

Ajumbu [muc]) noun class system sketch

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Background

This description highlights the regular system of Ajumbu (a.k.a. Mbu') as known from several weeks of field work. There may still be gaps, and some mistakes are likely.

Class numberings are meant to correspond to Proto-Bantu, though proper reconstruction has not been done.

Tone should be reasonably accurate in surface terms. Places where a formal distinction is purely tonal should accurately reflect which class has a lower/higher tone than the other.

Orthographic conventions attempt to follow the “General Alphabet of Cameroon Languages”.

Like some nearby languages, Ajumbu shows significant constructionally-conditioned loss of noun class prefixes. In fact, the prefixes found in citation forms for classes 7, 7a, 8, and 19 appear to be relatively rare in texts.

Example nouns

Class 1/2:	ŋkú/ānkú	‘chief’
Class 5/6:	shá/āshá	‘sand’
Class 5/7a:	kú/kākúlá	‘head’
Class 7/8:	kākwāfā/bākwāfā	‘bone’
Class 9/10:	bwā/bwá	‘goat’
Class 6a:	m̄gyóŋ	‘water’
Class 19/18:	fānyàŋ/mnyàŋ	‘bird’

Pronoun system

Preverbal personal pronouns

	Sg	Pl
1st	m̄	sə̀
2nd	wə̀	bə̀
3rd	wā̄/ū̄	bā̄

Note: Levels of tones on preverbal pronouns more tentative, though difference in tone levels for third person clear.

Note: Shorter form of 3s found in a text, not elicitation.

Non-preverbal personal pronouns

	Sg	Pl
1st	mā̄	sà
2nd	wə̀	bē̄
3rd	wē̄	bwá

Note: I can't recall how hard I checked for inclusive/exclusive, but I'm sure I tried. I did look for logophoricity and could not find it.

Compound pronouns

sàwə̀	'1p.2s'	"you and me"
sàwé	'1p.3s'	"me and him"
sàbē̄	'1p.2p'	"us and y'all" (?)
sàbwá	'1p.3p'	"me and them" (?)
bwāwé	'3p.3s'	"him and him", "them and him"
bèwé	'2p.3s'	"you and him"

Note: Elicitation of these forms was difficult. Listening to the recordings may uncover things not in my notes. There are probably other allowed combinations, though "bwáwə̀" '3p.2s' was explicitly rejected.

Note: For more compositional meanings, one can conjoin pronouns with "bā̄" 'with'.

Class pronouns

1. (= 3s) 2. (= 3p)

5. yā 6. yā

7a. (= 7)

7. kā 8. bā

9. yē 10. yá

6a. mā

19. fā 18. (= 6a)

Note: Data on whether there are different non-preverbal forms is not readily available.

Note: Change in vowel for class 9 versus 10 unusual for the area.

Possessive forms

Class 1

wəŋ sàny

wà bè

ɸù bwā

Note: Change in initial consonant for 3s possessive appears to be part of a regular change triggered by the following vowel, though the details have not been worked out.

Class 2

bəŋ ásány

bá ábé

bí ábwā

Class 5

yóŋ sány

yá bé

yí bwā

Class 6

yóŋ sány

yá bé

yí bwā

Note: There is a chance that my elicitation phrase could have obscured an initial á on the plural forms. This will need to be rechecked at some point.

Class 7/7a

kóŋ kósány

ká kóbé

kí kóbwā

Class 8

bóŋ bósány

bá bóbé

bí bóbwā

Class 9

yôŋ sāny

yâ bê

yí bwā

Class 10

yóŋ sány

yá bé

yí bwā

Class 6a

móŋ mśány

má mbé

mí mbwā

Class 19

fóŋ fśány

fá fǎbé

fí fǎbwā

Class 18 (= 6a)

Demonstratives

this

1. wè 2. bē

5. yē 6. yē

7a. (= 7)

7. kē 8. bē

9. yē 10. yē

6a. mē

19. fē 18. (= 6a)

Note: Whether final vowel is “e” vs. “ε” unclear in some forms (e.g., 2), but the distinction between 5 and 9 was checked for carefully.

that

- | | |
|--------|------------|
| 1. ɥũ | 2. bĩ |
| 5. yĩ | 6. yĩ |
| | 7a. (= 7) |
| 7. kĩ | 8. bĩ |
| 9. yĩ | 10. yĩ |
| 6a. mĩ | |
| 19. fĩ | 18. (= 6a) |

Associatives

- | | |
|--------|------------|
| 1. Ø | 2. á |
| 5. Ø | 6. Ø(?) |
| | 7a. (= 7) |
| 7. ká | 8. bá |
| 9. Ø | 10. Ø |
| 6a. mǎ | |
| 19. fǎ | 18. (= 6a) |

Note: In the associative there is usually a loss of a prefix on the first noun for classes 7, 8, and 19. Those classes with an overt associative marker also have an overt prefix in citation forms. However, class 6 seems to have an overt prefix but no overt associative. There is a chance that my elicitation phrase could have obscured an associative á, however.

Numbers ‘one’ and ‘two’

	‘one’	‘two’
1/2	mwè	àfyāṅ
5/6	mwè	àfyāṅ
7a	—	kàfyāṅ
7/8	kèmwè	† bəfyāṅ
9/10	mwè	fyāṅ
19/18	fəmwè	m̄fyāṅ

Note: 7a is plural of some nouns with singular in 5.

Note: Accidentally skipped class 8 in elicitation, constructed.

Modifiers: ‘other’ and ‘old’

‘other’

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 1. gyè | 2. āgyó |
| 5. gyó | 6. āgyó |
| | 7a. (= 7) |
| 7. kāgyó | 8. bāgyó |
| 9. gyè | 10. gyó |
| 6a. m̄gyó | |
| 19. fāgyó | 18. (= 6a) |

‘old’

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. kwàlós | 2. ākwálós |
| 5. kwálós | 6. ākwálós |
| | 7a. (= 7) |
| 7. kākwálós | 8. bākwálós |
| 9. kwàlós | 10. kwálós |
| 6a. m̄kwálós | |
| 19. fākwálós | 18. (= 6a) |

Note: There may be an prefixal high tone in class 9.