



Phasal Polarity expressions in Bambara (Mande)

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In Bambara there are at least two expressions for each of the four PhP concepts:

- (a) *kàban* ~ *kà bán*, *kàkɔɔ* and *kélen* express the ALREADY concept
- (b) *bán*, *fólɔ* express the NOT YET concept
- (c) *túgun* and *bilen*~*blèn* express the NO LONGER concept
- (d) the borrowed *hálisa* [hálísà], [hálisà], and, rarely, *bilen*~*blèn* express the STILL concept.

The expressions under (a) and (d) are found in affirmative clauses, displaying one of the affirmative predicate markers (auxiliaries or copulas), (b) and (c) in clauses bearing a negative predicate marker.

At least some items occur in more than one phasal category, justifying the label ‘flexible’ for the system. *kàban* ‘already’ and *bán* ‘not yet’ show the common element *bán*, whose origin, the verb *bán* ‘finish, end’ is transparent.

When the borrowed expression *hálisa* and the rare – and maybe only recently developing *bilen* expressing the concept ‘still’ are disregarded, the phasal system of Bambara can be qualified as asymmetric, comprising the three periods 1) not yet; 2) already; 3) no longer.

period 1	period 2	period 3
NOT YET	ALREADY	NO LONGER
<i>bán</i> , <i>fólɔ</i>	<i>kàban</i> ~ <i>kà bán</i>	<i>túgun</i> , <i>bilen</i> ~ <i>blèn</i>
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Asymmetric phasal system of Bambara (borrowed *hálisa* is excluded)

The expressions of the ALREADY and the NOT YET concepts differ with respect to pragmatic sensitivity. Among the first, *kàban* and *kàkɔɔ* are used in neutral scenarios, whereas *kélen* is the expression found in counterfactual contexts. Interestingly, the expressions *hálisà* or *háli bi*, the first part of which is borrowed from Arabic and that express in Bambara the occurrence of the situation implying a reference point in the subsequent phase, is also used as a strongly marked NOT YET expression ‘still not’, emphasising the extendedness of the phase of non-occurrence before the expectation of its overdue occurrence. However, these items do not belong exactly to the same paradigm as the other phasal polarity items.