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Citation

Mous, M. P. G. M. (2022). Tone and the verbal systems of nyokon. *The Journal Of West African Languages*, *49*(2). Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3562523

TONE AND THE VERBAL SYSTEMS OF NYOKON

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Abstract

 The article provides an overview of the formal aspects of the verbal paradigms of Nyokon, a Cameroonian Bantu language (A45). The language has a rich system of 22 non-negative verbal paradigms expressing tense, aspect and mood, and additional negative constructions. The paradigms are built on a TAM word with segmental and tonal properties in association with the choice of which set of subject pronouns to use and which shape of the verb stem to use. Verbs appear in two possible shapes; one of which contains a petrified suffix which is etymologically related to the Bantu *-a(n)g imperfective or pluractional suffix. A crucial property of each verbal paradigm is the position of the full object: for certain paradigms, this position is before the verb contrary to the general pattern in Bantu which tends to be strictly VO for full objects; in other paradigms, the object must occur after the verb; a third group allows both orders. Negative constructions have a clause final clitic. Nyokon is a tonal language and the article discusses the basic tonal rules that are needed for an analysis of the verbal paradigms. The analysis of any sentence in Nyokon requires an understanding of the verbal paradigm and to which verbal paradigm it belongs. Therefore, this article aims at providing the groundwork for further analyses of Nyokon. The emphasis is on the formal characteristics of the verbal paradigms while a substantial analysis of the semantics and functional distinctions of these paradigms awaits the next study, for which the labels used for the various paradigms here only function as first approximations.

 Keywords: Bantu, Cameroun, conjugation, TAM, Object-Verb Order,

Resumé

L'article donne un aperçu des aspects formels des paradigmes verbaux du Nyokon, une langue bantoue camerounaise (A45). La langue possède un riche système de 22 paradigmes verbaux non-négatifs exprimant le temps, l'aspect et la modalité, ainsi que des constructions négatives supplémentaires. Les paradigmes sont construits sur un mot TAM avec des propriétés segmentales et tonales en association avec le choix de l'ensemble des pronoms sujets à utiliser et de la forme du radical du verbe à utiliser. Les verbes apparaissent sous deux formes possibles, dont l'une contient un suffixe pétri qui est étymologiquement lié au suffixe imperfectif ou pluractionnel bantou ***-a(n)g.** Une propriété cruciale de chaque paradigme verbal est la position de l'objet complet : pour certains paradigmes, cette position est avant le verbe, contrairement au modèle général en bantou qui tend à être strictement VO pour les objets complets ; dans d'autres paradigmes, l'objet doit se trouver après le verbe ; un troisième groupe permet les deux ordres. Les constructions négatives ont un clitique final de phrase. Le Nyokon est une langue tonale et l'article discute des règles tonales de base qui sont nécessaires pour une analyse des paradigmes verbaux. L'analyse de toute phrase en Nyokon nécessite la compréhension du paradigme verbal. Par conséquent, cet article vise à fournir les bases pour des analyses ultérieures du Nyokon. L'accent est mis sur les caractéristiques formelles des paradigmes verbaux, tandis qu'une analyse substantielle de la sémantique et des distinctions fonctionnelles de ces paradigmes attend une prochaine étude, pour laquelle les étiquettes utilisées pour les différents paradigmes ici ne fonctionnent que comme des premières approximations.

Mots Clefs: Bantu, Cameroun, conjugaison, TAM, ordre des mots

Muhtasari

 Makala yanatoa muhtasari wa vitenzi vya Nyokon, lugha ya Kibantu ya Kikameruni (A45). Lugha ina mfumo tajiri wa wakati zaidi ya 22. Wakati hujengwa juu ya neno la TAM lenye sauti na toni, kwa kuhusishwa na uchaguzi wa seti ya viwakilishi vya somo na umbo lipi la shina la kitenzi litumike. Vitenzi huonekana katika maumbo mawili yanayowezekana; kimojawapo kina kiambishi tamati ambacho kinahusiana kimaadili na kiambishi tamati cha Kibantu ***-a(n)g**. Sifa muhimu ya kila wakati ni nafasi ya kitu: kwa dhana fulani nafasi hii iko mbele ya kitenzi kinyume na muundo wa jumla katika Kibantu ambao huelekea kuwa VO kwa vitu; katika wakati nyingine kitu lazima kitokee baada ya kitenzi; kikundi cha tatu kinaruhusu maagizo yote mawili. Miundo hasi ina clitic ya mwisho ya kifungu. Nyokon ni lugha ya toni na makala inajadili kanuni za msingi za toni ambazo zinahitajika kwa uchanganuzi wa wakati. Uchanganuzi wa sentensi yoyote katika Nyokon unahitaji uelewa wa vitenzi na wakati zao. Kwa hivyo, makala haya yanalenga kutoa msingi wa uchanganuzi zaidi wa Nyokon. Mkazo ni juu ya sifa rasmi za vielezi vya maneno huku uchanganuzi mkubwa wa semantiki na tofauti za kiuamilifu za dhana hizi unangoja utafiti unaofuata, ambao lebo zinazotumiwa kwa dhana mbalimbali hapa hufanya kazi tu kama makadirio ya kwanza.

1.   Introduction[1]

Nyokon (autonym **nìɲɔ̀'ɔ**) is a Bantu language (A.45) spoken in Nyokon and Makenene in the Mbam region of Cameroon. This article presents an overview of the formal properties of

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the verbal system of this little-studied language. It is based on two weeks of cooperation at Yaounde University in the summer of 2012 with Viviane Kigno Abwa-Yah, a mother tongue speaker of the language and, at the time, a Linguistics student at the University of Yaounde and at the Ecole Normale Superieur. We collected three texts: a tale, a recipe, and the telling of the frog-tale cartoon (Meyer 1969), in addition to an extensive discussion of sentences (made up or translated) without context, some of them unnatural but useful for establishing form properties; we used the texts as input for establishing meaning. The article concentrates on the formal aspects of the tense system and is doubtlessly incomplete. Lovestrand (2011) presents an overview of the phonology.[2] An initial analysis of nominal morphology is presented Yde (n.d.).

Recurrent elements are tone on the verb stem, choices in the form of the subject pronoun, the choice between simple verb stem or an **-a'** extended stem, the presence of a specific auxiliary, presence or absence of a clause final element. What makes Nyokon quite unique as a Bantu language is the fact that in some tenses the full noun object can occur before the verb. Bantu languages by and large place a full object after the verb. In Mous (2014) a tentative historical scenario for this surprising word order in Nyokon and in its closest relative and neighbour, Tunen, is offered; as well as a detailed comparison of the commonalities and major differences between the word order properties of these two languages.

The paper is organised as follows: We first present the building blocks of verbal paradigms and an overview of all the verbal paradigms in section 2. Then we discuss all verbal paradigms in groups, starting with the simplest one, the imperative, section 3. In section 4 we discuss the paradigms that are most complex in terms of tonal changes and that lack a segmental TAM marker, including the general Present and several Past tenses. Having introduced the tonal properties, we delve into the paradigms with a TAM marker in section 5, starting with the Perfect. In section 6 we discuss complex verbal paradigms that involve the verb 'to be'. Followed by verbal paradigms with special structures, a subject pronoun after the TAM marker in the Future, 7.1, and a combination of TAM markers for the Narrative, 7.2. In section 8, we present the focus paradigms that have a different shape of their subject marker. Section 9 deals with the procedural tenses which require an infinitival form of the verb. The negative paradigms are given in section 10. After the discussion of all the tenses, we offer an overview of the Preverbs that can occur in any of the tenses, section 11. And finally in section 12, an overview of the properties of the object position which is a particularly interesting feature of Nyokon with its option of pre-verbal full objects.

2.   Basic structure of the verbal paradigm

The construction for the various conjugational paradigms of the verb consists of a TAM marker and changes to the verb. The Subject precedes the TAM marker and the object is either between the TAM marker and the Verb or after the verb. Some tenses require a clause final element, here termed Final. The verb may be preceded by a limited set of preverbal markers which are verbal in nature and can in principle occur with any tense; formulated differently, these so-called Preverbs are independent of the TAM marker and the paradigm. This structure is represented in the following scheme, (1), after which we briefly introduce each of the constituting elements in turn.

(1)   Scheme of tense marking structure

Subject TAM (Object) preverb=V+ (Object) X =Final

The scheme is different from the verb structure in core Bantu in the fact the subject marker and the TAM marker are separate words and that they do not form one word with the verb stem. Such a looser structure is typical for North-West Bantu languages (Nurse 2008:70).

2.1 Elements of building verbal paradigms

Subject: The nominal subject can be replaced by a subject pronoun. In most tenses it is impossible to have a pronoun in addition to a nominal subject, i.e., there is a pro-drop; with the exception that in the future tense and in the subjunctive the pronoun is always present and can appear in addition to a full subject noun phrase (no pro-drop). Some tenses have a tonal TAM marker. If it consists of a High-tone, this tone docks on the final syllable of the subject. If it consists of a Low tone, it only does so for the singular subject pronouns, see section 3.3 for an overview of pronouns. Subject pronouns agree to some extent with the noun class of the subject but this is severely reduced. Therefore, we use the gloss 3SG/PL rather than a class indication in the later examples throughout the paper.

TAM-marking: Many forms are attested in this slot: **nǒ**, **nɔ̀**, **mbɨe** (in three different tonal shapes), **maa**, **pi**, **nəkə** and **nəku** with various tones, **me**, etc. These are separate words. Some of them double as copula or verb "to be". The verb 'to be' **mbɨe** is similar to such a verb, **m̀bɔ̀** in neighbouring Medumba Bamileke (Kandem 2020:144). Otherwise, the TAM markers are quite different from those of neighbouring and related Tunen as well as from neighbouring Bamileke languages. Some differ from each other in a tonal pattern only and we take each of those as a separate form. Some tenses do not have a segmental TAM marker; these require tonal realisations on the verb stem (and sometimes on the subject). A more abstract analysis could consider these realisations as tonal TAM markers.

Verb shapes: Verbs undergo two kinds of changes in the tenses. One is their tonal shape mentioned above, and the second is the addition of the **-à'** suffix in one of its many manifestations; this suffix is glossed as K. In fact, the morphophonology involving the suffix is so complex that the most efficient analysis seems to us to assume two verb-stem variants: one with and one without **à'**. Additionally, there are two basic tone patterns in addition to the underlying tone of the lexical verb. These are the Present tense tone pattern,[3] and the Past tense tone pattern. The underlying tone shows up in the infinitive of the verb stem, which is formed by the prefix **ù-**. Most verb stems are monosyllabic and they fall into three tonal groups: H, L, HL.

Object position is also a factor to take into consideration. Some tenses do not allow the object to precede the verb. This is indicated by (N) in the penultimate column of Table 1. The Present tense has a special tonal shape for when an object follows.

Final All negative tenses require a clause final **á**. This is not the common Bantu final vowel of the verb form; it rather occurs as a clitic as the last element in the clause. Since it is required by the negative tenses, we consider it as yet another element to build a specific tense.

Preverb. In addition, and somewhat independent of the tenses, there are a number of preverbal aspectual markers; these are discussed in section 17. As they are independent additional aspectual markers they are not treated as building elements of the distinguished tenses.

Table 1 presents an overview of the Nyokon tenses, their labels, their realisation schema and their value for these building elements. The order represents the order in which they are discussed.

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[3] The Present tense has two different tone patterns. The standard tone pattern here labelled with Present tense tone pattern is the one when the object precedes the verb, the most common pattern. The Present tense has a different tone pattern for when an object follows. Details can be found in section 4.1.

label	schema	TAM marker	verb stem	OV	remarks	section
Imperative	V\H	-		N		3
Present	V:K +T	-	K	Y		4.1
Subjunctive	S̲PRO̲\H V\H	-		Y	subject pronoun obligatory	4.2
Recent past	H\V	-		Y		4.3
Far past	V\H	-		Y		4.3
Remote past	V\H:K	-	K	Y	built on Far past	4.3
Perfect	V\H	**nòó nə̀kú**		N	built on Far past	5.1
Present Continuous	V +T	**nə̌**	no K	N	built on Present; **nə** COP	5.2
Conditional	V +T	**nə́**	no K	Y	built on Present Continuous	5.3
Past Imperfective	S **mbíə́** S (O) V(\PR) (O)			Y		6
Past Imperfective 2	S **mbíə́ku** V\PA (O)	**mbíə́ku**		N		6
Background	S **mbíə̀**V(\PR) (O)	**mbíə̀**		N		6
Background_Past_R	S **mbìə́**V (O)	**mbìə́**		N		6
Background Moment	S **màà** S (O) V (O)			Y		6
Future	**mə̀**=S̲pro V\PA (O)			N		7.1
Narrative	**pí** (+ kə̌ ~ kə̀) + V	**pí**		Y		7.2
Present Subject Focus	Compl INF-V-à' (O)			N		8
Recent Past Subject Focus	Compl **nóò/nə́kú** V\PA (O)	**nóò nə́kú**		N		8
Far Past Subject Focus	Compl Verb\PA (O)			N		8
Remote Past Subject Focus	Compl Verb-K\PA (O)			N		8
Procedural	(O) INF-MID-V\H* Obl			Y obl		9
Procedural2	(O) **mbíə̀**INF- V\H* Obl			Y obl		9
Negative General Present	S **sí** V\H (O) other=á	**sí**		N		10
Negative Present	S **nà~nə̀kə̀~káŋ** (O) á	**nà nə̀kə̀ káŋ**		N		10
Negative Background	S **mbíə́** V (O) á	**mbíə́**		N		10
Negative Past	S **mbíə́** V\PAST (O) á	**mbíə́**		N		10

Table 1: Overview of Nyokon tenses

2.2. Pronouns

The subject and non-subject pronouns differ in form depending on the tense. The following Table 2 presents these various forms. The complement pronouns are used in the Subject Focus tense which uses a cleft construction. We distinguish three different sets of subject pronouns of which the first two in the two first columns of Table 2, are very similar, PRO1 and PRO2. These two are clearly historically related and differ only in tone in the first and the second person singular. However, we cannot relate this tonal difference to any other factor and we have to assume different pronoun sets.

	subject PRO1 PRESENT	subject PRO2 RECPAST	subject pronoun with FUTURE	pre-verbal Object PRO	complement pronoun
1SG	m̀ ~ mì	ḿ	mə̌m	ŋgómá	ŋgóm
2SG	á	à	máà	ŋgə́	ŋgə̂
3SG	ò	ò	mòó	və̀	və̂
1PL INCL	tə̀ŋ	tə̀ŋ		tə̀ŋá	tə̀ŋ
1PL EXL	tàá	tàá		váásá	váás
2PL	nàá	nàá		vááná	váá
3PL	pɨ́	pɨ́	mə̀ pɨ́	pə́	pə́

Table 2: Pronouns across tenses

The first three columns provide the various shapes of the subject pronouns for the various tenses. The next three columns provide the non-subject pronouns. Column 4 gives the shapes of the object pronouns in pre-verbal positions. Column 5 the more generally used complement pronouns which are used clauses initially for the Focus tenses that are structured as cleft clauses. Not only does the table show gaps, but the table is also not exhaustive. we came across a variant **və̀s** of the 3SG complement pronoun **və̂** in a sentence with a generic reading, (2).

(2)   Independent generic pronoun
    və̀s   àyí ò   kîr   kìtìə̀   mòó kwə́   kɔ̀n
    3SG   REL 3SG   bite\PR monkey   FUT:3SG   fall   ill
    'Whoever eats a monkey will be ill.'

The inclusive/exclusive distinction for the first-person plural seems present in all pronouns in this table but it is not so clear whether the distinction is really maintained in subject pronouns in actual language use.

To give only one form for third person singular and one for third person plural is unexpected in a Bantu noun class language. However, Nyokon shows a strong tendency towards a default use of a general third-person pronoun for subjects irrespective of whether they are human or non-human, and not reflecting their noun class. However, there is a pair **kí** 3SG.NONHUMAN and **pí** 3PL.NONHUMAN which is sometimes used for non-human subjects, and sometimes preferred upon reflection. Another third-person non-human subject marker **yì** is specifically used in relative clauses. In the sentence in (3) the subject can be replaced by **ò** 3SG, by **kí** 3SG.NONHUMAN, or by **yì** 3SG.NONHUMAN. Any of these subject pronouns cannot be used alongside the full noun unless there is a clear and strong intonation break between them, (4). The noun class system is fully intact with strict morphological agreement within the noun phrase.

(3)   Different markers for non-human subject
    màɲí   twǎ   swà
    water   leaves   wash:K
    'The rain washes the leaves.'

(4)   Nominal subject as topic plus subject pronoun
    màɲí,   yì   twǎ   swà
    water   3SG.NONHUMAN   leaves   wash:K
    'The rain, it washes the leaves.'

The subject marker **kí** is used for singular non-human referents, (5), while **ò** is not restricted to humans; the plural equivalent is **pí**, (6), note that this pronoun is marginally different from the general 3PL pronoun **pɨ́** (Table 2).

(5)   Subject marker **kí** where **ò** was used before.

pùcɔ́   kí   mbíɔ̀   kí   tɔ̀ŋá   ɣámbɔ̂k nòó   cɔ́p
thing   3SG.NONHUMAN   PAST   3SG.NONHUMAN   O1PL   annoy   PRF   leave\PA
'The thing that annoyed us has disappeared.'

(6)   Subject marker **pí** for plural

ò   nòó   ɣóó   íɲɛ̀m   pí   tɔ̀ŋ   ɲâ   àɲô
3SG   PRF   kill   animals   3PL.NONHUMAN.REL   1PL   eat:K   today
'He has killed the animals that we eat today.'

We start our overview of the tenses with the simplest one, the imperative.

3.   Simplest verb form: Imperative

We start with the imperative as the simplest conjugational form. This facilitates our discussion of more complex forms. The imperative distinguishes between positive and negative imperative and between single and plural addressee. It does not distinguish tense, aspect, or mood. The basic positive imperative consists of the verb stem plus a high tone. The three basic tone patterns of verbs change in the following manner, (7).

(7)   Tonal changes in the imperative

L   >LH
H   >H
HL   >H

The form with plural addressees requires the addition of the **–a'** suffix. Table 3 provides some examples.

(8)   **ndǎ'   màɲí   ŋgɔ́m**
give:IMP   water   O1SG
'Give me water!'

infinitive	meaning	SG	PL
ù-swɔ̀	wash	swǒ	swá'-á
ù-ɲɛ́	eat	ɲɛ́ ~ ɲá'	ɲá'-á

Table 3: Singular and plural imperative forms

The prohibitive (negative imperative) is formed by the negation particle **kɔ̀** plus the same forms as the positive imperative, (9). The word order in the positive imperative is Verb+direct object+dative object, (8); in the prohibitive, the order is NEG+theme object+verb, (9b).

(9a)   **kɔ̀   líɔ̀l**
NEG   cry
'Don't cry!' (Barreteau n.d.: 211)

(9b)   **kɔ̀   kí   kìú   njóós**
NEG   7.DEM   7.bone   suck
'Don't suck that bone!' (Barreteau n.d.: 161)

Next, we present the more complex tenses. First, those that have no TAM marker. These tenses are a challenge for analysis in the complexity of tonal changes that characterises them.

4.   Verbal paradigms with tonal changes and no segmental TAM marker

The verb forms in these verbal paradigms vary in two dimensions: the choice between the extended stem with the **-à'** suffix or the basic stem; and the other dimension is the tonal shape of the verb: that of the Present tense or that of the Past tense. In the following tenses, these two

tonal shapes will be labelled \PR for the present or \PA for the past tense shape. These labels refer to the tonal shape only and occur in all sorts of tenses.

4.1 Present tense

The tone of the first-person singular pronoun is always high in the Present tense. In the Present tense, the verb is modified with the **–à'** suffix, or variants thereof, (25). The variants of the verb shapes with this multifaced suffix can be found in Table 3 for the imperative above and in (27) below. Not all verbs have a form with **–à'**: Stative verbs such as **mi** 'to know', for example, do not admit this suffix. In some verbs the suffix can only be noticed by the tonal change; its final consonant is sometimes **k**, a glottal stop, and often not pronounced at all, (12).[4] We represent this suffix abstractly by :K in glosses. The suffix goes back to the Bantu pluractional and durative suffix **-a(n)g** (Nurse 2008: 153) which explains its use in the present tense and for plural addressees. The suffix does not have an independent function in Nyokon, and it is best analysed as a different variant of the verbal stem given its lexicalised shapes. Verbs that end in their basic form in what looks like this suffix take a different ending, often **–an**, to form their present tense form. A Nyokon lexicon should give the "**–a'** forms" of the verb. We will see below that the **–a'** shape is also used to form the Remote Past on the basis of the Far Past form. This usage shows that this verb shape takes different functions in the tense system and can no longer be analysed as an independent pluractional or durative suffix.

(10)   Example of verb final Present tense form of a L verb with **-à'**

         màɲí   twǎ   swà'
         màɲí   twǎ   swɔ̀-à'
         6.water   leaves   wash-K
         'The rain washes the leaves.'

(11)   Example of verb final Present tense form of a HL verb with **-à'**

         píní   páá   lêr(k)   cǐí
         píní   pàá   lêr-à'   cǐí
         2:2PL.POSS 2:children cry-K   a.lot
         'Your children cry a lot.'

(12)   Examples of verb final Present tense form of a H verb with **-à'**

         ò tɔ́'ɔ̀k   's/he starts.'   from   **ù-tɔ́'** 'to start'.

         ò kìɲɔ̀ tîpk 's/he beats Kinyo.'   from   **ù-típ** 'to beat'.

If an object follows the verb in the Present tense, there are tonal changes on the verb which are summarised below, (13).

(13)   Tonal changes in the present if an object follows

         L   >   LH   (examples   14-21)
         H   >   HL   (examples   22-24)
         HL   > HL (examples 25-28)

There are three further tone rules that are relevant here: First, the second element of the rising tone may be absorbed by a following non modulated High tone. Second, there is the phenomenon of High tone bridging. A Low between two Highs becomes High in this context; this also applies to the L of HL followed by H. In addition, there is a morpho-tonological rule applying to the oblique particle **à** which has a polar High tone if its following tone is Low. These tone rules are illustrated below.

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[4] This can be seen as part of the general tendency of devoicing and reduction utterance finally, see Lovestrand (2011).

Low tone verbs such as **ù-nɔ̀** 'to throw' and **ù-lɛ̀** 'say' occur with both the **–à'** suffix and the LH tone pattern, glossed with Pᴿ, (14,15).

(14)   Present with Low tone verb and post verbal object

      ò   nìá'   mìr
      ò   nɔ̀-à'\LH   mìr
      3ꜱɢ throw-ᴋ\Pʀ   wine
      'S/he throws (palm)wine.'

(15)   Present with Low tone verb and post verbal object

      ò   lìá'   pìcààm
      ò   lɛ̀-à'\LH   pìcààm
      3ꜱɢ say-ᴋ\Pʀ   words
      'S/he says the words.'

The H of the LH is absorbed by the High tone of **mɔ́s** which is always High. This verb **ùkwɔ̀** does not have an **–a'** form, (16).

(16)   Present tense of Low verb with absorption of the rise by following High

      ò   kwɔ̀   mɔ́s
      ò   kwɔ̌   mɔ́s
      3ꜱɢ fall\Pʀ   ground
      'S/he falls on the ground.'

When followed by a Low-tone object the Rise is realised on the verb, (17).

(17)   Present tense of same Low-tone verb with Rise realised

      ò   kwɔ̌   mù
      3ꜱɢ fall\Pʀ   high
      'S/hefalls "high"'

In the following example, there is no such absorption of the H of the Rise due to the fact that the subsequent tone is complex, (18).

(18)   Present tense of Low-tone verb with Rise realised because what follows is Fall
      ò   swǎ'   pân
      3ꜱɢ wash:ᴋ\Pʀ   plate
      'S/he washes the plate.'

The object starts in a High tone because of the High-tone-bridge tone rule, (34). This verb has the **–a'** shape and its tone is Rising but the High of the Rise forces the next Low to become High between two Highs (High-tone-bridge) and is subsequently absorbed by the following High (19,20).

(19)   Present tense of Low tone verb with H realised on next syllable because of H-bridge
      ḿ   swà'   ákín
      ḿ   swɔ̀-a'\LH àkín
      1ꜱɢ wash-ᴋ\Pʀ   calabash
      'I wash a calabash.'

Likewise, High-tone-bridge between rising and falling tone, (20).

(20)   Present tense of Low tone verb with H realised on next syllable because of H tone
         bridge
         ò   swà'   pípân
         ò   swɔ̀–a'\LH   pìpân
         s/he wash   plates
         's/he washes the plates.'

H tone verbs require a HL pattern in the Present tense if an object follows, (21). The final
k of the **–a'** form **tîpk** is not realised with the object following, avoiding a cluster of **pkp** (21);
alternatively, this may be interpreted as a form without the **–a'** (**-k**) suffix. We present examples
with the same verb and a range of objects to show this behaviour, resulting in some uncommon
but perfectly acceptable sentences.

(21)   Present tense of High tone verb

         ò   tîp   pân
         ò   típ(:à')\HL pân
         s/he beat(:ᴋ)\Pʀ   plate
         's/he hits the plate.'

The L of the HL pattern of the High-tone verb **típ** 'to beat, hit' is not absorbed by the
following Low tone, (22).

(22)   Present tense of High tone verb

         ò   tîp   pìfòmâ.
         3ꜱɢ beat\Pʀ   oranges
         'S/he hits oranges.'

The Low-tone of the prefix of the object becomes High because of H-tone-bridge which
applies to the prefix of the object in these cases, (23). The Low-tone of the Fall is realised as
downstep, (23). There is some variation between examples between it being realised as a
downstep or as Fall, compare (23) and (24).

(23)   Present tense of High tone verb with Low of Fall realised as Downstep

         ò   típ↓   pípân
         ò   tîp   pìpân
         3ꜱɢ   beat\Pʀ   plates
         's/he hits the plates.'

(24)   Same present tense of High tone verb with Fall realised and no Downstep
         ò   tîp   míyíp
         ò   tîp   mìyíp
         3ꜱɢ beat\Pʀ   houses
         's/he hits the houses.'

If the HL on the verb is the underlying tone of the verb, it triggers H-tone-bridge as well,
(25, 26).

(25)   Present tense of HL verb with H tone bridge

         á   lêk   ákín
         2ꜱɢ like   calabash
         'You like calabash.'

(26)   Present tense of HL verb with H tone bridge

á   lêk   pípân
á   lêk(\HL)   pìpân
2SG like(\PR)   plates
'You like plates.'

But the High-tone bridge does not apply if what follows is not an object but an oblique, (27, 28).

(27)   Present tense of HL verb with oblique and no H tone bridge

á   lêk   à   ɲɛ́
2SG like   at   eat
'You like to eat.'

(28)   Present tense of HL verb with oblique and no H tone bridge

á   lêk   à   lɔ̂k
2sg like   at   close
'You like to close.'

If the element following the verb is not an object, the Present tense form of the verb is tonally the same as when the object precedes it or is absent. Thus, in the following examples, (29-31), the tones are simply Low because what follows is an oblique complement marked by the **à** particle.

(29)   Low-tone verb in present tense with oblique

ò   cɔ̀p   àkɔ́
3SG leave   at:home
'S/he leaves home.'

(30)   Low-tone verb in present tense with oblique

ò   cɨ̀'èn   à   mɘ́s
ò   cɨ̀'è-n   à   mɘ́s
3SG leave:K   at   ground
'S/he leaves the earth.'

(31)   Low-tone verb in present tense with oblique

ò   cɨ̀'èn   á   mù
3SG leave:K   at\H high
'S/he gets up.'

The particle **à** has a High polar tone in the last example because its complement is Low. This is also the case in the following example, (32).

(32)   Present tense of High-tone verb and oblique with polar High tone

á   fɨ́r   á   cɔ̀p
2SG can   at\H leave
'You can leave.'

The Present tense is used to represent habitual situations; there is no dedicated habitual tense. After the beginning of the Frog-story (Meier 1969) which is recounted in past tenses, the general property that the boy sleeps with his dog is presented with the Present tense, (33). Likewise, a general truth requires a Present tense, (34), (35).

(33)   Present tense to indicate habit

ă   pùtú   yin   ò-fyà   pɨ́   ɣìɘ̀p
at   night   arrive 3SG-sleep with   dog
'During the night he sleeps with his dog.'

(34)   **ɲɔ̀'ɔ́   ɲàás   ndɪ̀k   á-sì   pìŋgɔ́rǎ**
Nyokon   twins   see:K   at-like   8:gods
'Nyokon see twins as gods.'

(35)   **ɲàás nɘ̀   pǎ**
twins COP   children
à-yí   pɨ́   pîn   pɔ̂   páfòò, pátáá, ɣɔ̀'   nɘ́   pánìs
at-REL   3PL   born:K O3Pl   2:two   2:three even   COP   2-four
'Twins are children that are born 2, 3, even 4.'

4.2   Subjunctive

The subjunctive is formed by a High-tone on the verb and a High-tone on the subject pronoun, except for the 1PL pronoun, (36, 37). In the Subjunctive, all subjects require a subject pronoun including in addition to nominal subjects (last two instances in (36), (37)).

(36)   Subjunctives with the L verb **ù-fɛ̀** 'to come'

ɱ́   fɛ́ kɔ́'   'I should come home'

á   fɛ́ kɔ́'   'You should come home'

ó   fɛ́ kɔ́'   'S/He should come home'

tɘ̀ŋ   fɛ́ kɔ́'   'We should come home'

nàá   fɛ́ kɔ́'   'You (pl)should come home'

pɨ́   fɛ́ kɔ́'   'They (pl)should come home'

kíŋó   fɛ́ kɔ́'   'The king should come home'

Kìɲɔ̀ó fɛ́ kɔ́'   'Kigno should come home'

(37)   Subjunctives with the H verb **ù-mɔ́** 'to drink'

ɱ́   mɔ́   'I should drink'

á   mɔ́   'You should drink'

ó   mɔ́   'He should drink'

tɘ̀ŋ   mwá'   'We should drink'

~tɘ̀ŋ   mɔ́   'We should drink'

nàá   mwá'   'You (pl) should drink'

~nàá   mɔ́   'You (pl) should drink'

pɨ́   mwá'   'They (pl) should drink'

~pɨ́   mɔ́   'They (pl) should drink'

kíŋó   mɔ́   'The king should drink.'

Kìɲɔ̀ó mɔ́   'Kinyo should drink.'

The High-tones of the subjunctive are realised on the verb and on the subject pronoun. If there is a preverbal object the High-tone is still realised on the subject pronoun and not on the

object (as it may be for the Recent Past, see section 4.3 below). In the following example (38) the Low tone object stays Low for all subjects.

(38)   Subjunctive with a preverbal object

ḿ   mìr   mɔ́
1SG:SBJV   wine   drink(:SBJV)
'I should drink wine'

The shape of the 1PL plural pronoun is falling if the Low tone object follows it, but not if the object follows the verb in which case, it is Low, (39), as in clauses without an object, or, optionally, rising with anticipation of the High tone of the verb. We cannot explain the falling tone on the 1PL pronoun which remains Low elsewhere in the subjunctive.

(39a)   Falling tone on 1PL subject pronoun with object following it

tɔ̂ŋ   mìr   mɔ́
tɔ̀ŋ   mìr   mɔ́
1PL   wine   wine
'We should drink wine'.

Compare to:

(39b)   Low tone on 1PL subject pronoun with verb following it

tɔ̀ŋ mɔ́   mìr   ~   tɔ̌ŋ   mɔ́   mìr
1PL   drink   wine
'We should drink wine'.

4.3   Past tenses: Recent, Far, Remote

There are three distinctions in the past tenses, distinguishing deictic differences in reference to the past. The Cameroonian Bantu languages are well known to have systems of past reference (Nurse 2008:88). We have tentatively labelled these three past tenses Recent, Far, and Remote Past reflecting these distinctions in temporal distance. We have not conducted a detailed semantic study into these tenses. The default past tense in the Recent Past which is used for situations in which the degree in past reference is irrelevant. Far and Remote Past are marked and used when specifying such past reference matters.

The Recent Past is formed by a High-tone which docks to the right onto the object if that follows it (and can receive it), (40, 41), and it goes to the left onto the subject if there is no object, (61, 62). It does not influence the verb. Low tone subject pronouns become High, (42, 46); noun subjects change a final Low tone to High, (43). However, the tonal shape for some subject pronouns is different for this tense: the subject pronoun for the second person singular is Low underlyingly in this tense, **à**, while **m̀** for the first-person singular is Low, (40). Pronouns and their variants across tenses are presented in Table 3 in section 2.2. The verb has the same tonal shape as in the Present.

(40)   H tone on preverbal object

a.   **m̀   ófɘn   típ   vɘ̂**
      m̀   H:ò-fɘ̀n   típ   vɘ̂
      1SG   RECP:CL3-thigh   beat   O3SG
      'I have hit his [him] thigh'

b.   **à   ófɘn   típ   vɘ̂**
      à   H:ò-fɘ̀n   típ   vɘ̂
      2SG   RECP:CL3-thigh   beat   O3SG
      'You have hit his [him] thigh.'

(41)   H tone on preverbal object

    m̀   **ándwóm**   **ɲà'**
    m̀   **H:àndwòm**   **ɲà'**
    1SG RECP:mutton   eat
    'I have eaten mutton.'

(42)   H tone on preverbal object and on subject pronoun

    ḿ   **ípún**   **ndìk**   **nə̀**   **ìndwómâ**
    m̀   **H:ìpún**   **ndìk**   **nə̀**   **ìndwómâ**
    1SG REC.P:goats see\PR   and   sheep
    'I have seen goats and sheep.'

(43)   Recent Past with a High tone verb and H tone on preverbal object

    pól   **ófə̀n**   **típ**   **və̂**
    Paul   **H:òfə̀n**   **típ**   **və̂**
    Paul   REC.P:thigh   beat O3SG
    'Paul has hit him on the thigh (recently)'

The High-tone TAM marker can be realised on the object and the subject pronoun, (44).

(44)   H of Recent Past on subject pronoun as well

    ómîr   **nə̀**
    ò:H:mìr   **nə̀**
    3SG:RECP:wine   throw
    'He has thrown away wine.' (recently).

This does not happen on nominal subjects, (45).

(45)   No High tone of recent past on the nominal subject; only on the object

    Kìɲə̀   **ófə̀n típ**   **və̂**
    Kigno   **H:òfə̀n**   **típ**   **və̂**
    Kigno   REC.P:thigh   beat   him
    'Kigno has hit him on the thigh (recently).'

If there is no preverbal object, this High-tone of the Recent Past is realised on the subject pronoun, (46), or on the last syllable of the nominal subject, (47).

(46)   Recent Past without preverbal object

    ó   **cɔ̀p**   **àkɔ́**
    3SG:RECP   leave   home
    'He has left the house.' (recently)'

(47)   Recent Past without preverbal object and nominal subject

    Kìɲǒ   swə̀
    Kigno:RECP wash
    'Kigno has just washed.'

The object has an initial High-tone if it follows a Low tone verb, (48, 49). This shows that the verb is in the LH tonal shape of the Present tense with object following. The High tone of the Rise is realised on the following object (and as example (48) shows actually also on the preverbal part of the object as the head noun of the object is preverbal but its modifier post-verbal in this example).

(48)   Recent past with post verbal object and High-tone realised on

     ḿpáá   **kìp**   **páfòò**
     m̀:H:pàá   **kìp\LH** **pàfòò**
     1SG:RECP:children\PR   bath\PR two
     'I have bathed two children.' (recently).'

(49)   Recent past with post verbal object and High-tone realised on it

     ó   **swə̀**   **ákɨ́n**
     Pɔ́l   **swə̀**   **ákɨ́n**
     Kìɲɔ̌   **swə̀**   **ákɨ́n**
     Kìɲɔ̀:H   **swə̀\LH**   **àkɨ́n**
     subject:RECP wash\PR   calabash
     'S/he, Paul, Kigno have just washed the calabash.'

     For High tone verbs, the Recent Past form with pronominal subject is indistinguishable from the Subjunctive in case there is no object.

     The Recent Past is used as a general past. For example, in (50) it is clear the event is not meant to be recent but rather unspecific as to the time in the past.

(50)   **ìcɔ́ɔ́**   **pɨ́**   **tɔ́'**   **ápín**   **mápín**   **mì**   **ɲàás**
     what?   3PL   start   dance   6:dances 6:of twins
     'Why did they start this dance of the twins?'

     There are two further past tenses that differ from the Recent Past in tonal behaviour. The Far Past is formed by a High tone on the verb, (51). This High tone of the verb spreads to the following syllable of an object, (51). The Remote past (longer ago) is formed on the basis of the Far Past but with the –**à'** form of the verb, (52). Replacing the base stem of the verb with the extended stem in this paradigm always rendered the reference further into the past. In both tenses, the object can be placed before the verb, compare (53) to (51) and (54) to (53). The subject pronouns for first and second person singular have a Low tone for both tenses (53-56). Object pronouns occur post-verbally (57,58).

(51)   Far Past

     ò   **swə́**   **ákɨ́n**
     ò   **swə̀\H**   **àkɨ́n**
     3SG wash\PA   calabash
     He washed the calabash

(52)   Remote Past

     ò   **swá'**   **ákɨ́n**
     ò   **swə̀:k\H**   **àkɨ́n**
     3SG wash:REM\PA calabash
     He had washed the calabash

(53)   Far Past with preverbal object

     m̀ àkɨ́n   **swə́**
     m̀ àkɨ́n   **swə̀\H**
     1SG   calabash wash\PA
     I washed the calabash

(54)   Remote Past with preverbal object

    m̀   **àkín**   **swá'**
    m̀   **àkín**   **swɔ̀:ĸ\H**
    1SG   calabash wash:REM\PA
    I had washed the calabash

(55)   Far Past second person singular subject

    à   **swɔ́**   **ákín**
    à   **swɔ̀\H**   **àkín**
    2SG   wash\PA   calabash
    You washed the calabash.

(56)   Remote Past second person singular subject

    à   **swá'**   **ákín**
    à   **swɔ̀:k\H**   **àkín**
    2SG   wash:REM\PA calabash
    You had washed the calabash.

(57)   Far Past pronominal object

    ò   **lə́**   **və̂**
    ò   **lə̀\H**   **və̂**
    3SG say\PA   O3PL
    'He told them.

(58)   Remote Past pronominal object

    ò   **lìá'**   **və̂**
    ò   **lə̀:ĸ\H**   **və̂**
    3sg   say:REM\H   O3pl
    'He had told them.'

The object after a past tense of a High-toned verb often has a High initial syllable like *ákín* 'calabash' (56) above. These instances can be accounted for either by H-tone-bridge or by the polar High on the oblique particle **a**, (59, 60).

(59)   Past verb and High tone bridge with following oblique

    ò   **cɔ́p**   **ákɔ́**
    ò   **cɔ̀p\H**   **à ìkɔ́**
    3SG leave\PA at home
    'He left the house.'

(60)   Past verb and High tone bridge with following oblique

    kìcà'ɲòr   **cɛ́s**   **á**   **cɛ́m**
    kìcà'ɲòr   **cɛ̀s\H**   **à**   **cɛ́m**
    frog   leave\PA at inside
    'The frog left the inside.'

Observe that the same **à** does not become High if a Low tone follows, (61).

(61)   No High tone on **a** when Low follows

pɨ́   kǒ   cɛ́s   à   kìcâ
3PL   INCHO   leave\PA   at   now
'They left now.'

However, a High tone after a Past tense verb can be brought about by the polar High tone on the Oblique marker **a** 'at' before a Low tone of a nominal oblique, (62). This requires further study.

(62)   Polar High tone on oblique

pɨ́   tɔ́'   á   ndìk
pɨ́   tɔ̀'\H   à   ndìk
3PL   begin\PA   at   see
'They began to see.'

And finally, there are cases where the Oblique marker **a** 'at' has a High polar tone and fuses with the vowel prefix of the noun, (63).

(63)   Polar High tone of oblique marker

ò   vɔ́   típ   áfə̀n
ò   vɔ́   típ   à   ìfə̀n
3SG   O3SG   beat\PA   at   thigh
'He had hit on the tigh.'

There is no general High-tone spread from the verb onto the next object, (64-68).

(64)   No High spread to object

m̀   yár   mìr
1SG   search\PA   wine
'I wanted wine.'

(65)   No High spread to object

ò   yár   mìr
3SG   search\PA   wine
'S/he wanted wine.'

(66)   No High spread to object

m̀   mbá'   pùnùk
1SG   chew\PA   meat
'I chewed the meat.'

(67)   No High spread to object

m̀   ndɨ́k   pìfòmâ
1SG   see\PA   oranges
'I saw oranges.'

Nor does the High-tone spread to any other element following the verb, (68).

(83)   No High tone spread; also not to oblique

à   mwá'   mbà'mbà'
2SG   drink:K\PA   morning
'You drank in the morning.'

And post verbal modifiers of the object noun stay Low after the High-toned verb in the past, (68).

(68)   No High tone bridge for modifier

ò   pàkàbà ndá'   mànjá' ápíɣóó
3SG   root   give\PA   big   at:8:children
'He gave the big root to the children.'

However, the quantifier after the verb (referring to the preverbal nominal object) has a High-tone. Possibly, this High tone is a property of the quantifier concord, (60,70).

(69)   High tone on post-verbal quantifier

m̀   ìkín   swə́   áfòò
m̀   ìkín   swə̀\H   àfòò
1SG   calabashes   wash\PA   two
'I washed two calabashes.'

(70)   High tone on post-verbal quantifier agreeing prefix

m̀   pìpân   swə́   pífòò
m̀   pìpân   swə̀\H   pìfòò
1SG   calabashes   wash\PA   two
'I washed two plates.'

In the next section we discuss the tenses which have a designated TAM marker. We will make use of the same labels \PA (in the Perfect tense) and \PR (in the Present Conitnuous tense) for the tonal shapes of the verbs.

5   Tenses with a segmental TAM marker

5.1   Perfect

The Perfect is formed by the TAM marker **nòó** or **nə̀kú** plus the High-toned verb form of the past, (71,72). The object hardly ever precedes the verb in this tense, but see (150a).

(71)   Perfect with locative goal complement

ɣìə̀p   nòó   kwə́   mə́
dog   PRF   fall\PA   ground
'The dog has fallen.'

(72)   Perfect with underlying High tone verb and High tone object

mì   nòó   típ   vúm   òfə̀n
mì   nòó   típ\H   vúm   òfə̀n
1SG   PRF   hit\PA   my   thigh
'I have hit my thigh.'

In the following example H bridge applies and **ákà'á** 'on top' has a polar High tone on the initial Oblique marker **a**, (73)

(73)   Perfect with tone rules applying to complements

tɛ́p   àyí   m̀   nòó   kɔ́n   pícíɲɛ́   ákà'á   nə̀   à   kír   cíi̋
tɛ́p   àyí   m̀   nòó   kɔ̀n\H   pìcíɲɛ̀   àkà'á   nə̀   à   kír   cíi̋
table   REL   1SG   PRF   place\PA   stuff:eat   top   COP   at   small   very
'The table on which I have put the meal is too small.'

The High tone spreads from a vowel final High tone verb onto a following vowel that can coalesce with it (74, 75), and hence not to the **i** in **ìɲɛ̀m** 'animals' in (75).

(74)   High tone spread on adjacent vowels

ò   nòó   ɣóó   ìɲɛ̀m   /   áɲɛ̀m
ò   nòó   ɣóó   ìɲɛ̀m   /   áɲɛ̀m
3SG   PRF   kill\PA animals /   animal
'He has killed an animal.'

(75)   High tone spread on adjacent vowels

vɘ̀pûm   nòó   ɣóó   ácìk
vɘ̀pûm   nòó   ɣòò\H àcìk
2:hunters PRF   kill\PA elephant
'The hunters killed the elephant.'

The Perfect is used with verbs like **mí** 'know' to indicate a present resultant state of knowing, (76), following Comrie's analysis of the perfect (Comrie 1967:57). The Perfect is also used for the consequence of a condition; example (77) is the complement clause of conditional clause (86). It is also used for a general truth, (78).

(76)   **yí   pìɘ̀   bàkìm   nòó   mí**
         REL   people 2:all   PRF   know
         'that everyone knows.'

(77)   **pɨ́   nòó   ŋgɘ́r   ápín   mápín   mì   twin**
         3PL   PRF   must   dance   6.dance 6:of   twins
         'One has to dance the twin-dance.'

(78)   **pɨ́-ɲáás nɘ̀   pàá   àyí   pɨ́   nóò   ngɘ́r   páwá**
         8-twin   COP   2.children REL   3PL   PRF   possess power
         'Twins are children that have powers.'

5.2   Present continuous

The Present Continuous is formed by the marker **nɘ̌** and the tone pattern on the verb identical to the one in the Present tense if an Object follows but without the **–a'** marker. The origin of the tense marker lies in the copula **nɘ̀**, (79). By assuming an underlying Rising tone on this tense marker, glossed as PROG, we can cover the tonal behaviour. The same tonal changes on the following object apply such as High-bridge in (79). The High of the Rise on **nɘ̌** is absorbed by the High tone of a High-tone verb (80), or of a HL tone verb. Subject pronouns in their underlying form are **á** 'you' and **ò** 's/he, it' for this tense, as in the Present tense, subject PRO1, see Table 3. Objects cannot precede the verb in this tense.

(79)   Present Continuous with object and H bridge

m̀   nɘ̌   swɘ̌   ákín
m̀   nɘ̌   swɘ̀\LH àkín
1SG   PROG   wash\PR calabash
'I am washing the calabash.'

(80)   High of Rise absorbed by following High

m̀   nɘ̀   típ   kífá'
m̀   nɘ̌   típ   kìfá'
1SG   PROG   beat   stick
'I am hitting with a stick.'

If the verb has HL as the underlying tone, this tone remains HL if a High-tone object follows; the rule of High tone bridge does not apply to this underlying Fall, (81).

(81)   H bridge not affecting underlying Fall

 m̀   nǝ̀   tên   yíp
m̀   nǝ̌   tên   yíp
1SG PROG build house
'I am building a house.'

After a High-tone subject such as **á**2SG the form of the auxiliary becomes Low toned **nǝ̀**, (82, 83).

(82)   Exceptional auxiliary tone after **á** 2SG

á   nǝ̀   mbà'
á   nǝ̌   mbà'
2SG PROG walk
'You are busy chewing.'

(83)   Exceptional auxiliary tone after **á** 2SG with H verb

á   nǝ̀   ɣóó
á   nǝ̌   ɣóó
2SG PROG kill
'You are busy killing.'

5.3   Conditional Future

The Conditional Future is very similar in shape to the Present Continuous, but there are tonal differences, and the object can occur on either side of the verb, (85), (86). The subject pronouns are from the PRO2 set that is also used in the Recent Past. It has a High tone on the tense marker **nǝ́** after the Low tone **à** pronoun, (84), and after the Rising **nàá** pronoun, (85), but a Low tone on the tense marker after the Low tone **ò**, (86). More data are needed to analyse the tonal behaviour. The Conditional Future is used in yet unfulfilled conditions.

(84)   Conditional Future

pùtú (àyí) à   nǝ̀   lǝ̀ sá m̀ nǝ̀ ví mɔ̂m víí tà'átà'á
day REL 2SG COND.FUT say that 1SG PROG die FUT:1SG die truly
'The day you will say that you will die, you will truly die.'

(85)   Conditional Future

nàá   nǝ̀   ngǝ́r   mó
2PL   COND.FUT   have   money
'If you(pl) will have money.'

(86)   ò   nǝ̀   vǝ̀   ɣòó ɲàás   pî   à   cɛ́m   ɲɔ̀'ɔ́
3SG COND.FUT   O3SG child twin   bear at   inside Nyokon
'When someone bears twins among the Nyokon, ...'

6.   Constructions with mbɨǝ: Past Imperfective and Backgrounding tenses

Under this heading, we group a number of tenses that use the marker **mbɨǝ** with various tonal shapes. This is basically the verb 'to be', as it is also used with nominal complements in tensed clauses, (87, 88).

(87)   with a nominal complement

kà à   mbɨ́ǝ   ɣɨ̌p
if 2SG be:PAST thief
'If you were a thief.'

(88)   with a Prepositional Phrase as complement

ò   mbɨ́ə̀   nə̀   ɲùùm
she   be:PAST with pregnancy
'She was pregnant (literally, with pregnancy).'

The infinitive **úmbɨ̀ə̀** is used as complementiser 'whether', (89).

(89)   infinitive 'to be' as complementiser

ḿ   pyá'àn úmbɨ̀ə̀ ò   ɣə̂m   ìlɔ́ŋ màŋgâ
1SG hear:K if   3SG sing   nice song
'I listen whether she sings a nice song.'

These constructions with **mbɨə** are quite common in narratives which typically start as in (90) with an infinitive **úmbɨ́ə̀**.

(90)   Opening clause of story

úmbɨ́ə̀   pɨ̀ə́   pútú
INF:BE   INDEF 14.day
'Once upon a time'

Given the limited number of available examples, it is difficult to establish what the shape of the verb is in the following tenses. In most cases, it seems to be the underlying form of the verb but some cases point to the Present tense form when there is an object following. The Past Imperfective with the infinitive **ku** takes the High-toned Past tense form of the verb. The object follows the verb. Only the constructions with a repetition of the subject (and a new clause) after **mbɨ́ə́** or **màà** allow a preverbal object. The following constructions are presented in this section, Table 4.

Label	scheme	gloss for aux
Past Imperfective:	S **mbɨ́ə́** S (O) V(\PR) (O)	be:PAST
Past Imperfective 2:	S **mbɨ́ə́ku** V\PAST (O)	be:PAST INF
Background	S **mbɨ́ə̀**V(\PR) (O)	BGND
Background before R in past	S **mbɨ̀ə̀**V (O)	REL.BGND
Background moment	S **màà** S (O) V (O)	WHEN

Table 4: Constructions with variants of **mbɨə**

The *Past Imperfective* uses a construction with the Subject pronoun plus **mbɨ́ə́** followed by a clause with the same subject pronoun, (91, 92, 93).

(91)   Scheme of Past Imperfective: S **mbɨ́ə́** S(O)V (O)

(92)   Past Imperfective with preverbal object

m̀   mbɨ́ə́   m̀   àkɨ́n   swə̀
1SG be:PAST 1SG calabash wash
'I was washing the calabashes.'

(93)   Past Imperfective with a preverbal pronominal object in the relative clause
pùcó   àyí   ò   mbɨ́ə́   ò   tə̀ŋá   ɣámbɔ̂k
14.thing   REL   3SG be:PAST 3SG   O1PL   annoy:K
nòó   cɔ́p
PRF   leave\PA
'What annoyed us has left.'

The subject pronoun need not be repeated, (95), compared to (93).

(94)   Past Imperfective without second subject pronoun and V in Present tense form
m̀   mbɨ́ɔ̀ swɔ̀   ákɨ́n
1SG   be:PAST   wash   calabash
'I was washing the calabash.'

The Past Imperfective can be used with an initial topic rather than the identical subject as in (95) with the topic 'twins' before the tense marker and the impersonal 'they' after it.

(95)   **ɲàás mbɨ́ɔ̀ pɨ́ sáà   ɲɛ́ɛ̀ ɲàás kɔ̀n   à kínɔ́ŋ**
twins be:PAST 3PL say   that twins walk:K at 7:road
'It is said that twins walk on the road.'

Past Imperfective 2: The second clause can be replaced by an infinitival pro-clitic **kú**. No subject pronoun is possible in the infinitival complement. It is unclear whether this construction has exactly the same function as the Past Imperfective. The Past Imperfective 2 in (97) is used immediately after a clause with the other shape of the Past Imperfective. The time situation is identical in both clauses; possibly there are sequence effects.

(96)   Past Imperfective with infinitival complement **kú**.

nàá mbɨ́ɔ̀ kú   mí   sâ
2PL   be:PAST INF   know\PAthat
tɔ̀ŋ mbɨ́ɔ̀ tɔ̀ŋ pìnà'   káp   ɨ
1PL   be:PAST 1PL   8:cattle buy\PA Q
'Do you know that we have bought cattle?'

(97)   Past Imperfective with infinitival complement **kú**.

ò   mbɨ́ɔ̀ kú ŋgɔ́r   ɣìɔ̀p   nɔ̀ kìcà'áɲɔ̀r
3SG   be:PAST INF have(\PR) dog   and frog
'He had a dog and a frog.'

Backgrounding is used for clauses describing the background to the following focal clause, (99). The tone on **mbɨ́ɔ̀** is HL. The background is immediate and in the recent past (99-103). Example (102) differs minimally from the similar sentence (92) and the distinction is that (102) refers to the *recent* past.

(98)   Scheme of backgrounding tense: S **mbɨ́ɔ̀**V (O)

(99)   Backgrounding
ò   mbɨ́ɔ̀ cɔ̀
3SG   BGND leave
'When he left.'

(100)   Backgrounding in complex sentence

ò   mbɨ́ɔ̀ kɔ̀r ò   yíp   pùú   kàr
3SG   BGND make 3SG house bees   destroy
'While he was destroying the beehive.'

(101)   Conditional backgrounding with stative complement and preceded by "it is"
ò   nɔ̀ á   mbɨ́ɔ̀ kákɔ́m á   fɨ́r á   cɔ̀p ŋgɔ̂ ámɨ́s
3SG   COP 2SG BGND big   2SG can at   leave O2SG alone
'When you are grown up you can go on your own.'

(102)   with the verb in the shape of the Present and expressing the Recent past;
m̀   mbɨ́ə̀ swə̀   ákín
1SG BGND wash   calabash
'I was washing the calabash. (recently)'

(103)   Background tense with oblique

ò   mbɨ́ə̀ cə̀ cîn   ándɔ̀ŋ àkíá' pùə̀ə̀s
3SG BGND go   see   at:there at:side tree
'When he looked there at the side of the trees.'

Relative Past backgrounding: The same construction with the opposite tone on the TAM marker is used for backgrounding in past situations prior to a reference point in the past (plus quam perfectum), (104, 105).

(104)   Scheme for Relative Past backgrounding: S **mbɨ̀ə́** V O

(105)   Example of Relative Past Backgrounding

ò mbɨ̀ə́   yàr   kìcà'áɲɔ̀r
3SG   REL.BGND   search frog
'When he was searching for the frog, ...'

Background moment with **màà**. The construction consists of the subject plus **màà** followed by a clause that commences with the same subject as a pronoun, (106). The construction with **màà** indicates the moment at which something, expressed in the next clause, happened, (107-108).

(106)   Scheme for background moment: S **màà** S (O) V

(107)   Backgrounding with **màà**

pɨ́   màà pɨ́   kàà   cɛ́m yìr
3PL   WHEN   3PL arrive   inside forest
'When they arrived in a forest, ...'

(108)   Backgrounding with **màà** and preverbal object

ò màà   ò   ɲě nìtán ndɨk
3SG   WHEN   3SG INDEF   rock   see
'When he saw a certain rock, ...'

The marker **màà** can be used as a prepositional like element to a noun phase indicating 'since', as in (109), which is probably its etymological origin, as in all its uses time is involved.

(109)   **á   màà   pyàá   pí-fòò**
at   WHEN 8.years 8-two
'Since two years'

7   Tenses with complex TAM marker structure

7.1   Future

The future is formed by a TAM marker **mV** which precedes and fuses with the singular subject pronouns. Subject pronouns are obligatorily present in this tense, and thus also used in addition to nominal subjects. The verb has a High-tone; it is in the so labelled Past tense form \PA, (110). Objects cannot precede the verb. The forms are presented in Table 5.

(110)   Scheme for the future: **mə̀** = Spro V\PA (O)

form	Gloss	translation
mə̌m swə́ ákín	FUT:1SG wash\PA calabash	'I will wash the calabash.'
máà swə́ ákín	FUT:2SG wash\PA calabash	'You will wash the calabash.'
mòó swə́ ákín	FUT:3SG wash\PA calabash	'S/he will wash the calabash.'
Pɔ́l mòó swə́ ákín	Paul FUT:3SG wash\PA calabash	'Paul will wash the calabash.'
mə̀ pí ndík	FUT 3PL see	'They will see.'

Table 5: Future Conjugation

The Future is used for the immediate consequence of the action in a preceding clause. The clause in (111) is preceded by the condition 'when they see a family in trouble' which also employs the future tense.

(111)   **mə̀   pí cóó   cɛ́m   pìnə̀m   vìə́   óníis**
         FUT   3PL   enter   inside   8:stomach   INDEF wife
         á-ndə̀ŋ   àyí   ò-nə̀   pî   pə̂
         at-there   REL   3SG-PRES bear O3PL
         'They (twins) will choose to enter in the belly of a woman who is giving birth to them (twins).

7.2   Narrative

The Narrative is formed by **pí**, (112,113), optionally followed by **kə̌** or **kə̀**, (114), and followed by the verb without tonal changes. The object is either before, (112) and (113) or after the verb, (112). There seems to be no extra meaning in the addition of **kə̌**; therefore, we use the unspecified gloss preV(erb). The preverb **kə̌** is dealt with in section 11 below.

(112)   Narrative with post verbal pronominal object

         ò   pí   pìcà'áɲòr   sɔ̂m   à   yí   pí   yír   vɔ̂
         3SG   other frogs   thank at   PRO   NARR   take   3SG.O
         'He thanks the other frogs for taking care of him.'

(113)   Narrative with preverbal pronominal object

         ké   kìcà'áɲòr   pí   vɔ́   lyɛ̀s
         his   frog   NARR   him   notice
         'His frog notices him.'

(114)   Narrative with addition of the preverb kə̌

         pàá   pìcà'áɲòr   pí   kə̌   cɛ́s   àkìcyâ
         children   frogs   NARR   preV   leave   now
         'The small frogs appeared at that moment.'

8   Subject Focus tenses with a complement pronoun as subject marker

Subject focus for present, recent past and past tenses starts with the personal pronoun from the complement series, Table 2 in section 2.2, without any tonal changes suggesting that the construction involves clefts. The object has to follow the verb. The various subject focus tenses are schematized in Table 6. Examples for each are presented in (115-120). These tenses occur often in relative clauses.

Label	Schema
Present Subject Focus	Compl INF-V-à' (O)
Recent Past Subject Focus:	Compl INF-V (O)
Perfect Subject Focus:	Compl nóò/nɔ́kú V\PA (O).
Far Past Subject Focus	Compl Verb\PA (O)
Remote Past Subject Focus	Compl Verb-K\PA (O)

Table 6: Various subject focus tenses (Compl = Complement pronoun)

(115)   Present Subject Focus

ŋgɔ́m   ù-swà'   àkɪ́n
me   INF-wash:K   calabash
'**I** washed the calabash.'

(116)   Recent Past Subject Focus with nominal subject

Kìŋɔ̀   ù-swɔ̀   àkɪ́n
Kigno   INF-wash:K   calabash
'**KIGNO** washed the calabash.'

(117)   Perfect   Subject   Focus   (No   High   tone   spread   to   object   pronoun)
kǔn   àyí   ò   nóò   má   ɣóó   tɔ̀ŋ   ndɪ́k   vɔ̂   nɔ́
tortoise   REL   3SG   S.FOC   end   kill\PA   O1PL   see   him   F
'The **TORTOISE** who finished killing us is here.'

(118)   Perfect Subject Focus

ŋgɔ́m   nóò(nɔ́kú) swɔ́   ákɪ́n
me   S.FOC   wash\PA calabash
'**I** washed the calabash.'

(119)   Far Past Subject Focus

ŋgɔ́m   swɔ́   ákɪ́n
me   wash\PA   calabash
'**I** washed the calabash (some time ago).'

(120)   Remote Past Subject Focus

ŋgɔ́m   swá'   ákɪ́n
me   wash:K\PA   calabash
'**I** washed the calabash (long time ago).'

9   Procedural tenses with an infinitival verb form

In procedural texts, we encounter subject-less infinitival verb forms with a High-tone on the verb and the infinitival prefix, often with the middle prefix **pí** between the infinitival prefix and radical, (121). These clauses express instructions and translate as imperatives. Nearly all sentences in our text that entail a recipe for making couscous with vegetables contain this verb form, (122-124). The object precedes the infinitive. Many, but not all, clauses have a final **a**. A variant of the procedural tense contains the background marker **mbɪ́ɔ̀** before the High-toned infinitive, also with a preverbal, pre **mbɪ́ɔ̀**, object. These forms usually do not contain the middle prefix **pí**.

(121)   Scheme of procedural: (O) INF-MID-V\H* other

                                        (O) **mbɪ́ɔ̀**INF-V\H* other

(122)   part of a recipe[5]

kə̀nə̀ŋ   ù-pí-kɔ́'   nə̀   pàsə̀ŋ ă
peanuts   INF-MID-crush with   pepper F
'Crush the peanuts with pepper.'

(123)   next line in recipe

ànjɛ́ŋ   ú-pí-pɔ́s   á   sín
vegetables INF-MID-put at   pot
'Add vegetables to the pot.'

(124)   **ànjɛ́ŋ   mbɨ́ɔ̀   ú-mán   á   pí-sɨ́ɔ̀r**
vegetables   BGND   INF-end\H at   MID-cut
'When the vegetables are cut, ...'

10.   Negation in the verbal paradigm

To render a clause negative Nyokon employs a negative segmental TAM marker and a clause final element **á** which is **ǎ** after a Low tone. All clauses with negation require an object to follow the verb. The constructions with negation are schematized in Table 7.

Negative General Present	S **sɨ́** V\PA (O) other **á**
Negative Present	S **nà~nə̀kə̀~káŋ** (O) **á**
Negative Background	S **mbɨ́ɔ̀** V (O) **á**
Negative Past	S **mbɨ́ɔ̀** V\PA (O) **á**

Table 7: Overview of negative verbal constructions

The *Negative General Present* is formed with the TAM marker **sɨ́**; with no tonal change of subject, but the verb becomes High, (125). The usual tone rules apply. There is an end of clause marker **á**, (126); also present underlyingly in (125). Objects cannot precede the verb in the negative clauses, (127).

(125)   Negative General Present

ḿ   sɨ́   swɔ̀   ákɨ́ná
1SG   NEG   wash   calabash:F
'I don't wash the calabash (never).'

(126)   Negative General Present

m̀   nòó   píkɔ́r   á   sǐ   ò   sɨ́   kwɔ̀ nìɲɔ̀'ɔ́   (n)á
1SG   PRF   8:surprise   at   COMPL   3SG   NEG   speak Nyokon   F
'I am surprised that he does not speak Nyokon.'

(127)   Negative General Present

pɨ́   sɨ́   yàr   písá'   á
3PL   NEG   search   8:problems   F
'They don't want problems.'

The *Negative Present* is formed with the TAM marker **nà**. The verb has its underlying tone, (128-130).

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[5]Unexplained Low tone on the infinitive prefix.

(128)   Negative Present

pɨ́   nà   púúŋ   á
3PL   NEG   find   F
'They don't find (it).'

(129)   Negative Present

yɛ́   tɔ̂   nà(nɜkɜ)   ɣóó   àyóò   ă
POSS.2SG   father   NEG   kill   snake   F
'Your FATHER did not kill a snake.'

(130)   Negative Present

m̀   nà   ɲɛ́   ɣɔ̀'   mǎŋgɔ̀rà   àmɔ̀   ă
1SG   NEG   eat   even   mango   one   F
'I haven't eaten even one mango.'

There is an alternative negative present using **kâŋ**, (131).

(131)   Negative Present with **kâŋ**

m̀   kâŋ   á fɛ̀   ă
1SG NEG   at come   F
'I don't come.'

The *Negative Background* is formed with the TAM marker **mbɨ́ɔ́** which is also used for the Past Imperfective. In the Negative Background construction, the subject pronoun cannot be repeated after **mbɨ́ɔ́**, the object has to follow the verb, and there is a clause final marker **á**. Moreover, the verb has its underlying tone, (132, 133).

(132)   Negative Background

ò   mbɨ́ɔ́ púúŋ   ké   kìcà'áɲòr   ă
3SG   NEG   find   3SG.POSS:7 frog   F
'He didn't find his frog.'

(133)   Negative Background with a Low tone verb.

pɨ́   mbɨ́ɔ́   ndɪk   kìcà'áɲòr ă
3PL NEG   see   frog   F
'They didn't see the frog.'

The Negative Past is similar to the Negative Background but the Verb has the High tone of the Past tense, (134). The usual tone rules apply.

(134)   Negative Past

ò   sâ   pɔ̂ŋ   mbɨ́ɔ́   fɨ́r
3SG   say   LOG   NEG   can\PA
ù-sɨ́k ké   kìcà'áɲòr   yì   nîm   ă
INF-let   7POSS.3SG   frog   it   loose   F
'He says that he can't let his frog to be lost.'

It is possible to negate a noun phrase with a negative marker **kɜ̀** before the phrase, and the clause final **á**, (135, 136).

(135)   Negation of noun phrase

ò   cîn   kɘ̀   kìcà'áɲòr   á   ndɔ̀ŋ   ǎ
3SG   see\PR   NEG   frog   at   there   F
'He does not see the frog anymore.'

(136)   Negation of noun phrase

kɘ̀   pyé   písá'   tɔ́   á   cɛ́m   yǎ   yíp   kìnɔ̀m   ǎ
NEG INDEF   8:problems   again   at   inside   DEM   house   family   F
'No problems anymore in that family.'

The marker **kɘ̀** and **kâŋ** are also used for negation in nominal clauses, (137, 138).

(137)   Negative of existential nominal clause

kɘ̀   pân   á
NEG   plate   F
'There is no plate.'

(138)   Negative of locative nominal clause

pân   kâŋ   ándɔ̀ŋ   ǎ
plate   NEG   there   F
'The plate is not there.'

11.   Preverb Phasal Aspectuals

The preverbs are for the most part aspectual in nature. In principle, they are independent of the choice of tense and from the choice of verb, and clearly, there are preferential patterns, e.g., the inchoative **kɘ̌** is mainly attested after the Narrative or in the Present tense. Bear in mind that some of the tenses have no segmental TAM marker and then the preverb may be taken for the TAM marker. Whenever a marker can be used in addition to a TAM marker, it is analysed as a preverb. The preverb **kə** seems to be part of the TAM marker **nəku** as a variant of TAM marker **noo** for the Perfect and Recent Past Subject Focus, and there is a homophone negation marker **kə** that we assume to be a different morpheme. The phasal aspectual preverbs are presented in Table 8.

Preverb	gloss	Function	etymological source
cɔ̀	go	immediate action	verb 'go'
fɛ̀	come	movement to deictic centre	verb 'come'
má	finish	Terminative	verb 'end'
kɘ̀	INCHOative	Inchoative	?
ŋgô	busy	Continuative	?
sɨ́	so	Consequential	?

Table 8: Overview of preverbs

The preverb **cɔ̀** is used to mark an immediate action, (139, 140). It is derived from the verb 'to go'. Its directional counterpart is the preverb **fɛ̀** 'come', (141).

(139)   Preverb **cɔ̀** 'go'

pɨ́   cɔ̀   nɨ̀ɔ̀m
3PL   go   hide
'They hide (him).'

(140)　　Preverb **cɔ̀** 'go'

mɔ̌m　　cɔ́　tɛ̂n　yíp
FUT:1SG　go　build　house
'I'll go build a house.'

(141)　　Preverb **fɛ̀** 'come'

m̀　　fɛ̀　　tɛ̂n　yíp
1SG　come　build　house
'I have come to build a house.'

The preverb **má** doubles as the verb 'to finish, end', (142)

(142)　　Preverb **má** 'to finish'

kǔn　àyí　ò　　nóò　má　ɣóó　tə̀ŋ
tortoise　REL　3SG　S.FOC　end　kill　O1PL
'Tortoise who finished killingus, ...'

The preverb **kə̀** is the opposite in that it marks a beginning, an inchoative, (143-145). It is not clear whether it is derived from a verb, and if so, from which. It is probably related to the element **kə** that reoccurs in long forms of certain TAM markers, and in the negative marker **kə**.

(143)　　Preverb **kə̀** inchoative

pìpyê　kə̀　　nîm　vâ　　　yíp
things　INCHO　loose　3SG.POSS　house
'Things start to get lost in his house.'

(144)　　Preverb **kə̀** inchoative but with a LH tone melody

ɣìə̀ŋ　kə̌　　kǎm　vâ
dog　INCHO　help　O3SG
'The dog set out to help him.'

(145)　　Preverb **kə̀** inchoative with H tone verb and an Object

á　　kə̀　　típ　kífá'
2SG　INCHO　beat　stick
'You start beating the stick.'

The preverb **ŋgô** is used to emphasize the continuation of the action, (146).

(146)　　Continuative **ŋgô**

ò　　pyâ'　ásì̀　pìcà'áɲòrmbíɔ́　ŋgô　yù　　　　ándɔ̀ŋ　àkíá'
3SG　hear\PR　that　8:frogs　　BGND　busy　make.noise\PR　at:there　at:side
'He heard that the frogs were making noise there at the side.'

The preverb **sɨ́** translated with 'alors' in French is difficult to characterise but it adds logical consequence to the sentence. We gloss it with 'so', (147-149).

(147)　　Preverb **sɨ́** for logical next step.
ò　　sɨ́　ɣíɔ́n　　　mbà'mbà'
3SG　so　get.up\PA　morning
'He thus got up in the morning,...'

(148)   Preverb **sɪ́** in time conditional

tám   àyí   ò   sɪ́   pí   ɲáás   sɪ́
time   REL   3SG   so   beget   twin   F
'When someone gives birth to twins.'

(149)   Preverb **sɪ́** in a verbless clause

ɲàás   sɪ́   mbɪ́ə   sɔ́
twin   so   be:PA   so
'Twins thus, ...'

12   Object position

Nyokon is remarkable in that it allows a full object to occur before the verb root while Bantu languages are strictly VO in word order. It shares this property with neighbouring and related Tunen. A detailed comparison between the functions of object placement in Nyokon and Tunen can be found in Mous (2014). It differs from Tunen in that this order is only possible (and optional) in certain tenses: the Present, the Subjunctive, the Recent Past, the Far Past, the Remote Past, the Conditional, the Past Imperfective, the Background Moment, the Narrative. It is not possible in the Imperative, Perfect, Present Continuous, the Future. The impossibility of the OV order in the Subject Focus tenses and the Negative tenses must be related to the information structure properties of the alternative orders. But otherwise, the distribution of which tenses do and do not allow pre-verbal objects is not solely determined by the semantics of the tenses. Structural properties of the constructions of the various tenses play a role too. The Procedural tenses are the only ones that require the object to be before the verb stem and do not allow a post-verbal position but these are also the only tenses that are built on an infinitive, a nominalised verb. The constructions with **mbɪə** 'to be' tend not to allow a pre-verbal object with the exception of the Past Imperfective, and possibly this tense has grammaticalised a step further by allowing that.

Only direct objects can occur pre-verbally, including a locative object, (151), but dative or indirect objects are never pre-verbal, (150b). This asymmetry and hierarchy in objecthood are also reflected in the order in the imperative where the direct or theme object needs to precede indirect or dative objects, (152).

(150)a. **m̀   nòó   yíp   tɛ̂n   ngɔ́ə̀**
1SG   PRF   house   build   O2SG
'I have built a house for you.'

b.   ***m̀   nòó   ngɔ́ə̀   tɛ̂n   yíp**
1SG   PRF   O2SG   build   house

(151)a. **ɱ́   yîn   àkɔ́**
1SG   arrive   house
'I arrive at the house.'

b.   ***ɱ́   àkɔ́   yîn**

(152)a. **ndáà'   màɲí   ŋgɔ́m**
give:K   6.water   O1SG
'Give me water!'

b.   ***ndáà'   ŋgɔ́m   màɲí**

The object typically occurs preverbally in polar questions with a tense form that allows it (153a), (154a,b), but it then occurs post-verbally in answers that contain negation, corrective or contrastive focus, (153b,c). In non-contrastive affirmative answers to polar questions, the object precedes the verbs in tenses that allow that, (154c).

(153)a. **á kàángè ɲâ'-ì**
2SG cassava eat-Q
'Do you eat cassava?'

b. mbɛ́ɛ̀ mì sɨ́ ɲɛ́ kàáŋgà á
no 1SG NEG eat cassava F
'No, I don't eat cassava,'

c. **ɱ́ ɲâ' píɲáá**
1SG eat yam
'I eat YAM.'

(154)a. **ò nóò ɲá' nìpán áɲɛ̀m ì**
3SG PRF 5.eat liver animal Q
'Did he eat the liver of the animal?'

b. **ò nìpàn áɲɛ̀m ɲá' ì**
3SG liver animal 5.eat Q
'Did he eat the liver of the animal?'

c. **ò nìpàn áɲɛ̀m ɲá'**
3SG liver animal 5.eat
'He ate the liver of the animal.'

In answers to What?-questions, the object is typically post-verbal, (155d). The question word is either sentence initial, (155a) or in situ (155b,c).

(155)a. **ìcɔ́ à ɣáà á kà'á têp**
what? 2SG put at top table
'What did you put on the table?'

b. **à ɣáà ìcɔ́ á kà'á têp**
2SG put what? at top table
'What did you put on the table?'

c. **á kà'á têp à ɣáà ìcɔ́**
at top table 2SG put what?
'On the table, what did you put?'

d. **ɱ̀ ɣáà mìr nìpíí á kà'á têp**
1SG put wine palm at top table
'I have put palm wine on the table.'

When there is a choice to position the object before or after the verb, there are differences in information structure. In (156b), the object after the verb receives contrastive focus. Circumstantial locative phrases are topics when sentence initial, (155c.) above.

(156)a. **mɨ́ ìngî ɣɔ̀ tà'm**
1sg claws leopard fear
'I feared the claws of the leopard.'

b. **mɨ́ tà'm ìngî ɣɔ̀**
1sg fear claws leopard
'It is the claws of the leopard, that I fear (maybe not other claws)'

Objects that consist of coordinated phrases naturally have the coordinated phrase after the verb, and the first co-ordinant before the verb, (157a). To have both before the verb stresses the fact that the two co-ordinants, goats and sheep, are together. Such "discontinuous" phrases regularly occur with the numeral following the verb, (158). Associate phrase cannot be split across the verb; (159) is only acceptable if the leopard is not the modifier of the claws but a

separate addressee with a preceding pause. Likewise, an adjective cannot follow the verb modifying a preverbal nominal object, (160). Such a construction is possible if the object and the adjective do not qualify the object but denote a discrete type, like, for example long and short trousers, or a black type of sheep, (161).

(157)a. **mɪ́ ípún ndɪ̀k nə̀ ìndwóm á**
1SG 10.goats see:K with sheep F
'I have seen goats and sheep.'

b. **mɪ́ ípún nə̀ ìndwóm ndɪ̀k**
1SG 10.goats with sheep see:K
'I have seen goats and sheep together.'

(158) **m̀ ándwôm ndà' àmə̀**
1SG sheep give one
'I have given one sheep (not two).'

(159) **mɪ́ ìngɪ̂ tà'm, ...   ɣə̀'**
1sg claws fear leopard
'I feared the claws, leopard.'

(160) **ò ákɪ́n mànjá ndà' à pɪ́ ɣó**
3sg calabash big give at with child
'He gave the big calabash to the child.'

b. **#ò ákɪ́n ndà' mànjá à pɪ́ ɣó**
3sg calabash give big at with child
'He gave a big-calabash to the child.'

(161) **m̀ ándwôm ndà' fɪ̀'**
1SG sheep give black
'I have given a black sheep (not white).'

Do the alternations with longer verb stems in tenses have the properties of the disjoint/conjoint that is so common in Bantu? The longer verb stem with the fused -**á'** suffix is required for the Present tense, irrespective of whether the object precedes or follows the verb, (162); although there can be minor differences in phonetic realisation depending on what follows the verb due to sequence restrictions, which is why the final **k** is not realized on the verb in (163a). In the Recent Past, differences in interpretation do occur: in (165a) with the long verb stem the object race is something like a cognate object forming one semantic unit with the verb while in (164b) with the short stem the object, race, is what is avoided, fled from. The distinction in two stems does not correspond with the conjoint/disjoint distinction, however. One of the crucial distinctions for conjoint/disjoint, namely that "one form is not allowed in sentence-final position" (Van der Wal 2016:15) does not hold for Nyokon. Moreover, the choice between a short and a long verb stem marks the difference between Far Past and Remote Past, as we will see in section 6 below.

The tone-bridge-rule is limited to true post-verbal objects and does not apply to phrases that are more loosely linked to the clause.

(163)a. **ò cánk pìr**
3SG flee:K war

b. **ò pìr cánk**
3SG war flee:K
'He flees from war.'

(164)a. **ḿ yǎr mìr**
1SG search\PR wine

b. **ḿ   mǐr   yàr(k)**
1SG   wine   search\PR(:K)
'I want wine.'

(165)a. **ò   cánk   òcέr**
3SG   flee:K   race
'He ran his race'

b. **ò   cá   òcέr**
3SG   flee   race
'He ran from the race.'

c. **Pɔ́l   òcέr   cánk**
Paul   race   flee:K
'Paul has run his race.'

13. Summary

We have presented the "tenses" of Nyokon. In view of the paucity of publications on this language, we have illustrated the tenses with examples that cover to some extent the various tonal configurations given the three tone types of the verb. Nyokon has a rich system of tenses making distinctions in degree in past reference. This is a common feature in the Grassfields Bantu area and Nyokon is situated at the border of this with Bamileke as one of its neighbouring languages. Of particular interest is the final marker **á** that marks the end of the clause in negative tenses. A final marker of some shape is also used in complement clauses and relative clauses, and in polar questions. The verb paradigms are rich in the expression of tense, aspect, and, to some extent mood, but also in marking information structure in terms of subject focus and backgrounding. In addition, there is a system of preverbal elements that operate independently of the tenses and indicate phasal semantics such as beginning and end of action, continuation and logical link to the previous clause. Nyokon will probably receive most interest from comparative linguists because of its property of allowing a full object before the verb which is extremely uncommon for Bantu languages. As this option is dependent on the tense or conjugational paradigm of the verb, the overview of the full system of tenses of Nyokon, as presented in this paper, is essential for subsequent study of word order functionality.

Abbreviations

\PA   past shape of verb
\PR   present shape of verb with object
BGND   background
COMPL   complementiser, complement pronoun
EXCL   exclusive of first person plural
F   final
FUT   future
INCHO   inchoative
INCL   inclusive, of first-person plural
INF   infinitive
K   verb stem with **-a'** suffix
LOG   logophoric pronoun
MID   middle
NEG   negative
O   object
PRF   perfect
PL   plural
POSS   possessive

RECP   recent past
REL   relative
REMP   remote past
SBJV   subjunctive
S.FOC   subject focus
SG   singular

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