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“May God preserve us from evil sicknesses”: Grammar, Arabic origin, and pragmatics of request prayers in Bambara (Mande)

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Abstract

Dùgawu, petitionary or request prayers, are ubiquitous in the lives of Bambara speakers. Leave-taking or good-night wishes, wishes of success, of quick recovery to a sick person, encouragement to accomplish a difficult task, the expressions of gratefulness, the call for divine protection or for a good fate for the dead are all uttered in the form of blessings. Even curses can be encoded as *dùgawu*. Imitating the pattern of request prayers in Arabic, *dùgawu* can be described as a genre of communicative exchanges including a request in a fixed syntactic structure, and a confirming response. This article provides a linguistic description of request prayers, focusing on two possible syntactic patterns of encoding that are perfectly equivalent to each other, as well as on their syntactic peculiarities in comparison to the syntax elsewhere in the language. Furthermore, we examine abbreviated request prayers. We suggest interpreting them as instances of a strong conventionalization that might also entail a secularization process. Finally, we discuss hypotheses of the origin of *dùgawu*, highlighting the role of traditional Islamic education as a probable source and illustrate request prayers used in different communicative situations.

Keywords

Bambara, Mande, Arabic, islam, blessing, prayer, curse, anthropological linguistics

Résumé

Les *dùgawu*, sortes de prières véhiculant un souhait ou une requête, sont omniprésentes dans le quotidien des locuteurs du bambara. Qu’il s’agisse de prendre son congé, de souhaiter une bonne nuit, d’exprimer des vœux de succès, de formuler l’espoir d’une prompte guérison pour un malade, d’encourager quelqu’un à accomplir une tâche éprouvante, de manifester sa gratitude, d’en appeler à la protection de Dieu ou de désirer le meilleur pour son allocutaire, tous ces souhaits sont rendus en bambara au moyen des bénédictions que sont les *dùgawu*. De fait, les malédictions elles-mêmes se coulent dans le moule du *dùgawu*. Reprenant le modèle arabe des prières de requête, les *dùgawu* peuvent être conçues comme un type d’échange communicatif comprenant une requête, laquelle s’insère dans un cadre syntaxique préalablement fixé, et une réponse qui en valide le contenu. Cet article vise à décrire les caractéristiques linguistiques des prières de requête du bambara, en mettant l’accent sur les deux types de cadres syntaxiques attestés, lesquels ont des valeurs rigoureusement équivalentes, ainsi que sur les particularités desdits cadres par rapport aux règles qui régissent la syntaxe du reste de la langue. La présente étude prend également en compte le cas des prières de requêtes abrégées, que l’on suggère ici d’interpréter comme un exemple de conventionnalisation poussée qui pourrait aussi être liée à un processus de sécularisation de ces prières. Finalement, l’article traite aussi de la question des origines du *dùgawu* – dont l’apparition est probablement due au rôle joué par l’éducation religieuse musulmane traditionnelle – et illustre l’emploi des prières de requête dans différents contextes communicationnels.

Mots-clés

bambara, mandé, arabe, islam, bénédiction, prière, malédiction, ethnolinguistique

1. INTRODUCTION

In his book on *Blessings, curses, hopes and fears* in Yiddish, Matisoff (2000) mentions that knowing these *psycho-ostensive expressions*, and knowing how to use them, responds to his "need for security – the comfortable feeling that one is saying exactly the right thing under a particular set of circumstances". The learning of *dùgawu* 'request prayers' in Bambara[1] by students who wish to get their bearings in a Bambara speaking environment derives from a similar motive. Knowing which request prayer must be used under which circumstances is part of the communicative competence in the language. While some *dùgawu* are obligatory components of formal social encounters such as condolence visits, weddings, naming ceremonies for newborn children, or New Year's greetings, others are uttered at somebody's departure for the daily shopping at the market; still others are commonplace at the end of a shared meal, or a form of extended thanks.

By pronouncing a *dùgawu*, the speaker invokes God's favor—or its withdrawal—upon a person or a group of people. Blessings, curses or maledictions, and parenthetical exclamations in Bambara share structural similarities. Occurring in recurrent social situations, *dùgawu* can be characterized as routine formulas (Coulmas 1979). The security Matisoff talks about in the citation above derives from the conventionalization process due to frequent use of an expression or a sentence in a particular context so that it eventually achieves a special illocutionary goal in this very context (Terkourafi 2015: 15).

Although *dùgawu* are predominantly used in direct oral communication, they can be heard and seen in other types of interactions as well. For instance, political speeches include *dùgawu*, and broadcasts often end with a blessing in this form. Another example is a stage play, which informs Bambara speakers about protective measures against Covid-19. It ends with a request prayer asking for protection for the country, as shown in (1).[2]

(1)	*Ála*	*ka*	*Mali*	*kísi,*	*Ála*	*ka*	*Mali*	*tànga*
	God	SBJV.AFF	Mali	preserve	God	SBJV.AFF	Mali	protect

'May God preserve Mali, may God protect Mali.'[3]

Written request prayers are found in different categories of texts, ranging from treatises on Islamic faith and health, written in the Ajami script (see, for instance, Tamari 1994), to journal articles written in the official orthography in the newspaper *Kibaru*. They are found in public spaces, among others, on store signs, advertisement bills, and on vehicles. They are omnipresent in face-to-face communication and on social media.

In this paper, we pursue several goals: we discuss the structure of *dùgawu* in Bambara, make hypotheses about their origin, and illustrate the genre with some examples and the contexts of their use. It is our aim to raise interest in the study of a genre which enjoys great popularity not only in Bambara but also in related Manding varieties and other languages of the West African cultural area, such as Fula (A. Diallo, p.c.). *Dùgawu* are continually spreading into languages influenced by Bambara and Jula, such as the Senufo languages of Mali and Burkina Faso (Carlson 1994; Dombrowsky-Hahn 1999; 2015; Traoré 2015; Coulibaly 2020). Due to its cultural pervasiveness, the genre of request prayers may be of concern not only to linguists but also to specialists of other disciplines such as literature, religious studies, and anthropology.

The insights offered here are based on different types of data: personal knowledge, extracts from written publications, including the electronic *Corpus bambara de référence* (Vydrin et al. 2011-2018), photos of *dùgawu* written on shops, street advertisement and on vehicles, participant observation, and discussions with colleagues and speakers of Bambara.

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1. Bambara or Bamanankan is a variety belonging to the Manding cluster together with Jula, Maninka, and Mandinka. The plural, *dùgawuw* is rarely used. In this paper, we use the singular term *dùgawu* for the singular and the plural alike.
2. Bambara is a tonal language. Tone is marked as follows: grave accent is used for High tone, acute accent for Low tone. Toneless morphemes do not show any marking. Their tonal realization depends on the context.
3. https://www.facebook.com/bamanankankalan/videos/1358668717674130/

This paper is structured as follows. We start by providing some background on the Bambara syntax and orthography and the writing conventions used here (§2) before we discuss the formal aspects of the genre of *dùgawu* (§3), including the morphosyntax of simple request prayers and deviations from the canonical form of Bambara sentences. The following sections are dedicated to the examination of the Arabic/Islamic origin of the *dùgawu* (§4-5). Subsequently we focus on their pragmatics (§6). We will provide some examples of *dùgawu* used in context and finally conclude and note further questions (§7).

2. Background on Bambara

Bambara or Bamanan is a Mande language that belongs—together with Jula, Maninka, Mandinka, and other varieties—to the Manding dialect continuum. Bambara is mainly spoken in Mali, and it is the language with the highest number of speakers in the country.[4] There are several types of sentences with non-verbal predicates in the language. However, request prayers are clauses with verbal predicates; therefore, this grammatical introduction is restricted to this type of clause and some other phenomena that are of interest for our topic.

Bambara shows a rigid S Aux (O) V (X) word order, and word order alone indicates grammatical relations. S stands for the subject NP, Aux for an auxiliary or "predicate marker", as it is called in Mande language studies, O for an object NP, and X refers to obliques and more peripheral elements, often marked by means of postpositions. Sentences lacking O are intransitive. In independent clauses, predicate markers following the subject NP or verbal suffixes are obligatory constituents. They are portmanteau morphemes that combine a TMA value and a polarity value. Table 1 summarizes the affirmative predicate markers and inflectional suffixes and the corresponding negative morphemes.

The examples are written using the official orthographic transcription to which the lexical tone is added. In most lexemes, it is found on the first syllable, which is considered as dominant, and which conditions the tonal realization of the syllables to its right (Vydrin 2016). Predicate markers without an associated tone are toneless; their realization depends on the immediate context and on individual preferences. For space reasons and because it is not relevant for our argument, the actual surface realization, which takes into account the application of tone rules, is not provided. The reader interested in the tone system of Bambara is referred to lesson 3 and throughout the other lessons in Vydrin (2019).

Table 1 — Affirmative and negative predicate markers and suffixes

TAM	Affirmative	Gloss	Neg.	Gloss
trans. perfective	*ye*	PFV.TR	*ma*	PFV.NEG
intrans. perfective	*-ra~-la~-na*	PFV.INTR	*ma*	PFV.NEG
imperfective	*bɛ*	IPFV.AFF	*tɛ*	IPFV.NEG
future (intentional)	*bɛ́nà*	FUT.AFF	*tɛ́nà*	FUT.NEG
future (certain)	*na, nà*	FUT.CERT.AFF	*tɛ́nà*	FUT.NEG
subjunctive	*ka*	SBJV.AFF	*kànâ*	SBJV.NEG
optative	*mà(a)* + *-ra~-la~-na*	OPT	*kànâ*	SBJV.NEG
imperative singular	*Ø*	IMP.SG	*kànâ*	SBJV.NEG
imperative plural	*yé*	IMP.PL	*kànâ*	SBJV.NEG

4. Vydrin (2019: 9) indicates 13-14 million (L1 + L2) speakers, corresponding to 89-90% of the Malian population for the second half of the 2010s.

In transitive clauses, the predicate marker is inserted between the subject and the object NPs, as in (2), (3), and (4). In intransitive clauses, it follows the subject NP and precedes the verb, as in (5) and (6). An exception is the affirmative intransitive perfective. Its exponent is the suffix *-ra*, which has two allomorphs: *-na* following a nasal syllable (*CṼ* or *NV*) (7), and *-la* suffixed to a verb stem which ends in *-lV* or *-rV*.

(2) *wàye-`* *ye* *sògo-`* *tìgɛ* *(súgu-`* *lá)*
butcher-art PFV.TR meat-art cut market-art PP
'The butcher cut meat (at the market).'

(3) *wàye-`* *ma* *sògo-`* *tìgɛ* *(súgu-`* *lá)*
butcher-art PFV.NEG meat-ART cut market-art PP
'The butcher did not cut meat (at the market).'

(4) *wàye-`* *bɛ́nà* *sògo-`* *tìgɛ* *(súgu-`* *lá)*
butcher-art FUT.AFF meat-ART cut market-art PP
'The butcher will cut meat (at the market).'

(5) *à* *bɛ́nà* *dòn* *só-`* *kɔ́nɔ*
3SG FUT.AFF enter house-art inside
'S/he will go into the house.'

(6) *à* *ma* *dòn* *só-`* *kɔ́nɔ*
3SG PFV.NEG enter house-art inside
'S/he did not go into the house.'

(7) *à* *dòn-na [dõna]* *só-`* *kɔ́nɔ*
3SG enter-PFV.INTR house-art inside
'S/he went into the house.'

Two moods play a role in the context of *dùgawu*: the optative and the subjunctive. Since they will be discussed in the next section, we will only refer to their main features here. The optative is a mood dedicated to request prayers. In contrast, the subjunctive is not dedicated to this genre of communicative exchange. It has several other meanings: with a 2nd person subject, it expresses a wish or a non-categorical command (8); with a 3rd person subject, it has the meaning of an indirect command (9); with a 1st person plural subject, it has a hortative meaning (10). Furthermore, the subjunctive is used in subordinate clauses, complementing verbs or other constructions expressing a command, a piece of advice, a wish, an agreement, or a disagreement (11); it expresses reported commands and adverbial clauses of purpose. The subjunctive is used in clauses introduced by some conjunctions, e.g. *fó* 'until, unless', *sáni* 'before', *wálasa* 'in order to'; it marks topicalized clauses at the left periphery and sequences of direct commands, among others following a clause in the imperative (for examples, see Vydrin 2019: 102, 172, chap. 33; Creissels 2023: sect. 3).

(8) *í* *ka* *ò* *fúra-`* *kìsɛ* *kélen* *tà*
2SG SBJV.AFF this medicine-ART pill one take
'(You should) take one pill of this medicine.' (Touré & Touré 1996: 33)

(9) *ù* *ka* *dòn* *yàn*
3PL SBJV.AFF enter here
'They should enter here.'

(10) *án* *ka* *táa*
1PL SBJV.AFF go
'Let's go!'

(11) *ń* *bá-`* *sìna-`* *ma* *sɔ̀n* *ń* *ka* *táa*
1SG mother-ART co-wife-ART PFV.NEG agree 1SG SBJV.AFF go
'My mother's co-wife didn't agree that I go.' (Bailleul et al. 1992)

The subjunctive *ka* has a negative suppletive form *kànâ,* as shown in (12).

(12) *[à fɔ́ra kó]*
mɔ̀gɔ *sí* *kànâ* *táa* *kúngo-`* *kɔ́nɔ* *sélidonya-`* *fɛ̀*
person no.one SBJV.NEG go wilderness-ART inside holiday-ART PP
'[It has been said that] nobody should go to the wilderness on a holiday.'
(01npogotiginin_kokorobola.dis.html)

In addition to *dùgawu* that are complete sentences in the optative or subjunctive, there exist abbreviated *dùgawu* and request prayers strung together. Their characteristic feature is the infinitive, marked by the Low tone *kà*. This morpheme is segmentally identical to the toneless subjunctive predicate marker, the realization of which depends on the immediate context (Dumestre 1997; 2003: chap. 29; Vydrin 2019: chap. 32; Creissels 2023). The infinitive has the structure *kà* (O) V (X), i.e. the word order corresponds to that of verbal clauses, however without the subject NP, which is always lacking with the infinitive. The infinitive occurs in many contexts. Among others, it corresponds to the citation form of verbs (13). It is used for the topicalization of events (14), in subjectless dependent clauses, such as complement clauses (15), or adverbial clauses with or without a conjunction.

(13) a. *kà* *mɔ̀gɔ-`* *lásiran*
INF person-ART frighten
'frighten someone'
b. *kà* *nísɔndiya*
INF be.glad
'be glad' (Dumestre & Maïga 1993: 64)

(14) *[kà* *jégɛ`* *mɔ̀n],* *án* *tɛ* *ò* *ké*
INF fish-ART fish 1PL IPFV.NEG this do
'As for fishing, we don't do it.' (Vydrin 2020: 82)

(15) *à* *bɛ* *síran* *[kà* *sì* *kúngo-`* *kɔ́nɔ]*
3SG IPFV.AFF fear INF spend.night wilderness-ART inside
'S/he is afraid of spending the night in the wilderness.'

The infinitive is also frequent in clause chaining constructions following a complete clause and where the absent subject is meant as coreferential with the subject of the initial clause. In many cases, the clauses following the initial clause express consecutive or subsequent events, but they can also express simultaneous events, especially when the first clause is in an aspect other than the perfective (Vydrin 2020: 86). Although most clause chains are same-subject clauses, there exist also different-subject clauses (Dumestre 2003: 386; Vydrin 2020: 92), leading Vydrin (2020: 95) to the hypothesis of "conjunctional origin of the infinitive marker in Bambara".[5] (16) illustrates a same-subject

5. Using cross-dialectal data, Creissels (2023) proposes another hypothesis of transgrammaticalization of the infinitive to the subjunctive marking, including a tone change.

chain of clauses, the type that will be relevant in the discussion of *dùgawu* strung together and of abbreviated request prayers.

(16) *ù* *nà-na* *[kà* *mùru* *kura-`* *ɲíni],*
3PL come-PFV.INTR INF knife new-ART search
[kà *síralan* *kura-`* *ɲíni],* *[kà* *fílen*
INF broom new-ART search INF calabash
kama-` *ɲíni]*
new-ART search
'They came, they looked for a new knife, (they looked for) a new broom, (they looked for) a new calabash.' [Bamakɔ sigicogoya] (Vydrin 2020: 84)

We will show that both the subjunctive and the infinitive play a role (in addition to the optative) in the syntax of *dùgawu*.

There is only one valency changing derivation in the language, but different alternations are possible. Among them, the passive and the causative alternations are relevant for *dùgawu*. When the patient-object of a typical transitive construction aligns with the subject, the resulting intransitive construction receives a passive interpretation. This happens in (17) and (18), which are passive alternations of (2) and (3).

(17) *sògo-`* *tìgɛ-ra* *(súgu-`* *lá)* *(wàye-`* *fɛ̂)*
meat-ART cut-PFV.INTR market-ART PP butcher-ART PP
'The meat has been cut at the market (by the butcher).'

(18) *sògo-`* *ma* *tìgɛ* *(súgu-`* *lá)* *(wàye-`* *fɛ̂)*
meat-ART PFV.NEG cut-PFV market-ART PP butcher-ART PP
'The meat has not been cut at the market (by the butcher).'

We will show in §3.3 that request prayers are constructions prone to causative alternations. The causative alternation serves to add the intervention of an external cause to a process that a being or an entity undergoes without such an interposition, and which is expressed in an intransitive construction. Creissels (2007: 16) illustrates the causative alternation with the verb *tòli* 'rot': the intransitive construction (19) does not imply any external intervention, while in the transitive construction (20) the heat is added as the subject to signal an external cause.

(19) *jɛ́gɛ`* *tòli-la*
fish-ART rot- PFV.INTR
'The fish rotted.' (Creissels 2007: 16)

(20) *fùnteni-`* *yé* *jɛ́gɛ-`* *tòli*
heat-ART PFV.TR fish-ART rot
'The heat rotted the fish.' (Creissels 2007: 16)

Dumestre (2003: 180) notes that there are intransitive verbs that can occur in transitive constructions in very specific contexts. He lists some examples with the verbs *táa* 'go', *síran* 'be afraid', and *sé* 'arrive', which get the meaning of 'make go', 'frighten', 'let arrive' in such transitive constructions. Creissels (2007) assumes that the causative alternation can be interpreted according to Construction Grammar. Following this approach, the lexical meaning of a verb and the meaning of the constructions interact, evoking a new meaning. We will return to the causative alternation in §3.3.

3. The structure of *dùgawu*

Like proverbs, request prayers constitute a named genre category of formulaic language in Bambara which, according to our experience, belongs primarily to oral communication. They are named *dùgawu, dùbabu, dùga, dùba, dùwa*. The noun *dùgawu* occurs as an object in several expressions which are translated as 'to bless', understood as 'to ask God to bestow divine favor on s.o.'.

(21) *kà* *dùgawu-`* *tà* / *kɛ́* / *dòn* *mɔ̀gɔ-`* *yé*
INF request.prayer-ART take / do / put.into person-ART PP
'to bless s.o., lit. take a blessing for s.o. / make a blessing to s.o. / place a blessing onto s.o.'

dùgawu is a verb, too; however, its use as a verb is rare.

(22) *kà* *dùgawu* *mɔ̀gɔ-`* *lá / yé*
INF make.request.prayer person-ART PP
'to bless s.o., to make wishes for s.o.' (Dumestre 2011: 266)

The Bambara request prayer exchange includes generally two parts: the request prayer itself and the interlocutor's reply. Depending on the situation, a whole series of request prayers can be exchanged. In the following we describe the basic form of request prayer exchanges (§3.1), the form of request litanies (§3.2) and some syntactic particularities of the genre (§3.3). A discussion of deviations from the regular structure of *dùgawu* (§3.4) ends section 3.

3.1 Exchange of *dùgawu*

The first part of a *dùgawu* is the request prayer itself: a sentence with *Ála* 'God' in subject position and a verb expressing the action the speaker requests from God. The second part is the interlocutor's reinforcing replication.

The sentence expressing the request is marked for one of the two moods, the optative (23), or the subjunctive (1), (25), (68), (69). The optative is a mood reserved for the specific use in request prayers in Bambara. Two morphemes combine to express the optative value: first, the so called "predicate marker" or auxiliary *má~mà~màa*, which appears between the subject *Ála* and the object, and second, the suffix *-ra* or one of its allomorphs *-la, -na*, added to the verb. The optative suffix corresponds to the suffix of the perfective intransitive affirmative. Their formal identity suggests a historical relation between the perfective and the optative, which we discuss in §5. There is only a minor argument against a historical relation between the perfective suffix and the optative suffix: the distribution of the allomorphs *-la* and *-na* of the optative suffix *-ra* is not as regular as the distribution of the same allomorphs of the perfective intransitive suffix *-ra* (Vydrin 2019: 104). However, the counterexamples are very rare. We have found the example in (24), which exemplifies the irregular distribution when compared to (23). Both include the same verb *hínɛ*[6]'have mercy'. In (23), the verb whose last syllable contains a nasal segment is followed by the nasal allomorph *-na*. The form corresponds to that of the intransitive perfective morpheme (*Ála hínɛ**na*** 'God had mercy'). In contrast, (24) appears with the suffix *-la*.

(23) *Ála* *má* *hínɛ-**na*** *Dawuda* *Damɛle* *lá;* *máanabɔla-`*
God OPT have.mercy-OPT PN PN PP story.teller-ART
tùn *dòn*
PST ID
'God have mercy on Dawuda Dambele; he was a historian.'
(jekabaara349_06u_ko-zup.repl.html)

6. *Hínɛ* 'have mercy' is borrowed from Arabic *ḥinna* 'grace' (Zappa 2011: 246).

(24) *Ála* *màa* *hínɛ-**la*** *[...]*
God OPT have.mercy-OPT
'God have mercy [...].' (entretien_sida1994_04_04.dis.html)

A request prayer can alternatively be encoded by means of the subjunctive. The subjunctive auxiliary is *ka*, as illustrated in (25), the meaning of which is equivalent to (24).

(25) [A: and what about your mother? B: She died]
A: *Ala* *ka* *hínɛ* *à* *lá*
God SBJV.AFF have.mercy 3SG PP
'God have mercy on her.' (Morales 1996: lesson 4)

Before a word with an initial vowel or which consists of a vowel only, the vowel *a* of both auxiliaries, the optative *mà(a)* (26) and subjunctive *ká,* can be elided, as shown in (31). The same omission is possible with other predicate markers and the infinitive morpheme *kà* (see for instance (45)).

(26) *Ála* *m'* *án* *kísi-ra*
God OPT 1PL protect-OPT
'May God protect us.' (baarakalan_gafe-zup.repl.html)

The subjunctive *ka* has a negative suppletive form, *kànâ*, glossed SBJV.NEG. Unlike most affirmative auxiliaries in Bambara, the optative does not have a negative counterpart. To express a negative request prayer, speakers resort to the negative subjunctive auxiliary *kànâ*.

(27) [dón dɔ́w lá, fó né tùn bɛ́ bàna sùnɔgɔbaliya fɛ̀. né bɛ́ dùgawu kɛ́.]
Ála *kànâ* *né* *bɛ̀n* *ní* *dɔ̀lɔminna-`* *wɛ́rɛ*
God SBJV.NEG 1SG meet with drunkard-ART other
yé *nìn* *kɔ́*
with DEM after
['Sometimes the insomnia made me even almost sick. (Then) I used to pronounce a request prayer.'] 'May God never let me meet with a drunkard again (lit. after this).' (dumestre-chroniques_amoureuses_1995_07_15.dis.html)

The second part is the interlocutor's reply *àmiina* illustrated in (28) or its abbreviated form *àmii*.

(28) *àmiina ~ àmii*
amen
'Amen (so be it).'

To give emphasis, *àmii* can be reiterated as in (29). There also exists a variant of the interjection, as shown in (30).

(29) *àmii* *àmii* *àmii*
amen amen amen
'Amen, amen, amen.'

(30) *àmiina* *yàaràbi*
amen oh.Lord
'Amen (so be it), oh Lord.'

To reply by using *àmiina* or one of its variants is designated as *kà à lámìnɛ* 'respond' (causative *lá-* + *mìnɛ* 'seize'), as in example (31), which is, however, not restricted to blessings. You can *lámìnɛ* 'respond' to a greeting (*fòli*), a call (*wéle*), a song (*dɔ̀nkili*), i.e. to join in the chorus, or to a narrator's account, among others in the frame of the performances of stories or epics by responding with an interjection dedicated to the respective context.

(31) [He joined us and said:]

"Ála	*k'*	*áw*	*bɛ́ɛ*	*dòn*	*àrijana-`*	*kɔ́nɔ".*
God	SBJV.AFF	2PL	all	let.enter	paradise-ART	in
án	*ɲágali-len-`*		*y'*	*à*	*lámìnɛ*	
1PL	be.happy-PTCP.RES-ART		PFV.TR-ART	3SG	respond	
k'	*à*	*fɔ́*	*kó*	*"àmiina"*		
INF	3SG	say	QUOT	amen		

'"God let you all enter paradise." Highly pleased, we replied to him "amen".' (jekabaara160_03sidibe-an_ka_yele-zup.repl.html 1475068)

In written registers occurring in journal articles, inscriptions on public transport or shop signs, illustrated in Figures 1-4 (for another examples, see Lüpke 2020: 9), or when the speaker talks to him- or herself as in (27), no reply is necessary or expected. Among others, the request prayer inserted into a written obituary in (23) is not followed by the reinforcing formula. However, the presence or absence of the formula can get a particular function in given contexts (see §6.8).

3.2 String of request prayers and meta-*dùgawu*

It is very common to string several request prayers together. In this case, there is no rule concerning the marking of the individual clauses for optative or subjunctive: a clause in the optative can be followed by a clause in the subjunctive as in (32), or vice-versa.

(32) [án bɛ à fɔ́ kó:]

Ála	*màa*	*hínɛ-la,*	*Ála*	*ka*	*yàfa-`*	*kɛ́*	*à*	*mà*
God	OPT	have.mercy-OPT	God	SBJV.AFF	pardon-ART	do	3SG	PP

['We say':] 'God have mercy, God forgive him.' (entretien_sida1994_04_04.dis.html)

Furthermore, both (and even more than two) blessings can be in the same mood as in (38), both clauses of which show the optative. The encoding of request prayers in the form of clause chaining (see §2, especially ex. (16)) is very common, too. The first request prayer in a chain corresponds to an independent clause in the optative or subjunctive, whereas all subsequent requests follow in the form of the infinitive, introduced with the infinitive morpheme *kà* (the vowel of which may be elided before a word with an initial vowel). In request prayer chains, the infinitive clauses are understood to have the same subject as the initial clause.

(33)

Ála	*má*	*hínɛ-na*	*í*	*lá*	*Sumana,*	*k'*	*í*
God	OPT	have.mercy-OPT	2SG	PP	PN	INF	2SG
dáyɔrɔ-`		*súma*					
lying.place-ART		refresh					

'God have mercy on you, Sumana, may He refresh your resting place.'
(jekabaara349_06u_ko-zup.repl.html)

The reply *àmiina* may interrupt elements in a chain or it may occur only once at the very end of a series, which shows semantic cohesiveness. Some chains of blessings seem to never stop, for instance as part of a farewell preceding a long journey or following the Friday prayer at the mosque.[7] Sometimes the finalizing blessing 'May God seize (answer) the prayer' (34) (which can be used after one single request prayer, as well) has the effect to cut it short. This finalizing blessing, which often follows *àmiina (yaarabi),* uses the same *dùgawu* pattern to reply to a *dùgawu*. It is thus a sort of meta-*dùgawu*.

(34) A: *Ála* *ka* *dùgawu-`* *mìnɛ* B: *àmiina*
God SBJV.AFF blessing-ART seize Amen
A: 'May God grant the request (seize the blessing).' B: 'Amen.'

The verb *mìnɛ* 'seize, accept' constitutes the stem of the derived *lámìnɛ* 'grant, respond (to a greeting, call or request prayer)', lit. 'cause to seize or accept or cause to be seized or accepted'. The verb *jáabi* 'answer' is also found to replace *mìnɛ* in the finalizing blessing. Having presented the basic features of request prayer exchanges, we now turn to syntactic peculiarities of the constructions, such as a predilection for secondary predicates and the argument structure, including deviations from the usual Bambara argument structure.

3.3 Syntactic peculiarities

Secondary predicates are often found in Bambara *dùgawu*. Several word categories can function as a secondary predicate, some of which are encountered in blessings, including simple adjectives, such as *kénɛ* 'healthy', illustrated in (35), or derived adjectives, for instance *ɲùman* 'good' (*ɲì* 'be good' + *-man* ADJ) (61), or participles. (36) includes a resultative participle derived from the verb *ɲìnɛ ~ ɲìna* 'forget'.[8]

(35) [Maria has put on a nice shirt her mother gave her. Her friend Sirajɛ says:]
Ála *k'* *í* *bá-`* *kénɛ-`* *tó*
God SBJV.AFF 2SG mother-ART healthy-ART keep
'May God keep your mother healthy.' (Morales 1996: lesson 19)

(36) [To a woman worried about not getting pregnant.]
Ála *k'* *í* *ɲìna-nen-`* *sɔ́n*
God SBJV.AFF 2SG forget-PTCP.RES-ART present
'May God present you (with a child when you have) forgotten (to think about it).'

Dùgawu have also unique features in terms of their argument structure. The beneficiaries of the divine action can be encoded as the object (preceding the verb as in (23), (25), (35) or (36)) or the oblique (following the verb in form of a postpositional phrase as in (32)), but they may also remain unexpressed as in (39).

In Mandinka, verbs in *dùgawu* generally occur in transitive constructions "regardless of their inherent valency properties [resulting in] what can be analyzed as morphologically unmarked causativization of the verbs that are in principle strictly intransitive" (Creissels 2023: 20f.). This is, however, only partly true for Bambara. For instance, prayers for God's mercy with the verb *hínɛ* 'have mercy' or for God's pardon including the verb *yàfa* 'pardon' are intransitive constructions (32).

7. As an example, see the following citation on the Facebook site *Bamanankan*: https://m.facebook.com/Bamanankan/photos/allah-k%C3%A0-juma-w%C3%A8r%C3%A8-yira-an-naallah-k%C3%A0-an-ka-bato-k%C3%A8lenw-jaabiallah-k%C3%A0-an-ka-sara/462636060599868/

8. For a discussion of properties of secondary predicates see Dumestre (2003: different chapters) and Vydrin (2019: 217f., 223, 234, 403ff.).

On the other hand, many prototypically intransitive verbs, for instance *sì* 'spend the night'[9] (37), *táa* 'go' (38), *nà* 'come' (39) or *sà* 'die' (40) are used with an object in request prayers. This alternation has the effect to convey more agency to God and are best translated as 'let spend the night', 'make advance', 'cause to rain', 'let die'.

(37) *Ála* *màa* *án* *sì-ra*
God OPT 1PL spend.night-OPT
Subject Auxiliary Object verb-Suffix
'Good night (lit. May God let us spend the night)!'

(38) *Ála* *má* *jàmana-`* *táa-ra* *nέ*
God OPT country-ART go-OPT forward
Ála *má* *à* *júgu-`-w* *màlo-la*
God OPT 3SG enemy-ART-PL humble-OPT
'May God make the country advance (lit. May God go the country forward), may God humble its enemies.' (Dumestre 2011: 654)

(39) *Ála* *ka* *sánji* *cáman-`* *nà*
God SBJV.AFF rain much-ART come
'May God let it rain a lot.' (Bailleul 2005: no. 1486)

(40) [You have dishonored me, I do not forgive you.]
Ála *kànâ* *í* *sà* *ní* *í* *má* *lèbu*
God SBJV.NEG 2SG die if 2SG PFV.NEG disgrace
'May God let you die in dishonor (lit. May God not let you die if you do not fall from grace).' (dumestre-chroniques_amoureuses_ 1995_07_04.dis.html 5195777)

3.4 Deviations from the regular structure of *dùgawu*

The encoding of God as the subject-agent is one of the defining criteria of request prayers. When the requested event includes an agent different from God and additionally an object-patient, Bambara speakers recur to a biclausal construction. The first clause has the form of a *dùgawu*, showing *Ála* as the subject, the cataphoric pronoun *à* as the object resuming the event expressed in the following complement clause and the verb *tó* 'allow, cause' or *kέ* 'do, make, cause' in either the optative or the subjunctive mood. Thus, the introductory formula reads as *Ála máa à tóra...* or *Ála k'à tó...* 'May God grant that…'. The desired event is encoded in a complement clause in the subjunctive mood, marked with *ká* (affirmative) or *kànâ* (negative). The subject of the complement clause is an agent (41) or an item construed as such (42). This construction allows the subject of the complement clause to retain its agency, yet God—encoded as the subject of the main clause—is expressed as the superior agent. The agentivity of the subject of the complement clause is limited and made dependent upon the paramount agentivity of God, which is perfectly consistent with the traditional Islamic theology according to which human actions are indeed pre-determined, 'created' and 'acted' by God Himself.

(41) *Ála* *k'* *à* *tó* *án* *ka* *sègɛn-`* *kún*
God SBJV.AFF 3SG let 1PL SBJV.AFF exhaustion-ART resist
'May God make us resist exhaustion (lit. grant that we resist exhaustion).'
(kibaru558_4sidibe-poyi_don_bee.dis.html)

9. The verb *sì* is also used in transitive constructions with a period of time as object, meaning then 'spend a certain time'.

(42) *Ála* *m'* *à* *tó-ra* *sàn* *1973* *ka* *dúsu* *ɲùman-`*
God OPT 3SG let-OPT year 1973 SBJV.AFF heart good-ART
dòn *án* *bɛ́ɛ* *kɔ́nɔ* *fàso-`* *kóɲɛ-`-w* *lá*
put.into *1PL* all into native.country-ART concerns-ART-PL PP
'May we all have courage in 1973 (lit. May God grant that the year 1973 encourage us all) in the concerns of the home country.' (kibaru011_01kante-san_kura.old.repl.html 7425036)

Nevertheless, the introductory formula seems not to be obligatory every time. A wish such as (43), encoded in a subjunctive clause with the second singular pronoun as subject does not show the features of a *dùgawu*. However, the most frequently heard reply *àmiina* suggests that it is a routinized *dùgawu* without the introductory formula *Ála k'à tó ...* 'May God grant that ...'.

(43) [Said by the vendor or a bystander to someone who bought a piece of clothes or shoes]
í *kɛ́nɛ-`* *ka* *à* *kɔ̀rɔ*
2SG healthy-ART SBJV.AFF 3SG wear.out
'May you wear them out in good health.'

There exist also abbreviated *dùgawu*. A common strategy is to leave the subject-agent *Ála* unexpressed. The blessing has in this case the form of an infinitive, introduced with the Low tone *kà* (Dumestre 2003: 213). That means the form of the entire clause corresponds to a non-initial request in a chain of *dùgawu* described in 3.2. High frequency blessings such as farewell greetings, as in (44), are often abbreviated.

(44) *kà* *án* *bɛ̀n* *[k'ɑ̃́ː bɛ̃̀]*
INF 1PL meet
'Goodbye (lit. (May God) let us meet).'

The shortened form where the name of God is elided is a sign of strong conventionalization, which might entail as side effect a secularization process of blessings, the result of which is a simple greeting formula, especially when it is echoed with *k'án bɛ̀n* 'Goodbye' by the interlocutor. However, interlocutors often give the confirmatory response to blessings *àmiina*, or even (34) 'May God seize the blessing', which in turn is a request prayer and serves as a formula reinforcing previously uttered request prayers. The same is true of other standard wishes, for instance the shortened version of *Ála ká nɔ̀gɔya kɛ́* '(God give) good recovery' in (45).

(45) [Fanekɛ joins Fanta in the compound. When he hears that her husband is sick, he expresses the following abbreviated request prayer]
Fanekɛ: *kà* *nɔ̀gɔya-`* *kɛ́,* *k'* *à* *sègin* *à* *yèrɛ* *mà*
INF ease-ART do INF 3SG return 3SG self PP
'[May God grant] good recovery and make him come to himself.'

Fanta: *Ála* *má* *dùgawu-`* *mìnɛ-na*
God OPT blessing-ART seize-OPT
'May God seize the blessing.'
(kote1987_09_03sanogo-juru_be-zup.repl.html 2931430)

The confirmatory response *àmiina* and a response which has the form of a request prayer qualifies the wish itself as a request prayer and weakens the hypothesis of secularization. This is due to the cooperative nature of the *dùgawu*. It may be that the interlocutors do not share the evaluation of a conventionalized blessing as secular. The speaker Fanekɛ in (45) does not mention God in his blessing, which suggests a rather secular expression of a wish; his interlocutor, however, does not take the

utterance as such. With her answer in the form of the reinforcing *dùgawu* 'God grant the wish', she makes it clear that for her it is not a secular exchange, but a request prayer addressed to God.

There are other abbreviated *dùgawu*, for instance in (46b) and (47b), which are shortened versions of (46a) and (47a) In (46b), only the infinitive morpheme and the object 'the peace of the night' remain, while the verb with its oblique (noted here in brackets) is omitted. In (47b), translated as 'see you soon' only the object pronoun and the adverb follow the infinitive morpheme. The adverb occupies the position of a verb, suggesting a verbal interpretation approximately with the meaning 'meet s.o. soon'; it is not developed into a verb, though, for it is restricted to this construction and does not occur in other verbal clauses in this position.

(46) a.

Ála	*ka*	*sú-`*	*hérɛ`*	*dí*	*án*	*mà*
God	SBJV.AFF	night-ART	peace-ART	give	1PL	PP
Subject	ka	Object		Verb	Oblique/Beneficiary	

'Good night (lit. May God give us the peace of the night).'

b.

kà	*sú-`*	*hérɛ-`*	*(dí*	*án*	*mà)*
INF	night-ART	peace-ART	give	1PL	PP

'Good night (lit. and (give us) the peace of the night').

(47) a.

Ála	*k'*	*án*	*bèn*	*sɔ́ɔni*
God	SBJV.AFF	1PL	meet	soon

'See you soon (lit. (God) let us meet soon).'

b.

k'	*án*	*sɔ́ɔni*
INF	1PL	soon

'See you soon (lit. and we soon).'

After having introduced the structural properties and some peculiarities of *dùgawu* in Bambara, we now turn to its Arabic sources and propose a scenario of their origins in Bambara. Our aim is to show that the entire organization of prayer plus confirmatory response is borrowed from Arabic.

4. Arabic/Islamic origin of *dùgawu* and their spread

Although the use of *dùgawu* in Bambara is far from being restricted to religious or ritual Islamic contexts, they are unequivocally related to Islamic request prayers and hence to Arabic as the language of the Qur'ān. Their designation, the pattern of a request prayer and the interlocutor's response, as well as numerous terms occurring in the *dùgawu* are borrowed from Arabic.

The term *dùga, dùgawu* itself derives from Arabic *du'ā'*, which designates, in both the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīṯ* corpus (Sunna), a voluntary petitionary prayer. It contrasts with the compulsory, ritual daily prayer, *ṣalāt*, borrowed into Bambara as *séli*. In a *du'ā'* in the strict sense of the term, the speaker of Arabic addresses God directly, making use of the imperative singular. In its extended meaning, however *(ṣiyaġ du'ā'* or "[further] forms of *du'ā'*" according to the terminology of Arabic grammarians), the term designates a call for God's intervention, in favor of (or sometimes against) an interlocutor. In these latter blessings/curses, which are the model for the Bambara *dùgawu*, God is encoded in the 3rd person singular as in *Jazā-k Allāhu ḫayran* 'May God reward you!'

The term *Ála* 'God', which occurs in the subject position of every unabbreviated Bambara request prayer, can be traced back to Arabic *Allāh* 'God'. The response *àmiina,* supposed to strengthen the effect of the preceding request prayer (as is evident from the speech context),[10] is uttered once (28), or reiterated (29). It is borrowed from the Arabic interjection *āmīn* 'amen', which, in turn, is semantically related to its quasi-homophone adjective *amīn,* meaning "sure, confident", as in its ultimate

10. See also the discussion of (64) in §6.8.

Hebrew source אֲמָנָה *amanah* 'confidence'.[11] In Arabic, this interjection can be pronounced at the end of any request prayer *(du'ā')* addressed to God.[12] As mentioned above, in Bambara the response can include additionally *yàaràbi ~ yáarabi* 'oh Lord', which is not used in any other context. This formula is borrowed from Arabic *yā rabbī* where it has the function of a vocative, meaning 'oh Lord'. Here too, Bambara follows the Arabic model, which shows the entire phrase *amīn yā rabb(ī),* or sometimes only the *yā rabb(ī)* segment at the end of (or in the reply to) a blessing or a *du'ā'* request prayer.

As mentioned above and illustrated in (34), a single *dùgawu* or a string of request prayers may end with the finalizing reply *Ála ká dùgawu mìnɛ* 'May God grant the request (lit. seize the *dùgawu*)'. Although a literal equivalent of such a finalizing *du'ā'* is much less common in Arabic, there is one formula which is very close to it: *taqabbala Allāh minnā wa-minka* 'May God accept [requests] from us and from you'. It is ritually exchanged upon returning from *'īd* prayer, which is, however, performed only twice a year.

The verb *jáabi* 'answer', sometimes replacing *mìnɛ* 'seize, accept, grant (a request)' originates in Arabic *ajāba* 'to answer' or a verb based on the same root, *istajāba* with the more restricted meaning 'to hear, answer (a prayer), grant (a request)'. The verb is found in the Qur'anic verse XL, 60: *Qāla rabbu-kum ud'ū-ni astajib la-kum* 'Your Lord says: call on Me! I shall answer you[r prayers]', which can be considered as one of the main scriptural foundations of the practice of *du'ā'* among Muslims.

In addition to the aforementioned elements, many items occurring in individual *dùgawu* cited in this paper originate from Arabic, among others *tànga* 'protect', *kísi* 'preserve', *dáhìrimɛ* 'daily bread', *àrijana ~ àlijinɛ* 'paradise', *hínɛ* 'compassion', *fátu* 'die'. The high proportion of Arabic loanwords is not surprising, as they have been getting into the language since the 11th century and account for up to 20% or more of the total Bambara lexicon (Zappa 2011: 230f. and references therein). Most of them belong either to the lexical domains of trade and material culture or to those of writing, religion, esotericism, space, time and abstract concepts in general. While many Arabic loanwords from the first category have passed through intermediary languages, mainly Soninke and Songhai, those belonging to the religious, abstract and scholarly domains probably have not. They made their way into the language through traditional Islamic education. Dumestre (1983) observes that words closely related to the religious domain resemble the Arabic source more than lexemes belonging to worldly domains. The reason, he hypothesizes, is that religious terms – to which we would add all the vocabulary borrowed through traditional Islamic schooling – are periodically checked against the Arabic source by native speakers of Bambara educated in classical Arabic, while the words belonging to the worldly domains, borrowed at an earlier date through contact with native speakers of colloquial Arabic, have adapted to the phonology of the target language, independently from any further link to their source. The loanword *dùgawu* is itself a case in point: as so many Bambara nouns borrowed through learned orality, it shows traces of the *i'rāb* pronunciation of classical Arabic *(du'ā'u* instead of the more common *du'ā')*, featuring the case ending *(-u)*, which is never used in colloquial Arabic and even in classical Arabic is only used within the traditional teaching system and in a few, highly formal contexts.

The resemblance of the exchange patterns of Bambara *dùgawu* and Arabic request prayers suggests their entering the language through the channel of "learned orality". Zappa (2011: 231) uses this term to designate the register of Bambara (as well as of other West African languages) that has been elaborated within the traditional Islamic pedagogy. This teaching system rests on renewed reading aloud and memorizing written Arabic texts, starting from the original Arabic text of the Qur'ān (Baldé 1981: 207), followed by their oral periphrastic translation into a local vernacular, to which further, extended commentary in the target language is often added. Such an oral translatory practice "is widespread in the advanced levels of traditional Islamic educational system" (Zappa 2011: 231f.) and has been analyzed in depth in several studies by Tamari.[13] Although it can be assumed that the

11. In Hebrew, it implies the idea of truth, thus in the formula *amen, amen* 'verily, verily'. Already in the Old Testament it was used as an assent particle ("verily, certainly") to affirm a covenant or oath.

12. *Āmīn* is used in classical, modern standard, and colloquial Arabic to finalize a prayer, especially the *Fātiḥa*, the first sura of the Qur'ān, which has the form of a prayer and which is omnipresent in the ritual life of any Muslim.

13. For a general overview, see Tamari (2002).

first who introduced them into Bambara were members of the Islamic intellectual elite, the *dùgawu* have been used by uneducated people for a long time as well. First transmitted within the traditional Islamic education system, they arguably found their way to the larger public through imitation of the speech habits of the scholarly elite by common speakers, enhanced by the exposure of a larger section of society to basic Islamic education at primary Qur'anic school. More recently, they have further spread thanks to new forms of religious communication (Baldé 1981; Tamari 2002): *madrasahs* (i.e. modern Islamic educational establishments), mass-mediated forms of religious communication, with sermons and exegesis sessions, using diverse media, radio-broadcast, and social media. Ultimately, request prayers are not a matter of Islamic faith alone, since there is evidence of their use not only by Bambara-speaking Christians, but also by practitioners of local traditional cults (Ebermann 1989: 38, 100; Tamari 2011).

Returning to the structure of the *dùgawu*, the question arises whether the "learned orality" also provides clues for the origin of their encoding. We have shown in section 3 that there are two equivalent ways of encoding *dùgawu*, the optative and the subjunctive. This requires an explanation, which we undertake in the following.

5. Hypothesis of origin

As mentioned in §3.1, the optative, i.e. the mood dedicated to *dùgawu* is the only TMA value in the language with a discontinuous marking including the auxiliary or predicate marker *má~màa~mà* following the subject, and *-ra/-la-/-na* suffixed to the verb. We hypothesize that the optative is a hybrid form, the second part of which results from the periphrastic translation of memorized classical Arabic request prayers practiced in the frame of religious instruction. We know of two hypotheses concerning the origin of the first morpheme, the predicate marker *má~màa~mà*. Due to its resemblance with the postposition *mà*, Dumestre (1997) assumes a transfer from a postpositional phrase *Ála mà* 'in God's name (lit. to God)' (48) to a subject plus predicate marker sequence, as in (49).

(48)	*í*	*ka*	*à*	*dí*	*Ála*	*mà*
	2SG	SUBJ.AFF	3SG	give	God	PP
	'Give it in God's name!' (Dumestre 1997: 41)					

(49)	*Ála*	*mà*	*júgu`-w*	*màlo-la*
	God	OPT	enemy-ART-PL	humble-OPT
	'May the enemies be humbled in God's name' (Dumestre 1997: 40)			

Basing his observations on Mandinka, where optative constructions show a transitive use of all verbs, Creissels (2023: 21) assumes that the origin of the optative "developed from an originally biclausal construction". According to the author, *màa* is a reflex of the Mande root **ma* 'do, make'", which has, however, "not subsisted in Manding as a verb" (Creissels 2023: 21). The result would have been a formulation corresponding to 'let God make that', French: *Dieu fasse que*, whereas "the verb in the embedded clause had its normal behavior with respect to valency and transitivity" (Creissels 2023: 21). Both hypotheses sound convincing, but their application to Bambara requires an explanation of the few intransitive verbs such as *hínɛ* 'have mercy' or *yàfa* 'pardon' in the optative clauses and the request prayers extended by *Ála m'à tó-ra*, itself meaning 'God grant that', as in (42).

It is striking that there are two free variants of the auxiliary,[14] with a long and with a short vowel. It can be assumed that the long vowel is due to the original presence of the pronoun *à* 'He', which is coreferential with the subject of the introductory formula (or the noun of the postpositional phrase if one gives preference to Dumestre's (1997) hypothesis). Without an assumed personal pronoun in subject position the embedded clause would not be complete. The hypothesis is that the long version

14. In the Bamadaba online dictionary we find the following notice: *la majorité préfèrent la variante mà, et la minorité, la variante maa à ton variable* 'the majority (of speakers) prefer the variant *mà*, the minority the variant *maa* with a variable tone' (http://cormand.huma-num.fr/Bamadaba/lexicon/)

of the optative predicate marker *màa* results from the merger of the pronoun with the vowel of the preceding predicate marker. The short version *mà*, on the other hand, results from vowel elision. In spoken speech, the vowel of a predicate marker adjacent to (a word with) an initial vowel (*ka à > k'à, yé à > y'à*) is optionally elided. As the elision is not obligatory, two forms developed and continue to coexist as free variants, here illustrated with the intransitive verb *hínɛ (mɔ̀gɔ lá)* 'have mercy (on s.o.)'.

(50) **Ála mà à hínɛ-la*
God PP 3SG have.mercy-PFV.INTR
> *Ála màa hínɛ-la* ~ *Ála m'à hínɛ-la*
God OPT have.mercy-OPT
'God have mercy.'

And even today we find the different versions in written Bambara : *Ála mà à hínɛna* (entretien_sida1994_04_04.dis.html), *Ála mà à hínɛla* (Vydrin 2019: 446), *Ála maa hínɛna Lamini Cɛkura Kulibali lá* (kibaru536_01jara-balikukalan_togoladon.dis.html) 'God have mercy (on Lamine Tyekura Kulibali)'.[15] As far as we know, no attempt has been made to date to explain the correspondence between the optative suffix and the suffix of the perfective intransitive affirmative. We think that the scenario of a periphrastic translation of Arabic religious formulas provides an explanation, for such a proceeding allows for a more or less textual translation. Provided the validity of the mentioned hypotheses about the origin of *mà(a)*, we argue that the ensuing part of the sentence used to be an independent clause and the perfective an imitation of the Arabic model. As (51) illustrates, the verb in an Arabic *du'ā'* occurs in the perfective (*māḍī*).

(51) Classical Arabic
bāraka *Allāhu* *fī* *-k*
bless.PFV God PRP you
'May God bless you!'

The additional *Ála m'à tó-ra*, 'God grant that' and the less regular distribution of the optative suffix variants *-ra/-la/-na* when compared to the affirmative intransitive perfective suffix (see §3.1) would then have developed later, after the grammaticalization of the biclausal construction or of the postpositional noun phrase + intransitive clause-construction into a monoclausal construction with the optative.

But Bambara also makes use of the subjunctive marking of the *dùgawu*, which is presently prevailing. As for its origin, there seem to be several possibilities. The first possibility is that we are dealing with an adaptation of classical Arabic to the most current verbal mood used to express, among others, direct and indirect wishes in Bambara (see §2). The second possibility is that the request prayers are not only translated from classical Arabic but also, due to an increasing frequency of oral interaction with native speakers of colloquial Arabic, from colloquial Arabic. In different Maghribi Arabic dialects, the verbs occurring in the *ṣiyaġ du'ā'* "[further] forms of *du'ā'*" are inflected for the subjunctive mood.

(52) Colloquial Arabic (dialects) (SVO): Subjunctive verb with an optative function
Allāh *yəbārek* *fī* *-k*
God bless.SBJV PRP you
'May God bless you!'

Hence, learned orality has probably not been the only channel for the transmission of *du'ā'*: alongside this top-down channel, drawing exclusively from classical Arabic, the request prayers were arguably also adopted into Bambara in encounters with speakers of Maghribi Arabic dialects. Even neighboring languages such as Soninke or Songhai may have played a role, since their native speakers were in closer contact with Arabs than native speakers of Bambara.

15. The two possible realizations of the optative suffix *-la* and *-na* were mentioned in 3.1.

It should also be emphasized that most *dùgawu* are not literal translations of *du'ā'* formulas from either classical or colloquial Arabic. Once this speech genre was adopted by Bambara speakers, it developed independently and proved productive in highly creative ways. Furthermore, the spread and current use of *dùgawu* extend far beyond Bambara-speaking Muslims, since even adherents of traditional religion use them (Ebermann 1989: 38, 100). The following are some of the most important occasions on which request prayers play a significant role across religious groups and educational levels.

6. *Dùgawu* as a speech act

Bambara *dùgawu* are the form used to formulate routinized speech acts of blessings and curses. They are performed by specialists (which in Mali would include imams, N'ko activists and—outside the Islamic context—catholic or protestant priests and authorities of traditional cults), and by non-specialists, i.e. all others, to solemnize, sacralize and mark boundaries of social events (Szuchewycz 2006). They occur within cultural-situational frames of interaction, and, far from serving phatic communion alone, they play a part in defining the events to the point that their occurrence is predictable in such social situations. Their understanding requires a consideration of the entire context in which they are embedded (Coulmas 1979: 241). It is possible to arrange *dùgawu* in several categories according to the cultural-situational frames in which they occur. A first category is given by a ceremonial context. A wedding (§6.1), a child's naming ceremony (see, for instance, Touré 1999: 83), or a burial (§6.2) are formal events that include dedicated or planned visits of family members, neighbors, and friends. *Dùgawu* used in a larger discourse such as an Imam's speech during a burial are still another category. In less ceremonial contexts, such as everyday encounters, *dùgawu* are part of opening and closing access rituals, defined as "verbal and nonverbal communicative acts that mark boundaries at the beginning and closing phases of social interaction" (Ameka 2009: 127). *Dùgawu* occurring in access rituals are illustrated with good-night wishes (§6.3) and thanks (§6.4). Nevertheless, in certain closing access rituals, a *dùgawu* can be much more than a daily or common request prayer: a son's, a daughter's, or a friend's departure for a long journey includes lengthy blessings pronounced by his or her parents, relatives or friends. Unforeseen good and bad events or discoveries sometimes require the pronunciation of a blessing (§§6.5, 6.6). Finally, curses may also have the form of a request prayer (§6.7). In this section, we first illustrate a handful of categories of request prayers with examples and discuss some cases of *dùgawu* that instantiate different speech acts according to variations of the situations in which they occur (§6.8). §6.9 summarizes the topics addressed in the *dùgawu* and discusses the values that they express.

6.1 Wishes on the occasion of marriage

The sequence of request prayers in (53), formulated at the occasion of a marriage, encompasses entreaties for a long life of the spouses, offspring as its outcome, absence of death, sicknesses, and other misfortunes.

(53)	*Ála*	*ka*	*kɔ́ɲɔ-`*	*ní*	*sì-`*	*bèn,*		
	God	SBJV.AFF	wedding-ART	and	life-ART	meet		
	Ála	*ka*	*à* *ní*	*kénɛya-`*		*bèn,*		
	God	SBJV.AFF	3SG and	health-ART		meet		
	Ála	*ká*	*à* *ké*	*sì-ma*	*fìla-`*	*ká*	*fúru-`*	*yé,*
	God	SBJV.AFF	3SG make	life-COM	TWO-ART	POSS	marriage-ART	PP
	Ála	*ká*	*sèn-`*	*ní*	*bolo-`*	*bɔ́*	*à*	*lá.*
	God	SBJV.AFF	foot-ART	and	arm-ART	put.out	3SG	PP

'May God give long life to the spouses (lit. make meet the wedding and life), may God make it a healthy marriage (lit. make meet it and health), may God let both live long as spouses (lit. make it a marriage of two long-living ones), may children come out of it (lit. may God bring forth from it feet and arms).' (entretien_sida1994_04_04.dis.html)

6.2 Burial and funeral eulogy

Blessings concerned with the death of a person are uttered during a burial, but also during visits to the deceased person's family at this occasion. A *dùgawu* such as the first part of (32) is very common. The blessing can be more elaborate when the death occurred prematurely and is thus considered as something bad. An example is given in (54). The reaction to the news of the death of a child is a blessing that affects its potential siblings who have not yet been born. In (55), the speaker wishes that the child to be born may become older, that is, not die as a child.

(54) [Blessings addressed to the families of the victims after an airplane accident which happened on 22 February 1985]

Ála	*k'*	*ù*	*dáyɔrɔ-`*		*súma!*		
God	SBJV.AFF	3PL	resting.place-ART		refresh		
Ála	*má*	*yàafa-`*	*kɛ́-ra*		*ù*	*mà.*	
God	OPT	pardon-ART	do-OPT		3PL	PP	
Ála	*k'*	*ù*	*kɔ́-`*	*súma*	*k'*	*ù*	*ɲɛ́-`*	*súma*
God	SBJV.AFF	3PL	back-ART	refresh	INF	3PL	face-ART	refresh
k'	*ù*	*sàra-`*		*kɛ́*		*àlijinɛ-`*	*yé!*	
INF	3PL	reward-ART		make		paradise-ART	PP	

'May God refresh their (last) resting place! May God pardon them. May God refresh their back and face and reward them with paradise.' (faso_kumakan1985_03_09_01mali_depiteso.old.repl.html 5546026)

(55) [When a child died]

Ála	*ka*	*à*	*kɔ́fàlen*	*sì-ma-`*	*ná!*
God	SBJV.AFF	3SG	replace	life-COM-ART	PP

'May God replace him/her by s.o. who gets old (s.o. who has life).' (Dumestre 2011: 908)

Different sources stress the difference between *dùgawu* pronounced when the deceased was a Muslim and when they were not. One speaker participating in the collection of conversations about AIDS notes that there is no other request prayer for a non-Muslim beyond the one in (56).

(56)

Ála	*ka*	*à*	*dáyɔrɔ-`*	*kɛ́*	*lìmana`*	*yé*
God	SBJV.AFF	3SG	resting.place-ART	make	faith-ART	PP

'May God make his/her last resting place (a place of) faith.' (entretien_sida1994_04_04.dis.html)

This conforms to the opinion of many traditionally minded Muslims who believe that praying for a deceased non-Muslim is not allowed, even if it is one's close relative or friend. Prophet Muhammad himself is said not to have prayed for his cherished uncle Abū Ṭālib, who had died as a "pagan". The only way to sidestep this prohibition is to wish that the bereaved had converted to Islam on their deathbed, which is always possible according to Islamic doctrine, since only God knows one's inner feelings and beliefs.

All the blessings said in the situation of death deal with the future of the deceased or of his or her family. More than compassion for the bereaved, the *dùgawu* in (54) and (56) express wishes of well-being in the afterlife for the deceased person: physical coolness, forgiveness of their sins, paradise, and faith. Example (55) expresses a wish for the dead child's family that future children survive.

6.3 Good-night wishes

Good-night wishes are formed using a *dùgawu*. In addition to (46) above, there are numerous other wishes for a good night, some of which are listed in (57).

(57) a. *Ála k' án sì.*
God SBJV.AFF 1PL spend.night
'May God let us spend the night, good night.'

b. *Ála má dùgu-` ɲùman-` jé-ra*
INF OPT earth-ART well-ART brighten-OPT
'God let the earth become well lit.' (kibaru528_05konta-kalankene_161nan.dis.html)

c. *k' án kélen kélen wúli.*
INF 1PL one one get.up
'(May God) wake us up one by one.'

The importance and relative elaboration of these greetings is linked to the perceived dangers associated with the night, both in material and spiritual terms (sorcery, etc.). The wish in (57a) is that we may 'survive' the night and see the dawn (57b), which apparently is not taken for granted. The idea underlying example (57c) is a wish for peace, indicated by all inhabitants getting up one by one. The opposite, everyone getting up at once, takes place in times of war to assemble everyone into readiness for military action or because of a fire or another sudden distress affecting the whole household or village.

6.4 Thanks: recognition of one's effort

Thanking in the form of a request prayer is the expression of increased gratitude. Invoking God who has the power to reward the good (and the bad) is equivalent to the recognition that a human is not apt to offer an appropriate reward. Whatever it may be—health, long life, happiness—God's reward is much more important than anything a human could give.

(58) [Bedrisa thanks for Seydu's visit which pleased him]
Ála màa à ɲɔ̀gɔn ké-ra í yèrɛ yé,
God OPT 3SG equal do-OPT 2SG self PP
Ála k' í sàra, í ní cé
God SBJV.AFF 2SG pay 2SG and thank
'May God do the same to you, May God repay you, thank you.' (dumestre-chroniques_amoureuses_1995_08_20.dis.html 5221586)

It is not necessary that the person who has done something good be present when a blessing is said. Third persons can be beneficiaries of a blessing, too. In (35), the speaker shows appreciation for Maria's mother, who had offered Maria a cloth. She says, *Ála k'í bá` kénɛ` tó* 'May God keep your mother healthy'. Another possible blessing in such a context is *Ála k'í bá` sàra* 'May God reward your mother'.

6.5 Wishes regarding pregnancy and birth

When the speaker discovers that the listener is pregnant or that the time of birth is close, the expression of a blessing is almost unavoidable. There are different *dùgawu* possible; most of them express the wish for *héɛrɛ* 'peace/happiness', which includes the undisturbed state of pregnancy and unperturbed process of birth giving.

(59) *Ála k' à kɛ́ héɛrɛ-` yé*
God SBJV.AFF 3SG make peace-ART PP
'May God make it happiness.'

(60) *Ála k' í jìgin héɛrɛ-` lá*
God SBJV.AFF 2SG give.birth peace-ART PP
'May God let you give birth in happiness.'

(61) *Ála k' í ɲùman-` jìgin*
God SBJV.AFF 2SG good-ART give.birth
'May God let you give birth well.'

6.6 Prayer to prevent evil

At different occasions, especially when the conversation partners hear about bad things that have happened, speakers pronounce a request prayer to ask for prevention of similar bad things. Illnesses are considered bad, for instance *bàna júguw* 'evil sicknesses' as in (62), but also concrete diseases such as *dána* 'syphilis' or *koronavirisi* 'COVID-19', but there are also other bad events, such as *kàsaara* 'accident, catastrophe', *jóginni* 'injury', *sɔ̀ngɔ yèlɛn* 'rising prices', and other events that disturb a peaceful life. The beneficiaries may include the speaker, who can be represented in the pronoun *án* 'we', it may be a larger group, for instance the family or the entire country of Mali such as it was pronounced at the end of a film made to raise awareness about measures to prevent infection with the coronavirus (62).

(62) *Ála mà án kísi-ra bàna júgu`-w mà*
God OPT 1PL preserve-OPT sickness evil-ART-PL PP
'May God preserve us from evil sicknesses!'

6.7 Curses

As already mentioned and illustrated in (40), there are curses that are instances of request prayers which display the same syntactic structure as blessings and often occur —like the latter—in a litany. (63b) provides evidence for the same categorization of curses and request prayers under the term of *dùbabu* (*dùgawu*). The second quotative *kó* in the passage of *... kó à bé dùbabu ké kó Ála ká dùgu nìn lábin* '...who intends (lit. says) to make request prayers saying "May God perish this village"' introduces represented speech. What follows is the citation of a curse in form of a *dùgawu*.

(63) a. *jànfa júgu fɛ́n ó fɛ́n bé díɲé-` kɔ́nɔ yàn,*
traitor evil thing DISTR thing COP world-ART in here
Ála ka ò fátu.
God SBJV.AFF this die
'May God thwart any attempt at betrayal in this world here. (lit. May God make die any traitor that exists in this world here).'

b. *mɔ̀gɔ ó mɔ̀gɔ, mɔ̀gɔ júgu ó*
person DISTR person person evil DISTR
mɔ̀gɔ júgu-` bɛ́ɛ kó à bɛ́
person evil-ART all QUOT 3SG IPFV.AFF
dùbabu-` kɛ́ kó Ála ká
request.prayer-ART do QUOT God SBJV.AFF

dùgu	*nìn*	*lábin,*	*Ála*	*ka*	*ò*	*sèn*
village	DEM	perish	God	SBJV.AFF	this	leg
fila-`	*kári,*	*kà*	*ò*	*bólo*	*fila-`*	*kári*
two-ART	break	INF	this	arm	two-ART	break

'May God break both legs and both arms of anyone, of any evil who asks God to destroy this village! (lit. of every villain who pronounces request prayers saying God may destroy this village)'.

c.

mɔ̀gɔ	*ó*	*mɔ̀gɔ-`*	*bɛ́ɛ*	*kó*	*é*	*dè*		
person	DISTR	person-ART	all	QUOT	2SG	FOC		
b'	*à*	*fɛ̀*	*dùgu*	*nìn*	*kànâ*	*táa*	*ɲɛ́fɛ,*	*Ála*
COP	3SG	PP	village	DEM	SBJV.NEG	go	forward	God
k'	*í*	*ɲé-`*	*fíyen*					
SBJV.AFF	2SG	eye-ART	blind					

'May God blind those who wish this village may not flourish.' (Ebermann 1989: 102)

Many of them call for God's revenge in case a potential enemy does or wishes something bad to the community for whose benefit they are uttered. (63b) illustrates the closure of a burial, arranged by the imam of the village as the principal protagonist. The imam first performs blessings asking God to bestow divine favor on the village, or more precisely to bestow it with progress and prosperity. He then goes on to invoke God's rancor upon any potential enemy of the village.

6.8 *Dùgawu* representing different speech acts

As mentioned above, the context in which a *dùgawu* is used determines the speech act it represents. (64), *Ála k'í sàra* 'May God repay you', taken without the context in which it occurs illustrates the indeterminacy of a *dùgawu.* When someone has done a good deed, *Ála k'í sàra* is a way to thank the benefactor, as illustrated in (58), where it occurs as part of a litany. The expression of thanks is the most frequent use of the sentence. Under appropriate conditions, however, the sentence gets the reverse meaning, and the blessing changes into a curse. Thus, when the speaker suspects the hearer of a misdeed, say, a theft, they can put them to the test: if the addressee is indeed the malefactor, he or she will be irritated and will not reply *àmiina* to reinforce the request prayer. This is because by uttering *àmiina*, the respondent confirms and reinforces the request that the past act be reciprocated with an equivalent one, but even a thief does not wish to be stolen from.

(64)

Ála	*k'*	*í*	*sàra*
God	SBJV.AFF	2SG	pay

'May God repay you'

In contrast, when the addressee responds *àmiina*, the speaker can be sure that they are innocent. Using this *dùgawu* in the latter situation means also that the offended party does not need to avenge themselves; they place the payment for the wrongdoing in God's hands. The accusation of someone having done wrong is a face-threatening act and using this *dùgawu* here functions thus as a polite off-the-record way to do it (Brown & Levinson 1987).

Another routinized blessing with several functions according to the situational context is given in (65).

(65)

Ála	*ká*	*dɔ́gɔ`*	*díya*
God	SBJV.AFF	weekly.market-ART	make.agreeable

'(lit.) May God make the market agreeable.'

Figure 1 — Vehicles, especially big busses are a preferred location of inscriptions.

Allah ka an deme, transcribed here in the official orthography (tone marking added) as *Ála ká án dɛ̀mɛ* 'May God help us' is a frequently encountered inscription. (Photo: Klaudia Dombrowsky-Hahn)

Figure 2 — Some dùgawu written on huge vehicles have some additional phrases.

Here we read, transcribed in official orthography: *bɛ́ɛ́ ká bàn, Ála ká sɔ̀n* 'May everybody refuse, God may accept' (Photo: Maria Rauscher)

The first situational context is the imminent departure of a person to the market. It can also be said when two persons meet on the road, one of whom is on their way to the market. Wishing them a good outcome for the upcoming activity falls under the category of closing access rituals. The second context occurs when a potential client wants to reject an offer to buy a commodity. It fulfills two functions: first, it communicates the addressee-merchant that the speaker does not accept his or her offer, and second and more importantly, that the speaker wishes the merchant a good outcome for his or her activity. Here, too, the unspoken rejection of the offer allows the addressee to keep face, and the responsibility for a good outcome is shifted to God as a third party. Similarly, the wish (66) 'May God gratify you' said to a beggar focuses on God's unlimited generosity, while the speaker–the one who was begged–avoids a direct rejection to give alms.

(66) *Ála* *màa* *í* *sɔ́n-na*
God OPT 2SG gratify-OPT
'May God gratify you.'

6.9 Values and effects of *dùgawu*

Most *dùgawu* are blessings: Speakers ask for something good to happen to the addressees or other people, among whom the speakers themselves may be included. A look at the topics that occur most frequently allows one to understand the values of the communities who practice them. We find the following topics: peace or happiness, which include good health, long life, food, clothing, and offspring; protection from misfortune, which includes sickness, accidents, threats, and being in

Figure 3 — SABALIKAGNE ALLA KATIENDEME
Transcribed as follows: *sábali ká ɲì. Ála ká tìɲɛ dɛ̀mɛ* 'Patience is good. May God help the truth'. (Photo: Maria Rauscher)

need; success and support (in any undertaking); prosperity; harmonious relations; solidarity; God's help and recompense for good (and bad) deeds; in the event of death, God's pity, forgiveness, and being granted to enter paradise. By their very form with God as the subject of the sentence, *dùgawu* are theocentric formulas: God is called upon to give the addressees health, peace, happiness, and so on. There are several reasons to invoke God. First, by invoking God's blessing, the speaker reduces his or her own responsibility for the realization of the wish. Human relations are fragile, and a wish that has been spoken but was not fulfilled carries the risk of creating distrust about its sincerity. Including God dispels any doubts about the sincere intentions of the one pronouncing a *dùgawu*. At the same time, He is also considered responsible for the realization of the wish. In some cases, the possibility of invoking God as the cause of what may come provides relief to the speaker. When God is invoked to repay an act as in the second context of (64), used to put the hearer to the test, the speaker is relieved of the task of judging that act himself. If the trader's activity does not turn out as well as expected, those who refused to buy what they are offered do not have full responsibility when they say the sentence in (65). The reference to God has thus a softening effect for the relation between the parties; He is supposed to act as an arbiter and allows the interlocutors to maintain face (Tarr 1979: 196).

Curses have been described as "thematic variations and inversions" of blessings (Kratz 1989: 637). They are directed against people, things, or beings perceived as a threat to a community or to an individual as part of that community but can have the effect of strengthening solidarity with one's own community. This is visible in (63), a request prayer in which God is called upon to bring about misfortune, rupture of prosperity, death, or destruction upon traitors, evil people, and enemies, but the speaker requests this for the preservation of his own community.

Figure 4 — This billboard of a bank on the side of a road in Mali shows a wish in French and Bambara: Bon voyage.

Prudence! *Allah ka sé ni aw gnouman yé*; retranscribed in the current orthography as *Ála ká sé ní áw ɲùman yé*. 'Have a good trip'. (The first two words of the Bambara part are invisible in the photo). (Photo: Joany Martian Kamate)

Speech acts expressed as blessings are performatives. But what do they do concretely for the people they are addressed to? Following Szuchewycz (2006) they bring about a change of spiritual state. The perlocutionary force of blessings and curses differs, however, according to the speakers who pronounce them and according to the addressees to whom they are spoken. According to Kratz (1989: 637), the "constitutive pragmatic definition [of blessings and curses] includes a difference of authority or power". In the Bambara-speaking communities that make use of *dùgawu* this means that, although everybody is likely to pronounce a *dùgawu*, some people are more appropriate to do so, they do it more often than others, and their blessings are said to be more effective than those of others. A blessing from an older person is considered particularly effective. Blessings uttered by certain persons are analogous to their relative position in the family, the village, or the community. For instance, one's parents' words are directly performative, i.e., they produce the reality of what is being pronounced (Derive 1987: 26). Thus, blessings spoken by the head of the family are the most powerful, especially when the blessed person is his child. This is also confirmed in the Bambara proverb in (67).

(67)	*ní*	*mɔ̀gɔ̀*	*fà-̀*	*y'*	*í*	*dánga,*		
	if	person-ART	father-ART	PFV.TR	2SG	curse		
	í	*tɛ́*	*fóyi*	*sɔ̀rɔ*	*díɲɛ-̀*	*ná,*		
	2SG	IPFV.NEG	nothing	find	world-ART	PP		
	ní	*mɔ̀gɔ-̀*	*fà-̀*	*ye*	*dùga-̀*	*tà*	*í*	*yé*
	if	person-ART	father-ART	PFV.TR	blessing-ART	take	2SG	PP
	n'	*í*	*ye*	*fɛ́n*	*ó*	*fɛ́n*	*ɲíni,*	
	if	2SG	PFV.TR	thing	DISTR	thing	search	
	í	*b'*	*ò*	*sɔ̀rɔ.*				
	2SG	IPFV.AFF	this	find				

'When your father curses you, you won't find anything in your life; when your father expresses blessings for you, you will get whatever you wish'. (Bailleul 2005: no. 3359)

Accoding to our observations and to speakers' statements, words of a child's mother and of her co-wives have much power, too. Children who have been blessed by their father (and mother and her co-wives) can be confident of being successful in their lives, whereas those who have been cursed are sure to fail in their undertakings. (Professional) success depends on blessings as illustrated in Machín Álvarez' (2011: 17) account of female Mande griots in Senegal. The author notes that, next to other

factors, blessings that had been pronounced upon them were considered as the source of their own persuasiveness on their audiences in their work as *jèli* 'griot'.

Particularly strong effects are attributed to *dùgawu* spoken by ritual specialists, such as imams and traditional dignitaries, and, in recent times also N'Ko activists (Donaldson 2017). The latter represent the "new kind of Muslim subject [...], whose religiosity is at once more standardized and more individualized [...] and has to be staged in public" (Zappa 2009: 371).

Finally, the choice to translate a wish written in French, i.e. 'bon voyage' into the Bambara request prayer *Ála ká sé ní áw ɲùman yé* 'Have a good trip, lit. May God let you arrive safely' as in Figure 4 includes both languages on purpose. The billboard of a bank placed on the side of a big road targets cultivators, many of whom are assumed not to speak and write French. By addressing the target group in a language they understand, and which is associated with their culture and their religion more than French, the bank hopes to attract them as customers.[16]

7. CONCLUSION

Unlike other oral genres such as epics, proverbs, or narratives, prayers in African languages are under-researched. This paper is a first attempt to linguistically study a subgenre of prayer: the request prayer *dùgawu* in Bambara and its developments. It is a construction whose basic form is determined by *Ála* in subject position and the verbal mode of optative or subjunctive. It allows for some features that are rare outside request prayers, such as the transitive use of intransitive verbs. Another defining feature is the exchange character: The *dùgawu* expressed by the speaker is affirmed with a response formula by the listener or others present.

Our preliminary presentation of some orally uttered and written *dùgawu* in various situations hints at their wide range of use. Indeed, request prayers play an important role in the ceremonial and everyday life of the communities speaking Bambara. And although the exchange pattern and many lexemes originate from Arabic and are unequivocally related to Islamic request prayers, they are not only used by Muslims. They serve primarily to strengthen social bonds by praying good things for the listener, their relatives, and the whole community in various situations or (much more rarely) by praying for bad things for an individual's or a community's enemies.

Dùgawu undergo manifold developments. Among others, they are abbreviated into short greetings of farewell, good night, and the like. While this may suggest an underlying process of secularization, even shortened *dùgawu* where the name of God is omitted can still be interpreted as request prayers, as illustrated by the response *àmiina*, or the meta-*dùgawu*. Hence, secularization appears rather as a possible side-effect of a shortening process ultimately due to the high frequency of these formulas. If this is the case, *àmiina* takes simply on the meaning of 'thank you'. However, in order to understand how the speakers themselves apprehend the shortened *dùgawu,* a thorough study based on interviews with a substantial number of speakers would be needed.

Request prayers undergo a change also by the medium used. While they came into Bambara supposedly through the process of paraphrased translation of written Arabic request prayers and were, and still are, used mainly in direct oral communication, they are nowadays also written. However, they are not ratified, approved, and confirmed by means of *àmiina* when they occur in written form. Interviews with car owners, shopkeepers, and journalists publishing request prayers on their vehicles, shops, and in their articles could shed more light on the functions of these written *dùgawu* and the meaning of the missing response.

16. Thanks to Joany Martian Kamate for the photo and his interpretation of the reason for the translation on the board.

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Abbreviations

1PL	first person plural
1SG	first person singular
2PL	second person plural
2SG	second person singular
3PL	third person plural
3SG	third person singular
ADJ	adjective
AG	agent
ART	article
COM	comitative ('having X')
DEM	demonstrative
DISTR	distributive
FUT.AFF	future affirmative
FUT.CERT.AFF	certain future affirmative
ID	identifier
IMP.PL	imperative plural
IMP.SG	imperative singular
INF	infinitive
IPFV.AFF	imperfective affirmative
IPFV.NEG	imperfective negative
OPT	optative
PFV	perfective
PFV.INTR	perfective intransitive
PFV.NEG	perfective negative
PFV.TR	perfective transitive
PL	plural
POSS	possessive connector
PP	postposition
PRP	preposition
PST	past
PTCP.RES	resultative participle
QUOT	quotative
SBJV	subjunctive
SBJV.AFF	subjunctive affirmative
SBJV.NEG	subjunctive negative

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