Bibliography


THE CHAD LANGUAGES
IN THE
HAMITOSEMITIC-NIGRITIC
BORDER AREA

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Questioned and Focussed Subjects and Objects in Bade/Ngizim*

Russell G. Schuh

1. Introduction

Newman (1977) classifies the Bade/Ngizim language group of northeastern Nigeria as belonging to the B Subbranch of West Chadic. There are three distinct languages in this group - Bade, Ngizim, and Duwai - with Ngizim being spoken in an area ranging out to the east from Potiskum, Bade to the west and south of Gashua, and Duwai to the east of Gashua. Bade is the largest and dialectally most diverse, with three major dialects; Ngizim has no significant dialect differentiation; Duwai has some, but less than Bade. Though Bade and Duwai are geographically contiguous and Ngizim is separated from the rest of the group by Kanuri and Fulani, Bade and Ngizim are more closely related to each other than either is to Duwai. The classification of languages in this group, including the different Bade dialects is shown in the diagram below:

This paper presents a description of questioned direct objects and subjects and of focussed subjects in these languages/dialects followed by a historical account of how these systems of question and focus have changed from the reconstructable proto-language. In order to understand the present systems, it is necessary to describe questioned "associative" (possessive/genitive) noun phrases (2.2). To restrict the scope of the paper, only the question words 'who?' and 'what?' will be considered. The 'focus' construction to be described is the one normally realized by contrastive stress or clefting in English ('we wrote the story' or 'it was us who wrote the story'), by fronting and use of "relative" verb forms in Hausa (mu ne muka rubuta labarin), etc. Only focussed subjects are considered, quite simply because only subjects are available for syntactic focus. Whenever sentences with constituents other than subjects in focus are offered for translation, speakers of all languages in this group, including the different Bade dialects, are consistent in giving sentences with neutral word order, morphology, and intonation.1

Some other constructions of potential interest which will not be included here are questioned constituents other than subjects and direct objects, question words other than 'who?' and 'what?', questioned or focussed subjects of non-verbal sentences, and effects that various combinations of predicate constituents (indirect objects, instruments, etc.) might have on overall structure of questions and focus sentences. Sections 2 and 3 will present brief synchronic descriptions of the constructions of interest in the five languages/dialects given in the diagram above. For ease of exposition and cross-reference the same examples (with minor differences) are used for each language, with Arabic numbers for the examples corresponding from one section to the next and capital letters (D, N, G, S, W) referring to the respective languages. Section 4 is a reconstruction and history of the constructions in this group, and section 5 considers the questioned and focussed subject constructions in a wider Chadic framework.

2. Questions

2.1. Questioned objects of finite verbs

By "finite" is meant verbs in a tense/aspect/mood other than the Imperfective, which uses the verbal noun (see 2.2). Objects of all finite verbs are formally the same. Examples here are in the Perfective. Questioned direct objects for all these languages occupy the same position as normal noun phrase objects, viz. following the verb.

2.1.1. Duwai. 'What?' is mi, 'who?' is dduun or ndiyenye (examples list the version found in my notes). The initial nasal of 'who?' is desyllabified after a vowel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1D) ko kuru mi?</td>
<td>'what did you catch?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2D) Saku bana mi?</td>
<td>'what did Saku cook?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3D) ko kari ndiyenye?</td>
<td>'who did you accompany?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4D) Dugwe maka ndiyenye?</td>
<td>'who did Dugwe look for?'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2. Ngizim. 'What?' is tam, 'who?' is ta.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1N) ka jue tam?</td>
<td>'what did you catch?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2N) Safiya bana tam?</td>
<td>'what did Safiya cook?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3N) ka gari tay?</td>
<td>'who did you accompany?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4N) Tijani maka tay?</td>
<td>'who did Tijani look for?'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.3. Gashua Bade. 'What?' is tamu, 'who?' is tay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1G) ko gari tamu?</td>
<td>'what did you catch?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2G) Saku bana tamu?</td>
<td>'what did Saku cook?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3G) ko kari tay?</td>
<td>'who did you accompany?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4G) Dugwe maka tay?</td>
<td>'who did Dugwe look for?'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.4. Southern Bade. "What?" is täm, "who?" is tā.

(1S) ké gāfl tām?  "what did you catch?"
(2S) Sākkā bānh tām?  "who did you accompany?"
(3S) kē kūrē tā?  "who did Adabziki look for?"
(4S) Dūkwēe màakā tā?  "what did Adabziki look for?"

2.1.5. Western Bade. "What?" is täm, "who?" is tē.

(1W) gāfl tām†  "what did you catch?"
(2W) Sākkā bānh tām?  "who did you accompany?"
(3W) kē kūrē tē?  "who did Dukwe look for?"
(4W) Dūkwēe màakā tē?  "who did Dukwe look for?"

2.2. Questioned associative noun phrases and objects of Imperfective verbs

These constructions may be taken together since the verb form used in the imperfective is the verbal noun. Verb + direct object is formally the same as an N1 + N2 associative (possessive/genitive) noun phrase. A complete description of how such constructions are formed is found in Schuh (1977). Briefly, nouns in such constructions are linked by a morpheme reconstructible as *kē. The reconstructed morpheme is linked to the initial syllabic nasal as an underlying nasalized as Ø. The initial syllabic nasal is assigned before the linker, and for purposes of this rule the initial syllabic nasal is ŋa. The question words themselves are identical to those in 2.1.1.

2.2.1. Duwai. In (6D) tēn kē / [bêngē] by regressive and progressive assimilation to ŋa, followed by degemination and compensatory lengthening of the vowel, in io [mp] by weakening and loss of k/ through an intermediate (5D) [wānā kē] through vowel assimilation in (7D–8D), stage γ (still heard in some constructions), followed by vowel assimilation in (7D–8D), stage γ (still heard in some constructions), followed by vowel assimilation in (7D–8D), stage γ (still heard in some constructions).

(5D) akshē màřā wāñā āelsing?  "what kind of work did they do?"
(6D) Sākkā kē bānhā mē?  "what did Saku cook?"
(7D) kē tfal ekkwā ndley?  "what did Ti lakusw ask?"
(8D) kē kūrē ñaasānyé?  "what will you accompany (Imperf.)?"

2.2.2. Ngizim. There are four allomorphs of the linker: gā when preceded and followed by consonants and optionally after a vowel when N₂ begins in a sonorant sound; g after a vowel before a voiced sound; k after a vowel before a voiceless or glottalized consonant; Ø optional in all environments. The examples in (5N–6N) and (7N–8N) show the first allomorph, those in (7N–8N) the second. The question words can be segmented off as mó and ñé, but in modern Ngizim the associative question words are probably best though of as units gámo and gáye: mó and ñé are not found outside associative constructions, they never have the linker option (which is in fact preferred with regular nouns), and mó never occurs with the g allomorph (a frequent variant with nasal-initial nouns).

(5N) akshē jāmā wāñā gámo  "what kind of work (work of what) did they do?"
(6N) Sākkē jāmā bānhā gámo  "what will Sakké cook?"
(7N) kwā tē tē wāndokwe gáye?  "whose house did you (pl.) enter?"
(8N) kā yē wāndokwe gáye?  "who will you accompany?"

2.2.3. Gashua Bade. The linker has five allomorphs: Ø before velars, kē between consonants, g after vowels and before voiced obstruents, ñ after vowels and before nasals, k elsewhere. The question word can be segmented as m in (5G–6G) and a in (7G–8G). The constructions thus appear to be synchronically analyzable as N₁ + linker + Q-word. However, as in Ngizim, the correct analysis is probably one of unit associative question words kam and kē. The main evidence is from kēm, where we would expect *-ñ mē (cf. tāmā in 2.1.3). The tones of kam and kē are also difficult to explain if analyzed as constructions containing the linker.

(5G) akshē jāmā wāñā-kēm?  "what kind of work (work of what) did they do?"
(6G) Sākkē jāmā bānhā-kēm?  "what will Sakkē cook?"
(7G) wūn kēm ni ngwā-kēm?  "whose house (pl.) did you enter?"
(8G) yē kūrē kēm?  "who will you accompany?"

2.2.4. Southern Bade. On inspection of the SB sentences below, it looks as if the same remarks would apply as in GB except for "who?", where *ñ > e by a regular sound change. However, there is even stronger reason to believe that kēm and kē should be treated as units than in GB. In SB, the allomorphs of the linker are Ø before velars, kē before voiced obstruents, k before voiceless and glottalized obstruents, and ñ before nasals and vowels (epenthetic a is inserted before the linker if N₂ begins in a sonorant). If the linker in (5S–8S) were analyzed as a separate morpheme we would expect *-ñ mē and *-ñē, forms which do not exist. The modern kēm and kē must thus have been analyzed as units before the changes that give the modern SB linker allomorphs.

(5S) akshē jāmā wāñā-kēm?  "what kind of work (work of what) did they do?"
(6S) Sākkē jāmā bānhā-kēm?  "what will Sakkē cook?"
(7S) wūn jīlā gā-kē?  "where did you go?"
(8S) yē kūrē-kē?  "who will you accompany?"
2.2.5. Western Bade. The allomorphs of the linker in WB are the same as those of SB, and thus the same remarks apply here as in 2.2.4 with respect to the analysis of kam and ke.

(5W) akw j'lamâ wâñâ-ââ-m?  'what kind of work (work of what) did they do?'
(6W) Sâkâ â bânâ-kâ-m?  'what will Saku cook?'
(7W) âwâ'n bôi ñngââ-kâ-d?  'whose house did you enter?'
(8W) yâ kàrâ-kâ-d?  'who will you accompany?'

2.2.6. Gashua Bade. The forms of the question words (m and a) are identical to those in 2.2.3, the associative constructions, but instead of the linker k seen there, questioned subjects are preceded by a morpheme n(.), similar to that of Duwai and Ngizim.

2.3. Questioned subject

Questioned subjects in these languages all follow the verb, though the normal position for subjects is before the verb. There is some language/dialect variation as to in the predicate; in fact, some speakers prefer to remove such constituents from the predicate altogether by topicalizing them (note that these sentence initial topicalized constituents are not focussed). Examples are as found in my notes.

2.3.1. Duwai. The questioned subject in Duwai is preceded by a morpheme n(.), similar to that of Duwai and Ngizim. As in the other dialects the postposed question word is preceded by a nasal morpheme n(.), similar to that of Duwai and Ngizim.

(9D) ìgwâ n-â-m?  'what fell?'
(10D) t'àmpâtâ zàññàâ lâ-m?  'what tore your gown?'
(11D) dàaâwâ n-â-d?  'who came?'
(12D) dìmâ wàñâ-tıkâ-lâ-dâ n-â-d?  'who has finished his work?'

2.3.2. Ngizim. The allomorphs of the linker in WB are the same as those of SB. Examples with questioned subjects were collected in SB. The same remarks apply to SB as to GB (cf. the form of question words in 2.2.4).

(9G) ìgwâ n-â-m?  'what fell?'
(10G) t'àmpâtâ zàññàâ lâ-m?  'what tore your gown?'
(11G) dàaâwâ n-â-d?  'who came?'

2.3.3. Gashua Bade. The forms of the question words (m and a) are identical to those in 2.2.3, the associative constructions, but instead of the linker k seen there, questioned subjects are preceded by a morpheme n(.), similar to that of Duwai and Ngizim.

(9W) ìgwâ-å tâm?  'what fell?'
(10W) t'àmpâtâ-å kàm zânñàâ lâ-m?  'what tore your gown?'

2.3.4. Southern Bade. The same remarks apply to SB as to GB (cf. the form of question words in 2.2.4).

(12N) nàmâ mëndâwâ kâ-lâ?  'who built this house?'
(13N) ìâ t'àmpâtâ zàññàâ lâ-m?  'what will tear your gown?'
(14N) ìâ bânâ-å nân lâ?  'who will cook the food?'

2.3.5. Western Bade. The question words here are kâm 'what?' and kë 'who?'. These are identical to the questioned associative words seen in 2.2.3, where it was suggested (parallel to a similar situation in SB-2.2.4) that these words should be considered unit morphemes rather than bi-morphemic linker + Q-word constructions. The data below confirm the correctness of this hypothesis since here there is no associative construction involved to explain the presence of the k. Rather kâm and kë have been introduced into this construction as units. The historical explanation for this is given in 4.3.

As in the other dialects, the postposed questioned subject in WB is preceded by a nasal morpheme, represented here as n. While it may appear that this is the same n(ø) seen in 2.3.1-4 with simple assimilation to the velar, the data on focussed subjects in WB (3.5) suggests that a complete reanalysis of constructions with postposed subjects has taken place and that the n here has a historically different origin from n(ø).

(9N) ìgwâ-zàññàâ lâ-m?  'what fell?'
(10N) t'àmpâtâ zàññàâ lâ-m?  'what tore your gown?'
(11N) dìe-n lâ?  'who came?'

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3. Focussed Subjects

3.1. Duwai

Subjects are focussed in exactly the same way they are questioned (2.3.1), viz., they are postposed and preceded by the morpheme n. The sentences in (15D–16D) are answers to the questions in (10D–11D); the sentences in (17D–18D) are answers to the questions in (13D–14D). Here and in the following sections the focussed word to the questions in (13D–14D) is shown in the translations by italics.

(15D) zanitii, tiakzim ná 'lidii n 'my gown, wood tore (it)' 
(16D) dēe nā Sāku/Muusa 'Saku/Musa came'
(17D) tiirammi zaniltii ná 'lidam 'wood will tear my gown'
(18D) sāku, bāq-wā nā Sāku 'tuwo Saku will cook it'

When pronoun subjects are focussed, the pronouns in postposed position are the independent pronouns. In the first and second persons, the independent pronouns are go (1 p. ex.), gō (1 p. in.), kū (2 p.); an extra nasal element appears with those persons, but it is not possible to tell whether it is part of the pronoun or the focussed subject marker. Preverbal subject pronouns in first and second persons are obligatory whenever a focussed subject pronoun is present. The sentences in (19D) mean 'I tied', 'you tied', etc.

(19D) 1 s. yi dārrā n-iyu 1 p. ex. gō dārrā n-ē-gō 
2 s.m. kā dārrā nā kē 1 p. in. gō dαrrα k-ē-gō
2 s.f. kā dārrā nā kām 2 p. kē dārrā n-ē-kū
3 s.m. dārrā n-icīl 3 p. dārrā n-ē-kū

3.2. Ngizim

Subjects are focussed in exactly the same way they are questioned (2.3.2), viz., they are postposed with the morpheme n inserted. Sentences (15N–16N) answer questions (10N–11N) and (17N–18N) answer (13N–14N). When pronoun subjects are focussed, the independent pronouns are postposed, but preverbal subject pronouns are still required for first and second persons. The sentences in (19N) mean 'I tied', 'you tied', etc.

(15N) tāmmpiyi-n dām 'wood tore (it)'
(16N) dēe nā Musa 'Musa came'
(17N) kē tāmmpiyi-n dām 'wood will tear (it)'
(18N) ūsē bānē-Sāku/Sfāyā 'I will cook (it)'
(19N) 1 s. nā tāks-word jū 2 s.m. kē tāks-word kē 3 s.m. tāks-word δī

3.3. Gashba Bade

As in Duwai and Ngizim, subjects are focussed in exactly the same way they are questioned (2.3.3). The sentence forms for focussed pronoun subjects for Ngizim (3.2) also apply to (12G–13G) respectively. The sentences in (19G) mean 'I tied', 'you tied', etc.

(15G) tāmmpiyi-zamī-nsi nā dām 'wood tore my gown'
(16G) dāwā-Muusa 'Saku/Musa came'
(17G) kē tāmmpiyi-nsi nā dām 'wood will tear (it)'
(18G) ās bānē-Sāku 'Saku will cook (it)'
(19G) 1 s. nēk tāks-word nē 2 s.m. kē tāks-word kē 3 s.m. tāks-word 3.4. Southern Bade

Like questioned subjects, focussed subjects are postposed. However, the morpheme n(a) used with questioned subjects (2.3.4) is not used with focussed subjects. Instead what appears to be one of the allomorphs of the associative linker described in 2.2.4 is used, with one difference: when the focussed subject begins in a velar, it is preceded by ŋ rather than ŋ as the discussion in 2.2.4 would lead us to expect – see the third example in (16S). This will be elaborated on in 3.5 in the discussion on WB, where the same situation obtains. The sentences in (19S) and (16S) answer the questions in (10S) and (11S) respectively.

(15S) tāmmpiyi-g dām 'wood tore (it)'
(16S) dāwā-Muusa 'Saku/Adamu/Musa/Kaku came'

The focussed subject marker before pronoun subjects (which all begin in either a vowel or a velar) is also always ŋ. The following sentences mean 'I tied', 'you tied', etc.
3.5. Western Bade

As in the other languages, focussed subjects in WB are postposed. WB is like SB in having a focussed subject marker with allomorphs much like the associative linker (2.2.5) rather than an alveolar nasal n(ə) like that found in the other languages. Sentences (15W-16W) and (17W-18W) answer the questions in (10W-11W) and (13W-14W) respectively. The sentences in (19W) mean 'I tied', as illustrated in 2.2.4-5 and the focussed subject marker is the use of (/J before velars with the former but linker in N e.g. daco kwamon 'hair of a bull' (cf. dac.·k tomakun 'hair of a sheep', · ktlan 'hair of a cow'), an noun (see Schuh (1977) for details). Compare the allomorphs of the linker in (20W) with the N₁ proper noun, we cannot say that the focussed subject marker is the linker. First, the /J allomorph of the linker is used only before proper nouns, where the /J allomorph of the focussed subject marker is used before all nouns, e.g. akțe-w tali da dham j see da gkip taka-g gajju 'all the children died off until only the youngest remained'. Also, if this were the associative linker we would expect the special paradigm of associative pronouns to be used in focussed subject constructions rather than the independent pronouns seen in (19W). Compare dac-ə-na-a 'my hair', dac-ə-ni 'your (m.s.) hair', dac-ə-ri 'his hair', etc. with the forms in (19W).

In short, SB and WB must have a rule such as the following which yields identical allomorphs for morphemes in two distinct syntactic constructions:

- focussed subject marker | /J / vowels, nasals, and velars  
- associative linker when | k / voiceless and glottalized  
N₁ = proper noun | g / other voiced sounds

4. Reconstruction and History

The following forms and syntactic constructions can be reconstructed for proto-Bade/Ngizim:

- proto-Bade/Ngizim question words: *mə 'what? *štəye 'who?*
- questioned direct object: [Subject Verb mə/štəye?]
- questioned associative NP: [NP kə mə/štəye?]  
- questioned subject: [Verb (Object) nə mə/štəye?]
- focussed subject: [Verb (Object) nə Subject]

(If focussed subject was first or second person pronoun, preverbal subject pronoun was required as well as postposed pronoun.)

4.1. Direct object of finite verbs

All the languages preserve the proto-word order in this construction, the only differences from the reconstruction being in the forms of the question words themselves. Duwai mə 'what?' must be identical to the original form. The Duwai word for 'person' is ədi, suggesting that ədiya 'who?' may be a compound "person + who?"; the exact derivation of the alternative ədəuyə is not clear (but cf. fn. 4).

In all Bade dialects and Ngizim, the words for 'what?' and 'who?' as direct objects share an innovative prefix (ə)- added to reconstructed *mə and *štəye (+ minor phonetic changes). This prefix is also seen in Bade and Ngizim tawa which (one)' (cf. Duwai wənsi and Bade and Ngizim nəwən 'how much?'). The original function of this prefix remains a mystery, but it seems to have originally been restricted to question words in "indirect" functions, i.e. not following subordinating morphemes such as the associative linker. One such indirect function is direct objects of finite verbs; all languages of this group use morphemes, including personal pronouns, in their independent forms in this position.
4.2. Questioned associative noun phrases

The original construction is retained in fairly transparent form in all the languages/dialects. For the Bade dialects it was hypothesized that modern k.m and kai/ke have been reanalyzed as unit morphemes similar to English 'whose?' (2.2.3-5). This reanalysis is clearly confirmed for Western Bade by evidence from questioned subjects (see below).

4.3. Questioned and focussed subjects

All languages preserve the reconstructed word order, with questioned and focussed subjects being postposed. The distribution of the reconstructed morpheme *n̂a in the three most distantly related languages of this branch shows the forms found in SB and WB (2.2.5, 3.4-5) to be innovative. The origin of *n̂a is probably in the demonstrative system, but at the proto-Bade/Ngizim period it must have already been specialized to its use in these postposed subject constructions.

For questioned subjects, Duwai preserves the original situation intact (2.3.1) except for the innovative form of the word for 'who?'. Gashua Bade (2.3.3) and Southern Bade (2.3.4) show the original construction. Ngizim has extended its independent question words tam and ta to this function (2.3.2). Western Bade (2.3.5) represents the most complex innovation, which can be understood only in the context of focussed subjects.

Duwai, Ngizim, and Gashua Bade (3.1-3) all retain the original form of the focussed subject construction. In Southern and Western Bade, instead of a reflex of reconstructed *n̂a, a marker is inserted which has allomorphs identical to those of the associative linker used before proper nouns (3.4-5). The SB and WB situations can be explained in terms of a two stage development:

Stage I (shared by SB and WB - cf. fn. 5) - In focussed subject constructions, *n̂a is replaced by a morpheme with allomorphs identical to those of the associative linker used before proper nouns (k, g, or ǎ depending on phonetic environment).

Though the exact path for this innovation cannot be determined, a strong possibility is the following: In proto-Bade (possibly proto-Bade/Ngizim) in N̂a+Na associative constructions where N̂a was a proper noun, the linker *k̂a was not used, but rather a morpheme -n was used when N̂a was a masculine noun and -uk when N̂a was a feminine noun. This situation is still preserved in Gashua Bade, e.g. (masculine 'yât l' 'hair, feathers') yât-k̂a 'Zâba's hair' (cf. 'yât-g dâa' 'feathers of an owl'), 'yât-kâhâ 'Kaâbâ's hair' (cf. 'yât Qêkâm 'hair of a bull'); (femin. 'dâ 'eye') dâ-kâhâ 'Câkâwa's eye' (cf. dâ-kâhâ 'cow's eye'). At some point SB/WB must have formed some sort of "connection" between *n̂a as a focussed subject marker and *n used as a linker after masculine nouns before proper nouns. At a yet later date, linker *n̂a was displaced by the more commonly used linker *k̂a, but with a remnant of the *n̂a seen in the nasal allomorph ǎ before velars, where *k̂a always had a ǎ allo-

Stage II (WB only) - Associative forms of question words (k.m, ke) replace the original question words (*m, *e).

Once the "connection" was formed between the focussed subject marker and the linker, the situation was ripe for elements in the postposed subject position to be "identified as" elements in an associative construction. While no dialect has carried this to its logical syntactic conclusion (no dialect uses associative pronouns as focussed subjects), WB has gone one step further than SB by extending associative forms of question words to these constructions. Here, we see clearly that in WB the original monomorphemic *kâ mǎj/kâ nyê/ 'of what?' and *kâ nyê/ 'of whom?' have been analyzed as monomorphemic units, since they occur in a construction following n̂a, which itself is a reflex of a "linking" morpheme.
5. Comparative Remarks

While the history of the constructions discussed here is fairly clear within the Bade/Ngizim group, it is not so clear in a wider Chadic context, in particular with respect to placement of questioned and focussed subjects. Concentrating only on West Chadic, one finds that for most languages the normal place for question words is the same position as the position of the neutral NP. Since these languages are all SVO, this means post-verbal for objects, preverbal for subjects, etc. If any displacement of questioned constituents does take place, it is movement to the beginning of the sentence, the best known example of this being Hausa. Likewise, fronting is the most common device for focussing noun phrases in all functions.

As far as I can determine, postposing of questioned and focussed subjects is restricted to the following West Chadic languages: languages of the Bade/Ngizim group, the northern Boile-Tangale languages (Bolanci, Karekare, Ngamo), and Kanakur (a southern Boile-Tangale language). Rough geographic distribution is given in the map above. Names in all capitals are languages or language groups, others are place names. Potiskum is about 120 km south of Gashua and about the same distance north of Gombe.

A number of hypotheses may be advanced for the origin of this construction:

1. Retention with loss in languages 
not having it
   a. Reflex of proto-(West)-Chadic question/focus subject construction
   b. Reflex of proto-(West)-Chadic VSO word order, replaced by SVO order in "neutral" sentences

2. Innovation in languages 
now having it
   a. Contact with other languages using 
      this construction
   b. Result of universal tendency of 
      putting "new information late" in sentences

While a definitive answer will require more research, these hypotheses can be considered in terms of relative likelihood. Retention, at least from proto-West-Chadic, seems more likely than innovation. Were subject postposing restricted to the Bade/Ngizim and the northern Boile-Tangale region, the areal nature would make relatively late innovation very likely; but the presence of subject postposing in Kanakur, the southernmost Boile-Tangale language, linguistically and geographically distant from the northern languages, indicates that this is not simply an areal phenomenon. Independent innovation in Kanakur and the other languages, while possible, seems unlikely as well. None of the Chadic or non-Chadic languages which have contact with any of the Chadic languages at issue use subject postposing in this way as far as I know. It would also be unlikely for the universal tendency mentioned as 2b to have affected two isolated areas without touching surrounding languages.

As for subject postposing reflecting an original VSO word order, there is simply no way at our present state of knowledge to demonstrate this. VSO order is fairly common in Biu-Mandara, but it is not found at all in West Chadic, making it an open question how far back it can be reconstructed. As our only remaining possibility, then, we are left with the hypothesis that questioned/focussed subject postposing is a retention from proto-West Chadic with loss in those West Chadic languages or groups that no longer have it. Since the languages having this construction are from the two most distantly related branches of West Chadic and since it is found at the geographical extremities of the area in question, this hypothesis looks very strong. The construction has been lost in all the "central" Boile-Tangale languages; it shows signs of being lost in the northern languages of this group as well, but here contact with Bade/Ngizim may have been the reinforcing factor that has allowed it to be retained. Elsewhere, the idiosyncratic nature of the construction and contact with languages lacking it, in particular the all-pervasive influence of Hausa, have caused it to be lost, perhaps at a very early date. Postposing of subjects for focus may have been innovative within Chadic, but it must date to at least proto-West Chadic.

Footnotes

1. Research on Ngizim was conducted during 1969–70 in Potiskum, Nigeria under the auspices of National Science Foundation grant GS-2279 (Paul Newman, Principal Investigator). Research on Bade and Duwai and some further research on Ngizim was done during 1973–75 in Gashua, Nigeria while I was employed as a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for the Study of Niger-Congo Languages of Abdullahi Bayero College, Kano (now Bayero University). Attendance at the Symposium on the Chad Languages in the Hausa-Nigeritic Border Area was made possible by funds from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. In Ngizim this proved to be consistently true both in direct elicitation and in texts, where in several hundred pages, the only focussed constituents ever found were subjects. Some dialects, e.g. WB, are developing a construction where other constituents can be fronted followed by a focus marker, e.g. (WB) Agi maarrak na jahabai atakay "it's you I'll make the sacrifice with", where the "instrument" Agi 'you' is fronted, followed by maarrak. Such constructions were rarely volunteered in direct elicitation.

2. Examples parallel to (17–19) in other sections were not collected in SB.

3. Note that if rather than n were used in such construction, potential confusion between direct objects and focussed subjects could arise, e.g. takšar Garba would mean 'he tied Garba', not 'Garba tied (it)', which would be takšar Garba.

4. Comparative Chadic evidence would suggest a "pre-proto-Bade/Ngizim" reconstruction *abi for 'who?', a reconstruction supported by the vowel u in the Duwai alternant form Abbayak. This is one of several innovations showing Bade and Ngizim to form a linguistic subgroup separate from Duwai.

5. This shared innovation is a major criterion for West Chadic with loss in those West Chadic languages or groups that no longer have it. Some speakers of WB preserve at least one reflex of the pre-stage II situation in the semi-fixed expression bi gii siih 'what's the matter with you?' (lit: 'what has got you?').

6. This is one of the few areas where the "instrument" Agi was replaced by *ka, then its nasal ali-