm. (16 Jan. 2016); Botne 2019: 720–721

Of special importance in this table is the data on Ngoni and the language-internal variation between the realizations of **/g/*. This synchronic variation can be taken to reflect a gradual and ongoing historical change, that is, the palatalization of the consonant of the pre-final morpheme, suggesting that a similar variation also existed at an earlier stage in the Manda language (i.e. before its completely weakened status of today). Such a hypothesis is further strengthened in light of the fact that Ngoni is considered to be Manda’s closest affiliate (see Nurse 1988; Gray & Roth 2016). It should be pointed out, however, that Ngonyani (2003: 63) analyses the morphemes and morpheme breaks differently here, discussing a *-yi* form, which in turn has led Devos and Van Olmen (2013) to interpret this construction as involving a plural marker. However, the other sources on Ngoni (who also state that the final vowel may range from /i/ to /e/), suggest that we are actually dealing with the pre-final suffix (+ a final vowel suffix). In addition, it should be pointed out that there are also reports of similar cases of conditioned or unconditioned lenition of the pre-final morpheme in several other languages spoken not far from Manda, including Mwera (P22, ISO 639-3: mwe; Harries 1950) and Yao (P21, ISO 639-3: yao; Hyman & Ngunga 1994: 66). See also Sebasoni (1967) and Mieke (1989) for additional examples from an array of Bantu languages of the lenition of the consonant of the pre-final morpheme.

These comparative facts, taken together with the language-internal indications, strongly support the proposal that the suffix *-ayi* may formally be linked to the pre-final **-a(n)g-* in

¹⁰ Notice for Pangwa that the realization of the pre-final morpheme is due to a general sound law of this language, where **/g/* has fortified to /k/.

concatenation with a final vowel. The final question which still remains to be answered is the etymology of this final vowel. The following section attempts to answer this question.

6.3 The question of the final vowel

After linking the atypical imperative of Manda both functionally and formally to the reconstructed Proto-Bantu imperfective pre-final suffix **-a(n)g-* fused with a final vowel, a remaining part of the reconstruction is to disentangle the origin of the final vowel, namely the /i/ found in the *-ayi* suffix. Is it a reflex of the subjunctive **-é* or of the default imperative **-a*? It should be stressed that this question is of interest specifically for the imperative construction *B-ayi*. For other types of directives, it can be more safely assumed that the final vowel is a reflex of the subjunctive **-é*, based on the typical division between the subjunctive and the imperative within the Bantu directive domain (see Section 2). Although the high front vowel would at first seem to suggest that the final vowel is a reflex of the subjunctive with regard to the imperative construction as well, it will be argued that the default imperative **-a* is actually the most likely candidate in this case. This section will offer a brief presentation of these two possibilities, considering first **-é* and then **-a*.

6.3.1 Scenario one: Origin from subjunctive-imperative hybridization

The first plausible scenario is that the final vowel originates from a reflex of the subjunctive vowel *-é* and that its involvement in the imperative stems from subjunctive-imperative hybridization. Subjunctive-imperative hybrids are those cases where the formal division between the subjunctive and the imperative conflate as the subjunctive construction becomes increasingly imperative-like formally (Devos & Van Olmen 2013). The most telling aspect of such a conflation is the omission of the subject marker. Subjunctive-imperative hybridization is quite a common phenomenon across the Bantu speaking area, not least in central/southern Tanzania, the area where Manda is spoken (see Devos & Van Olmen 2013). One example of a language with a transparent subjunctive-imperative hybrid is Ndamba, a language relatively close to Manda both in genealogical and geographical terms (see Nurse 1988). Example (26) shows a command formed with a reflex of the subjunctive suffix but without a subject marker. That this formal hybrid has the functional role of the regular imperative in Ndamba is apparent when compared with (27), where it contrasts with a more “polite” version of a second person directive where the subject marker is retained.

- (26) Ndamba (G52, ISO 639-3: ndj; Edelsten & Lijongwa 2010: 86)

ly-e
ly-SBJV
 ‘eat!’

- (27) Ndamba (G52, ISO 639-3: ndj; Edelsten & Lijongwa 2010: 87)

wu-ly-e
 2SG.SM-eat-SBJV
 ‘eat!’ (more politely)

It should be noted that the subjunctive form may also be used with a reflex of the imperfective marker in Ndamba to form commands “with the meaning of doing an action continuously” (Edelsten & Lijongwa 2010: 88), as in (28).

(28) Ndamba (G52, ISO 639-3: ndj; Edelsten & Lijongwa 2010: 88)

u-telek-egh-e
2SG.SM-cook-IPFV-SBJV
‘be cooking!’

It could be argued that the atypical imperative in Manda is the result of a similar process to that found in Ndamba, but with the pre-final suffix also included. The fact that the tonal melodies of the Imperative and the Subjunctive are identical in Manda (see Section 2) provides language-internal support for such an explanation.

Comparative data from Manda’s closest affiliate Ngoni (which is a relatively well-described language) also provide some support for such a conclusion. As will become clear in Section 6.3.2, the Past Imperfective is still formed with a final vowel *-a* in Ngoni (although it may also be omitted). There are also examples of final vowel raising in Ngoni similar to those presented for Manda. Nonetheless, with regard to the Imperative with the pre-final suffix, there are no indications from any of the sources on Ngoni that the final vowel of the Imperative may be realized as /a/. A good illustration of this is given in (29), where the author provides examples of the various realizations of the imperative construction in Ngoni, including variation regarding the final vowel; this variation is restricted to occurring between a (fronted) mid-high and high vowel.

(29) Ngoni (N12, ISO 639-3: ngo; Moser 1983: 108)

per-ay-e ~ *per-ay-i* ~ *per-ag-e*
give-IPFV-SBJV(?)
‘give (it to me)!’

A similar case is also attested for Pangwa (Stirnemann 1983: 116), a language which, as far as I know, is not affected by phonological alternations due to final vowel raising.

6.3.2 Scenario two: Origin from final vowel **-a*

Although it is not an unlikely scenario that the final vowel of the imperative construction in Manda stems from subjunctive-imperative hybridization, it is considered to be even more likely that the final vowel is originally of the form *-a* and, thus, that the whole construction can be linked to the original Bantu imperative construction **B-a*. The arguments in favour of this view are explored further below.

There are several facts suggesting that the final /i/ of *-ayi* originates from the final suffix **-a* of the original Bantu imperative, which was then raised: /a/ > [+high +front]. Firstly, and more generally, although this vowel change does not reflect a particularly common phonological process of alteration cross-Bantu, it would indeed be consistent with a common case of phonological variation in Manda. Other examples of variation in the realization of the final vowel of words from other word classes than the verb in Manda include the comitative *na~ni*, the negative marker *lépa~lépi*, and nouns such as *mbátáta~mbátáti* ‘sweet potato’.

More specifically, there are clear indications that an original final vowel *-a* has been raised to /i/ in verbal words as well, particularly in constructions with a reflex of the pre-final suffix.

This can be deduced from the Past Imperfective construction in (25) in Section 6.1 above. Thus, as is apparent in the comparative data in Table 3 below, it would seem that it is not only the velar consonant of the pre-final suffix which underwent palatalization but that this process also triggered the final vowel to be raised. Thus, as the imperfective clearly raises the degree of aperture of vowels that occur before it, it is also plausible to posit that it has (or, indeed, had) the same effect on vowels occurring after it.

Table 3 The formal realization of the (Far) Past Imperfective in Manda and its neighbours

Language	Code	Past Imperfective 2	Sources
Pangwa	G64; pbr	SM-a-B-ak-a	Stirnemann 1983: 107
Kisi	G67; kiz	SM-a-B-agh-a	Gray forthcoming: 116
Nyakyusa	M31; nyy	SM-a-B-ag-a	Persohn 2017: 143
Ngoni	N12; ngo	SM-a-B-á(ga)	Moser 1983: 102; Ngonyani 2003: 60
Matengo	N13; mgv	SM-a-B-aje	Yoneda 2016: 429
Mpoto	N14; mpa	SM-a-B-ayi	Botne 2019: 721; Nurse 2007; John Oswald Makwaya pers. comm. (16 Jan. 2016)
Manda	N11; mgs	SM-a-B-ayi	-

In fact, this construction is even realized, at least in written form, as SM-a-B-aga in older Manda data. Consider example (30) from the New Testament (1937).

- (30) *nalongelaga ngati na nkeke*
ni-a-longel-ag-a ngati na mu-keke
 1SG.SM-PST2-speak-IPFV-FV like FOC 1-child
 ‘I talked like a child’ (1 Cor. 13:11)

Other Manda verbal forms of a similar shape may be added to this example of the Past Imperfective. Thus, in Bernander (2017: 150, 199), a similar historical scenario for the Situative construction, which has the form SM-ka-B-ayi, is proposed. Manda also makes use of connectives which are transparently derived from infinitive verbs. These include *kú(v)yáyi* ‘that, if’ <-(v)y-‘be(come)’ and *kumányáyi* ‘even’ <-many- ‘know’. The Infinitive, both in Manda and across the Bantu family, is a construction with the form *ku-B-a*, that is, a prefix *ku-*, the verbal base, and the final vowel *-a*. As pointed out, for example, by Nurse and Philippson (2006), it is common for a verb in the Infinitive to be additionally inflected with the pre-final suffix in Bantu languages. This seems to be the case for these connectives in Manda, based on the fact that they end with /ayi/. As far as I know, however, there are no reports of a Bantu language which allows the Infinitive to be inflected with the subjunctive vowel. Thus, once again, this is most reasonably an example of a construction where a post-verbal base reconstructable as °-aga has been raised to -ayi in Manda.

Given the identical segmental form of elements occurring after the verbal base in all of these verb forms it is reasonable to believe that a similar process has taken place and has also affected the Imperative in Manda. As this also means that the Imperative in Manda can be straightforwardly linked to the common Bantu imperative verb form, it is considered most likely that this is what happened in Manda. Whether the final vowel of the Manda Imperative in fact stems from the default imperative *-a or the subjunctive *-é is an issue which cannot be established with certainty, however. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the status of the final vowel remains to be clearly established, it is possible to confidently link the initial segment /ay/ of the -ayi suffix in Manda with the Imperfective *-a(n)g-.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has offered an account of the Imperative in the Bantu language Manda by reconstructing its origin and pathway of change. As argued, the synchronically atypical imperative construction with *-ayi* in Manda is not so odd from a historical point of view. Instead, it can be understood as originating from a specialization of the original Imperative with the addition of a pre-final morpheme **-a(n)g-* with an erstwhile imperfective meaning. This construction then became semantically neutralized and – to some extent – (morpho-)phonetically opaque.

Based on the formal and functional evidence found both language-internally and comparatively, this pathway of change in Manda has been reconstructed. As shown, it is common across the Bantu family to involve the pre-final morpheme in Imperatives (and other directives) to create pragmatic overtones. What is rare from a cross-Bantu perspective is that the imperative plus the pre-final morpheme has been reanalysed and conventionalized in Manda as the neutral strategy for second person directive speech acts. However, this does adhere to a general cross-linguistic pattern whereby imperfective markers become dedicated directives. To this fact may also be added that Manda is situated in a larger area of languages characterized by subjunctive-imperative hybridization and thus a more general acceptance of reclassification of form and meaning within the directive domain. An additional language-internal characteristic worth noting is the possibility of verb-final truncation in Manda, which resulted in the Imperative verb form being segmentally identical both with and without additional pre-final suffixation. Presumably, this undistinguishable status facilitated the levelling out of the original Imperative form.

It should furthermore be stressed that the vast bulk of studies on Bantu languages – and as a consequence also the set of data used for comparative research – are based on translation elicitation (or similar practices). Hence, they do not say anything about the frequency of use of the common Bantu Imperative. It is likely that a usage-based approach would show that, although grammatically acceptable, the reflex of the morphologically specialized imperative is seldom used in actual speech in many Bantu languages (due to factors such as the avoidance of face-threatening acts, or, in contrast, the desire to reinforce an order). If this is indeed the case, this would make the process of omitting the original imperative even less unusual.

To conclude, this study has shown how the seemingly atypical Manda data is more easily interpretable once the synchronic situation is seen in the light of historical processes. It has also shown how internal reconstruction and the comparative approach constitute useful methodological tools not only for phonological work but also for a deeper understanding of the synchronic status of the form and functional range of a TAM category in a previously understudied language. More generally, it also highlights the crucial fact that even the *non*-existence of a(n expected) grammatical form or construction deserves an explanation and may produce interesting findings.

ABBREVIATIONS

Numbers in the glosses refer either to person (SG/PL), noun class membership, or degree of remoteness (for tense markers).

◦	tentative reconstruction/ morphological representation	~	ambiguous/polysemic meaning; phonetic variant
*	reconstruction	ACP	agreement class prefix
<	from source	APPL	applicative

B	base	NCP	noun class prefix
DTV	directive	OM	object marker
FOC	focus	PL	plural
FUT	future	PROX.DEM	proximal demonstrative
FV	final vowel	PST	past
H	high tone	REP	repetitive
INF	infinitive	SBJV	subjunctive
IPFV	imperfective	SG	singular
ITV	itive	SM	subject marker
LOC	locative	TAM	tense-aspect-mood.

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