TENSE, ASPECTS AND MODALITY SYSTEMS IN THE MBANDJA VERB

By

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A Linguistics Practicum submitted to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation Studies

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

(Signed) --

Rev. Goma Mabele

Date: <u>December 10th, 1997</u>

DEDICATION

TO

my wife, Jeanne L. Goma

our son, Luyada A. Goma

our daughter, Yenga S. Goma

Acknowledgment

A successful completion of this project has been made possible by the grace of the Lord, for apart from him we can do nothing. To him be all the glory.

We want to appreciate Dr. Sim's academic warning without which we would not have perceived the seriousness of this project so soon. We are also truly grateful to Dr. Sim's family for their prompt assistance which helped us to raise and keep our academic balance when we were knocked down by sad news from our home country.

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We really want to express our thankfulness to our home church, through the Rt. Rev. Luyada Gbuda Ata Gbanzi for releasing us for the work of Bible translation and Translation studies.

To the NEGST Congolese community, we express our gratitude for the fellowship and mutual spiritual comfort and support we enjoyed together.

To all those who indirectly contributed to the realization of this project and are not mentioned by name, we want to acknowledge that we really appreciate their contribution.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Name and origin of the language

According to the <u>Ethnologue</u> (1988:346), the language may be variously called Mbanza, Mbandza, Mbanja, Mbandja. As a native speaker of the language, I consider the correct name to be Mbandja for the following reasons:

(a) Linguistically, this one fits in with one of the common word patterns CVCV if:- [^{m}b] is interpreted as one segment, and

      - [^{n}d^j] is also interpreted as a single segment.

(b) During the translation work, the translation team conducted a poll among the Mbandja in their different areas to find the correct Mbandja name. Unanimously, the two major dialects agreed with that orthography.

(c) Interpreted as a single segment, many of the Mbandja words have the segment [d^j], as in the following:

- badja   `stone'

- djapa   `whip'

- gbadjèvɔ   `hailstone'

- andja   `they'

- tandja   `to vomit'

- tandju   `to drink'

- The following compound verbs: - tadji õ `to listen, to hear'

                                    - tadji kudu `to dig a hole'

- tadji ngbeze `to get lost, to go astray'.

Traditionally, the Mbandja people say that they originated from Sudan. They were in the process of conquering and displacing various Bantu groups south of the area, when this was halted by Belgian colonization. The Sudanese origin of Mbandja can be supported by the following statement by Bendor-Samuel because it belongs to the Banda group of languages: "There are probably more than 500,000 Banda speakers in CAR and more than 100,000 in Zaire (Fultz and Morgan 1986). The number in Sudan is unknown and no breakdown by individual language is available" (Bendor-Samuel 1989:193).

In Occasional Papers in the study of Sudanese languages, no.4 (Sampson 1985:135,148-151), the following Tongbago words appear; there are some similarities between the Tongbago and Mbandja words:

Tongbago	Mbandja	gloss
vàná	vàná	`four'
màⁿdà	màⁿdà	`door'
dàᵐbá	dàᵐbá	`fail'
kàᵐbà	kàᵐbà	`knife'
yutu	yutu	`wash'
bĭši	'biši	`two'
mɛ̌rə	méré	`swell, to'

aᵐbə̌rɪ́pè	áᵐbérépé	`star'
su	tásu	`pierce'
kākó	kākó	`leaf'
ĝbābi	ĝbābi	`bone'
àbá	àbá	`father'

The above cases of similarity show clearly that Mbandja may indeed be one of the Banda languages which originated from Sudan.

1.2 Location

The Mbandja people live in the Northwest corner of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire). The main area is in North Ubangi, and another part in South Ubangi. In the Ethnologue (1988:346), it is stated that the Mbandja are mainly in the Equatorial Region, in various areas in North Ubangi, South Ubangi, and Western Mongala subregions, to the west, southwest, and east of the Ngbaka language. (See map 1, p. 74, taken from SIL: Nairobi).

1.3 Demographic factor

According to the Ethnologue (1988:346), there are 200,000 native speakers of Mbandja. Even in 1988 this estimate was too low because of the difficulty in reaching all the Mbandja speakers who are scattered in various areas in Ubangi land (see map 2 extracted from Benji Wald 1994:324). Actually the Mbandja speakers could now in 1997 be nearly one million.

1.4 Language family

Mbandja belongs to the super family of the Niger-Congo languages, and classified within the branch of Adamawa-Ubangi. As we have seen in 1.1. above, Mbandja is one of the Ubangian sub-branches which belongs to the group of the Banda languages (J. Bendor-Samuel 1989:192-3). The language is described in the Ethnologue (1988:346) as: Niger-Kordofanian, Niger-Congo, Adamawa Ubangi, Ubangi, Banda, Southern.

Benji Wald in the Atlas of the world's languages (Benji Wald 1994:292) states that "Niger-Congo is the dominant phylum in sub-Saharan African, and accounts for more than half of the total number of speakers of sub-saharan African languages." However, there is a discussion about the classification of its different branches. Benji Wald in the Atlas says that "because of its diversity, there are inevitably remaining problems and disagreements about suclassification, even among the better described Niger-Congo languages (Benji Wald 1994:292).

Despite the classification problems of the Niger-Congo phylum, the Atlas presents the Adamawa Ubangian sub-branches as follows: [see map 2 extracted from Benji Wald 1994:324].

1.5 Dialects and orthography

The Mbandja language has two major dialects called "Kala" and "Gbadɔ" (Ethnologue 1988:346). The Kala dialect is spoken in the southern Ubangi, whereas the Gbadɔ is spoken in the northern Ubangi.

The pronounciation and the vocabulary are the two major differences between these two dialects as shown below:

(a) Pronunciation

Two consonants [l] and [r] constitute the main characteristic to distinguish the pronunciation of these two dialects. Gbadɔ dialect frequently uses the consonant [r] in many of its words. On the other hand, the Kala dialect uses the consonant [l] instead of [r].

Examples:

Kala	Gbadɔ	gloss
begala	begara	`maize'
yabolo	yaboro	`goat'
kpolo	kporo	`drum'
milu	miru	`leopard'
bamala	bamara	`lion'
bulu	buru	`dusty'
tulugu	turugu	`soldier
tala	tara	`to calm (storm)'
tagolo	tagoro	`to slander'
yavɔlɔ	yavɔrɔ	`dog'
ndɔlɔ	ndɔrɔ	`cloud'
kœlœ	kœrœ	`name'
kalako	karako	`peanuts'

(b) Vocabulary

These are some of the differences in vocabulary between the two dialects:

Kala	Gbadɔ	gloss
songba ngu	kpakara	`fish'
bungu	gbogbo	`mat'
mɔlɔmbe	ka'danga	`cassava root'
mœ	nyamu	`palm tree'
ngu mœ	mœ	`mountain'
tsaga	tsama	`voice'
gole	gware	`price'
nyema	nyana	`what'
to	yi'ba	`message'

Before closing this section, it is important to say something about the phonology which is related to the orthographic system. Mbandja has eight vowels which are listed in the chart below:

	Front	Central	Back
close	i	ʉ	u
close-mid	e		o
open-mid	œ		ɔ
open		a	

We also want to signal that six of these eight vowels also have nasalized counterparts: ĩ, ẽ, ã, ũ, õ, ɔ̃.

Mbandja has three major word patterns: CV, CVCV and CVCVCV.

There are also three less common patterns VCV, CVV and VCVCV.

As a tonal language, Mbandja has three tones:

- High tone (H t) /

- Mid tone (M t) -

- Low tone (L t) \

Although belonging to the Gbadɔ dialect group, we will be using the orthography which is based on the Mbandja New Testament in this study.

1.6 The importance of the subject of tense, aspect

and modality systems (TAM systems)

The importance of the subject is expressed by T. Givón (1984:269) when he stated: "Of all grammatical sub-systems, tense-aspect-modality is probably the most complex and frustrating to the linguist. For one thing, it is an obligatory category without which simple sentences cannot be produced." In the light of T. Givón's pertinent observation about TAM, we will investigate how it works in the Mbandja verb.

Mbandja is mainly an ISOLATING language. Its constituent word order is SVO (AVP). Although an isolating language, it, nevertheless, has an interesting morphology which should be studied. This morphology is mostly found in the verb, and tentatively this will be described under the following chapter headings:

- Tense

- Aspect

- Mood

1.7 Previous research

To the best of my knowlege, no previous academic study of this kind has been done on the Mbandja language, except the general study done by France Cloarec-Heiss (1972) on the Banda verb, focusing on the Banda-Linda, an Ubangian language of CAR, and the early work by R.P. Charles Tisserant (1930) which was an attempt to describe the grammar of Banda.

The lack of any descriptive study of many of the Niger-Congo languages is also expressed by B. Wald in the Atlas (1994:292) as follows: "However, its size and diversity also keep it in need of much further study. Thus, most of the still underdescribed languages of sub-saharan Africa are probably Niger-Congo."

1.8 The purpose of the study

Considering the lack of a descriptive study of the Mbandja language, the purpose of this paper is twofold:

(1) To give a detailed discussion of the Mbandja verb, and

(2) to make the Mbandja language data available to others.

1.9 Data collection method

In this paper, one method only will be used in the collection of the data. Having no language informant, we will be using both memory and personal knowledge of the language as a native speaker to collect the data and analyse them by a descriptive approach. However, it is important to note that there is in the appendix a folk tale text from which we will be extracting some examples to illustrate our investigation which begins on the following page. The folk tale is translated from the Ngbaka folk tale booklet.

2. TENSE

2.1 Preliminaries

T. E. Payne (1994:190) defines tense as "the grammaticalized expression of the relation of time of an event to some reference point in time, usually the moment the clause is uttered." Payne's definition focuses on the moment at which the clause is uttered, and does not mention the sequentiality of the tense system as does T. Givón below.

T. Givón (1984:273) bases his definition of tense on two fundamental features which are involved in the concept of time, as reflected in tense systems, as follows:

a. **Sequentiality:** Tense is a way of construing time as a succession of points, each one occupying a fixed position in the linear order, this either preceding or following other discrete points in the sequence. Within such a sequence, precedence means existing/occurring before, and subsequence existing, occurring after...

b. **Point of reference**: within the flow of linear time, one may establish a point of reference - the time axis - with respect to which the `past' precedes and the `future' follows. The most common universal point of reference is the time of speech, anchored to the speaker at the time of performing the speech act.

Precedence and subsequence are the two fundamental sequences by which T. Givón defines the tense system with regard to the point of reference.

On the other hand, F. R. Palmer (1965:37) says that "Tense appears to have three distinct functions, first to mark purely temporal relations of Past and Present time; secondly in the sequence of tenses that is mainly relevant for reported speech, and thirdly to mark `unreality', particularly in conditional clauses and wishes". He goes on by stating that "the most important function of tense is to indicate Past and Present time". Although his most important function of tense meets our concerns in this paper, it is important to also note that Palmer purposely leaves out the future in his three distinct functions of tense.

2.2 Tense diagram

According to T. Givón (1984:273), the interaction between the two features of tense may be expressed diagrammatically as follows:

Past   time axis   future
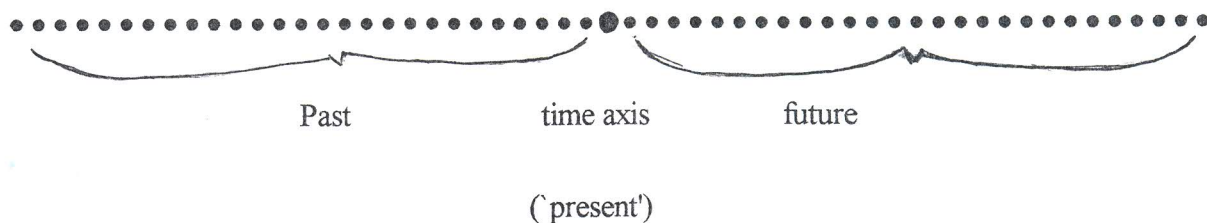
(`present')

For B. Comrie (1985:2), the time may be diagrammatically represented as follows:

Past   O   Future
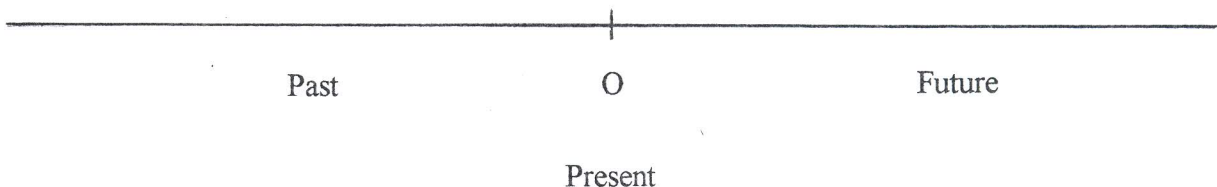
Present

He states the following: "For the purpose of the present book, we will assume that time can be represented as a straight line, with the past represented conventionally to the left and the future to the right. The present moment will be represented by a point labelled O on that figure."

Moreover, B. Comrie goes on by saying that "a system which relates entities to a reference point is termed a **deictic system**, and we therefore say that tense is **deictic**". He gives two instances of a deictic system of tense as follows:

a. The most straightforward instance of a deictic system is one where the **"here and now"**, i.e., the speech situation, is taken as deictic centre. In terms of person, this defines first person as the speaker and the second person as the hearer, with everything else being third person. In terms of place, the place where the speech situation takes place is defined as **here**, everywhere else as **there.**

b. The second distinction between deixis with regard to space and with regard to time is that, in general, the present moment is the same for both speaker and hearer, whereas for space it is possible for speaker and hearer to be in different locations and still communicate. (B. Comrie 1985:14-5).

Finally, according to T. Givón (1984:273), "the time axis itself may be either **absolute** (`now', time of speech) or **relative** (`then'; i.e. fixed by other means, most commonly by time

adverbial words or by reference to other events)." Givón's remark leads us into the third point of this chapter.

2.3 Absolute tense

The absolute tense is to be interpreted "to mean a tense which includes as part of its meaning the present moment as deictic centre." (B. Comrie 1985:36).

Given the `present moment' as deictic, it might seem **trivial** to define the three basic tenses that have formed the backbone of much linguistic work on the time reference in grammar, namely: present, past and future, as follows:

Present tense: means coincidence of the time of the situation and the present moment;

Past tense: means location of the situation prior to the present moment;

Future tense: means location of the situation after the present moment.

With reference to all the above, it is easy to see that Mbandja has three basic tenses. These three basic tenses are: present tense, past tense and future tense. Within these basic tenses, there are further sub-divisions.

2.4 Present tense

Following the whole conjugation paradigm below, it is clear that the Mbandja present tense does not have a specific marker as do the past and future. However, the important thing to note is that the verb root form is kept throughout the set of conjugations. There are six different personal

pronouns functioning as separate NPs; this means that there is no person marker needed on the verb.

Example (1)

me zœ logo   `I eat food'. or `I am eating food'.

ma zœ logo   `You (sg) eat food'. or `You (sg) are eating food'.

tsa zœ logo   `He/she eats food'. or `He/she is eating food'.

aza zœ logo   `We eat food'. or `We are eating food'.

nya zœ logo   `You (pl) eat food'. or `You (pl) are eating food'.

andja zœ logo   `They eat food'. or `They are eating food'.

2.4.1 The meanings associated with the present tense

According to example (1), the Present tense is used to express either the present moment `right now' or the continuous present, which are to be inferred from the context, as indicated below.

2.4.2 The present moment

The present moment can be inferred in the following context: A man is willing to send his son somewhere and asks his son: "What are you doing?" To that question, the son would answer, "I am eating". Or the husband may ask his wife: "What is he doing?" then the wife would answer: "He is eating" or "he is writing", depending on what the son is doing at that present moment as in Examples (2) and (3).

Example (2)

Ma	mbœlœ	nyema?	me	zœ	lʉ
you (sg)	do	what?	I	eat	thing

`What are you doing?' `I am eating'.

Example (3)

Tsa	mbœlœ	nyema?	tsa	zœ	lʉ
He	doing	what?	he	eats	thing

`What is he doing?'     `He is eating'.

Examples (2) and (3) show that the actions are taking place `right now' at the very time of utterance.

2.4.3 The continuous present

Considering the same context in (2) and (3), all we can say is that the deictic centre is included in the ongoing dynamic process. The Mbandja continuous is expressed by combining the auxiliary **po** `remain' and the particle **aze** `still' as in example (4) and (5).

Example (4)

ma	mbœlœ	nyema?	me	po	tazœ	lʉ	aze
you	doing	what?	I	remain	to-eat	thing	still

`What are you doing?'  `I am still eating'.

Example (5)

tsa	mbœlœ	nyema?	tsa	po	tazœ	lʉ	aze
he	doing	what?	he	remains	to-eat	thing	still'

`What is he doing?'     `He is still eating'.

Moreover, it is important to note that the actual tense may also be used to express an immediate intention. Thus in example (6), the actual tense is used to refer to a situation which is about to begin in the very immediate future, but has not yet begun.

Example (6)

me	gindœ	tazœ	logo
I	want	to-eat	food

`I want to eat (right now)'.

2.5 Future tense

In section 2.4. above, it was stated that the Future and the Past tense have a common marker which is the suffix - **ma**. Thus, the Mbandja future tense is generally formed by simply adding the suffix -**ma** to the verb root as in the following conjugation pattern.

Example (1)

me su-**ma** mbeti	`I will write letter'.
ma su-**ma** mbeti	`You (sg) will write letter'.
tsa su-**ma** mbeti	`He/she will write letter'.
aza su-**ma** mbeti	`We will write letter'.
nya su-**ma** mbeti	`You (pl) will write letter'.
andja su-**ma** mbeti	`They will write letter'.

Considering example (1), it is important to also note that, apart from the suffix -**ma** which generally marks the future, there is no other particle which can indicate the remote and the immediate future tense in Mbandja. However, the two concepts of future may be understood according to the context as in examples (2 to 5) below.

2.5.1 Remote future

Example (2)

Dœ ngba,	taka	kelasi,	me	gu-**ma**	'ba	tœ	Congo
after	to-finish	school	I	will-go	to	direc	Congo'

`After finishing my studies, I will go back to Congo'.

Example (2) shows a temporal succession. The first action is started in the past and is still in the process of completion. The completion will take place of course, in the remote future: the action of going back to Congo. That is a `projection' in the future. According to Longacre (1983 :7), such a future may be called `a narrative (prophecy)' which normally has a future tense.

Example (3)

Dœ ngba	taka	kelasi,	me	gu-**ma**	tayɔ	nda
after	to-finish	school	I	will-go	to-buy	house

`After completing my studies, I will go back to buy a house'.

Again example (3) expresseş a remote future. The action of buying the house will take place after the completion of the studies, and yet we do not know when these studies will be completed. Thus, such a future tense is a projection in the remote future.

2.5.2 Immediate Future

As stated 2.5 above, the immediate future is also to be understood according to the context in which the actions are taking place as in examples (4-5) below.

(4) Dœ ngba   tazœ   logo,   me yutu-**ma**   ne   me

      after   to-eat   food,   I   will-wash   hands   of-me'

`After eating (food) I will wash my hands'.

In example (4), the context shows clearly that after eating, the speaker will immediately wash his hands, the two actions are sequenced one after the other. Another context for example 4 is that the speaker belongs to a society in which people use their hands for eating. This is why there is an immediate need for washing the hands after eating i.e. a cause and effect relationship, dirty hands need washing.

(5) Dœ ngba   kelasi   me na-**ma**   'ba tœ   Karen

      after   school   I   will-go   to   direc   Karen

`After the class I will go to Karen'.

The context in (5) shows that the speaker will go to Karen after the class and this may be before the evening. Therefore, it is an immediate or nearest future when compared to the Remote future.

2.6 Past tense

Though the future and the past tenses have the same suffix which marks them, the Mbandja past tense is generally formed by suffixing -**ma** to the verb root with a High tone ′ on the vowel of the verb root, as in the following conjugation pattern.

Example (1)

me sú-**ma**   `I wrote'.

ma sú-**ma**   `You (sg) wrote'.

tsa sú-**ma**   `He, she wrote'.

aza sú-**ma**   `We wrote'.

nya sú-**ma**   `You (pl) wrote'.

andja sú-**ma**   `They wrote'.

However, within this general characteristic of the past tense, we can distinguish:

- the remote past

- the immediate/near past

- the neutral past

2.6.1 Remote past

The Mbandja remote past is formed by suffixing the particle -**le** to the verb root with, of course, a high tone on the vowel of the verb root as in examples (1-3) below:

Examples:

(1)	Ata	me	nwó-**le**	miru	da sa dœ	me	póle
	grandfather	of-me	had-killed	leopard	when	I	had-still

dœ	yavuzu.	`My grandfather had killed a leopard

dem	child	when I was young.'

(2) Ku nœ ata me zá-**le** miru

trap of grandfather me had-caught leopard

`My grandfather's trap had caught a leopard'.

(3) Ata me tsú-**le** dœ me pó**le** dœ yavuzu

grandfather of-me had-died dem I had-still dem young'

`My grandfather had died when I was still young.'

It is important to note that in discourse, the remote past is used to mark the setting/background in the narrative text as in the sequence of the following fairy tale.

Example (4)

Kolowa da tɨ **le** dœ aaye lo nga. Da nga lɔ bale,

mosquito and ear had-been dem friends conj. certain sun one,

tɨ mœ́nda fɔ kolowa dje:

ear told to mosquito that:

`Mosquito and ear had been friends. One day, ear told mosquito that:'

When the suffix **-le** stands by itself as a separate particle as in examples (5-6) below, it means the verb 'to be'.

(5) Ata   me **le**   dœ tulugu

     grandfather   me had-been   dem soldier

`My grandfather had been a soldier'.

(6) Kolowa   da tʉ **le**   dœ   aaye lo nga

     mosquito   and ear had-been   dem friends'

'Mosquito and ear had been friends'.

This particle **le** can be suffixed to any verb root with a high tone on the vowel of that verb root to express the remote past.

2.6.2 Immediate /near past

In order to clearly see the distinction between the immediate past and the neutral past, it is better to consider again the following sequence of the fairy tale about mosquito and ear.

Example (1)

Andja **nwó** asongba nguna ka ka ka, nyaa andja **ká** ku,

They killed animals water ideophone, and they finished all,

nyaa	tʉ	mœ́nda	fɔ	kolowa	dje:	"Nga	me,	me	djí-**ma**
and	ear	told	to	mosquito	that:	friend	me	I	heard

kœ	kpolo"
shouting	drum

'They finished catching all the fish; then ear told mosquito, "My friend, I heard the drum"'.

The form djí-**ma** is generally what is called the immediate/near past in Mbandja. The immediate past is frequently used in normal conversation to refer to an action or an event which took place in the very near or immediate past.

Examples

(2)	Awo	me	ná-**ma**	'ba	tœ	Nairobi
	wife	me	went	to	direc	Nairobi

`My wife went to Nairobi'.

(3)	Me	ndjú-**ma**	kafe	da	tutsona	kɔ
	I	drank	coffee	conj.	morning	this

`I drank coffee this morning'.

(4)	Yakosena	kɔ	'bí-**ma**	awo	ya
	the-man	this	beat	wife	of-him

`This man beat his wife'.

As seen in examples (1-3) above, the immediate past tends to express an aspect of completeness or definiteness. In example (2) the action of drinking was completed this morning. In (3), that man beat his wife some hours before, but now he is not beating her.

2.6.3 Neutral past

Again if we consider the sequence of that fairy tale in example (1) section 2.6.2 above, the neutral past will be shown as follows:

Andja	**nwó**	asongba	nguna	ka ka ka,	nyaa	andja	**ká**	ku,
They	killed	animals	water	ideophone,	and	they	finished	all,

nyaa	tɨ	**mœ́nda**	fɔ	kolowa	dje:	"Nga	me,	me	djí-**ma**
and	ear	told	to	mosquito	that:	friend	me	I	heard

kœ	kpolo"
shouting	drum

'They finished catching all the fish; then ear told mosquito, "My friend, I heard the drum"'.

The forms **nwó**, **ká** and **mœ'nda** are used as unmarked past with respect to remoteness or immediateness. While the immediate past is used with a completeness aspect, the neutral past has a descriptive sense, as in the following sequence of the fairy tale about mosquito and ear.

Example (1)

Andja	**béta**	'ba	lakpa	**dœ**	ta	**síma**	ko
they	arrived	to	village	dem.	part-imp.-pron.	buried	body

anɔ	kolowa	puu
mother	mosquito	already.

`When they arrived in the village, mosquito's mother was already buried'.

The neutral past **béta** is followed by the demonstrative particle **dœ** and the immediate past **síma** is descriptive in the sense that when they arrive, something has recently happened: the burial of mosquito's mother. The burial is expressed by the immediate past **sima** which in turn expresses the completeness of the burial through the adverb **puu** `already'.

2.7 Relative tense

According to B. Comrie (1985:56),

there are some adverbs or time adverbials which serve specifically to locate a situation relative to the present moment: e.g.

- today (the day including the present moment),

- yesterday (the day preceding the day including the present moment),

- tomorrow (the day following the day including the present moment)

Mbandja has three main time adverbials to express the relative tense:

- **dalama** `today',

- **lubumu** `yesterday',

- **ambatsa** `tomorrow'.

The relative tense, says B. Comrie (1985-58), "is quite strictly one which is interpreted relative to a reference point provided by the context." In order to describe the relative tense in context, we consider the following context.

A man went on a journey but did not know precisely when he would be back; wanting to know about his coming back, some of his friends came to ask his wife whether he was back or not. Using the time adverbials, the answer could be:

(1) Tsa béta **lubumu** `He arrived yesterday'

(2) Tsa bétama **dalakɔ** `He arrived today'

(3) Tsa betama **dalakɔ** `He will arrive today'

(4) Tsa betama **ambatsa** `He will arrive tomorrow'.

The context of example (1) tells us that, that man arrived yesterday; the event is situated between the remote and the immediate past; and therefore calls for the neutral past **béta**.

Example (2) according to the context, tells us that he arrived maybe sometime in the morning. The event took place in the near past. However, example (3) situates the event in the near future or immediate future. He will arrive late today, early in the evening.

Finally, example (4) tends to be less realis, in the sense that he may arrive tomorrow or after tomorrow. This leads us to consider the extension of relative tense in Mbandja.

2.7.1 Extension of relative tense

Using the same time adverbials (**lubumu**, **ambatsa**), the extension of relative tense can be expressed as follows:

1a. Tsa béta lubumu na 'baza

he arrived yesterday pronoun there

`He arrived before yesterday'

1b. Lubumu me ná dœ tsa béta tsu na puu

Yesterday I came dem he arrived before pron. already

'He had already arrived before I came yesterday'

2a. Tsa beta**ma** ambatsa na 'baza

He will arrive tomorrow from-there

`He will arrive after tomorrow'

2b. Ambatsa me **nama** nyeka tsa betama 'da

Tomorrow I come-future then he arrive future

`He will arrive after I come tomorrow.'

3.   Tsa   betama   **bala**

     He   arrive-fut   remote

`He will arrive (in the remote future)

3b.   Me   nwoma   **bala**   bamara   da sa dœ   me   gelema   ka.

      I   kill-fut   remote   lion   when   I   grow-up-fut   emph.

`I will kill (in the remote future) a lion when I grow up'

4.   Me   nama   **bala**   'ba   tœ   Amerika   da sa dœ   me   gelema   **ka**

     I   go-fut   remote   to   direc   America   when   I   grow-up-fut   emph.

`I will go (remote fut) to America when I grow up'.

The examples (3-4) show the extension of remoteness or indefiniteness in the future and are therefore irrealis or collateral. Collateral information, says J.E. Grimes (1975:64-5), "fits into projected time. Future tense forms predict actions that might or might not take place." The particle **bala** serves in (3-4) to mark the remoteness or indefiniteness of the relative tense in the future.

3. ASPECT

3.1 Introduction

B. Comrie (1976:3) defines Aspect as "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation." For John I. Saeed (1997:108) "Aspect is also a grammatical system relating to time, but here the speaker may choose how to describe the internal temporal nature of a

situation." In the same manner T.E. Payne (1994:191) defines Aspect as "the description of the internal temporal shape of events or states." In other words aspect is different ways of using the time relation by the speaker.

Having defined Aspect, it is important to consider T.E. Payne's observations on how languages grammaticalize the notion of aspect. He observes as follows: "Keep in mind, however, that no language necessarily grammaticalizes any of these aspects, and that the aspectual operations grammaticalized in any given language may not line up exactly with these notion" T.E. Payne (1994:191).

In the light of T.E. Payne's observation, it is easy to state that, instead of the main aspects Perfective and Imperfective, Mbandja has the Completive, Inceptive and Continuative aspects. These three are clear-cut.

3.2 Completive aspect

Mbandja uses the completive aspect to express the completion of an event. T.E. Payne (1994:192) notes that "the completive and inceptive aspect are called Phasal aspects, because they refer to different phases of the event described by the verb."

The following conjugation pattern shows how the Mbandja language uses the completive aspect:

Example (1)

me	káma	tazœ	logona	puu
I	finished	to-eat	the-food	already

`I already finished eating the food'.

ma káma tazœ logona puu	`You (sg) already finished eating the food'.
tsa káma tazœ logona puu	`He/she already finished eating the food'.
aza káma tazœ logona puu	`We already finished eating the food'.
nya káma tazœ logona puu	`You (pl) already finished eating the food'.
andja káma tazœ logona puu	`They already finished eating the food'.

The completive aspect is mainly formed by combining the immediate past of **taka** `to finish' and the infinitive of any verb.

(2) me beta dœ tsa **káma** tazœ logona puu

     I arrived dem he/she finished to-eat the-food already

`I arrived when he/she had already finished eating.'

(3) Kolowa da tʉ béta 'ba lakpa dœ ta **káma**

     mosquito and ear arrived dir. village dem imp-pron finished

tasi	ko	anɔ	kolowa	puu
to-bury	body	mother	mosquito	already'

`Mosquito and ear arrived in the village when they had finished burying mosquito's mother.'

(4)	Ằ	gú	tœ	kelassina	dœ	tsa	**káma**	tafa
	we	returned	direc	school	dem	she	finished	to-cook

logona	puu
the-food	already

`When she had already finished cooking the food, we returned from the school'.

Having set the context of the completive aspect in examples (2-4), it is clear to see that when the completive aspect is used in a complex sentence, it occurs in the subordinate clause.

3.3 Inceptive aspect

The Inceptive is used to focus on the beginning of an event. T.E. Payne (1994:192) says that the inceptive aspect expresses the starting point of an event. Thus, Mbandja combines the neutral past of **tatimbi** `to start'/`to begin' with the infinitive of any verb to express the inceptive as in the following conjugation pattern:

Example (1)

me **tímbi** taʃu mbeti

`I began to write letter'.

Ma **tímbi** tasu mbeti

`You (sg) began to write letter'.

tsa **tímbi** tasu mbeti

`He/she began to write letter'.

aza **tímbi** tasu mbeti

`We began to write letter'.

nya **tímbi** tasu mbeti

`You (pl) began to write letter'.

andja **tímbi** tasu mbeti

`They began to write letter'.

Example (2) in fairy tale line 7:

Andja	béta	'baza,	nyaa	a	**tímbi**	tai	nguna
they	arrived	there	and	they	started	to-bail	the-water.

`They arrived there, and they started to bail the water'.

Example (3) in fairy tale line 8

Andja	í	nguna	ka ka ka,	nyaa	a	ndjɔlɔ	ẽ,	ngbo	andja	**tímbi**
they	bailed	water	ideophone,	and	it	dried	up	thus	they	began

tanwo	asongba	nguna.
to-kill	animals	water

`They bailed the water, and it dried up, thus they began to catch the fish'.

Example (4) line 16

Po kœtsœ,	andja	**tímbi**	takpa	guta	gu	lakpa
immediately,	they	began	to-run	towards	direc	village.

`Immediately, they began to run home.'

According to the context of examples (2-4), it seems that the inceptive aspect in Mbandja tends to be more likely a resultative, conclusive or logical. Especially in example (3) where the discourse connector **ngbo** `thus' is comparable with the English discourse connector **therefore** which, according to D. Blakemore (1992:136), is used as a discourse connector to introduce contextual implication. The intention of Ear in producing his utterance in line 2 (see Appendix 2), "Nga me aza na tai ngu", was to catch fish as the result of bailing water. Therefore, the connector **ngbo** is used in line 8 to introduce a contextual implication. It is just in that context that we assume the inceptive aspect to be conclusive or logical.

3.4 Continuative aspect

T.E. Payne (1994:192) describes the continuative or progressive aspect as an ongoing or a dynamic process. Continuative or progressive does refer to an actual event. Mbandja uses two different forms to express the continuative aspect:

1. The first form consists of the combination of auxiliary sœ 'sit' with the infinitive of any verb.

2. The combination of the particle **ka** with the infinitive of any verb. These two forms can clearly be seen in the following sets of conjugations:

Example (1)

me	sœ	tasu	mbeti	`I am writing a letter'.
I	sit	to-write	letter	

ma	sœ	tasu	mbeti	`You (sg) are writing a letter'.
you(sg)	sit	to-write	letter	

tsa	sœ	tasu	mbeti	`He/she is writing a letter'.
she,he	sits	to-write	letter'	

aza	sœ	tasu	mbeti	`We are writing a letter'.
we	sit	to-write	letter	

nya	sœ	tasu	mbeti	`You (pl) are writing a letter'.
you (pl)	sit	to-write	letter	

andja	sœ	tasu	mbeti	`They are writing a letter'.
they	sit	to-write	letter	

Example (2)

me	ka	tasu	mbeti	`I am writing a letter'.
I	prog	to-write	letter	

ma	ka	tasu	mbeti	`You (sg) are writing a letter'.
you(sg)	prog	to-write	letter	

tsa	ka	tasu	mbeti	`He/she is writing a letter'.
he,she	prog	to-write	letter'	

aza	**ka**	tasu	mbeti	`We are writing a letter'.
we	prog	to-write	letter	

nya	**ka**	tasu	mbeti	`You (pl) are writing a letter'.
you-(pl)	prog	to-write	letter	

andja	**ka**	tasu	mbeti	`They are writing a letter'.
they	prog	to-write	letter.	

Though the two sets of conjugations are in the present, it suffices to put the high tone on the vowel of the auxiliary and add the particle **ka** to obtain the past progressive form as in the following examples:

(3) fairy tale line 18

Po kœtsœ,	nyaa	kolowa	gbó	tsœlœkoko,	ngbo	a	**ká**
Immediately	and	mosquito	found	anger	therefore	he	prog

taki	fɔ	tʉ	dje
scold	to	ear	that.

'And right there, mosquito felt angry, thus he started scolding ear as follows:'

(4) Da sa dœ   me   lí   dœ andja   soǽ   tazœ   logo

    when   I   entered   dem   they   sat   to-eat   food'

`They were eating when I entered'.

(5) Da sa dœ   anɔ   kolowa   tsú   dœ andja   soǽ tai   ngu

    when   mother   mosquito   died   dem   they   sat   to-bail   water'

`They were bailing water when mosquito's mother died'.

As we stated in 3.2. above, when the continuative aspect is used in complex sentences, it only occurs in main clauses as the examples (4) and (5).

3.5 Relations between tense and aspect

B. Comrie (1976:6) recognizes that linguists have failed to emphasize the difference between tense and aspect; he says, "traditional grammatical terminology does not always rigorously distinguish the two parameters, which can lead to confusion in discussing either aspect or tense in its own right. However, at various points it has been noted that aspect and tense do sometimes impinge on one another..."

Despite the three clear-cut cases discussed in the section above, there is a relationship between the present tense and habitual aspect according to the following examples:

(1) Tsa   mbœlœ   luna   kɔ   vɔla

    he   does   thing   this   always

`He always does this thing'.

(2) A   li   kelasi   da   lɔ   ngbe'de'de

     we   enter   class   at   sun   eight

`We (begin) enter the class at eight'.

(3) A   zœ   lʉ   vɔla   da   lɔ   bale   do ngba   midi

     we   eat   thing   always   at   sun   one   after   noon

`We always eat at one pm'.

Although these three sentences are in the present tense, they have to be interpreted with `habitual meaning' with or without the habitual **vɔla** `always'.

Thus, in these three examples, the present is used to express a habitual situation by presenting one instance to exemplify the recurrent situation (B. Comrie 1976:69).

Example (1) above shows that he has the habit to do such a thing and that he is doing it all the time. T.E. Payne (1994:193) observes that "it does not imply that an instance of the event is taking place `now'". According to B. Comrie (1976:27-8), the feature that is common to all habituals is that "they describe a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period".

Example (2) above fits well with B. Comrie's definition in terms of not being an incidental property of the moment, but a characteristic feature of a whole period in such a way that the setting time of entering the class is extended throughout the whole period of study. They always enter, or begin the class at eight.

4. MOOD

4.1 Preliminaries

It is important to clarify the different uses of the terms **mode**, **mood**, **modality**, as T.E. Payne notices: "The terms mode, mood and modality are often used interchangeably, though some linguists make distinctions among these terms". T.E. Payne (1994: 193).

4.1.1 Mode and mood

The use of **mode** and **mood** is a matter of preference for each linguist. Some prefer to use mode instead of mood; and some others use mood instead of mode. However, as these two terms do refer to the same concept, in this paper, we will be using mood instead of mode.

4.1.2 Mood and modality

Although there is interchangability in the use of these two terms, T.E. Payne also recognizes that there is a slight difference according to some linguists. F.R. Palmer (1986:21) suggests that it is useful to draw a clear distinction between mood and modality.

J. Bybee and S. Fleischman draw the difference between these two terms in the following lines:

Mood refers to a formally grammaticalized category of the verb which has a modal function. Moods are expressed inflectionally, generally in distinct sets of verbal paradigms, e.g. indicative, subjunctive, optative, imperative, conditional, etc. ... , which vary from one language to another in respect to number as well as to the semantic distinctions they mark. **Modality,** on the other hand, is the semantic domain pertaining to elements of meaning that languages express. It covers a broad range of semantic nuances - jussive, desiderative, inattentive, hypothetical, potential, obligative, hortatory, exclamative, etc. - whose common denominator is the addition of a supplement or overlay of meaning of the most neutral semantic value of the proposition of an utterance, namely factual and declarative. J.Bybee and S. Fleischman (1995:2).

The highest distinctive feature of modality is between **realis** and **irrealis.** J. Saeed describes that distinctive feature as follows:

This approach to modality is also supported by the existence of languages which have verb forms which regularly distinguish between events in the real world and events in future or imagery worlds. This two-term modal distinctions is often called a **realis/irrealis** modality (i.e. a reality/unreality distinction).
 J.Saeed (1997: 128).

According to E. W. Goodrick (1976: 4:7), the mood is the indication of the speaker's attitude toward the kind of reality behind his statement. He goes on by observing that maybe it could happen, or maybe someone wished that it would happen or commanded it to happen. Or possibly, it really did happen.

Having clarified the use of these two terms, **mood** and **modality,** and with reference to all the above, we can state that Mbandja has three moods. These three moods are: Indicative, Imperative and Conditional.

4.2 **Indicative**

The indicative mood describes situations reported as real. It is used in stating facts, giving information or reports, telling the narratives. Therefore, it is the most frequently used in Mbandja. In order to avoid repetition, we consider the indicative as being sufficiently described in section two, in which paradigms for tenses and most examples are given in the indicative mood. However, we want to bring in the following examples to clarify the concept of realis/irrealis.

Examples:

1a. Awo   me   zu   ya'bese   yakose

    wife   me   give birth+past   child   man

    'My wife gave birth to a son'.

1b. Awo   me   **zu-ma**   ya'bese   yakose

    wife   me   give birth+fut   child   man

    'My wife will give birth to a son'.

2a. Tsa   nwó**ma**   yakolo

     He   kill+immed. past   snake

     'He killed a snake'

2b. Tsa   nwo**ma**   yakole

     he   kill+fut   snake

     'He will kill a snake'

Examples 1a and 2a describe situations which are reported as real in such a way that the two situations are asserted.

Examples 1b and 2b describe situations which are collateral. **Collateral** information is a projection into the future. Such events may or may not happen. Who knows if his wife will necessarily give birth to a son? She may or may not give birth to a son. Therefore these two examples are irrealis.

   The following examples are stating facts which are linked to time deixis.

3a. Yœpœna   kɔ   dœ   yœpœ   tasho   kœndœ

    the month   this   is   month   to burn   field

    'Fields are burned during this month'.

3b. Yœpœna   kɔ   dœ   yœpœ   tasu   karako

the month   this   is   month   to uproot   peanut

'The peanuts are harvested during this month'.

In order to understand the background of these two examples, we have to consider S.C. Levinson's explanations of time deixis as follows:

> The bases for systems of reckoning and measuring time in most languages seem to be the natural and prominent cycles of day and night, lunar months, seasons and years. Such units can either be used as measures, relative to some fixed point of interest (including, crucially, the deictic center), or they can be used calendrically to locate events in 'absolute' time relative to some absolute origo, or at least to some part of each natural cycle designated as the beginning of that cycle. S.C. Levinson (1983: 73).

In Mbandja culture, the summer begins in January and continues up to March. It is within these three months that men start to clear the forest or to do spadework. Toward the end of March, they have to burn the grass, knowing that the first rains will arrive at that time. After the first rain, they begin to cultivate whatever they have. Having cultivated, they must wait for the next three months in order to begin the harvest.

Pragmatically, these two examples are making allusions to March and June in such a way that March and June are crucial times in Mbandja culture. Thus, in the light of examples 3a - 3b, we can see how the indicative mood is used to state facts in the Mbandja language.

4.3 **Imperative**

D. Crystal says that imperative mood refers to verb forms or sentence or clause types typically used in the expression of commands, D. Crystal (1980: 171). In the same manner S.E. Porter, talking about commands and prohibitions, states the following about imperative mood: "The most common means of forming commands is with an imperative mood form" S.E. Porter (1992: 221).

Although D. Blakemore (1992: 111-2) gives six other uses of the imperative beside commands (advice , permission, threats and dares, good wishes, audienceless cases, predetermined cases), Mbandja only uses the imperative mood to express commands and prohibitions. In the second person singular the imperative appears without the pronoun and in the second person plural the pronoun is obligatory.

However, it is important to note that Mbandja has a lexical mood. The following sets of examples illustrate the use of the Mbandja imperative mood.

4.3.1 **Commands**

Examples

1a.   Za   'take'

        you-sg take

1b.   nya   za   'take' (pl)

    you-pl take

2a.   na   'go'

    you-sg. go

2b.   nya   na   'go' (pl)

    you-pl   go

3a.   zœ   'eat'

    you-sg eat

3b.   nya   zœ   'eat' (pl)

    you-pl   eat

4a.   kpa   ẽ   'run'

    you-sg run   emph.

4b.   nya   kpa ẽ   'run' (pl)

    you-pl   run   emph.

5a.   ndju   'drink'

         you-sg drink

5b.   nya   ndju   'drink' (pl)

         you-pl   drink

Before tackling the prohibitions, it is important to acknowledge J. Lyons's distinction

between the more specific senses of the term **command** and a general sense for which he uses

the term **mand**. He says:

> In order to avoid confusing the more general and the more specific senses of
> 'command', we will henceforth employ Skinner's term and as a general term to refer
> to commands, demands, requests, entreaties, etc. Our use of the term 'mand' does not,
> of course, commit us to a behaviouristic analysis of meaning. Mands, as we
> shall see, are a subclass of what might be called directives, that is to say, utterances
> which impose, or propose, some course of action or pattern of behavior and
> indicate that it should be carried out, J. Lyons (1977: 745-6).

Although he states that mands differ from other subclasses of directives, such as warnings,

recommendations, and exhortation, Mbandja uses the command to impose, propose, perform

and exhort. Examples 1a - 5b are illustrating imposition and proposition whereas the following

are performatives.

Examples:

6a.   Shɔ   ẽ   'be healed'

        you-sg heal   emph

6b.   nya   shɔ   ẽ   'be healed' (pl)

        you-pl   heal   emph

This verb **tashɔ** 'to heal' is used to refer to someone who is sick, thus, by saying **shɔ ẽ** 'be healed' you are either performing the healing or wishing the sick person to be healed. Otherwise **shɔ ẽ** can be paraphrased as follows:

7.   me   ginda   djeke   ma   shɔ   ẽ

        I   want   that   you   heal   emph

        'I want/wish you to be healed'.

Examples 8a -9b are illustrating exhortation.

8a.   yutu   ne   za   ẽ

        wash   hand   you   emph

'wash your hands'

8b. (nya)   yutu   ne   nya   ẽ

      you (pl)   wash   hands   you   emph

      'wash   your hands' (pl)

9a. yutu   loba   tœ   za   ẽ

      wash   cloth   body   you   emph

      'wash your cloth'

9b. (nya)   yutu   loba   tœ   nya   ẽ

      you (pl) wash   cloths   body   you   emph

      'wash your cloths' (pl).

4.3.2 Prohibitions

Mbandja uses prohibition in discourse, mainly in hortatory texts when parents are giving injunctions to their children and also in other situations. The following examples are the sequences of an hortatory text where a parent is counseling his son.

1. Baye! djaa ma lo sabale da aaye zungba ne

   voc. son ! imper. part. you walk together with persons steal not

   'My son! Do not make friendship with stealers'.

2. Djaa ma lo sabale da aaye kutulu ne

   imper. part you walk together with persons turbulent not

   'Do not make friendship with trouble makers'.

3. Djaa ma to ndœ õ fɔ agbo azu ne

   imper. part you tell bad word to old persons not

   'Do not vex old persons'.

These three examples fit in well with M. Larson's description of an hortatory:

Purpose: propose

Speaker - hearer relation: advisor - advisee

Backbone: injunctions

Structure:	grounds - exhortation
Person:	2nd person
Mood:	imperative M. Larson (1984: 366).

In his <u>Thread of Discourse</u>, J.E. Grimes (1975: 65) states the following while describing collateral information: "Imperatives direct people to do things that might not be accomplished. All of these have the effect of setting up alternatives. Later in the text it is usually made clear which of the alternatives happens". If collateral information sets up an alternative and thus, is irrealis, then Imperative mood is irrealis as T.E. Payne notes: "Interrogative and Imperative clauses are likely to be irrealis, since they do not assert that X did not happen, but order it to come about, or question whether it will or did come about" T.E. Payne (1994: 194).

4.4 Conditional

The conditional mood in Mbandja describes conditional and hypothetical situations. The conditional sentence constructions are introduced by the conditional conjunction **sadœ** 'if'.

The following examples show a certain real possibility in the subordinate (**if-clauses).**

Example (1) context adapted from R. Murphy (1985:74).

Mary has lost her book. She thinks it may be at Rose's house.

Mary: I think I left my book at your house. Have you seen it?

Rose: No, but I'll have a look when I get home. If I find it, I'll tell you.

Mbunja:	**Sadœ**	**me**	**gbo**	**ta,**	me	mœmanda	fɔ	ma
	if	I	find	it,	I	tell-fut	to	you

'If I find it, I'll tell you'.

Examples (2-3) context taken from Mbandja fairy tale quoted in the appendix.

Mosquito:	**Sadœ**	**aza**	**dœlœ,**	nyaa	tsa	tsu	dœ ngba	me,	me	nwúmàsa	ne
	if		we	depart,	and	she	dies	after	me, I	will know	not

'If we depart and my mother dies, I'll not know'.

Example (3)

Ear:	kœlœ	me	dœ	tʉ,	**sadœ**	**anɔ**	**za**	**tsu**	**ẽ**
	name	me	is	ear,	if	mother	you	dies	emph

'My name is ear, if your mother dies'

andja	bima	kpolo ,	nyaa	me	djima	kœ	kpolona

they	beat-fut	drum ,	and	I	hear-fut	shouting	drum

'They will beat the drum and I'll hear it's shouting'.

ngbo	a	mœmanda	fɔ	ma.
thus	I	tell-fut	to	you

'Thus I'll tell you'.

In all these three examples, there are real possibilities in such a way that:

a. Rose feels there is a real possibility that she will find the book. So she says **sadœ me gbo ta, me mœmanda fɔ ma** 'If I find it, I'll tell you'.

b. Mosquito has the same feeling about his mother's sickness. Actually, it is what happened: after they had parted; his mother died.

c. Ear also predicted that he would tell mosquito if his mother died. Although he delayed the telling of that sad news, he finally told him after they had finished catching all the fish.

With regard to all the three examples above, it is clear that when the conditional mood expresses a real possibility, the subordinate if-clause is in the present tense and the main clause is in the future tense.

The following examples are less related to real possibility and are, therefore likely to be irrealis.

Example (4) taken from the draft of Mbandja N.T.

The general context is that of Jesus' meeting with Mary and Martha after the death of their brother Lazarus.

(4) Gbuzu,   **sadœ**   **ma**   **sœ̀má**   **kɔtsɔ,**

lord   if   you   had been   here

'Lord, if you had been here'

yakose   nya   me   tsúma   ne

man   brother   of me   would have died   not

'my brother would not have died'.

(5) **Sadœ**   **me**   **sœ̀má**   **dœ**   **aaye**   **gbo**   **lʉ**

if   I   had been   rel.   person   find   thing'

'If I had been a rich man',

me   lóma   da   da   me   ne

I		would have walked	with	feet	of me	not

'I would not have walked on foot'.

(6)	sadœ	aba	me	sœ̀pomá	da	solo
	if	father	of me	had remained	with	life

'If my father had remained alive',

me	nwúma	kanga	ne
I	would see	sorrow	not

'I would not be sad'.

In these three examples above, we can see that the **if-clauses** are expressed in a specific grammatical form:

1. the combination of low tone \ and high tone / which accompany **sadœ** 'if' to form the conditional;

2. the suffix **-ma** which can be suffixed to any verb root to express the conditional, either in the past tense or the future tense;

3. the main clause is in the immediate past tense characterized by the suffix **-ma** suffixed to the verb root and the high tone / on the vowel of the verb root.

Considering T.E. Payne's observation about conditional clauses as irrealis mood, we can state that these three examples above are irrealis. He observes: "Terms that have been used for various kinds of assertions that are close to the irrealis end of the realis - irrealis continuum are: subjunctive, optative (wishes), potential (might, ability to) hypothetical, imaginary, conditional (if), probability, deontic (should, must, have to)" T.E. Payne (1994: 194).

4.5 Deontic modality

J. Lyons defines deontic modality as follows:

The term deontic (from the Greek ' deon': "what is binding") is now quite widely used by philosophers to refer to a particular branch or extension of modal logic: the logic of obligation and permission J. Lyons (1977: 823).

In the same manner, F.R. Palmer describes Deontic modality as being essentially performative. He says: "Deontic modality is essentially performative. By using a deontic modal, a speaker may actually give permission (May, can), lay an obligation (MUST) or make a promise or threat (SHALL)." (F. R. Palmer 1979 :69)

We see that there are two common elements in these descriptions of deontic modality: obligation and permission.

In the light of the above, we can now clearly see how Mbandja uses deontic modality to express obligation and permission. Generally, Mbandja has a subordinate construction in expressing deontic modality. That subordinate construction can be summarized as follows:

Modal verb + complementizer + subordinative clause

The modal verbs which serve to construct examples of deontic modality are:

a) Obligation : **a yenda** 'must'

it demands

b) Permission : **a lusa** 'can'

it can

The following two sets of conjugations show how obligation and permission are expressed.

Example (1) Must (obligation)

A yenda djeke me su mbeti 'I must write a letter'.

it	demands	that	I	write	letter	

A	yenda	djeke	ma	su	mbeti	'you (sg) must write a letter'.
it	demands	that	you (sg)	write	letter	

A	yenda	djeke	tsa	su	mbeti	'he/she must write a letter'.
it	demands	that	he/she	writes	letter	

A	yenda	djeke	aza	su	mbeti	'we must write a letter'.
it	demands	that	we	write	letter	

A	yenda	djeke	nya	su	mbeti	'you (pl) must must write a letter'.
it	demands	that	you (pl)	write	letter	

A	yenda	djeke	andja	su	mbeti	'They must write a letter'
it	demands	that	they	write	letter	

Example (2) can/may   (permission)

A   lʉsa   djeke   me   su   mbeti   'I am granting myself permission to write a

it   appropriate   that   I   write   letter   letter'.

A   lʉsa   djeke   ma   su   mbeti   'You are granting yourself permission to

it   appropriate   that   you(sg) write   letter   write a letter'.

A   lʉsa   djeke   tsa   su   mbeti   'She/he is granting herself permission

it   appropriate   that   he/she   write   letter   to write a letter'.

A   lʉsa   djeke   aza   su   mbeti   'We are granting ourselves

it   appropriate   that   we   write   letter   permission to write a letter'.

A   lʉsa   djeke   nya   su   mbeti   'You (pl) are granting yourselves

it   appropriate   that   you(pl) write   letter   permission to write a letter'.

A   lʉsa   djeke   andja   su   mbeti   'They are granting themselves

it   appropriate   that   they   write   letter   permission to write a letter'.

The following examples are expressing obligation, permission and prohibition by using

modal verbs.

(3) A yenda djeke ma kɔlɔ ma ndana ẽ 'You must open the door'.

   it demands that you open mouth door emph.

(4) A lusa djeke ma kɔlɔ ma ndana ẽ 'You may open the door'.

   it appropriate that you open mouth door emph.

(5) A a yémànda djeke ma kɔlɔ ma ndana ne 'You must not open

   it neg demands that you open mouth door not the door'.

4.6 **Epistemic Modality**

According to J. Lyons; "the term 'epistemic', like epistemology is derived from the

Greek word meaning 'knowledge' " (J. Lyons 1977: 793). Likewise, F.R. Palmer

etymologically defines epistemic modality etymologically as follows:

This use of the term may be wider than usual, but it seems completely justified
etymologically since it is derived from the Greek word meaning 'understanding' or
'knowledge' (rather than 'belief'), and so is to be interpreted as showing the status of
the speaker's understanding or knowledge; this clearly includes both his own
judgments and the kind of warrant he has for what he says: F.R. Palmer (1986: 51).

Knowing that there is an overlap between the English use of deontic and epistemic modalities such that they use both the modal verbs 'may' and 'must', in the following pages, we will deal only with the lexical term **tagindœ** 'want/wish' and some modal adverbs like **dœ ngbo pœ** 'certainly', **djandje** 'perhaps/possible' to express necessity and possibility.

Example (1)

djandje	tsa	náma	'ba	tœ	Nairobi
perhaps	he/she	went	to	direc.	Nairobi

'perhaps he/she went to Nairobi'.

(2) **djandje**	tsa	**lusœ**	tasœ	da	ko'ba
perhaps	he/she	fits	to sit	with	sickness

'perhaps he/she may be sick'

(3) **djandje**	tsa	**lusœ**	tasœ	kœtsœ
perhaps	he/she	fits	to sit	there

'perhaps he/she may be there'

Since there is no strict separation between possibility and necessity in Mbandja, these three examples can express possibility and maybe necessity.

However, the necessity may be expressed more clearly in the following examples:

(4) ambatsa,   **a**   **yenda**   **djeke**   yavœlœ   ni   'da

     tomorrow   it   demands   that   rain   rains   emph.

'It must rain tomorrow'.

(5) **Dœ ngbo pœ,**   dalama   **a**   **yenda**   **djeke**   **tsa**   dœlœ   ẽ

     certainly,   today   it   demands   that   he   departs   emph.

'certainly, he must depart today'.

These two last examples are expressing the necessity in such a way that it must necessarily rain tomorrow; whereas the necessity of his departure is reinforced by the modal adverb **dœ ngbo pœ** 'certainly'.

5. CONCLUSION

The paper represents an initial investigation into tense, aspect and modality systems

(TAM systems) in the Mbandja Verb from a descriptive perspective. Its main purpose has been to give a detailed discussion of the Mbandja verb, and to make the Mbandja language data available to others. However, in all honesty, we cannot claim that our treatment is exhaustive. It is a starting point which opens the field for further studies. Such studies may confirm, clarify or contradict our findings.

Through this investigation, we can see how languages tend not to conform exclusively to one morphological type, but rather hold their place in a typological continuum. Although an **Isolating** language, Mbandja has, nevertheless an interesting morphology which is mostly found in the verb, as summarized below.

1. The suffix **-ma** is suffixed to any verb root to form the Past and the Future tenses.

2. The particle **-le** can be suffixed to any verb root to express the Remote Past.

3. The suffix **-ma** and the particle **-le** interact in the formation of the auxiliary. As such, they become further inflected instead of being a single suffix, as in the following examples:

a. Tsa   gí-**ma**-ndœ   tandju   ngu

he   want-imm. past   drink   water

'He   wanted to drink water'.

b. Tsa   gí-**le**-ndœ   tandju   ngu

he   want-rem. past   drink   water

'He had wanted to drink water'.

. The grammatical tones (High and low) also play a part in expressing:

a - Past tense

b - Conditional mood

c - Negative conditional mood.

The Mbandja language uses modal verbs and modal adverbs to express its modality.

Despite all the limitations, we hope that the present paper has, at least, stepped in the right direction for investigating this interesting topic of TAM systems.

6. APPENDICES

6.1 List of abbreviations

Sg   =   Singular

Pl   =   Plural

Conj =   Conjunction

Dem   =   Demonstrative

Rel   =   Relative

Pron =   Pronoun

Part =   Particle

Neg   =   Negative

Deic =   Deictic

Emph =   Emphatic

Ideo =   Ideophone

Direc =   Directional

Imp   =   Imperative

Fut   =   Future

Voc   =   Vocative

Pers   =   Person

Imm   =   Immediate Past

TAM   =   Tense, Aspect and Modality

IPA   =   International Phonetic Alphabet

Rem   =   Remote past

Prog   =   Progressive

6.2 Folktale

Õ   atɔlɔ   nœ   kolowa   da   tʉ

word   mythic pers.   of   mosquito   and   ear

1. Kolowa   da   tʉ   le   dœ   aaye lo nga. Da   nga   lɔ   bale,

    mosquito   and   ear   had been   rel   friends   conj certain day   one,

    tʉ   mœ́nda   fɔ   kolowa   dje:

    ear   told   to   mosquito   that:

2. "Nga   me,   aza   na tai   ngu".   Nyaa kolowa   gí   õ   fɔ tsa   dje:

    friend   of me,   we   go to bail water   And   mosquito returned word to   him   that:

3. "Anɔ   me   da   kpo   ko'ba,   sadœ aza   dœlœ,   nyaa tsa tsu dœ ngba me,

    mother   of me   has   strong   sickness, if   we   depart,   and   she   dies after   me,

    me   nwúmàsa   ne."

    I   will know   not."

4. Nyaa tʉ   gí   õ   fɔ   tsa   dje;

    And   ear   returned   word to   him   that:

5. "Kœlœ me   dœ tʉ,   sadœ anɔ   za   tsu ẽ,   andja `bima kpolo

name   of me is   ear,   if   mother of you dies emph. they   will beat drum.

6. nyaa me djima   kœ   kpolona, ngbo a   mœmanda fɔ   ma."

and   I   will hear shouting   the drum, thus I   will tell   to   you.

7. Andja   beta   'baza, nyaa a   tímbi   tai   nguna.

They   arrived there, and   they began to bail the water

8. Andja i   nguna   ka ka ka, nyaa a ndjɔlɔ ẽ,   ngbo   andja

They   bailed   the water Ideop,   and it dried up emph. therefore they

tímbi   tanwo   asongba   nguna.

began   to kill   animals   water.

9. Da   lɔkɔna ka,   andja nwóle asongba ngu   tale.

conj.   day   that, they   killed animals   water a lot

10. Ndœ   na   dœ́ fẽ,   nyaa tʉ djǐ   kœ   kpolona,

Trace   it   lasted   a little,   and   ear   heard   shouting   drum,

1. ngbo   a   gbó kpo   djeke anɔ   kolowa   tsú   puu

Thus   he   discovered   that   mother   mosquito   died   already.

2. Kadœ   tsa   a   mœ́nda   fɔ   kolowa   ne.

But   he   neg.   told   to   mosquito   not

3. Mba dɔ ne   tsa   gbé   djeke   sadœ   ana   mœnda   fɔ   tsa,   ngbo   ana

For   he   thought   that   if   he   tells   to   him,   therefore   they

tsíma   kœngba   asongba   nguna   tœ   ẽ.

will abandon   many   animals   water   part.   emph.

4. Andja   nwó   asongba   nguna   ka ka ka,   nyaa   andja   ka   kui

They   killed   animals   water   ideop.   and   they   finished   all

5. nyaa   tʉ   mœ́nda   fɔ   kolowa   dje: "Nga   me,   me djíma   kœ   kpolo."

and   ear   told   to   mosquito   that: "friend   of me,   I   heard   shouting   drum."

16. Po kœtsœ,   andja tímbi   takpa   guta   gu   lakpa

   immediately, they   began   to run towards to   village

17. Andja kpá   ka ka ka, nyaa da sa dœ andja béta   dœ ta   síma   kɔ

   they   ran   ideop.   and   when   they   arrived rel they buried body

   anɔ   kolowa   puu

   mother   mosquito already.

18. Po kœtsœ, nyaa kolowa gbó tsœlœkoko, ngbo   a   ká   taki   fɔ tu dje:

   immediately, and   mosquito found anger,   therefore he was scolding to ear that:

19. "Ma   yéma   djeke sadœ anɔ   me   tsu, nyaa ma   dji   kœ   kpolona

   you   said   that   if   mother of me dies, and   you hear shouting drum

20. ngbo ma   mœemanda fɔ me, kadœ bœlœ nyema ma   a   mœémànda fɔ   me

   thus you   will tell   to me, but   for   what   you neg. told   to   me

   kœrr ne   de?"

   soon not part.quest".

21. Timbina da lɔkɔna ka ve dalakɔ, sœna kui dœ tʉ sœ ta ka

    beginning conj day that till today, place all rel ear sits at dem,

22. Kolowa sœ kœtsœ tœpœnœ tayu tsa dapœnœ kuzu anɔ ya

    mosquito sits there in order to ask him concerning death mother of him.

23. Tsa yu tʉ dje: "anɔ me ẽẽẽẽ anɔ me ẽẽẽẽ! anɔ me ẽẽẽe!"

    he asks ear that: mother of me eee! mother of me eee! mother of me eee!

24. Djeka, sadœ kolowa kœ lœ tʉ za, djáa ma gɔlɔ tsa ne

    so, if mosquito weeps in ears of you, imp you chase him not

25. Mba dɔ ne tsa gindœ tanwusœ da kuzu anɔ ya

    for he wants to know reason death mother of him.

Story of Mosquito and Ear

Mosquito and Ear had been friends. One day, Ear told Mosquito: "My friend, let's go to fish." Mosquito answered: "My mother is seriously sick, if we depart and she dies, I will not know." Then Ear replied: "My name is Ear; if she dies, they will beat the drum, I will hear and tell you." Hearing that, Mosquito said: "It's all right, let's go."

They arrived there and began to bail, the water dried up and they got many fishes. After a few moments, Ear heard the drum and knew that Mosquito's mother was dead. But he did not tell Ear, because he thought, if he tells him, they will abandon the fishes and run back home.

When they finished catching the fishes, Ear told Mosquito that he heard the drum. Right there, they started running back home. Unfortunately, when they arrived, Mosquito's mother was already buried. Immediately Mosquito got angry and began to scold Ear. Since that day till today, wherever Ear is, Mosquito might be there to ask him about his mother's death.

So, when Mosquito comes to your ears, do not kill him, because he is weeping for his mother.

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ETHNOLOGUE

NORTHWESTERN ZAÏRE

LANGUAGE FAMILY

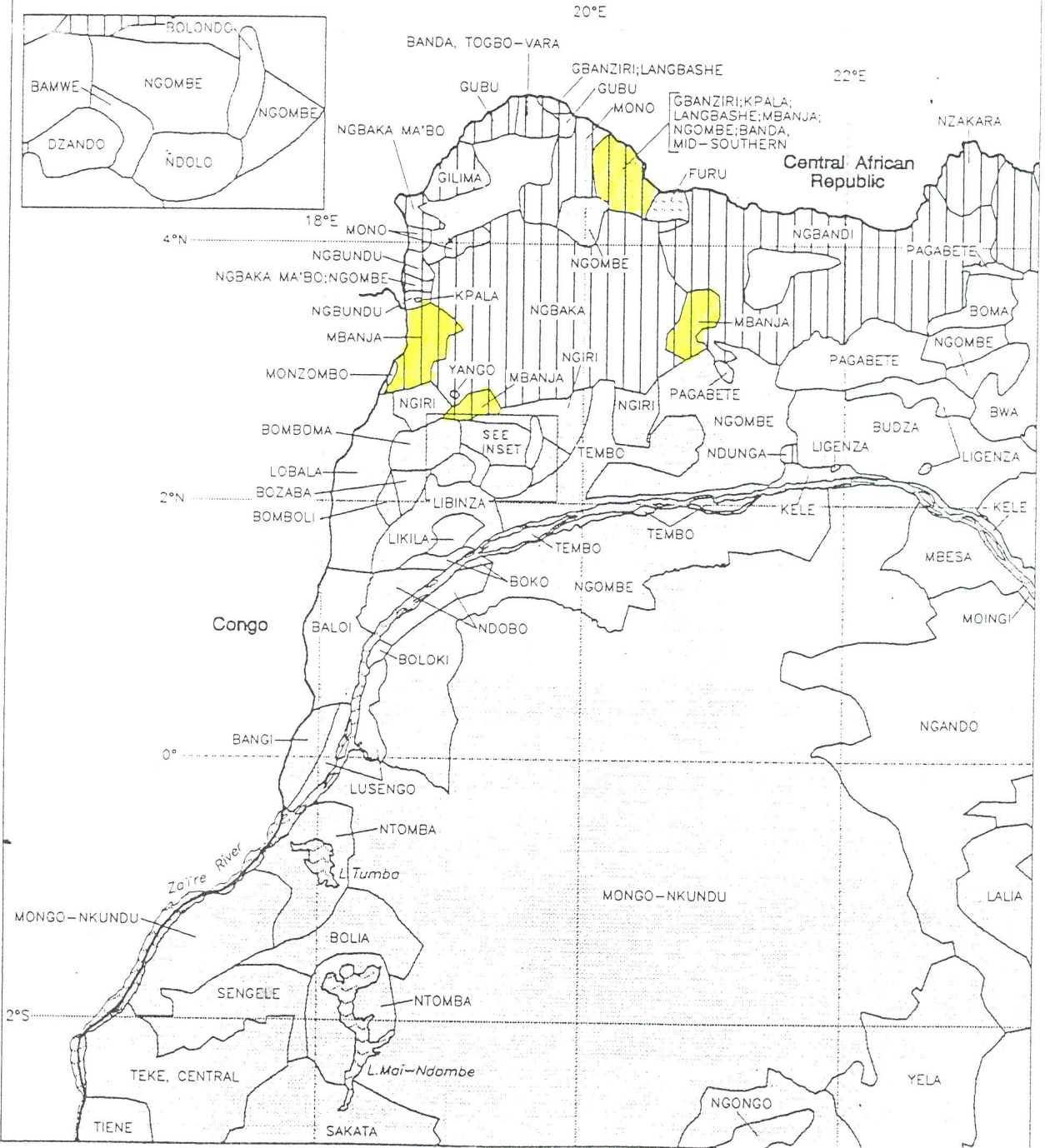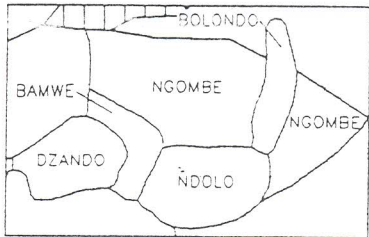▯ ADAMAWA—UBANGI

▯ BANTU

▯ NILO—SAHARAN

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE
FRENCH

REGIONAL LANGUAGES
KIKONGO (SOUTH—WEST)
LINGALA (WEST AND NORTH)
LUBA—KASAI (CENTRAL)
SWAHILI, ZAIRE (EAST AND SOUTH—EAST)

NOTES: (1) BOUNDARIES IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN
ZAIRE ARE UNCERTAIN.
(2) WHITE AREAS ARE VIRTUALLY UNINHABITED
(3) DASHED LINES SHOW OVERLAPPING
LANGUAGE AREAS
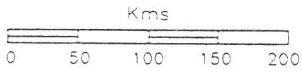
SOURCES: (1) NORTH AND EAST — SIL AND ADAPTED FROM TUCKER AND BRYAN, 1957
(2) CENTRE AND SOUTH — ADAPTED FROM VANSINA, J, INTRODUCTION A
L'ETHNOGRAPHIE DU CONGO, 1966

Kms
0   50   100   150   200

20°E

BOLONDO

BAMWE   NGOMBE
                        NGOMBE
DZANDO   NDOLO

BANDA, TOGBO—VARA

GBANZIRI;LANGBASHE
GUBU   GUBU
                MONO   GBANZIRI;KPALA;
                          LANGBASHE;MBANJA;
NGBAKA MA'BO   NGOMBE;BANDA,
                          MID—SOUTHERN   NZAKARA

GILIMA   FURU   Central African
                          Republic

18°E   MONO
4°N   NGBANDI   PAGABETE

NGBUNDU
NGBAKA MA'BO;NGOMBE
                KPALA   BOMA
NGBUNDU   NGBAKA   MBANJA
MBANJA   NGOMBE
                                    PAGABETE
MONZOMBO   YANGO   NGIRI
                    MBANJA   BWA
NGIRI   MBANJA   PAGABETE
BOMBOMA   NGIRI
                                NGOMBE   BUDZA
LOBALA   SEE   NDUNGA   LIGENZA
BOZABA   INSET   TEMBO   LIGENZA
2°N   KELE   KELE
BOMBOLI   LIBINZA
                                TEMBO   MBESA
        LIKILA
                    TEMBO
                BOKO   NGOMBE   MOINGI
Congo   BALOI
                    NDOBO
        BOLOKI
                                              NGANDO
BANGI
0°
        LUSENGO
            NTOMBA
        L.Tumbo
Zaïre River   MONGO—NKUNDU   LALIA
MONGO—NKUNDU
            BOLIA
        SENGELE   NTOMBA
2°S
                L.Mai—Ndombe
TEKE, CENTRAL   YELA
TIENE   SAKATA   NGONGO

22°E

1	BOBANGI
2	LEKU
3	ENGA
4	BOLOKI
5	MBONJI
6	LOI (NGIRI)
7	ZAMBA
8	NDOBO
9	IBOKO
10	MABALE
11	LINGALA
12	LOBO
13	GYANDO
14	NDOLO
15	NDONGO-BINZA
16	BONDANGA-LINGONDA
17	MOLIBA
18	BOMBOMA
19	EWAKU
20	LIBOBI-LIKATA-LIFONGA
21	LIFONGA
22	AKA
23	BUJA
24	NGOMBE
24a	LIKUNGU
24b	MOWEA
24c	DOKO-YUMBA
24d	POKO-YUMBA
25	NGOMBE-MOTEMBO
25a	POTO
25b	APAKIBETI
26	BABALE-LENGE
26a	LENGE
26b	BUDZA
27	BABALE-KUNDA
28	MOTEMBO
29	MANGBA
30	LOBOLA
31	LIKOKA

FAMILY	BRANCH	GROUP		
BANTU	NORTH-WEST	MONGO-NKUNDO	32	MONGO
			32a	LIONJE
			32b	NSONGO
			32c	BOKOTE
			32d	BONDE
			33	NGANDO
		SOKO-KELE	34	MBESA
	UBANGI	NGBANDI	35	NGBANDI
			36	MBANGI
			37	DENDI
			38	YAKOMA
			39	SANGO
		BANDA	40	JETO
			41	LANGBASI
			42	NGBUNDU
			43	MBANZA
			44	TOGBO
			45	MONO
			46	KPALA
			47	NDRI
			48	WADA
		NGBAKA	49	MONZOMBO
			50	NGBAKA-MA'BO
			51	GBANZILI (BURAKA)
		GBAYA	52	NGBAKA-MINAGENDE

NILO-SAHARAN PHYLUM

FAMILY	BRANCH		
CENTRAL SUDANIC	KREISH	53	FURU

BOUNDARY

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY — ・ — ・ —
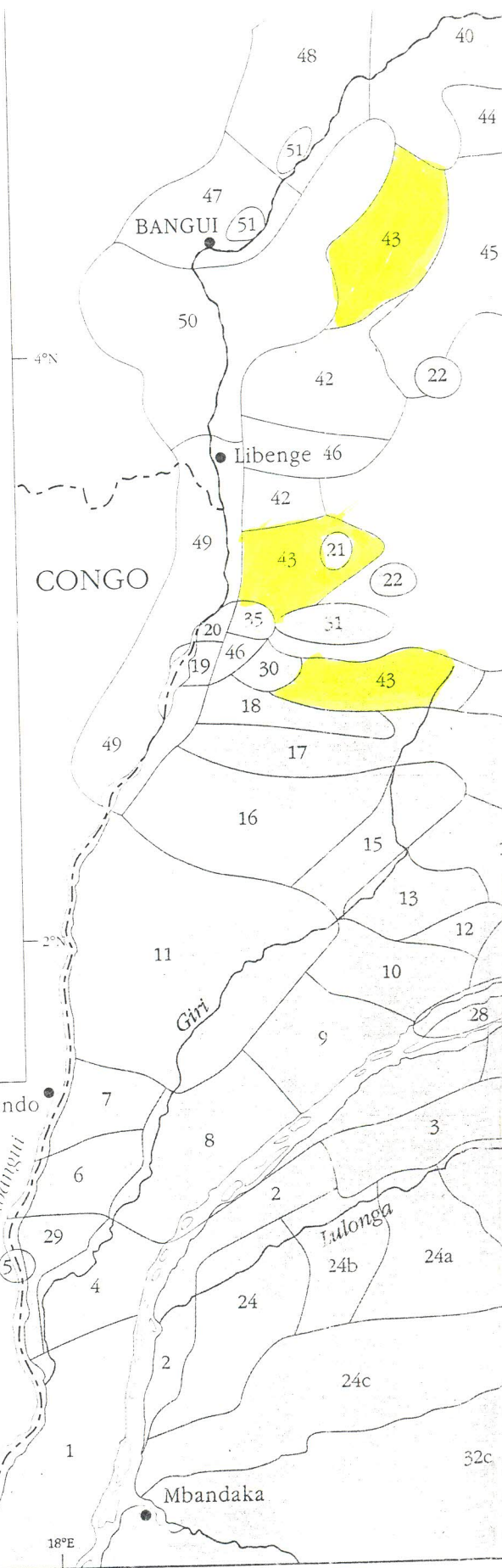
This area is shown in detail on Map 92

Scale
50   100   150 km

BANGUI

Libenge

CONGO

Impfondo

Mbandaka

Sangha

Likouala

Oubangui

Giri

Lulonga

16°E   18°E

4°N   2°N

51

Ubangi

41

40

36

Bang

22/24

53

39

41

38

37

Mobayi-
Mbongo

52

43

35

43

25b

35

ZAIRE

25

23

25a

Zaire

25

26a

32d

34

26b

26

Lopari

24d

24

24a

32b

24b

32

32

Maringa

32b

20°E

22°E
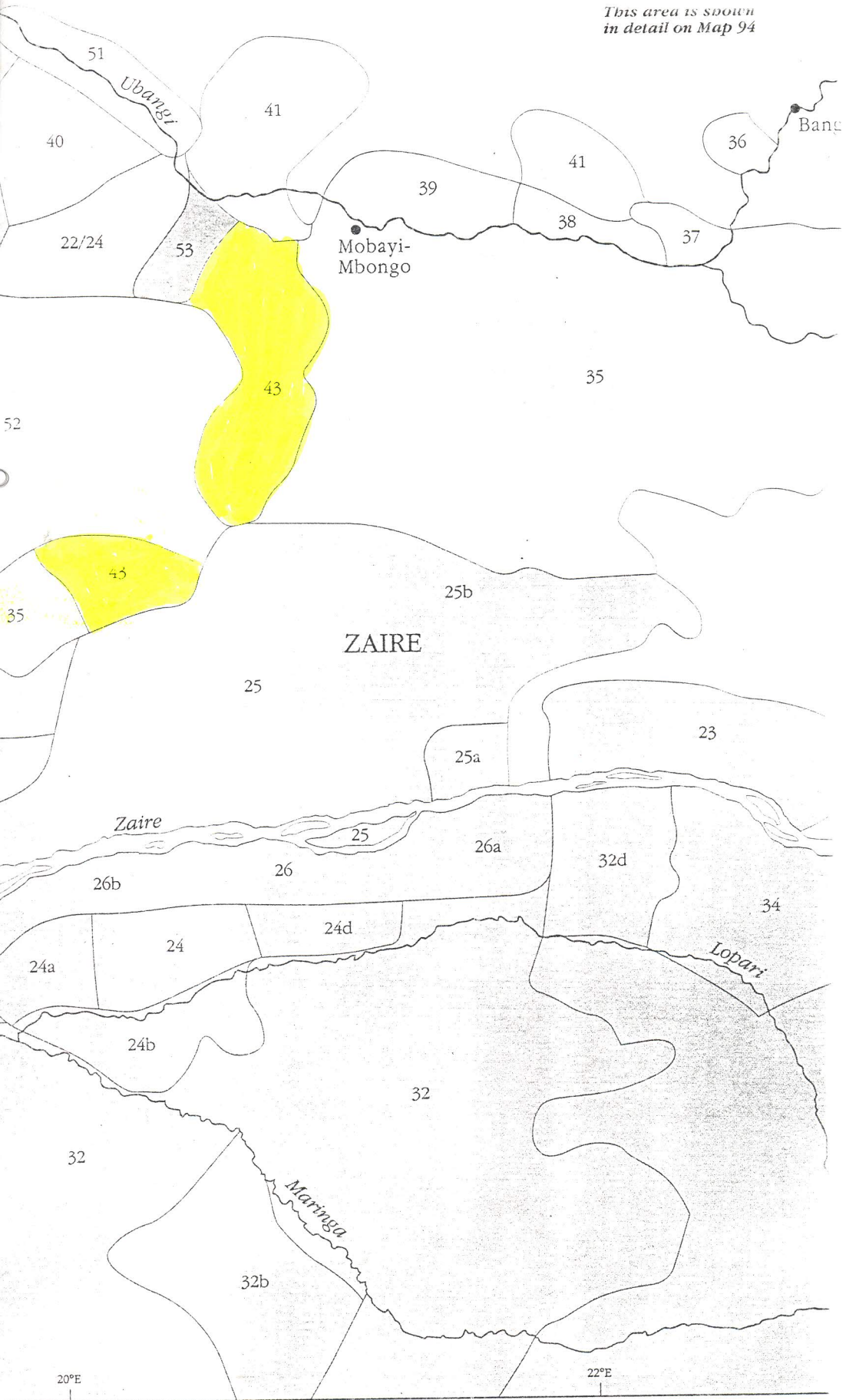
Niger-Kordofanian (represents Greenberg's classificat[ion]

Niger-Congo   Kordofanian

Nest
Antlantic   Mande   Gur   Kwa   Benue-congo   Adamawa-Easter[n]
                              (including
                              Kru, Ijo)

Niger-Congo*

Mande   Atlantic-Congo   Kordofanian

        Atlantic   Volta-Congo   Ijoid (?)

Kru   (New)   (New)   Gur   Adama-Ubangi
         Kwa   Benue-Congo

Adamawa-Ubangi

Ngbandi   Banda   Ngbaka   Gbaya

BANDA

Jeto   Langbasi   Ngbundu   Mbandja   Togbo   Mono   Kpala   Ndri   Wao[?]
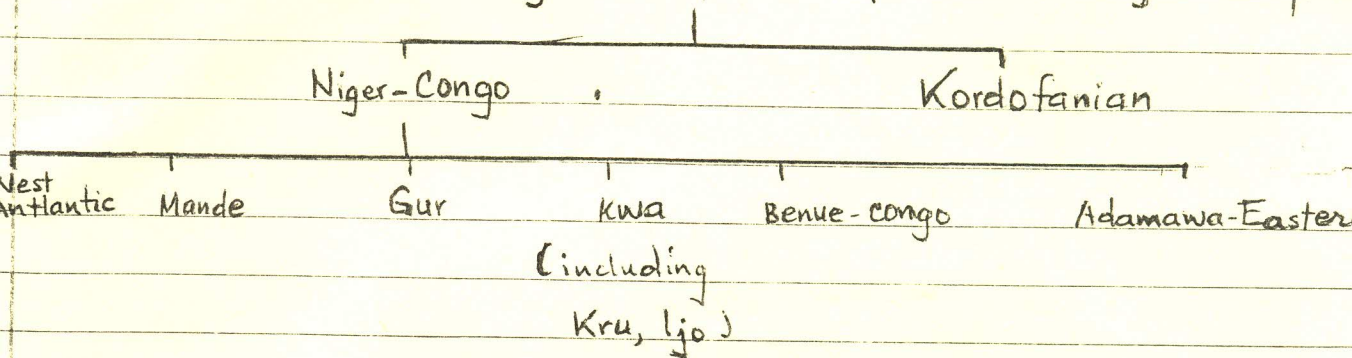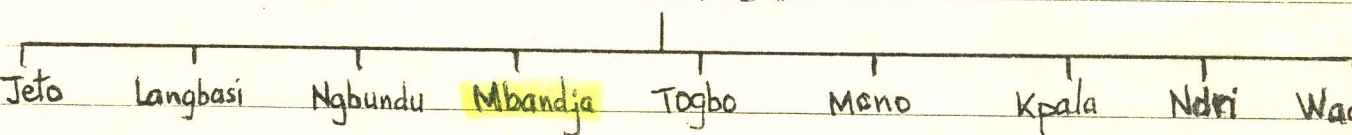

Adapted from: 1. John Bender-Samuel (1986:587)

                2. Benji Wald (Atlas 1994)

* (represents the thinking of a substantial number of scholars, though
consensus on some of the proposals reflected in this classification
has not yet been reached) Bender-Samuel (1986:589).