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The Nda? Nda? Noun Class System

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the specificities of noun classes in Nda?nda?. Our main objective is to analyze the structure of the noun and propose a more reliable classification of the Nda?nda? nouns. The data is collected through a questionnaire, transcribed with the International Phonetic Alphabet and analyzed within the framework of structuralism (Saussure: 1916). As far as the noun structure is concerned, a thorough description of all the syllable structures and the tone patterns of the Nda?nda? name is carried out. We revised Ngantchui's (1989) classification and proposed |ø-| and |w-| as concord prefix for class one nouns instead of |ø-| and |y-|. Her claims that tones were relevant in distinguishing classes in the language is also disproved. As for gender, four double class genders and four single-class genders have been identified. The double class genders included 1/2, 3/4, 3/6 and 5/4 and the single class genders 1, 2, 3 and 6. We also took a closer look at the relational pattern existing between the constituents of the nominal construction in terms of distribution and agreement.

Keywords: *Gender, Nda? nda?, Noun classes, Prefixes, Syllable Structure.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to describe the Ndaʔndaʔ noun in order to highlight its internal structure. The paper is divided into two sections. The first tackles the structure of the noun and the second analyses the noun class system of the language. In this subsection, we re-examine Ngantchui's classification (1989), highlight its shortcomings and improve on it by proposing a new marker for one of the classes. While identifying the classes, we will also be curious to see how they can be likened to the common semantics of the Proto-Bantu noun classes by Maho (1999) who summarized the works of Meinhof (1932), Meeussen (1967), Welmers (1973) and Hinnebusch (1989) in a table.

2. LANGUAGE BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Ndaʔndaʔ is a Grassfields Bantu language spoken in the Nkam division of the Littoral Region and in the Nde and Koung-Khi divisions of the West Region of Cameroon. It is made up of two dialects: Undimeha (East Ndaʔndaʔ) and Ungameha (South and West Ndaʔndaʔ). Our data was collected from Batufam, an Est-Ndaʔndaʔ dialect, referred to by native speaker as "ghom a tswefap". According to Ehnologue (2005), it has the following classification: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam and Bamileke. The language is spoken in Ndaʔndaʔ and the neighbouring villages either speak Ndaʔndaʔ (Bandrefam, Bangwa and Bagang-Fokam) or Ghomala (Bayangam and Bandjoun).

As far as Ndaʔndaʔ is concerned, three works have been earmarked. Ngantchui Debana (2009), in the fields of discourse analysis, studies the preeminence of nominal structures in Ndaʔndaʔ. Gueche Fotso (2015) describes the grammar of Batufam in three sections namely Noun morphology, verb morphology and syntax. Gueche Fotso (2019) discusses multiverb constructions and the homorganic nasal in Ndaʔndaʔ and argues that the homorganic nasal that is part of the tense marker, and the one that marks a sequence of verbs in a multiverb construction belong to the same syntactic category and cannot co-occur in the same construction since they are verbal affixes.



3. NOUN STRUCTURE

To understand the structure of the noun in Nda?nda?, we will first of all study the nature and structure of nominal prefixes. Then we will tackle the morphological structure of nouns before examining their tonal structure.

3.1 Nature and structure of nominal prefixes

Only primary prefixes are attested in Nda?nda?. These primary prefixes are scarcely segmentally marked (“segmentally marked” refers to the fact that we deal here with real segments as opposed to tones) and can only be guessed from the agreement triggered on the determiners. Let us consider the following examples.

(1)a- [sújó]

|sú j - ó|
Friend cl1 this
“This friend”

b- [sú pó]

|sú p - ó|
Friends cl2 this
“These friends”

(2)a- [tʃjǝ? tsɛ]

|tʃjǝ? ts - ɛ|
hat cl5 my
“My hat”

b- [tʃjǝ? mɛ]

|tʃjǝ? m - ɛ|
Hats cl4 my
“My hats”

For instance, in (1)a above, we assume that the concord prefix |j-|, present in the determiner |jó| was primarily also present in the noun |sú| but since Nda?nda?, like the majority of Grassfields Bantu languages, has lost most of its nominal prefixes, it has deleted. This is corroborated by the few nouns of “class 5” which still bear the class prefix. Actually, the concord prefix for this class is |ts-| and the fact that the majority of Nda?nda? words starting with |ts-| are part of that class can be an indication that initially all the nouns of the said class bore it, as evidenced below.



(3)	a- [tsík tsì]	b- [tsótsó]
	tsík ts -	tsó ts - ó
	ì	tree cl5 this
	name cl5	"This tree"

Primary prefixes can also be observed in the plural where some nouns either take the prefix |pə̀-| or the homorganic nasal. In the following examples, the primary prefixes are in bold.

(4)a- náʔ : "a cow"	[pənáʔ]
Cow	pə̀ - náʔ
	Pref cow
	"Cows"
b- tsó : "a cow"	[ntsə̀]
tree	N - tsə̀
	Pref tree
	"Trees"
c- pfú : "a hand"	[mvú]
hand	N - pfú
	Pref hand
	"Hands"

At the end of this discussion, the following observations can be made:

- Only primary nominal prefixes are attested in Ndaʔndaʔ.
- Very few of these prefixes are segmentally marked. They are |ts-| for some class five nouns, |pə̀-| and the homorganic nasal for the plural form of specific nouns.

3.2 Syllable structure and tone patterns of Ndaʔndaʔ nouns

This section aims at studying the tone patterns and syllable structures of nouns in Ndaʔndaʔ in order to facilitate the understanding of the various transformations that the latter can undergo in contact with other words.



1. The syllable structure of nouns

In Ndaʔndaʔ, nouns are either monosyllabic or disyllabic. The various structures of each type of noun are discussed below.

3.2.1. Syllable structures of monosyllabic nouns

The various syllable structures of monosyllabic nouns are summarized in the following table.

Table (1): Syllable structure of monosyllabic noun

SYLLABLE STRUCTURES	NOUN	Gloss
CVC	súp	Needle
CV	tsé	Tree
NCV	ndzə	Cloth
NCVC	ntáp	Shoe
CGV	kwì	Back
CGVC	kwəʔ	Chair
NCGVC	ŋwəʔ	Termite
NCGV	ntfʷə	Famine

Monosyllabic CV structures in Ndaʔndaʔ do not have any restrictions as far as consonants in onset position are concerned. There is also no restriction in terms of the types of vowels in peak position since any of the nine vowels (/i/, /u/, /e/, /ə/, /o/, /ɛ/, /a/, /ɔ/, /ɪ/) can occupy that position.

As far as the CGV structure is concerned, since consonant clusters are very common in Ndaʔndaʔ, it could have been analysed as CCV or CVV. But we handled the former separately from the latter because the CGV structure is very productive in the language. Moreover, we have not analysed it as CVV because it seems to be the underlying structure of all the elements of this group. We therefore assume that [kχwə] for instance is underlyingly |kχúə| and changes after the application of the gliding rule. This analysis is more tenable because the data do not include any word wherein the vowels /u/ and /i/ are followed by another vowel. If there is a consonant cluster at the beginning of a monosyllabic noun, the first consonant is always a nasal (/n/, /m/, /ŋ/). A few examples are given below.



- (5)
- | | | | | | |
|-------|-------------|------|------------|-------|-----------|
| ndzwó | “goat” | mbàk | “palm nut” | ŋkχó | “fence” |
| ɲɔ | “water” | mpóp | “egg” | ŋkχò: | “rope” |
| ntfwó | “famine” | mvó | “bone” | ŋgwó? | “termite” |
| ntfú | “intestine” | mbòg | “rain” | ŋgóp | “scorpio” |
| ndók | “horn” | mvàp | “stomach” | ŋgwí | “farm” |

/p/, /k/ and /ʔ/ are the only consonants allowed in coda position of monosyllable nouns as evidenced by the selection below.

- (6)
- | | | | | | |
|------|-------------|------|---------|-------|------------|
| ntáp | “shoe” | kpák | “ring” | ɲùʔ | “beer” |
| kíp | “claw” | ntòk | “neck” | náʔ | “cow” |
| tsùp | “plum” | swók | “tooth” | kwòʔ | “chair” |
| tsíp | “pregnancy” | kwòk | “spear” | pfwóʔ | “mushroom” |
| ntóp | “potato” | ntók | “ear” | lúʔ: | “spoon” |

3.2.2. Syllable structures of disyllabic nouns

Disyllabic words exhibit structures that are represented in the table below.

Table (2): Syllable structures of disyllabic nouns

SYLLABLE STRUCTURES	NOUN	Gloss
CVC	súp	Needle
CV	tsó	Tree
NCV	ndzò	Cloth
NCVC	ntáp	Shoe
CGV	kwì	Back
CGVC	kwòʔ	Chair
NCGVC	ŋgwóʔ	Termite
NCGV	ntfwó	Famine

Complex consonant clusters are very common in Ndaʔndaʔ and their segmentation often raises many questions. Let us consider for instance, the segmentation, CVC.CCVC. In fact, this is not the only possibility and has been preferred to others such as CVCC.CVC and CCVCCC.VC. As an illustration, if we segment the word [ŋgùʔndzík] as CVCC.CVC, it will yield illicit syllables such as “ŋgùʔn.” The syllable is illicit because every consonant-ending syllable in Ndaʔndaʔ must be either /p/, /k/ or /ʔ/. The same applies to the segmentation CVCCC.VC. Moreover, it is not plausible that a syllable that is preceded by three consonants will



start with a vowel. The segmentation CVC.CCVC is the best in two ways. On the one hand, it respects the internal behavior of the language in so much as /ʔ/ is part of the few consonants that can be in coda position and, on the other hand, it reflects the native speaker's pronunciation: a Ndaʔndaʔ will rather pronounce "ŋgùʔ.ndzík" than "ŋgù.ʔndzík" and "ŋgùʔn.dzík".

To conclude this section on the syllable structure, it is clear that words in Ndaʔndaʔ are either monosyllabic or disyllabic. In actual fact, there are some trisyllabic and tetrasyllabic words in the language but they are all either borrowings or compound words as seen below.

(7)

Borrowing

[tósíláp] "torch"
[ndʒèkéí] "donkey"
[késèŋgɛ́] "cassava"

Compounds

[nwónkχə̀tsə̀p] "young
man"
[ŋkúnàké] "beans"
[tòpŋgɔ́ŋgɔ́] "spider"

3.2.2 Tone patterns of nouns

The tone patterns will be studied with reference to the syllable structure identified above.

➤ **Tone patterns of monosyllabic nouns:** monosyllabic words can be classified into two tone patterns represented in the following table.

Table (3): Tone patterns of monosyllabic nouns

Tone patterns	Noun	Gloss
H	mfú	Hand
	ɲí	Cutlass
L	ŋfwə̀	Mouth
	ɲùʔ	Beer

➤ **Tone patterns of disyllabic nouns:** disyllabic nouns in Ndaʔndaʔ exhibit different tone patterns. These include: H-H, L-L, H-L and L-H. These tone patterns are illustrated below.

Table (4): Tone patterns of disyllabic nouns

Tone patterns	Noun	Gloss
H – H	tɔ́tɔ́ʔ	Frog
L – L	tʃə́tʃə́k	Shadow
H – L	ɡɔ́nɔ́p	Pig
L – H	mɔ̀àʔá	Bell

The description of the tone patterns of noun in the language is important in many respects:

- It helps us understand and have a clear picture of the prosody of the language.
- Since most tones vary according to whether the words are in isolation or associated to pronouns, adjectives etc., it is important to know the basic tones and tones association-patterns of the language.

4. NOUN CLASS SYSTEM

Bantu noun classes are morphologically realized with various affixes appearing on nouns, pronouns, adnominals and verbs. Maho (1999) refers to them as “*noun class affixes, which thus covers both noun prefixes (the one appearing on nouns) and concord (the rest).*” This is corroborated by Hyman (1970) who observes that “*nominals also generally consist of a class prefix plus a noun stem that can help set up a system of noun classes in the language.*” Let us consider the following examples in Oku and Bàm̀b̀b̀l̀d̀ extracted respectively from Blood (1999) and Djomeni (2007).

(8) Oku

ɛy - tuk cl5 potato “potato”	ɛy - biy cl5 kola nut “kola nut”	ɛy - shiɛ cl7 seed “seed”	ɛy - beeme cl7 faith “faith”
em - nduk cl6 palm wine “palm wine”	em - nduŋ cl6 blood “blood”	em - kfəŋ cl6 flour “flour”	em - gvəl cl6 oil “oil”
m̩ - bònɣ cl3 cassava “cassava”	n̩ - sònɣ cl3 yard “yard”	ɲ - gál cl3 wife “wife”	ɲ - kút cl3 bag “bag”

(9) Bàmbəlò

ì - nìṅ	ì - sínḡ	ì - néṅ	ì - sɛ́ɛ́
cl7 life	cl7 cat	cl7 mirror	cl7 farm work
“life”	“cat”	“mirror”	“farm work”

The above examples evidence that noun class prefixes are still attested in Oku and Bəmbələ and are key elements in the distinction of noun classes therein. However, in Ndaʔndaʔ, the identity of noun classes is not marked as pervasely as in Oku and Bəmbələ and the only context in which the full range of noun classes can be differentiated in the language is in the observed concord of possessive and/or demonstrative determiners. Actually, in Ndaʔndaʔ, unless we hear the possessive concord of a noun, we would be unsure and, to quote Hyman (1970), “usually unable to assign it to a class.” Consequently, what will be referred to, in this chapter, as class markers will actually be concord prefixes.

While classifying the nouns of Ndaʔndaʔ, we will also be curious to compare it to the common semantics of the noun classes in Proto-Bantu even though, as pointed out by Richardson (1967), “it is impossible to prove conclusively by any reputable methodology that nominal classification in Proto-Bantu was indeed widely based on conceptual implication.” In like manner, Denny (1976) observes that “the typical conclusion which is reached is that while all or most members of certain natural classes of entity may be placed in the same class [...] the classes themselves have no overall intrinsic semantic contents (with the frequent exception of class 1/2).” In effect, a group of nouns that fall into one or another noun class seldom constitute semantically coherent categories. Thus virtually, writes Maho (1999), all noun classes contain what grammarians label “miscellaneous nouns” (or something similar). Moreover, adds the latter, “while most grammarians define noun classes morphologically, that is, based on the form of the noun class affixes, many grammarians go beyond this and try to justify the existence of the noun classes with semantic parameters, an activity strongly opposed and criticized by Amidu (1997).” Still, the pursuit of regular semantic models or explanations in Ndaʔndaʔ is a process not completely in vain, mostly as the system of Bantu noun classes is not completely devoid of regular semantic tendencies.

The noun class system of Ndaʔndaʔ was earlier examined by Ngantchui (1989) but after carefully analyzing her classification against data collected on the field, we restructure the latter and propose a new class marker for class 1. This subsection will be divided into three parts. The first will present Ngantchui's classification, the second one will elaborate on what we consider to be the weaknesses of the latter and the third one will present the revised noun class system.

4.2. Ngantchui's noun class system

In her thesis, Ngantchui (1989) identifies the six noun classes presented below with the English translation of glosses in brackets.

- Class 1 is marked by the prefixes "ø-" and "y-" and a low tone as illustrated below.

(10) kχùʔ ø - ú y - ó y - íé

homonyme cl1 ton cl1 ce cl1 lequél ?

"Lequel est ton homonyme?" (Which one is your namesake?)

- Class 2 is marked by the prefix "p-" as exemplified below.

(11) kùʔ p - ù p - ó p - yé - é

homonyme cl2 tes cl2 ces cl2 lesquels Int

"Ce sont lesquels tes homonymes?" (Which ones are your namesakes?)

- Class 3 is marked by the prefixes "ø-" and "y-" and a high tone as presented below.

(12) pfú ø - í y - à lèp

main cl3 sa cl3 que gauche

"Sa main gauche" (His left hand)

- Class 4 is marked by the prefix "m-" as illustrated below.

(13) mvú m - í lèp

cl4 ses cl4 gauche

“Ses mains gauches” (His left hands)

- Class 5 is marked by “ts-” as exemplified below.

(14) tsé ts - é ts - ú kè ?

Arbre Cl5 cet cl5 ton Int

“Cet arbre est-il le tien ?” (Is this tree yours?)

- Class 6 nouns are marked by “ts-” as evidenced below.

(15) nzê ts - ú ts - é fáfá

habits cl6 tes cl6 que blanc

“Tes habits sont blancs” (Your clothes are white)

4.3. The problem with Ngantchui’s classification

The problem we have identified in Ngantchui’s classification lies in her distinction of class 1 and class 3. First, let us read what she writes about both classes: “comme la classe 1, la classe 3 se caractérise par le préfixe d’accord “ø” ou “y” mais s’en différencie par un ton haut”. In other words class 1 and class 3 share the same concord prefixes but differ in tones. We decided to check and cross-check the agreement patterns of both classes and we ended up realizing that the difference between class 1 and class 3 was not tonological but morphological.

Actually class one concord prefixes are not |ø-| and |y-| as advocated by Ngantchui (1989) but effectively |ø-| and |w-|. To have a clear picture of the difference in the following examples, we took class 1 data exactly as they appear in Ngantchui’s work, went to the field and had different results as presented below.

Ngantchui’s data (page 34)

(16)a- Nwə ø - à y - é wə nzi

Enfant cl.1 mon cl.1 ce Asp dormir

“Mon enfant-ci dort” (This child (that is mine) is sleeping)



b- khu' ø - ù y - ó y - ié ?
homonyme cl.1 ton cl.1 ce cl.1 lequel

“Lequel est ton homonyme?” (Which one is your namesake?)

Ngantchui's data cross-checked on the field

(17)a- [ɲwâ wó mə nzi]

|ɲwâ ø - à w - ó mé N-tsí|
child cl1 my cl1 this Pres sleep

“This child (that is mine) is sleeping”

b- [kχù?ù wó wjé ?]

|kχù? ø - ù w - ó w - ié|
namesake cl1 your cl1 that cl1 which

“Which one of these is your namesake?”

From the foregoing example, it clearly appears that the difference of concord prefixes between Ngantchui (1989) and our finding on the field is striking. While analyzing Ngantchui's data, our attention was drawn by “wə”, the aspectual marker she identifies in 16a that is not always the same throughout her work. To have a clear idea of the difference, below are two examples extracted from her thesis. 14a has been repeated below as 18b for convenience.

(18)(Page 140) a- gh - ù mbĩ **mə** ncwé
cl1 - ton rel **Asp** pleurer

“C'est le tien qui pleure” (Yours is crying)

(page34) b- ɲwə ø - à y - ó
wənzi

enfant cl1 mon cl1 ce **Asp** dormir

“Mon enfant –ci dort” (This child (that is mine) is sleeping)



In the above example, the fact that the aspectual marker for progressive has two forms, “mə” and “wə” is very uncommon and thought-provoking and leads us to ask ourselves whether the same aspectual marker could be written in two different ways in the same language and what could motivate such a change. Our first hypothesis was that the subject of both sentences belonged to different noun classes and on the influences of noun classes on other parts of speech Maho (1989) writes: “*Bantu noun classes are morphologically realized with various affixes appearing on nouns, pronouns, adnominals and verbs.*” Thus since the aspectual marker is part of the verb phrase, we thought it could change because of the noun class of the subject. This hypothesis was quickly discarded as the nouns that are involved in Ngantchui’s examples are both class 1 nouns. Confronting these examples to our data on the field, we notice that “mə” is actually the marker for the progressive form in the language as will be demonstrated in the paper on aspects and, actually, “wə” could be an indication of the real marker for that class, which in Ngantchui’s data was not clear enough. This new class marker was confirmed by its presence on the agreement patterns triggered by many other nouns. The following table presents samples of class 1.

Table (5): Samples of class 1 nouns

1.	Nouns	Gloss	Poss Sing	Poss Plur	Dem Sing	Dem Plur
2.	ndʒəkési	Donkey	θ-è	p-è	w-ɔ́	p-ɔ́
3.	tòpɲɔ́ɔ́ɲɔ́ɔ́	Spider	θ-à	p-è	w-ɔ́	p-ɔ́
4.	ndòkfúwó	Duck	θ-à	p-è	w-ɔ́	p-ɔ́
5.	ndʒòkvìp	Hunter	θ-à	p-è	w-ɔ́	p-ɔ́

From the above table, we can anticipate the following section by saying that the concord prefixes of class 1 nouns are actually |θ-| and |w-| and words of that class make their plural in class 2 where the concord prefix is |p-|. Class 3 nouns are exemplified in the table below.



Table (6): Samples of class 3 nouns

1.	Nouns	Gloss	Poss Sing	Poss Plur	Dem Sing	Dem Plur
2.	pfú	Hand	ø-à	m-é	j-ó	m-ó
3.	pà?	House	ø-à	m-é	j-ó	m-ó
4.	mbák	Pot	ø-à	m-é	j-ó	m-ó
5.	kák	Dish	ø-à	m-è	j-ó	m-ó

It therefore becomes obvious that the difference between class one and class three words is not tonological as stipulated by Ngantchui (1989) but actually morphological since class one markers are |ø-| and |w-| and class three ones are |ø-| and |j-|.

Another difficulty encountered with Ngantchui's classification of nouns comes from the fact that she associates tones in her distinction of classes. Actually, our findings reveal that if possessive determiners always bear a low tone irrespective of the class of the word they modify, demonstrative determiners bear a high tone depending on the location of the designated element. Let us consider the following examples.

(19)a- [mbjáǵà jó]

|mbjáǵ ø - à j - ó|
groundnut cl3 my cl3 this
"This groundnut (that is mine)"

b- [móà wì]

|mó ø - à w - ì|
fire cl1 my cl1 that
"That fire (that is mine)"

c- [tsó tsè tsò]

|tsó ts - è ts - ò|
grain cl5 my cl3 this
"This grain (that is mine)"

In the above examples, the possessive determiner (in bold), irrespective of its class, bears a low tone and it becomes clear that tones in Ndaʔndaʔ, contrary to some other Grassfields languages, cannot be a criterion to distinguish classes.

In a nutshell, Ngantchui's classification has been revised in two main points.

- The first is that, after careful considerations and field investigation, we propose |ø-| and |w-| as morphological markers for class 1, instead of |ø-| and |y-| as formerly considered.

- The second is that tones, though very important, cannot be considered as pertinent in distinguishing classes in the language.

The revised classification of Ndaʔndaʔ noun is presented below.

4.4. A revised noun class system of Ndaʔndaʔ

Six classes are attested in the language under study.

4.3.1. Noun class 1

This class is marked by the concord prefixes |ø-| and |w-| as evidenced in the following examples.

- (20) a- [sɔ́gà wɔ́]
 |sɔ́k ø - à w - ɔ́|
 bird cl1 my cl1 this
 “his bird (that is mine)”
- b- [ɲgíp wɔ̀ wì]
 |ɲgíp w - ɔ̀ w -
 ì|
 hen cl1our cl1 that
 “That hen (that is ours)”
- c- [fɔ́nóbè wì]
 |fɔ́nóp ø - è w - ì|
 lion cl1 her cl1 that
 “that lion (that is her)”
- d- [títʃé wìgɔ̀ wɔ̀]
 |títʃé w - ìgɔ̀ w - ɔ̀|
 teacher cl1 your cl1 that
 “that teacher (that is yours)”

Other class 1 nouns include:

- (21) 1- kákwí “donkey” 2- ngíp “fowl”



3- ɲwá	"child"	4- fɔ	"chief "
5- pú?	"slave"	6- ɲgóp	"spider"
7- mó	" fire"	8- ntɔwók	"thief"
9- tótó?	"toad "	10- nòp	"animal"
11- kú?	"namesake "	12- ɲgóp	"scorpio"
13- tɔ	"insect "	14- pú?	"slave"

Nouns of this class form their plural in class 2, presented below, and class 6 that will be studied latter.

As far as the semantics of this class is concerned, it is the archetypal class for animates and is mostly made up of animals and people carrying out specific activities and it corresponds to a certain extent to the Proto-Bantu, class 1 (the marker of which is "mu-") which is the typical class for humans. In Proto-Bantu, animals belong to class 9, a class the absence of which in Nda?nda?, justifies why its elements are instead found in class 1. Another similarity with Proto-Bantu is that class 1 words also make their plural in class 2.

4.3.2 Noun class 2

This class is marked by the prefix |p-|. It is the plural class of class 1 nouns. The following examples illustrate this class.

- (22)a- [kúptswá pè pɔ]
- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|-----|----|-----|-------|---|---|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|---|---|--|
| kúptswá | p | - | è | p | - | ɔ | b- [kú? pò pì] | | | | | | |
| barbers | cl2 | my | cl2 | these | | | kú? | p | - | ò | p | - | |
| | | | | | | | ì | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | namesakes | cl2 | our | cl2 | | | |
| | | | | | | | those | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | "Those namesakes (that are ours)" | | | | | | |
- "These barbers (that are mine)"
- c- [sók pìgè pɔ]
- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-----|------|-----|-------|---|---|----------------|-------|-----|---|--|--|--|
| sók | p | - | ìgè | p | - | ɔ | d- [tò pùp pì] | | | | | | |
| birds | cl1 | your | cl1 | these | | | tò | p | - | | | | |
| | | | | | | | ùp | p | - | ì | | | |
| | | | | | | | Insect cl2 | their | cl2 | | | | |
| | | | | | | | those | | | | | | |
- "These birds (that are theirs)"



4.3.3 Noun class 3

|ø-| and |j-| are the prefixes of this class. The second prefix |j-|, by a phonological process of spirantisation becomes |ʒ-| in front of the unrounded front vowels /i/ and /i/.

- (23) a- [súbájó] b- [kíʃíbè ʒì]
 |súp ø - j - |kíʃíp ø - è ʒ - ì|
 ó| Kitchen cl3 my cl3 that
 needle cl3 my cl3 "That kitchen (that is mine)"
 this
- c- [kχwə ʒìgə jó] d- [mbjágè jó]
 |kχwə ʒ - ìgə j - ó| |mbjáκ ø - è j - ó|
 Foot cl3 your cl3 this groundnut cl3 his cl3 this
 "This foot (that is yours)" "This groundnut (that is hers/his)"

Other class three nouns include:

- | | | | | |
|------|----------|-------------|----------|------------|
| (24) | 1- súp | "needle" | 2- kúʔú | "yam " |
| | 3- mbjáκ | "groundnut" | 4- mfú | "hand" |
| | 5- kák | "dish" | 6- mbák | "pot" |
| | 7- ηkχók | "fence" | 8- mbák | "coco nut" |
| | 9- ηkχwó | "firewood " | 10- kχwə | "foot" |
| | 11- ηfwə | "mouth" | 12- tsəʔ | "place" |
| | 13- ndók | "horn " | 14- pəyə | "bag" |

In Ndaʔndaʔ, class 3 is the class where common objects are found. Nouns referring to food stuffs and very few body parts can also be found therein. This class has some similarities with class 3 in Proto-Bantu (the marker of which is "mu-") which is the class for inanimates. Like in Proto-Bantu, Ndaʔndaʔ class 3 nouns form their plural in class 4.

4.3.4 Noun class 4

The marker for this class is the prefix |m-|; it is the plural class for the majority of class 3 nouns as illustrated below.



- (25)a- [súp m̀è ḿó]
|súp m - è m - ó|
needles cl4 my cl3 these
“These needles (that are mine)”
- b- [kíḽip m̀ò m̀ì]
|kíḽip m -
ò m - ì|
kitchens cl4 our cl4
those

Class 5 nouns that will be studied below also form their plural in this class. Examples of class 5 nouns that form their plural in class 4 are presented below.

- (26) a- [ntsó m̀è]
|n - tsó m - è|
Plur arbre cl4 my
“My trees”
- b- [swók m̀è]
|swók m - è|
teeth cl4 my
“My teeth”

Class four is also the archetypal class for uncountable nouns such as certain words related to the human body, liquids etc., some examples of which are presented below.

- (27)a- [mvì m̀è]
|mvì m - è|
lungs cl4 my
“my lungs”
- b- [pú? mùp m̀ì]
|pú? m - ùp m - ì|
beer cl4 their cl4 that
“That beer (that is theirs)”

4.3.5 Noun class 5

The prefix for this class is |ts-| as the following examples show.

- (28)a- [tj́j́? tsè tsì]
|tj́j́? ts - è ts - ì|
hat cl5 my cl5 that
“That hat (that is mine)”
- b- [kpák tsù tsó]
|kpák ts - ù ts - ó|
ring cl5 your cl5 this
“This ring (that is yours)”
- c- [tsó tsìgè tsó]
|tsó ts - ìgè ts - ó|
eye cl5 your cl5 this
“This eye (that is yours)”
- d- [tsík tsùp tsí]
|tsík ts - ùp ts - í|
name cl5 their cl5 that
“That name (that is theirs)”

We have to agree with Ngantchui (1989) that the fact that the majority of words beginning with |ts-| are part of this class is an indication that the latter was a common prefix for all the elements of the class. Some of such words are given below.

- (29) |tsùp| : "Plum" |tsól| : "Grain" |tsól| : "tree"
 |tswól| : "Head" |tsíp| : "Pregnancy" |tsík| : "name"

Actually, the presence of noun class prefixes in other Grassfields Bantu languages like Oku and Bòmbelò, the data of which have been presented at the beginning of this paper, is evidence that they were attested in other languages of the same group. However, most of these languages have lost their noun class prefixes in a normal process of language evolution and simplification. In fact, it is a normal process for a language to gradually get rid of its complexities to become simpler with time and even the English and French spoken now are far simpler than what was spoken in the past. In French for instance, this evolution and simplification of the language consisted in the disappearance, around the fifteenth century, of all the declination cases (dative, genitive, accusative, etc.) inherited from Latin. Moreover, as far as gender is concerned, the neutral was absorbed into the masculine and the feminine. Hyman (1970) working on Feʔfeʔ observes that *"in most cases the original noun class prefix has been lost"*. Later in the work he becomes really pessimistic on the fate of noun classes and asserts that *"there are strong indications that the remaining noun classes will survive no more than another generation."* We therefore assume that noun class prefixes do not disappear suddenly in a language. It is a gradual process whereby particles that are not relevant to the meaning of a given word delete. Ndaʔndaʔ, as demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, like most languages of its sub-group, has lost all its nominal affixes but the regular pattern observed in certain words of class 5 and the fact that the said pattern is identical to the concord prefix on all the determiners that modify nouns of that class cannot be overlooked; this is the reason why we strongly think that, |ts-|, was the class prefix of all the words belonging to class 5.

However, we must recognize that such a prefix is very strange in a Bantu language. Actually our research shows that most noun class prefixes in Bantu are either syllable or syllabic nasal. This can be checked from the above examples in Oku and Bəmbələ and in many other Bantu languages. Besides, Maho (1999) "*A comparative study of Bantu noun classes*" is full of evidences corroborating this fact. We therefore suggest that what we consider as the noun class marker of class 5 was associated to a vowel that deleted due to morphophonological conditions. In fact, a class 5 noun like |pɸwɔ́|, cannot be said to have evolved from "ts-pɸwɔ́"*, a word that does not fit in any syllable structure of the language. But if we added a vowel to the class prefix, we would therefore have possible alternatives like "tse-pɸwɔ́"*, "tɛ-pɸwɔ́"*, "tsɔ-pɸwɔ́"*, the structures of which better fit into Ndaʔndaʔ.

Nouns of this class form their plural in class 4. Other class five nouns include:

- | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|--------|------------|-----|--------|-----------|
| (30) | 1- | pjé | "pear" | 2- | kàʔtʃĩ | "bow " |
| | 3- | kpák | "ring" | 4- | náʔ | "cow" |
| | 5- | pɸwɔ́ʔ | "mushroom" | 6- | mvɔ́ | "bone" |
| | 7- | tʃjəʔ | "hat" | 8- | fə | "feather" |
| | 9- | pfi | "knife" | 10- | só | "peper" |
| | 11- | lúʔ | "spoon" | 12- | mpáp | "egg" |
| | 13- | swók | "tooth" | 14- | kwə̀k | "spear" |

In Proto-Bantu, class 5 (the marker of which is "li-") contains miscellaneous things, what can be likened to the Ndaʔndaʔ class 5 which, as the foregoing examples demonstrate, includes some food stuffs, common objects and few body parts.

4.3.6 Noun class 6

It is the third plural class and its concord prefix, |ts-|, is similar to that of class 5. Actually, it only differs from the latter by virtue of the fact that it is plural.



- (31)a- [fú tsè] b- [lòṅgɛ tsùp tsó]
 |fú ts - è| |lòṅgɛ ts - ùp ts - ó|
 Cabbages cl6 my buckets cl6 their cl6 these
 “These buckets (that are theirs)”
 “My cabbages”

In this class, you can also find some body parts that are in the singular and always appear as a whole as the following examples illustrate.

- (32)a- [váp tsà] b- [tsjé tsù tsó]
 |váp ts - à| |tsjé ts - ù ts - ó|
 stomach cl6 his forehead cl6 your cl6 this
 “This forehead (that is yours)”
 “Her/His stomach”

Contrary to the other classes like class 2 and class 4 which are exclusively plural classes, this class contains singular nouns and has a specific semantic identity in that we can find therein common objects and a few body parts. In Proto-Bantu too, class 6, apart from being the plural class for other classes, is the archetypal class for liquids and collectives.

To summarize this section on noun classes, we can say that the semantics of the Nda?nda? noun class system is not that different from the common semantics of the noun classes in Proto-Bantu. The language has six classes that can only be identified through the agreement they trigger on determiners. We have also brought enough evidences to partially revise Ngantchui’s classification and attribute a new concord prefix to class one. In fact the table below is a synopsis of all the concord prefixes that are attested in the language.

Table (7): Concord prefixes in the Nda?nda? noun class system

Noun class	Ngantchui’s concord prefixes	Revised concord prefixes
1	ø- ; y-	ø- ; w-
2	p-	p-
3	ø- ; y-	ø- ; j-
4	m-	m-



5	ts-	ts-
6	ts-	ts-

4.4 Genders in Nda?nda?

Here gender refers to the noun class pairing that consists in putting together singular classes with their corresponding plural classes. Generally, genders can be divided into single class genders and double class genders.

4.4.1 Double class genders

Double class gender can also be divided into regular or canonical genders and irregular genders.

4.4.1.1 Regular genders

Only two regular genders are attested in the language.

Gender I: 1/2

This gender is made up of nouns of class 1 that form their plural in class 2, thus giving us the pair 1/2 (ø, w- / - p) illustrated by the examples below.

- (33)a- [tátót?à]
|tátót? ø - à|
toad cl1 my
b- "My toad"
[nòp] ø - ò|
animal cl1 your
"Your animal"
- [tátót? pè]
|tátót? p - è|
toads cl2 my
[nòpù]
|nòp p - ù|
animals cl2 your
"Your animals"

Gender II: 3/4

Gender 2 results from the pairing of class 3 and class 4. In other words, class 3 words (ø, j-) form their plural in class 4(m-) as exemplified below.

- (34)a- [pà?ò]
|pà? ø - ò|
House cl3 your
"Your house"
- [mbà? mù]
|N - pà? m - ù|
Pl house cl4
your

[illegible]

4.4.1.2 Irregular genders

This category of genders is made up of two genders presented below.

Gender III: 3/6

This gender results from the pairing of class 3 nouns (ø-, j-) with class 6 (ts-). In fact, if the majority of class 3 nouns form their plural in class 4, very few instead form their plural in class 6, thus yielding the third gender illustrated by the following examples.

(35) a- [ʃwà] [ʃũ tsɛ̀]
 b- |ʃũ ø - à|
 cabbage cl3 my
 “My cabbage”

[lòŋɡɛ́ tsɛ̀]
 |lòŋɡɛ́ ts - è|
 buckets cl6 my
 “My buckets”

Gender IV: 5/4

Gender IV: 5/4

Class 5 pairs with class 4 to form this gender as presented below.

(36)a-

[kí tsɛ̀]		[kí mɛ̀]
kɪ ts- ɛ̀		kɪ m - ɛ̀
key cl5 my		keys cl4 my
“My key”		“My keys”

b-

[fɛ̀ tsɛ̀]		[mfɛ̀ mɛ̀]
fɛ̀ ts - ɛ̀		m - fɛ̀ m - ɛ̀
feather cl5 my		cl4 feather cl4 my
“My feather”		“My feathers”

4.4.2 Single class genders

In Ndaʔndaʔ, single class genders include nouns that appear exclusively either in the plural or in the singular. Most of the time, they are uncountable nouns such as liquids, body parts, etc. They are listed below.

A- Class 1

(37)a- [mbòk wó]

|mbòk w - ó|
rain cl1 this
"This rain"

b- [nǝ wì]

|nǝ ø - à w - ì|
water cl1 my cl1
that
"That water (that is mine)"

B- Class 2

(38) a- [mvì mè]

|mvì m - è|
lungs cl2 my
"My lungs"

b- [ntǝ mù]

|ntǝ m - ù|
saliva cl2 your
"Your saliva"

C- Class 3

(39)a- [nǝwà]

|nǝwà ø - á|
mouth cl3 my
"My mouth"

b- [tètùpǝ ó]

|tètùp j - ó|
mud cl3 this
"This mud"

D- Class 6

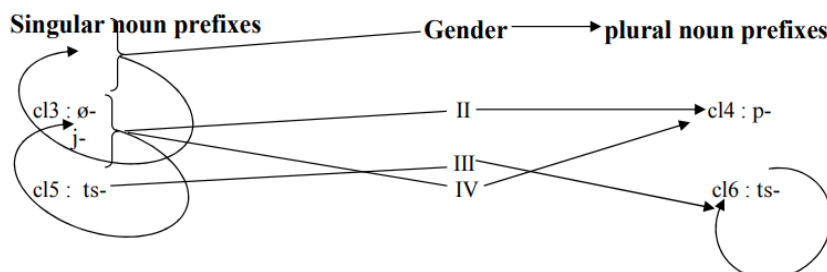
(40)a- [tòk tsè]

|tòk ts - è|
navel cl6 my
"My navel"

b- [mvàp tsùp]

|mvàp ts - ùp|
stomach cl6 their
"Their stomach"

Table (8): Distribution of genders in Nda?nda?



This diagram gives an overview of classes in Nda?nda? and how they interact to form genders. The arrows in the above diagram show the connections between noun classes in Nda?nda? and the genders that result from them. For instance, we notice that class three nouns make their plural in both class 4 and class 6. The circle represents single class genders.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to describe the noun structure of Nda?nda? and to identify the various noun classes and genders in the language. As far as the noun structure is concerned, all the syllable structures and the tone patterns of the Nda?nda? nouns were described. As concerns noun classes, Ngantchui's classification was revised in that not only was one of class 1 prefixes changed but tones were not considered as important in distinguishing classes. At the end of that section, a revised noun class system was proposed. Gender was the last task and four double-class genders and four single-class genders were identified. After this analysis of the structure of the Nda?nda? noun, the next paper will delve into the various noun formation processes of the language.

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