# The languages of the Lower Fungom region of Cameroon: Grammatical overview

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## Abstract

The Lower Fungom region of Northwest Cameroon is one of the most linguistically diverse areas of the Cameroonian Grassfields. Seven languages, or small language clusters, are spoken in its thirteen recognized villages, four of which are restricted to a single village. While the languages are all recognizably Bantoid, five of them do not have any established close relatives outside of the region, nor can they be straightforwardly shown to be closely related to each other. Until recently, the languages of the area have not been subject to extensive investigation. However, since 2005, available information on them has increased significantly, and it is now possible to provide an overview of their grammatical structures. This paper offers sketches of segment inventories, pronominal and noun class systems, and verb stem alternations of six of the region's seven languages, in addition to giving relevant background information and an updated map of the area. Received classifications of the region's languages are assessed in light of the newly collected data, and a concrete proposal is made to reclassify the group of languages presently known as Western Beboid into a referential grouping which we term the Yemne-Kimbi group.

# The languages of the Lower Fungom region of Cameroon: Grammatical overview

## 1 Lower Fungom: Heterogeneity in the northern Grassfields

The Lower Fungom region of Northwest Cameroon is one of the most linguistically diverse areas of the Cameroonian Grassfields. Found in the Grassfields' northwest periphery (see figure 1), it stretches roughly ten kilometers both north to south and east to west. Seven languages, or small language clusters, are spoken in its thirteen recognized villages, four of which are restricted to a single village. While the languages are all recognizably Bantoid, five of them—referentially classified as Western Beboid since Hombert (1980)—do not have any established close relatives outside of the region, nor can they be straightforwardly shown to be closely related to each other.

Until recently, the languages of the area have not been subject to extensive investigation. References to some of the groups appear in colonial documents, while the first published linguistic data we are aware of is found in Chilver and Kaberry (1974:37–40), which offers short wordlists for two of the area's languages, Naki and Koshin (though the data for the former is from a variety spoken outside of Lower Fungom).[1] The first systematic investigation is found in Hombert (1980), which contains data on four of the area's languages (Naki, Koshin, the Missong variety of the Mungbam cluster, and the Buu variety of the Ji cluster). Further study did not take place until the survey described in Hamm et al. (2002). From 2005 onwards, research on the languages of the area has increased significantly, first in survey work conducted by Good and, subsequently, by other researchers associated with him, including the other authors of this paper.

While it is hoped that detailed grammatical descriptions of some of the languages of Lower Fungom will appear in the near future, the information available for them at this point has increased to such an extent that it seems reasonable to offer an updated linguistic overview on the region, which is the purpose of the present paper. In this way, even if planned publications are delayed, some research results will still be widely available. Furthermore, some of the region's languages or varieties may not be described for quite some time, in which case this overview may remain the

[1] Westermann and Bryan (1952:120) also discuss aspects of the noun class system of Naki, citing an unpublished paper by Father A. Bruens, though they do not give specific data.

only readily available reference on them for the foreseeable future.

Section 2 gives a genetic and areal overview of the linguistic situation of Lower Fungom, including an updated map of the area. Section 3 gives basic grammatical information on all but one of the region's languages, focusing on data of clear comparative interest in a Bantoid and Niger-Congo context. Section 4 offers a brief conclusion with an emphasis on the significance of the data presented here for classifications of the region's languages.

## 2 Areal and genetic context

### 2.1 The villages of Lower Fungom

Figure 1 gives a map of Lower Fungom and adjacent areas. The map indicates the centers of each of the region's villages which, in some cases, may be associated with a number of additional detached settlements. Each village also controls land outside the village itself for activities like farming. Only thirteen villages in figure 1 are within Lower Fungom, and these are listed in table 1. One additional settled area within Lower Fungom, Yemgeh, is given on the map. This is the site of a market that, relatively recently, has also become a settlement in its own right, inhabited by people associated both with local and outside villages. In addition to Bantoid speakers, one also finds Fulani herdsmen in Lower Fungom, though the details of their settlement patterns and linguistic varieties have not been investigated. Roads indicated as "motorable" in the map may still be difficult to traverse and even impassable during the rainy season.

The map is based on data collected with a GPS device and should, therefore, be significantly more accurate than earlier maps. It indicates all the major roads and pathways of Lower Fungom itself as well as those routes we have information on that connect Lower Fungom's villages to other settlements in adjacent areas. However, our information is not complete regarding these routes. We include the village of Isu (where the language Isu [isu] is spoken) for purposes of reference, though we lack information on the roads and paths that connect it to other villages. Therefore, the fact that none are indicated should not be taken as significant.

Table 1 gives each of the Lower Fungom villages along with rough population estimates as ascertained by the authors. These estimates may turn out to be incorrect in absolute terms, but

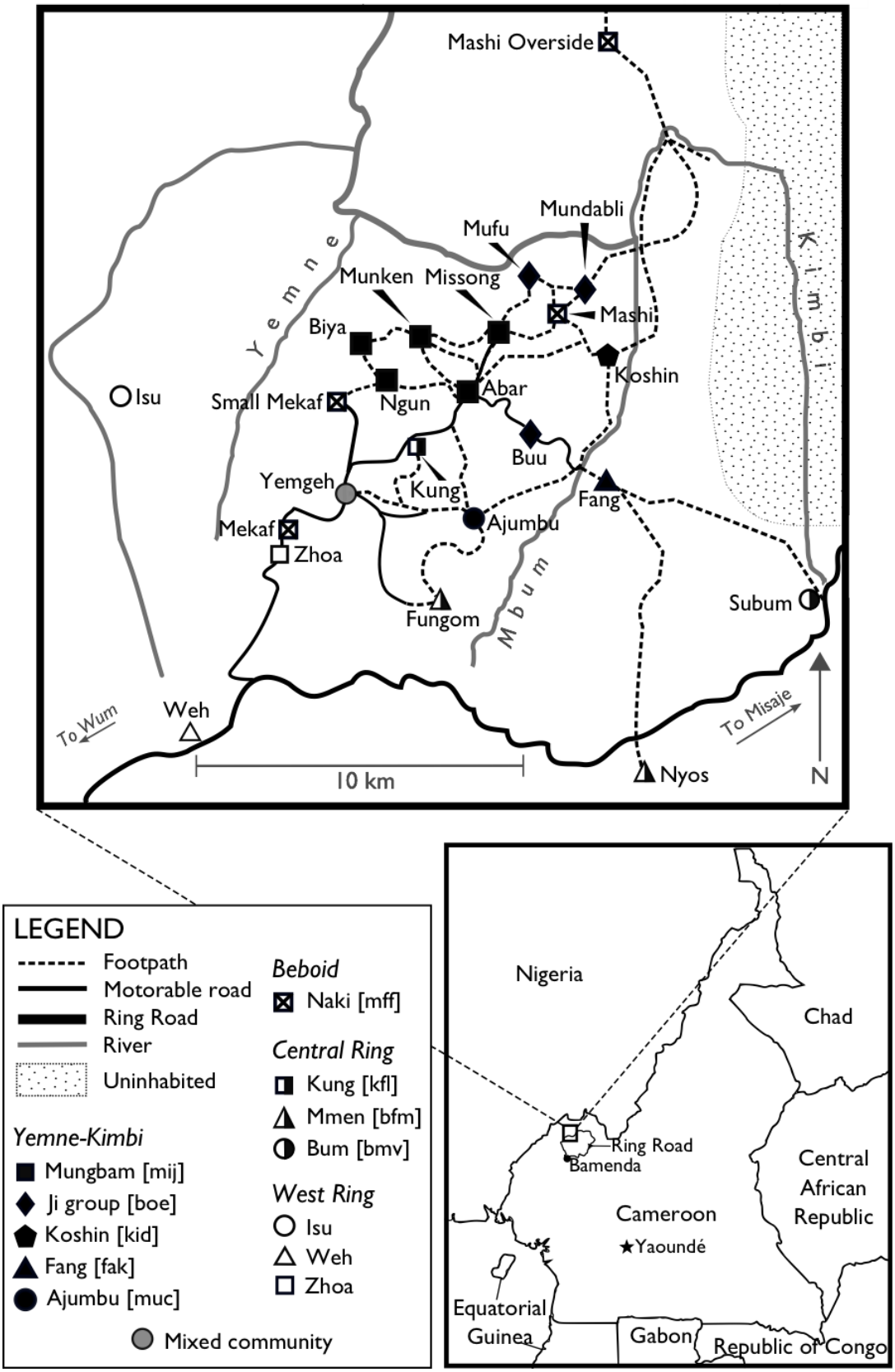


Figure 1: Lower Fungom and surrounding area

they at least give some indication of differences between the relative sizes of the villages. The figures include individuals who are politically connected to a given village even if they live in an area detached from the main portion of the village. No attempt is made to separate out village inhabitants from native speakers (for example, in cases where women have married into a village), though we do not believe this would affect the numbers substantially. We also have no information allowing us to estimate the number of speakers of these languages who might be living outside of the area (e.g., in order to work), though we suspect that, at least for some villages, these figures would be relatively high when considered against the number of people living in the village itself. The use of the term *Yemne-Kimbi* in table 1 will be explained in section 2.2. It replaces the currently used designation *Western Beboid*.

| SUBGROUP | LANGUAGE | VILLAGE | POPULATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yemne-Kimbi | Mungbam [mij] | Abar | 650–850 |
| | | Munken | around 600 |
| | | Ngun | 150–200 |
| | | Biya | 50–100 |
| | | Missong | around 400 |
| | Ji [boe] | Mundabli | 350–450 |
| | | Mufu | 80–150 |
| | | Buu | 100–200 |
| | Fang [fak] | Fang | 4,000–6,000 |
| | Koshin [kid] | Koshin | 3,000–3,500 |
| | Ajumbu [muc] | Ajumbu | 200–300 |
| Beboid | Naki [mff] | Mashi | 300–400 |
| Central Ring | Kung [kfl] | Kung | 600–800 |

Table 1: Lower Fungom villages

Some of the names used in Table 1 are not found in earlier sources, and we discuss our choices in the relevant parts of section 3. In the Ethnologue classification system, which largely follows Hamm et al. (2002), the villages of Lower Fungom are treated as speaking seven languages, as indicated in table 1. This is likely an underestimate based on the criterion of mutual intelligibility, since it seems likely that the linguistic variety spoken in Buu is a distinct, though closely related, language from the varieties spoken in Mundabli and Mufu. The same is also probably true of the linguistic variety of Missong as compared to the other four Mungbam villages. Thus, each of these villages is separated from the other villages speaking closely related varieties with a dashed

line in table 1. It should be noted, however, that patterns of multilingualism and acquired intelligibility make it difficult to determine language/dialect boundaries with certainty in the area. It should also be noted that each of the villages grouped under Mungbam and Ji in table 1 speaks an unambiguously distinct variety regardless of how one may group these varieties into languages.

Mungbam, Ji, Fang, Koshin, and Ajumbu are only known to be spoken within Lower Fungom and have no established close relatives outside of the area. The village of Mashi speaks a variety of Naki, a language spoken in a number of villages outside of Lower Fungom, three of which, Mekaf, Small Mekaf, and Mashi Overside, appear in figure 1. Mashi appears to speak a distinct variety of Naki—or, at least a variety distinct from that of Mekaf, which is relatively well studied—but the differences between the Mashi variety of Naki and the varieties spoken elsewhere are not as pronounced as what is found within Mungbam or Ji. Kung, which the authors have not studied, is spoken only within the village of Kung and has been classified with the Central Ring languages found to the south, which include Mmen [bfm]. A dialect of Mmen is spoken in Fungom, a village to the south of Ajumbu which gained prominence after it became the seat of the area's earliest Native Court under the British colonial administration in 1917. The administrative subdivision took its name after it (though the capital was soon thereafter moved to Zhoa) and consequently the label "Lower Fungom", to which Fungom village itself does not belong, was used to refer to the lower-elevation territories found within the subdivision boundaries.

In terms of social identification, with the partial exception of Mashi and Mekaf which in some respects act as parts of a larger Naki unit, even villages speaking closely related varieties view themselves as autonomous, each having their own chief, and identify their language as being spoken only within the village itself, though they often recognize that other villages speak languages which "rhyme" with theirs. While this makes it difficult to determine language/dialect boundaries within the Mungbam and Ji groups, trying to do so is probably not a particularly useful exercise since there is no obvious social or political need for it. From the linguist's perspective, the most important fact is that, if one were to conduct research on Mungbam or Ji, it is necessary to seek out residents of particular villages rather than trying to look for, say, "Mungbam" speakers.

Before moving on, we will make a few comments on the general state of transport and development in Lower Fungom, both for those who may wish to conduct research there themselves and

to create a record for historical purposes in case circumstances should significantly change.

In terms of transport, the region is somewhat difficult to travel to (and within) given the poor state of its road network. Regular public transportation serves routes between the major cities of Cameroon and the town of Wum, which has served as the base for the work on Lower Fungom described here (and which is a traditionally Aghem [agq] area). From Wum, there is irregular transport to Yemgeh or Abar on a very rough road which can only be traversed with a light truck (or comparable vehicle) or a motorcycle. It is also possible to walk to the area from Wum in about a day, though such a trip would be more difficult for an outlying village like Mundabli. Otherwise, as indicated in figure 1, most of Lower Fungom's villages are only reachable by footpaths which, in some cases, can also be negotiated by motorcycles. That being said, since the area is relatively compact, walking from any one village in the area to another can generally be done within a few hours in good weather, though this may require significant travel up and down steep paths.

Lower Fungom's economy is dominated by subsistence agriculture, with some trade of agricultural products with centers to the south for cash income. There is no centralized electricity or running water and minimal health care and school facilities. To the north of Lower Fungom is the significantly more isolated region of Furu Awa (see Breton (1993, 1995) for discussion in a linguistic context), which hinders economic interaction with populated areas of nearby parts of Nigeria. The relatively isolated status of Lower Fungom is no doubt conducive to maintenance of its linguistic diversity. Section 2.3 covers additional aspects of settlement in Lower Fungom, in particular those relevant to its historical relationship to the Grassfields area to its south.

### 2.2 Bantoid, "Beboid", and "Western Beboid"

The languages of Lower Fungom show Bantu-like systems of noun classes (see section 3), which are nevertheless divergent enough from the noun class systems associated with Narrow Bantu languages (Maho 1999, Katamba 2003) to suggest they should be treated as part of the higher-level grouping referred to as Bantoid (see Watters (1989) for an overview of this proposed group). Accordingly, a relatively close relationship between these languages and the Narrow Bantu languages seems fairly clear, though the details of any such connection are still obscure.

Received classifications, which we propose to revise here, place all the languages of Lower Fungom except Kung into the Beboid subgroup, following Hombert (1980). Beboid, in turn is treated as part of a South Bantoid group which contains Narrow Bantu and its closest relatives (see, for example, Schadeberg (2003:155)) including the Grassfields Bantu languages, to which Kung belongs (within its Ring subgroup) (Troyer et al. 1995). Beboid itself has conventionally been broken down into two primary branches, Eastern Beboid and Western Beboid (Hombert 1980, Brye and Brye 2002, Hamm et al. 2002). All of the languages classified as Western Beboid are restricted to Lower Fungom. One Eastern Beboid language, Naki, is found in Lower Fungom in the village of Mashi, as well as to the north and west of region. Notably, the largest Naki-speaking village, Mekaf, is in significant contact with a number of western Lower Fungom villages, meaning Naki's presence in the region is not limited to the village of Mashi.

Despite the widespread adoption of Beboid as a classificatory label, no publication has ever presented evidence for the group in terms of shared innovations, or even lexicostatistics. Personal communication with Jean-Marie Hombert, who proposed the group in Hombert (1980) has not revealed any further evidence for it, and he has not tried to defend the grouping. Therefore, while his proposal was quite valuable as an initial hypothesis, in particular clearly delineating a group of non-Grassfields languages at the family's northern periphery, its repeated use as a referential label in recent decades is presumably better understood as the result of lack of detailed investigation into the matter rather than acceptance of the subgroup as proven.

As will be briefly discussed in section 4, the research reported on here has not resulted in any substantiating evidence for either a Western Beboid subgroup or a close affinity between "Western Beboid" and Eastern Beboid languages. Thus, we abandon the label Western Beboid—along with its associated genetic hypotheses—and propose the new name *Yemne-Kimbi* for this group of languages which references two rivers that are found at the western and eastern borders of the Lower Fungom region, between which all of the relevant languages are spoken (see the map in figure 1).[2]

If this naming convention becomes more widely adopted, then Eastern Beboid could simply

[2] While the name *Kimbi* for the river at the eastern edge of Lower Fungom is widely used, we are not aware of a general name for the (smaller) river at the region's western edge and adapt the name for it in the Zhoa [zhw] language to English, given Zhoa's importance in the area as the capital of the Fungom Subdivision, of which Lower Fungom is a part.

be termed *Beboid* since it would no longer be associated with a Western Beboid group, and we refer to this group simply as *Beboid* here. While this group of languages has not been proven to be a genetic unit, this seems plausible on the basis of available evidence.[3] A comparison, for example, of the lexicostatistical results of Brye and Brye (2002) for Eastern Beboid with those of Hamm et al. (2002:9) for Western Beboid indicates much higher cognacy rates within the first set of languages than the second.

### 2.3 The northern periphery of the Grassfields

In order to appreciate the language distributions of Lower Fungom, it is helpful to have some understanding of its broader areal context. The region is geographically and economically peripheral to the distinctive Cameroonian Grassfields cultural and linguistic zone, and while we have no direct evidence of this, it seems reasonable to assume that this has been the case for quite some time. The Grassfields area appears to be historically fairly old, potentially going back to the Iron Age in this part of Africa which dates to, perhaps, two or more millennia ago (Rowlands and Warnier 1993:514) and is characterized by relatively high population density (Warnier 1980:831), local economic specialization (Warnier 1979:410), frequent internal migration (Warnier 1979:412–413), and pervasive multilingualism (Warnier 1980:832).

The entire Grassfields area is fairly high in elevation and relatively hilly. The latter trait is presumably an important factor in the well-known linguistic diversity of the region. It lies within the generally diverse area of Africa known as the Subsaharan Fragmentation Belt (Dalby 1970:163) and, within that belt, it shows particularly extreme language (though not lineage) density (Stallcup 1980:44). Lower Fungom itself is exceptionally dense linguistically even by Grassfields standards.

Lower Fungom groups share many traits with groups in the "core" of the Grassfields with the notable additional characteristic that, being on the region's periphery, they were relatively unaffected by patterns of political consolidation and social stratification found in the center of the Grassfields connected to the maintenance of trade networks and production of specialized products

[3] We are unaware of any published statement of the etymology of the name *Beboid*. However, the name must certainly be based on the name of the Bebe language [bzv], and a factor in this choice was presumably that the one Beboid language geographically detached from the rest of the group, Naki, has an oral tradition which treats it as originating in the Bebe speaking village of Bebe-Jatto.

(e.g., iron tools) (Warnier 1985:11–21, 297). Lower Fungom was (and still is) instead economically characterized by the production of palm oil which was used for trade with groups to the south (Warnier 1985:15–20). Its "backwater" location appears to have fostered linguistic diversity not merely by virtue of the lack of centralizing political influences but also because it has served as a historical refugium for groups displaced by external events. This is most clearly seen today with respect to the presence of speakers of a Central Ring variety in Kung and a Naki variety Mashi.[4]

Like much of the rest of the Grassfields, Lower Fungom was affected by slaving raids from the north during the nineteenth century (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:86,190). The most salient impact of these raids for language distributions is that they triggered population movements to relatively compact and dense settlements on hilltops for defensive purposes where, before, it appears that settlement was more dispersed. This pattern largely continues to this day, though one does see increasing decentralization for at least some of the villages, in particular the relatively populous Fang and Koshin. One can only speculate on the impact these shifts may have had on the area's linguistic patterns, though it seems likely that they would have resulted in fragmentation of earlier dialect continua into more more discrete linguistic varieties. Lower Fungom appears to not only have been directly affected by slave raids, but also indirectly insofar as at least some groups originally outside of the area (e.g., Kung and Naki) seem to have come to settle there due to displacements triggered by raids elsewhere.

The colonial and contemporary eras brought additional changes, but none that had comparable impact on population distribution as slaving raids, to the best of our knowledge. The most noteworthy change brought on since the beginning of the colonial period is the establishment of relatively stable territories now associated with each village, which is, at least partly, the product of a modern government seeking to reduce conflicts triggered by internal movements of ethnic groups.

### 2.4 Present linguistic vitality

Like the rest of the Grassfields, the languages of Lower Fungom appear to be relatively vital, despite their small size. Children born and raised in its villages speak the language associated

[4] Fang and Koshin are also strong candidates for having come into the region this way, as will be discussed in section 3.

with their home village. Most inhabitants also have some degree of competence in Cameroonian Pidgin but, while one not rarely encounters code-switching between Cameroonian Pidgin and the local languages, there is no evidence that it is contributing to their decline. Anecdotal observations suggest that its spread may be leading to the decline of knowledge of local languages as second or third languages insofar as bilingualism in one's native language and Cameroonian Pidgin may be replacing older patterns of "opportunistic" multilingualism. However, this issue has yet to be examined systematically (see also Hamm et al. (2002:20)).

Due to the limited economic opportunities in the region, many of its inhabitants go elsewhere for work. Except for those who live and work in the nearby town of Wum, who, for the most part, use their native languages actively or semi-actively with those from their village living in the town and during relatively frequent trips home, we have no information regarding the extent to which those living outside the area or their children use their village language. However, it is relatively common in Cameroon for children born outside of the village of their parents to be sent back to that village to stay with relatives for extended periods of time. This gives some of them opportunities to learn village languages.

While the linguistic varieties of Lower Fungom do not appear to be clearly endangered in the narrow sense that they are no longer being transmitted across generations, a number of them are intrinsically demographically threatened due to the small population sizes of some of the villages (see also Hamm et al. (2002:16–18)). Furthermore, the current internal sociopolitical and socioeconomic dynamics of some of the villages (e.g., Biya and Mufu) is such that there is a clear risk of their complete dissipation in the near future, in which case their linguistic varieties would presumably also disappear, as former inhabitants adopt the linguistic varieties of their new homes.

# 3 Overview of languages and language groups

## 3.1 General points

We present here brief descriptions of aspects of the grammars of Lower Fungom languages, emphasizing features that should be of particular interest for comparative purposes. The only language we do not cover in such detail is Kung, which, as an apparent Central Ring language, has not been

the object of study by the present authors, who have instead focused on the non-Grassfields languages of the region. Nevertheless, we include a brief section on it in order to place it within the broader Lower Fungom context. It should be stressed that the languages have not all been subject to the same level of field work. Mungbam (section 3.2), the Mundabli variety of Ji (section 3.3), and, to a lesser extent, Naki (section 3.7), have been the subject of relatively more intensive work than the others and, therefore, the facts presented here should be considered more reliable for them.

We have attempted to standardize the descriptions of each language as much as possible, though since different authors bear primary responsibility for different sections and the grammatical features of individual languages differ as well, some discrepancies remain. Since information is not available to the same degree for all languages, the following sections do not always give the same coverage of these languages' grammars, nor can glossing be offered at equal levels of precision. In the appropriate sections, we will try to indicate which aspects of the presented data may be more likely to revised in future work than others. The one general caveat we should make at the outset is that, while every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of tonal transcriptions, analyzing the tone systems of languages in this part of the world is notoriously difficult (see Hyman (2001:31)), and there are undoubtedly infelicities in this regard in the data to be provided below.

Our transcriptions largely attempt to follow the general orthography for Cameroonian languages as presented in Tadadjeu and Sadembouo (1984). Essentially, this means favoring conventions paralleling English pronunciations of Roman letters and using digraphs that will largely be transparent to English readers (e.g., *sh* for [ʃ] or *ny* for [ɲ]). Where the conventions in this orthography are insufficient, we either use IPA symbols or describe the specific transcription choices we employ. We depart, somewhat, from Tadadjeu and Sadembouo (1984) for transcribing tones insofar as, when a fourth tone level is required, we either employ a double-grave (i.e., *ȁ*) (for "super-low") or a double-acute (i.e., *a̋*) (for "super-high") rather than using a raised vertical bar (i.e., *ạ*) as a "central low" tone (i.e., a tone between a mid tone and a low tone). Ligatures comprising combinations of acutes, graves, or macrons are used to mark contour tones. Finally, we use a tilde below a vowel to mark nasalization, rather than the more usual tilde above the vowel, so that the indication of nasalization does not interfere with tone marking.

The majority of the languages described below have been observed to have a series of high vow-

els that are associated with frication of at least some preceding consonants (see Connell (2007) for discussion of this phenomena in other nearby languages). We have not attempted to standardize our transcription system for such fricating vowels and, instead, have opted to allow each linguist who has focused on a specific language to adopt a system of vowel transcription which best reflects their present understanding of the overall phonetics and phonology of the relevant vowel system. Accordingly, in comparing vowels across the languages described here, it is important to pay attention not only to the transcriptions but also the descriptions of how to interpret the transcriptions.

In presenting schematic noun class systems, we try to relate the noun classes in each Lower Fungom language to Proto-Bantu noun classes by using the traditional Bantu numbering scheme (see Maho (1999:51) and Katamba (2003)), though these should not be taken as definitive reconstructions. The first form associated with each class in the noun class tables indicates the (regular) form of the class prefix on nouns. The second form indicates the most typical initial consonant of the associated concord markers. Presentation of forms in the same row indicates that these two classes regularly form a singular-plural pairing, with some classes left unpaired since they are associated with nouns which do not exhibit a singular/plural distinction.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of our numbering conventions is the association of (reconstructed singular) Class 7 to a group of *plural* forms in Mungbam, the Mundabli variety of Ji, and Ajumbu. The problem of the proper identification of the historical class for the group of plural nouns which we associate here with Class 7 was already recognized by Hombert (1980:93). Our Class 7 label is based purely on formal criteria, and determination of the ideal designation for this group of nouns with respect to Proto-Bantu will have to await future work. The label Class 7a is used for cases where a noun's concord patterns suggest assignment to Class 7, but the marking on the noun shows a circumfixal form along the lines of *kə*...C*ə*. This marker has been found specifically in a class of plural nouns in Mungbam, the Buu variety of Ji, and Ajumbu.

As will be pointed out in the specific descriptions, in many cases there is no formal distinction found among classes given distinct numbers. In such instances, our use of distinct class numbers is for descriptive convenience, either to facilitate comparison of the relevant noun class systems with other Bantoid languages or to highlight distinct functional uses of classes that are formally the same. If the matter has been thoroughly investigated, it will be explicitly mentioned whether

or not the entire set of concord forms for classes listed separately are exactly the same. When this is not discussed, it should be assumed that the requisite data is not yet available.

Capital *N* in the noun class tables refers to an assimilating nasal consonant. The high and low tone marks should be interpreted as "higher" or "lower" rather than strict tone levels. For example, such marks will be used to indicate that the concords for Class 1 in many of the languages, despite being segmentally homophonous with the concords for Class 3, will generally show a lower tone than those for Class 3 in agreeing forms drawn from the same paradigm. Similarly, class marking on nouns for the 9/10 pairing often involves a lower tone on the singular and a higher tone on the plural, with the precise tones dependent on the root (see Hombert (1980:91) for comparative examples). The tones of prefixes can be conditioned by lexical factors, which is why they are often not indicated. Superscript *w* and *y* are used to describe noun class marking in cases where it is found as consonant mutations involving labialized and palatalized consonants respectively. This pattern is connected to a small-scale areal phenomenon discussed in Kießling (2010).

We do not go into detail regarding the semantics or the lexical distribution of the various noun classes. However, overall those patterns which we have found are in line with what is known in other languages of the Grassfields. For instance, the Class 1/2 pairing is prototypically used for humans, the Class 7/8 pairing is fairly large and used for many inanimates, the Class 9/10 pairing is associated with many animals, etc. We use the label Class 6a for a class involving marking with a nasal that is associated with liquids, following earlier work.[5] There is also a pairing which, here, we label Class 19/18 associated with diminutives. There have been varying conventions for the labeling of the plural class in this pair, and we choose Class 18 here because of a formal similarity with the Proto-Bantu locative Class 18, though this should not be taken as a serious reconstruction.

In our discussions of pronominal systems below, we focus on only the set of "core" personal pronouns, which includes first and second person pronouns as well as the third person pronouns associated with Class 1 and 2 (and which, therefore, refer to humans), leaving out the pronouns associated with the other classes, except in cases where they present a pattern of special interest. All of the languages of the area show at least a partial distinction between two sets of pronouns

[5] Hyman (1980b:183) discusses Class 6a in the context of the general Grassfields area, clarifying why it has been associated with Class 6.

which we refer to as *Preverbal* and *Non-Preverbal*. Functionally, the distinction falls roughly along the lines of subject/non-subject pronouns, but subjects can take on the Non-Preverbal forms in certain contexts (e.g., when they are in focus, which often entails not being immediately preverbal). Accordingly, we choose labels not directly associated with grammatical categories here. Another possible labeling convention might be *dependent* and *independent* to reflect the fact that the Preverbal pronouns tend to be phonologically reduced and, impressionistically, show prosodic dependence on the following verb, while Non-Preverbal pronouns tend to be prosodically free.

In our discussions of verb morphology below, we focus on one aspect of verbal conjugation: Namely the presence of distinct Perfective and Imperfective stems where the Imperfective stem typically is phonologically longer or more complex in some way. This alternation appears to be part of a larger areal pattern, being additionally documented, for example, in the nearby Ring language, Aghem (Anderson 1979:78) and in the Beboid language Noni [nhu] (Hyman 1981:41). We use the terms Perfective and Imperfective for this opposition since it appears to be functionally well-characterized along perfective/imperfective aspectual lines, though the use of these labels should not be taken as a substitute for a full analysis of the function of this formal distinction in any of the Lower Fungom languages, which we do not provide here. Our reason for including discussion, even if only brief, of these alternations here is that, although it has yet to be worked on in detail, the heterogenous nature of the specific forms involved in verbs that express the opposition seems likely to be probative in establishing genetic relationships, perhaps even more probative than noun class system comparison.

There are a number of features held in common by the languages of Lower Fungom not explicitly discussed below which are unsurprising given their genetic and areal affiliation. For example, they are all tonal, show basic SVO word order, and have labiovelar consonants. (The authors have not done any work on the Kung language, though we suspect these traits should hold in that language as well.) These are all patterns one would expect based on the results of typological surveys like Dryer (2005) and Maddieson (2005b, 2005a). Broadly speaking, these languages show a comparable typology to Grassfields Bantu languages (as summarized by Watters (2003:233–255)), especially as compared against Narrow Bantu, including such traits as: relatively phonologically small roots and stems; vowel inventories containing at least one central vowel; three or more tones;

use of tone to mark grammatical oppositions; reduced nominal and verbal morphology compared to the Bantu type but nowhere near to the degree found in the so-called "Kwa" type (see Hyman (2004)); and at least some degree of verb serialization (see Kießling (2004) for description of verb serialization in nearby Ring languages). Another feature typical of the area's languages is the lack of phonemic *p* despite showing a voicing opposition in the coronal, velar and labiovelar stop series. This is consistent with what is reported in Maddieson (2005c). Simplifying away from a wide range of language-specific issues, one could get a reasonable idea of the overall grammar of the Lower Fungom languages by consulting, for example, Hyman's (1981) sketch grammar of Noni.

## 3.2 Mungbam

### *3.2.1 Overview*

Mungbam is the language referred to by ISO 639-3 code [mij]. It comprises the varieties of the villages of Abar, Biya, Missong, Munken, and Ngun and has been subject to fairly extensive investigation by Lovegren during a six-month field trip in 2010. Although these varieties are more or less mutually intelligible, speakers uniformly reject the notion that any of these five villages speak the same language. They further reject any notion of shared ethnicity with any of the other five villages. There is therefore no indigenous name for either the language or the people who speak it, and the name used in this paper has been coined for convenience. It is a quasi-acronym derived from the names of the five villages where it is spoken, specifically formed by the emphasized letters in the following list: *Mu*nken, *Ng*un, *B*iya, *A*bar, and *M*issong.[6] The names of the villages/varieties that we use here are the most common ones that have been found in the linguistics literature except for Biya, which has been previously known as Za' (see, e.g., Hamm et al. (2002)). We employ Biya here since it reflects the locally current English name for the village.

The earliest work on Mungbam that we are aware of is the discussion of the noun class system of the Missong variety found in Hombert (1980). After this, we are not aware of any other work until Hamm et al. (2002:30–32), which provides wordlists for the Abar and Missong varieties.

Special attention is paid to dialectal diversity in this section, which is considerable, and for

[6] A word with a form roughly like *mungbam* also happens to refer to a type of grass in the various varieties of Mungbam.

which we have relatively good data as compared to the other dialect/language cluster in the region, the Ji group (see section 3.3). As was mentioned in section 2.1, the Missong variety has features which clearly set it apart from from the other four Mungbam varieties. For instance, a significant minority of its lexical items represent distinct roots where the other four varieties share a cognate. Moreover, roots which it does share with the other four varieties often show diachronically opaque or inconsistent sound correspondences. Contrastive vowel length bears an exceptionally high functional load as well, at least compared to the other four varieties, and certain high-frequency grammatical morphemes (e.g. tense markers, nominalizing affixes) are unique to the variety, as are some pronominal forms.[7] Though clearly important to resolve in the Yemne-Kimbi context, determination of the exact linguistic status of Missong is outside of the scope of this article, and we note that its overall grammatical structure is not so divergent as to make it impossible to give a unified description of all five Mungbam varieties.

### *3.2.2 Phonology*

#### 3.2.2.1 Consonants

The Mungbam varieties are relatively consistent with respect to their phonemic consonant inventories, allowing them to be presented via the unified chart in table 2. Cases where the orthographic symbol used to represent a given consonant differs significantly from its usual phonetic interpretation are indicated.

| | Labial | Dental | Alveolo-Palatal | Palatal | Velar | Labiovelar | Glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosives | (p) b | t d | | | k g | kp gb | |
| Fricatives | f | s | sh [ɕ] | | | | h |
| Affricates | | ts dz | c [tɕ] j [dʑ] | | | | |
| Nasals | m | n | | ny | ŋ | | |
| Liquids | | l | | | | | |
| Glides | | | | ɥ y | | w | |

Table 2: Mungbam consonants

There are two series of stops which contrast in voicing. The phoneme *p* is of questionable

[7] In social terms, Missong is also treated distinctly, with the Missong people claiming themselves to be gifted in mastering other languages, while people from other villages allege that Missong people have "stolen" their language from different neighboring groups.

status and here it will be treated as a marginal phoneme. It is not attested in native words except in the Abar, Munken, and Missong varieties, where it has been found only in the verb *pî* 'die'. In this case [p] is assumed to be historically derived from the labiovelar stop *kp*, given that its cognate in Biya and Ngun is *kpê*.

There are no contrastive doubly-articulated labiovelar nasals which form part of the regular set of phonemes. The noun class prefix for Class 18, however, takes the shape *mN-* in Biya, Ngun and, Abar, presumably deriving from earlier **mu-*, which is attested in Munken and Missong.

The phonemes *s*, *sh* and *f* all appear in word-initial position where they are contrastive, while *h* appears word-medially and in the reduced forms of some clitics producing during rapid speech. The hodiernal past marker in Munken, Biya, Abar and Ngun, for example, is typically realized as [hə̃] in spontaneous speech, but as [fə̃] in careful speech. In general, *h* may freely alternate with either *s* or *f*, although younger speakers prefer to use only *h* in some of these contexts.

Nasals are the only consonants which may appear in word-final position. The sound ɰ may appear word-initially in Biya and Ngun, but is limited to the position G in syllables of type CGV in the other varieties. In addition to consonant-glide clusters, nasal-obstruent clusters are also found.

#### 3.2.2.2 Vowels

There is significant cross-dialectal variation in the vowel inventories of the Mungbam. The most important difference is that Munken and Missong have only one series of high vowels, while Abar, Biya, and Ngun have either two high front vowels or two high back vowels. Table 3 presents the present analysis of the vowel phonemes across the five varieties. Vowels are arranged so as to give an idea of their relative acoustic heights, as determined from a spectrographic study. Munken *e*, therefore, is presented in a way that indicates it is lower than Munken *o*, and lower than Biya *e*, for example. Use of the same symbol should not be interpreted to suggest that two particular vowels are phonetically identical or are reflexes of a single vowel in a putative Pre-Mungbam. Although nasalization is not contrastive, it will be transcribed for some morphemes to suggest its influence on the perception of a following stop consonant. The discussion is limited to vowels occurring as the only vowel in a verb or noun root. A vowel in parentheses indicates a vowel which is found

only outside of this context (for instance as the second vowel of a disyllabic stem), and the ɛ vowel in Abar is marked with a dagger because it has only been found in two stems.

| ABAR | | | NGUN | | | MUNKEN | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| i | | u | i | | u | i | | u |
| e | | o | e | | o | | | o |
| ɪ | | ʊ | | | ʊ | e | | |
| ɛ† | (ə) | | ɛ | (ə) | ɔ | ɛ | (ə) | ɔ |
| | a | | | a | | | a | |

| MISSONG | | | BIYA | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| i | | u | i | | u |
| | | o | e | | o |
| e | | o͡a | ɪ | | |
| ɛ | ə | ɔ | e͡a | ə | ɔ |
| | a | | | (a) | |

Table 3: Mungbam vowels

In all of the varieties, *u* and *o* are quite close perceptually in their realizations, and *u* is most clearly distinguished by being occasionally realized with friction at the labial constriction. In Abar, Biya, and Ngun, *e* is also realized higher than its transcription may suggest, but is readily distinguished from *i* by the presence of friction at the palatal constriction in realizations of *i*. Friction during the vowel articulation as well as spirantizing effects on preceding consonants are characteristic of the highest series of vowels in all of the five varieties. Missong ɛ is higher than the vowel transcribed with the same symbol in Ngun and Munken. Perhaps not coincidentally, Abar ɪ generally corresponds to Ngun and Munken ɛ, but not to Missong ɛ. (Williamson (1973:159) discusses a similar case in the Ịzọn dialects of Ịjọ, where ɪ is distinguished "only with difficulty" from ɛ or merges with it entirely.)

Biya and Missong are the only varieties which have diphthongs in their vowel inventories, and they are additionally the only varieties permitting ə in open syllables. The Biya diphthong *e͡a* is occasionally realized as [ɛ] or [æ].[8] Biya also has the conspicuous absence of *a* in open syllables in native words.

Abar has a length distinction between *a* and *a:* in closed syllables. Missong appears to allow

[8] The tie bar is used to transcribe diphthongs in this section for purposes of clarity but is not used in the rest of this section.

vowel length distinctions in all syllable types with all vowel qualities, but they do not seem to bear a heavy functional load. Contrastive length has not been found in the other three varieties.

#### 3.2.2.3 Tone

Mungbam appears to make use of four tone levels, which we treat here as low, mid, high, and super-high, as well as a variety of contour tones. Verbs may belong to one of three different tonal classes, while there are more than a dozen different tonal patterns which have been found for disyllabic nouns. Unusually for Lower Fungom, Mungbam retains segmental prefixes for all noun classes (see section 3.2.3.2), meaning that almost all nouns are disyllabic or trisyllabic. Table 4 shows some of the tonal contrasts for nouns in the Missong variety.

| WORD | GLOSS | WORD | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|---|
| *ìtsɔ̀* | 'cork' | *ìdzɔ̄m* | 'war' |
| *bábyàŋ* | 'Ajumbu people' | *bābyàŋ* | 'people' |
| *kícǐ* | 'foundation' | *ícì* | 'stone' |
| *íjîn* | 'candle sap' | *ìcù* | 'kind' |
| *āŋkwɔ́* | 'oil' | *úcűm* | 'village' |

Table 4: Tone in Missong

Examples of the three lexical tonal classes for verbs are illustrated for the Abar variety in table 5. Example (1), from the Biya variety, illustrates the grammatical use of tone, showing specifically how tone on the verb stem is coupled with a segmental tense marker *lē* to distinguish differing degrees of remoteness in the past.

| WORD | GLOSS |
|---|---|
| *wū* | 'grind!' |
| *wû* | 'wash!' |
| *wű* | 'ascend!' |

Table 5: Lexical tone classes in Abar

(1) a. *Wɔ̄ lē ŋɔ́–ŋɔ́.*
3s.PVB PST VFOC-plant.PST3
"He *did* plant a tree (long ago)."

b. *Wɔ̄ lē ŋɔ́-ŋɔ́.*
3s.PVB PST VFOC-plant.PST2
"He *did* plant a tree (perhaps earlier this week)."

### *3.2.3 Pronouns and noun classes*

#### 3.2.3.1 Pronouns

Table 6 gives the Preverbal and Non-Preverbal personal pronouns for Ngun. A similar paradigm is found, with minor differences, for Abar, Biya, and Munken. The first person singular form in all dialects shows apparent free variation between the two forms given in the table. The paradigm of Missong is also similar, except for the second singular pronoun, which has a comparable Preverbal form but an unexpected Non-Preverbal form *bí* (also realized as *ɨ́*). This pronoun is not only formally unusual, but also syntactically since it serves as the Preverbal form in embedded clauses (see example (2b)), thereby coding a grammatical distinction between root and embedded clause subjects not otherwise seen in Mungbam. In all five varieties, the second singular pronoun is the only one to have suppletive Preverbal and Non-Preverbal forms. Compound pronouns, of the sort found in Ajumbu and Mundabli (see tables 18 and 25), have not been found in Mungbam despite specific investigation into the issue. Logophoric pronouns have also not been found, again, despite specific investigation.

| | PREVERBAL | | NON-PREVERBAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SG | PL | SG | PL |
| 1st | *mə̄/N̄* | *sə̄* | *mə̀* | *sə̀* |
| 2nd | *ā* | *bɛ̄n* | *wɔ̀* | *bɛ̄n* |
| 3rd | *ù* | *bɥ́* | *wɛ̀* | *bwɛ́* |

Table 6: Ngun personal pronouns

(2) a. *Ā mɔ̀hɔ̀ yɛ̄ ā dzàn ā dzɛ́ tsɔ̂ŋ ìyānā́ yì* `.
2s.PVB think.IPFV COMP 2s.PVB stay 2.PVB call see 5.name 3s.POSS Q
"Do you think you can say (nobody having succeeded thus far) her name?" (Ngun)

b. *Bījún nywà yɛ̄ bí kánə̄ wānī́.*
8.Missong stay COMP 2s.NPVB have 1.brother
"Missong people say that if you have a brother..." (Missong)

Unlike other languages of Lower Fungom so far studied, possessive pronouns in Mungbam have very limited agreement with the noun class of the possessum (demonstrating only a two-way tonal contrast rather than the more usual alternation of initial concordial consonants). Abar and Ngun have a class of benefactive pronouns. In Abar the paradigm covers all pronouns, while in

Ngun it is defective, covering only first person pronouns. Benefactive arguments are otherwise marked by an enclitic *nə́*/*ná*. Special benefactive pronouns have also been found in Ji (see section 3.3.3.1).

#### 3.2.3.2 Noun class prefixes and concords

Tables 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 give the paradigms for noun class prefixes and concords in each of the five Mungbam varieties. The label Class 4a is used for a singular noun class that otherwise makes use of the same set of forms as plural Class 4 (as well as Class 10). We employ the Class 12 label in Abar and Munken to reflect the fact that these varieties show classes making use of (at least partly) distinct concord sets involving a *k*, one of which is associated with a sequence like *ky* (which we label Class 7) and the other of which is not. This label should be taken with caution as an actual reconstruction, however, due to the apparent lack of attestation of Class 12 otherwise in the area (for example, it is not reconstructed for the Grassfields group (Hyman 1980b:182)).[9]

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ù- / Ø- | w`- | 2 | bə-/a- | bw´- |
| 3 | ú- | w´- | 4 | í- | y´- |
| 5 | ì- | y`- | 6 | aN-/məN- | mɥ´- |
| 4a | í- | y´- | 7a | kə-...-Cɔ | ky´- |
| 12 | kə-/a- | k´- | 8 | bi-/í- | by´- |
| 9 | ì- | y`- | 10 | í- | y´- |
| 14 | bu-/ú- | bw´- | | | |
| 19 | shi- | sh´- | 18 | mN- | m̩´- |
| 6a | aN-/N- | mɥ´-/mw´- | | | |

Table 7: Abar noun classes

All of the varieties make use of the same basic set of noun classes and concords. The main area of difference is in the degree of merger of noun classes with respect to their prefixes and marking of concords. For example, Munken maintains separate prefix and concordial marking for classes 6 and 6a, while Ngun has a merger in concord marking for this pair and Abar appears to be in the process of complete formal merger of classes 6 and 6a. Similarly, classes 2 and 14, in Munken, Biya, and Missong employ distinct concord marking, while in Ngun and Abar, the two classes

[9] The indication of a syllabic nasal as the concord marker for Class 18 in Abar is intended to convey a situation wherein Class 18 is distinct in some parts of its concord paradigm from Classes 6 and 6a, in particular regarding the shape of its determiner and pronoun forms, which can appear as a syllabic *m*.

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ù- / Ø- | w`- | 2 | bə- | bw´- |
| 3 | ú- | w´- | 4 | í- | y´- |
| 5 | ì- | y`- | 6 | a- | w´- |
| 4a | í- | y´- | 7a | kə-...-Cə | k´- |
| 7 | kə- | k´- | 8 | bi- | by´- |
| 9 | ì- | y`- | 10 | í- | y´- |
| 14 | bu- | bɥ´- | | | |
| 19 | fi- | f´- | 18 | mN- | mw´- |
| 6a | N- | mw´- | | | |

Table 8: Biya noun classes

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ù- / Ø- | w`- | 2 | ba- | bɥ´- |
| 3 | ú- | w´- | 4 | í- | y´- |
| 5 | ì- | y`- | 6 | a- | w´- |
| 4a | í- | y´- | 7a | ki-...-Cə | k´- |
| 7 | ki- | k´- | 8 | bi- | by´- |
| 9 | ì- | y`- | 10 | í- | y´- |
| 14 | bu- | bw´- | | | |
| 19 | fi- | f´- | 18 | mu- | mw´- |
| 6a | aN- | mɥ´- | | | |

Table 9: Missong noun classes

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ù- / Ø- | w`- | 2 | bə- | b´- |
| 3 | ú- | w´- | 4 | í- | y´- |
| 5 | ì- | y`- | 6 | a- | n´- |
| 4a | í- | y´- | 7a | ki-...-Cə | ky´- |
| 12 | a- | k´- | 8 | bi- | by´- |
| 9 | ì- | y`- | 10 | í- | y´- |
| 14 | bu- | bw´- | | | |
| 19 | shi- | sh´- | 18 | mu- | mw´- |
| 6a | N- | m´- | | | |

Table 10: Munken noun classes

have merged with respect to concord marking. In no variety is Class 5 distinct from Class 9, nor is Classes 4 (or 4a) formally distinct from Class 10. A noteworthy feature of the noun class systems of all of the Mungbam varieties is a surprising degree of instability in singular-plural pairings, where many nouns will frequently allow alternate plural forms from what would be expected based on the tables shown here, with alternate plurals in Class 7 being especially common.

Table 12 gives examples of nouns from each of the fourteen noun classes of the Munken variety.

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ù- / Ø- | w`- | 2 | bə- | bɥ´- |
| 3 | ú- | ɥ´- | 4 | í- | y´- |
| 5 | ì- | y`- | 6 | a- | mɥ´- |
| 4a | í- | y´- | 7a | kə-...-Cə | k´- |
| 7 | kə- | k´- | 8 | bi- | by´- |
| 9 | ì- | y`- | 10 | í- | y´- |
| 14 | bu- | bɥ´- | | | |
| 19 | fi- | f´- | 18 | mN- | mɥ´- |
| 6a | N- | mɥ´- | | | |

Table 11: Ngun noun classes

| | SINGULAR | GLOSS | | PLURAL | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *m̀fà* | ‘slave’ | 2 | *bə̀mfà* | ‘slaves’ |
| 3 | *úshɛ́* | ‘knife’ | 4 | *íshɛ́* | ‘knives’ |
| 5 | *ìsɛ̀* | ‘face’ | 6 | *ásɛ́* | ‘faces’ |
| 4a | *íyɪ́* | ‘watch’ | 7a | *kíyílɔ́* | ‘watches’ |
| 7 | *átsɛ́* | ‘lizard type’ | 8 | *bìmfɛ̄* | ‘cocoyams’ |
| 9 | *ītsù* | ‘fish (sg.)’ | 10 | *ítsû* | ‘fish (pl.)’ |
| 14 | *būtù* | ‘day’ | | | |
| 19 | *shìbûs* | ‘cat’ | 18 | *mūwáhá* | ‘puppies’ |
| 6a | *ńnyɛ́* | ‘water’ | | | |

Table 12: Examples of Munken noun classes

### *3.2.4 Verb morphology*

As mentioned in section 3.2.2.3, Mungbam verbs are divided into three lexical tonal classes. There are three morphological processes that verb stems may be subject to: reduplication, tone change, and ablaut. Reduplication is reserved for indicating focus on the truth value of a clause, or verum focus (see the examples in (2)). Tone change is employed as one of the coding strategies for tense and modality. Ablaut, which we discuss in detail here, is used to code a distinction between Perfective and Imperfective stems.

All Mungbam varieties have some verb stems which mark a Perfective/Imperfective distinction via ablaut. In particular, verbs with stems consisting of one open syllable in their Perfective form can undergo ablaut to form the Imperfective (though they do not always do so). Examples are given from the Missong and Munken varieties in table 13. Tone is not relevant to this alternation; the tone appearing on stems is the relevant marking for the jussive form, given the verb’s lexical tone class. As can be seen, in Munken, when a distinction is made for these two stems, the relationship

can largely be described in terms of an alternation between front and back vowels. In Missong, the alternation is more complicated, and it is the only variety where the distinction is sometimes marked by the the presence of a coda nasal in the Imperfective stem.

| MISSONG | | MUNKEN | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PERFECTIVE | IMPERFECTIVE | PERFECTIVE | IMPERFECTIVE | GLOSS |
| *nyōa* | *nyāŋ* | *nyɛ̄* | *nyā* | 'stay' |
| *mā́* | *mɔ̋* | *mɛ́* | *mɔ̋* | 'soak' |
| *jɪ́* | *jɛ́* | *já* | *já* | 'steal' |
| *gbə̄* | *gbē* | *gbī* | *gbō* | 'fall' |
| *wâ* | *wâŋ* | *wân* | *wân* | 'keep' |
| *nɔ́a* | *nɛ́ŋ* | *ŋán* | *ŋán* | 'slice' |
| *tô* | *tî* | *tî* | *tô* | 'come' |

Table 13: Missong and Munken verb stems

### *3.2.5 Example sentences*

Examples (3) and (4) give an indication of some of the syntactic constructions commonly employed in Mungbam (e.g. verb serialization, clause-final marking of negation, postpositions, and noun-class agreement marking). Example (3) is from a Ngun folk tale recorded in Wum, and example (4), from Biya, comes from natural discourse data. Glossing is tentative.

(3) *Fínò fɪ̄ té. Fɪ́ yɛ́hɛ́ kû kə̀ fàn. Bʉ́ɔ́ lèhɛ̀ tèn bɛ́hɛ́ kə̀*
19.man 19.DET come 19.PVB shift enter PRT.IPFV here 3p.PVB push send exit PRT.IPFV
*yɛ̀ fɪ́ á nāŋ sè fínò fí báálə̄ fínò bɛ̀ ǹtə̂mbù ākwɛ́hɛ́*
COMP 19.PVB NEG good NEG 19.MAN 19.PVB ugly 19.man COM 6a.jiggers 6.feet
*fɪ́n āmē.*
19.POSS LOC

"The (small) man came and he moved in. They pushed him out, (saying) that he is not good, he is an ugly man, a man with jiggers in his feet." (Ngun)

(4) *Mə̄ lē dǐ lèà ŋ́gə̀ mə̀=ə̄ nyéā m̀=fə̀lə̄ gbù~gbɛ́.*
1s.PVB PST say.PST3 VEN.PST3 thus 1s.PVB=FUT be.able 1s.PVB=tangle VFOC~fall
Seraphin *ùnè ù nyèà kə̂m ù nyèà kàhà gbə́bə̄ kə̂m* wrapper *wè*
Seraphin 1.person 3s.PVB stay again 3s.PVB stay tie strong again wrapper 1.DET
*mə̀ kàhà cèā wū è.*
1s.PVB tie surpass 3s.NPVB EMPH

"I thought that I might really get tangled up and fall. But, Seraphin, someone who can really tie the wrapper quite well, I tied it better than her!" (Biya)

## 3.3 Mundabli-Mufu and Buu: The Ji group

### *3.3.1 Overview*

Three villages, Mundabli, Mufu, and Buu, speak what we refer to here as the Ji group of languages. The name of this group refers to the fact that the varieties found in each of these villages make use of a root like *ji* for 'dog', which is otherwise not found in the region. Such a root is not restricted within Bantoid solely to this group, however. Piron (1997:116), for example, reports that the word for dog in the Mambiloid language Kwanja [knp] (spoken somewhat to the north) has a form *jîi*, making it merely a local identifier.

In other sources, the name for Buu is written as *Bu*, and our different spelling does not reflect a different pronunciation, but, rather, a change in the local conventions for spelling the village's name. There is another village to the south of Wum also known as Bu which speaks the West Ring language Laimbue [lmx]. This latter Bu is pronounced with a higher tone than the Buu of Lower Fungom. However, those outside of Lower Fungom often confuse Lower Fungom Buu with Laimbue-speaking Bu, since the latter is much larger in terms of population. (See section 3.4.1 for further discussion of confusion arising from names which sound similar to Buu.)

The earliest work we are aware of on any language of the Ji group is the information on the noun class system of the Buu variety found in Hombert (1980). We are aware of no other work after this until Hamm et al. (2002:30–32), which provides wordlists for the Buu and Mundabli varieties.

Of the three varieties in the Ji group, only Mundabli has been subject to extensive investigation (by Voll). The work that has been done on Mufu and Buu indicates that the varieties Mufu and

Mundabli can probably be considered dialects of the same language, while Buu is probably best considered a distinct language. Speaker reports match our own linguistic assessment in this regard. What follows below is a characterization specifically of the Mundabli variety, and reports on the other varieties will have to await future work. The description here is based primarily on data collected during two several month field trips in 2008 and 2009 by Voll.

### *3.3.2 Phonology*

#### 3.3.2.1 Consonants

Table 14 presents the consonant inventory of Mundabli.

| | Labial | Dental | Alveolo-Palatal | Palatal | Velar | Labiovelar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosives | b | t d | | | k g | kp gb |
| Fricatives | f | s | sh | | | |
| Affricates | | ts dz | c j | | | |
| Nasals | m | n | | ny | ŋ | |
| Liquids | | l | | | | |
| Glides | | | | ɥ y | | w |

Table 14: Mundabli consonant sounds

A nasal in Mundabli may show place assimilation before a labiovelar stop, but a labiovelar nasal has not been otherwise observed, which is why it is not treated as a phoneme. All consonants can stand in syllable-initial position, although the occurrence of *ŋ* in syllable-initial position is rare. An example is *ŋwǎ* 'write!', which is probably a loanword. Like the other glides, the labio-palatal glide *ɥ* commonly occurs in onset position, e.g. in the word *ɥǒŋ* 'snake'. The only phonetic consonant clusters that are possible at the beginning of a syllable are nasal-obstruent and consonant-glide sequences (or combinations thereof). In such clusters, any nasal fully assimilates to the place of the following stop. Whether these sequences are better analyzed phonologically as complex single consonants or a series of consonants is not yet established. The only consonants that can form a syllable coda in Mundabli are the nasals *m*, *n* and *ŋ* and the liquid *l*, though there are indications that coda *l* is being lost in the speech of younger speakers resulting in open syllables, with an apparent change in vowel quality, though the details are not yet clear. In the Mufu variety, syllables can also end in a velar stop *k* (in fast speech often pronounced as [ɣ]), and there is at least a partial

correspondence between syllable-final *k* in Mufu and pharyngealized vowels in Mundabli (see section 3.3.2.2). Some of the consonants have a slightly different pronunciation when preceding one of the high vowels *i* and *u* (see 3.3.2.2). As this seems to be a phonetic effect of the vowel along the lines of spirantizing effects seen elsewhere, the variants are not listed here as separate phonemes.

#### 3.3.2.2 Vowels

Table 15 provides a preliminary inventory of the plain vowels in Mundabli, which predominate in noun stems and Perfective verb stems (see section 3.3.4).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| i | i̱ | u |
| ɪ | | ʊ |
| e | | o |
| ɛ | ə | ɔ |
| | a | (ɒ) |

Table 15: Mundabli simple vowels

The high vowels *i* and *u* are usually pronounced with some friction also causing spirantization in consonants preceding them. It is not clear whether *ɒ* has phonemic status, due the fact that it has been found in only a few nouns and verbs. In addition to the plain vowels, Mundabli also employs contrastive vowel pharyngealization. Vowels of this type appear to be unique in Lower Fungom (and, we believe, the wider area) and seem to have arisen historically either through the loss of syllable-final consonants (which are still preserved Mufu—see section 3.3.2.1) or through the loss of the vowels of a former subsequent syllable. These vowels are quite common in Imperfective verb forms (see table 21), though they are also found in some nouns. The degree of pharyngealization varies considerably among speakers with older speakers pronouncing it more strongly than younger speakers. This pharyngealization impressionistically sounds as though the speaker is straining with their voice, and it clearly involves some special articulation in the lower part of the vocal tract, though the articulatory details have not been established.

#### 3.3.2.3 Tones

There is evidence for four tone levels in Mundabli: low, mid, high and super-high. The choice of these labels is mainly based on the fact that a super-high tone never occurs as part of a contour tone, while the low tone commonly does, indicating the super-high has a special status compared to the other three. All tone levels are distinguished in the following four-way minimal set of nouns: *kù* 'long rope', *kū* 'mole rat', *kú* 'village', *kű́* 'belly'. The four tone levels can also combine to form various contour tones. There are three attested falling tones, mid-low, high-low and high-mid, but only one rising tone, from low to high. While the rising tone is very common, of the falling tones only mid-low appears to be common, while high-mid and high-low are rare. The latter occur only in a handful of nouns and never in verbs. Examples of contour tones are *fô* 'raffia sticks', *sê* 'front of house', *fõ* 'cap' and *fŏ* 'blow.PFV'. Most nouns are monosyllabic (which is partly due to the relative lack of noun class prefixes in Mundabli, see section 3.3.3.2), and monosyllabic nouns can carry any one of the level or contour tones listed above. Examples of all level and contour tones on monosyllabic nouns are provided in table 16.

| WORD | GLOSS | WORD | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|---|
| *kù* | 'long rope' | *tsə̆* | 'baboon' |
| *kpān* | 'tree' | *kpè* | 'pot' |
| *kpé* | 'woman' | *sê* | 'front of house' |
| *fõ* | 'cap' | *kű́* | 'belly' |

Table 16: Tone in Mundabli Nouns

Except for Class 9/10, the tone of the singular and plural form of a noun stem is in most cases identical. The only (segmental) noun prefixes in Mundabli are *bə̀-* (Class 2), *fì-* (Class 19) and *mù-* (Class 18) (see section 3.3.3.2). All of these carry a low tone that does not seem to have any effect on the tone pattern of the root. Even otherwise common tonal processes in the language like a low tone spreading rule do not apply between prefix and stem. Disyllabic stems (often former compounds, reduplications or loans) show combinations of level and contour tones resulting in more than twenty different tone patterns.

Every verb in Mundabli falls into one of three tone classes, and the tone patterns of verbs change systematically in different grammatical contexts depending on the tone class they belong to. An example of a three-way near minimal set of verbs from the different tone classes, marked

for their imperative tones, is *shǐ* ‘descend’, *shī* ‘spend day’, and *shí* ‘rub’.

### *3.3.3 Pronouns and noun classes*

#### 3.3.3.1 Pronouns

The Mundabli Preverbal and Non-Preverbal personal pronouns are presented in table 17. Logophoric pronouns have not been found in Mundabli despite specific investigation.

| | PREVERBAL | | NON-PREVERBAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SG | PL | SG | PL |
| 1st | *N̄* | *bī* | *mɨ̄* | *bī* |
| 2nd | *à* | *bɛ̄n* | *wà* | *bɛ̄n* |
| 3rd | *wù* | *bɔ̋* | *wù* | *bɔ̋* |

Table 17: Mundabli personal pronouns

The first person subject marker *N-* behaves somewhat differently from the other pronouns in negative sentences, indicating that it may have status comparable to a prefix. Specifically, it appears after the negative marker *ā* and adjacent to the verb, rather than before the negative marker, as seen in the contrasting examples in (5). In Mufu, the preverbal form of this pronoun is even found not only on the first element of the verb phrase, but on every verb or auxiliary in the verbal complex (comparable to what has been described for Noni (Hyman 1981:77)).

(5) a. *ā n-tshyé wɔ̄*
NEG 1s-know NEG
“I don’t know.”

b. *bɔ̋ ā tshyé wɔ̄*
3p NEG know NEG
“They don’t know.”

A first person plural pronoun beginning with a *b* is relatively less common in the context of the Yemne-Kimbi group, though it also has been found in Fang (see section 3.6.3.1). Mufu has a first person plural pronoun beginning with a *b*, but Buu does not appear to, instead showing a *t*, at least in the relatively small amount of data we have available for that variety.

Although there is neither a dual form nor a distinction between inclusive and exclusive in simple pronouns, it is in some cases possible to express an inclusive/exclusive distinction or dual

meaning by the use of a grammatical construction illustrated by the forms in table 18, which is clearly comparable to the compound pronouns found in other Bantoid languages of the area (see Cysouw (2003:171–181)). As can be seen, the forms in table 18 involve a coordination-like pairing of pronouns. However, the interpretation of the component pronouns of the phrase is not strictly additive since, despite always having a plural form, the first pronoun can have a singular interpretation. Thus, *bī byā wà* does not mean 'us and you (sg.)' but rather 'me and you (sg.)', resulting in an inclusive dual reading. This "incorporative" reading is characteristic of compound pronouns (Cysouw 2003:171).

| PRONOUN | GLOSS | INTERPRETATION | TRANSLATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| *bī byā wà* | '1p 1p.with 2s' | 1s + 2s | "me and you (sg.)" |
| *bī byā bɛ̄n* | '1p 1p.with 2p' | 1s/p + 2p | "me/us and you (pl.)" |
| *bī byā wù* | '1p 1p.with 3s' | 1s + 3s | "me and him" |
| *bī byā bɔ̌* | '1p 1p.with 3p' | 1s/p + 3p | "me/us and them" |
| *bɛ̄n bɛ̄ wù* | '2p 2p.with 3s' | 2s + 3s | "you (sg.) and him" |
| *bɛ̄n bɛ̄ bɔ̌* | '2p 2p.with 3p' | 2s/p + 3p | "you (sg./pl.) and them" |
| *bɔ́ báā wù* | '3p 3p.with 3s' | 3s + 3s | "him$_i$ and him$_j$" |
| *bɔ́ báā mɨ̄* | '3p 3p.with 1s' | 3s + 1s | "him and me" |
| *bɔ́ báā wà* | '3p 3p.with 2s' | 3s + 2s | "him and you (sg.)" |

Table 18: Mundabli compound pronouns

The underlying structure of the forms in table 18 may be analyzable as PRO1 PRO1+*with* PRO2, where the first part is a full plural pronoun, the second part consists of a repetition of the initial pronoun morphophonologically fused with the preposition *ā* 'with', and the last part as the second pronoun. However, if we adopt such an interpretation, it is somewhat obscure why the fusion of *bɛ̄n* and *ā* should result in the second person plural "intervening" form *bɛ̄*.

While the use of a conjoining element *a* is common in Bantoid compound pronouns (Cysouw 2003:181), the repetition of the first pronoun is unusual, to the best of our knowledge. Moreover, the two forms below the dashed line in table 18 are atypical in an additional way. In other reported cases of compound pronouns in the area, the first pronoun is never lower in the person hierarchy than the second pronoun (Cysouw 2003:166–184). In those two forms, however, this is not the case, and they are also paradigmatically "redundant" since their semantics overlap with some of the forms above the dashed line in table 18. In addition to the forms in table 18, it is also possible to conjoin a personal pronoun with a pronoun with a non-human referent (i.e., belonging to a

noun class other than Class 1 or 2) or to conjoin a pronoun and a proper name using the same construction, as in (6).

(6) *Bī byā mbɛ̌ fə̋ lɔ̀ nyū.*
1p 1p.with Mbeh P1 go.bush 3.field
"Me and Mbeh went to the field (earlier today)."

Overall, the forms associated with this construction are functionally comparable to compound pronouns in nearby languages, but they show salient formal and functional differences. While there is a need for more detailed analysis, even at this stage it seems clear that they represent an interesting, and apparently previously unattested, variant of this phenomenon. In addition, all of the meanings expressed by the forms in table 18, except for those with dual interpretation, can be replaced by a simple conjunction of pronouns as in, for example, *bī āmɨ̀ wù* 'us and him' or by the use of a prepositional phrase with the preposition *ā* 'with', without any obvious difference in meaning.

While possessive pronouns in Mundabli usually show agreement with the noun class of the possessum, the first person singular possessive pronoun shows fewer agreement forms than other pronouns, as can be seen in contrasting examples like *gbɔ̄ wā́* '3.house 3.your' vs. *gbɔ̄ ŋgɨ́* '3.house 3.my' for a Class 3 noun and *jɨ́ yā́* '10.dog 10.your' vs. *jɨ́ ŋgɨ́* '10.dog 10.my' for a Class 10 noun. Furthermore, while other pronouns, like *wā́* '3.your' and *yā́* '10.your' clearly consist of an agreement prefix *w-* or *y-* respectively, plus a stem *a*, the structure of the pronoun 'my' is not as transparent. For example, forms of this pronoun, like *ŋgɨ́* '3.my' and *mɨ́ŋ* '18.my' cannot simply be divided into prefix and stem in a straightforward way. For the third person plural possessive pronoun the noun class distinction is completely neutralized and the form is always *bə̌*. This reduction is comparable to, though less extreme than what is found in Mungbam (see section 3.2.3.1).

As in Mungbam (see section 3.2.3.1) there are cases of special benefactive pronouns in Mundabli. One of these is the first person singular pronoun where, instead of the expected form *mɨ̄* marked with a postposition, an alternative form *ndə́/ndá* is also possible, as seen in (7b), which contrasts with (7a). (The semantics of the use of this pronoun are not strictly benefactive in (7a) since this form has other uses as well.)

(7) a. *. . . à mɨ̄ tshű́ fə̋ mɨ́ lā!*
2s CONS come give 1s.NPVB for
"[...] and then come and give it to me!"

b. *Mò kə̌ dyà wɔ̄ ndɔ́ lā ò!*
1.person HAB see.IPFV NEG 1s.BEN for EMPH
"Nobody ever sees me!"

The other pronoun which has been found to have a special benefactive form is the interrogative pronoun *ndɛ̀* 'who'. Its benefactive form is *ndíēn*, as seen in (8b), which contrasts with (8a).

(8) a. *Fə̌ fə̋ ndɛ̀ kpő ű́ Ntí lā?*
PST1 give who 5.money LOC Ntie for
"Who gave Ntie money (earlier today)?"

b. *Nyùŋfù fə̌ fə̋ kpő wɔ́ ndíēn?*
Nyungfu PST1 give 5.money 5.DET who.BEN
"To whom did Nyungfu give the money (earlier today)?"

Like with the first person singular pronoun (see (7)), the use of the benefactive form *ndíēn* is not obligatory although it seems to be preferred.

#### 3.3.3.2 Noun classes

The Mundabli noun class system is schematized in table 19 and examples of nouns from each of the classes are given in table 20. As can be seen, the Mundabli noun class system shows significant formal attrition and, in many cases, distinct classes can only be observed via concord relations rather than marking on the noun itself.

| SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ø- | w`- | 2 | bə- | b´- |
| 3 | $^{w}$- | w´- | 4 | $^{y}$- | y´- |
| 5 | Ø- | w´- | 7 | Ø- | k´- |
| 7 | Ø- | k´- | 8 | Ø- | b´- |
| 9 | `- | y`- | 10 | ´- | y´- |
| 19 | fi- | f´- | 18 | mu- | m´- |
| 6a | N- | m´- | | | |
| 14 | Ø- | b´ | | | |

Table 19: Mundabli noun classes

| SINGULAR | | PLURAL | | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *ŋkŏng* | 2 | *bəŋkŏŋ* | 'chief' |
| 3 | *gbɔ̀* | 4 | *dzɔ̀* | 'house' |
| 5 | *yǐ* | 7 | *yǐ* | 'eye' |
| 7 | *nɨ̀m* | 8 | *nɨ̀m* | 'belt' |
| 9 | *nyàm* | 10 | *nyàm* | 'animal' |
| 19 | *fìjǐ* | 18 | *mùjǐ* | 'small dog' |
| 6a | *ŋgī* | | | 'water' |
| 14 | *nyām* | | | 'fufu' |

Table 20: Examples of Mundabli noun classes

The presence of the Class 2 prefix *bə̀-* is not always obligatory when a concordial element is present. Thus, instead of *bəŋkŏŋ bɔ̋* '2.chief 2.DEM', it is also possible to say *ŋkŏŋ bɔ̋* 'chief 2.DEM'. It yet has to be investigated in exactly which contexts the prefix can be dropped. A comparable patterns has been found in the Yemne-Kimbi group in Ajumbu, where noun class prefixes can also be dropped in certain contexts (see 3.4.3.2).

The data in (9) exemplifies the concord patterns for the paired noun classes 3/4 (9a), 5/7 (9b), 7/8 (9c), and 9/10 (9d). These are the classes not associated with segmental class marking.

(9) a. Class 3/4: *gbɔ̀ wɛ̄n* '3.house 3.this' / *dzɔ̀ yɛ̄n* '4.house 4.this'

Class 3/4: *kpān wɛ̄n* '3.wood 3.this' / *tswān yɛ̄n* '4.wood 4.this'

b. Class 5/7: *yǐ wɔ̋mɔ̰̄* '5.eye 5.one' / *yǐ kɔ̋fɪ̄è* '7.eye 7.two'

c. Class 7/8: *nɨ̀m kɛ̄n* '7.belt 7.this' / *nɨ̀m bɛ̄n* '8.belt 8.this'

d. Class 9/10: *nyàm yɛ̀n* '9.animal 9.this' / *nyâm yɛ̄n* '10.animal 10.this'

In most cases the consonant mutation seen in the Class 3/4 alternation involves the labiovelars *kp* and *gb* in Class 3 nouns alternating with alveolar affricates *ts* and *dz* in Class 4 nouns as seen in table 20 and (9a).

While there is no productive stem alternation in any of the other noun classes, there are sporadic cases of stem alternation in Classes 1/2, 5/7 and 7/8, involving ablaut, sometimes a change in place of articulation of a final nasal (possibly due to adaption to a following determiner), and other changes for which a consistent explanation has not yet been found. Examples for such stem alternations are *mò* '1.person' vs. *mbɛ̀* '2.person', *nyú* '5.knee' vs. *nywɛ́* '7.knee', and *fɔ̄* '7.head' vs. *fá* '8.head'.

### *3.3.4 Verb morphology*

Most verbs in Mundabli are monosyllabic. Examples of verb stems in their Perfective and Imperfective forms are given in table 21. The verb forms were elicited by asking for the form of the verb in a frame like *we have X-ed* and *we are X-ing*, with the indicated tones being the tones found when those frames were used.

| PERFECTIVE | IMPERFECTIVE | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|
| *bɔ́m* | *bɔ́m* | 'agree' |
| *dzě* | *dzé* | 'speak' |
| *fŏ* | *fó* | 'blow' |
| *kʊ̀* | *kʊ̀* | 'cry' |
| *bì* | *bì* | 'exit' |
| *tsə̆* | *tsá* | 'pass' |
| *kù* | *kṳ̀* | 'clap' |
| *mŭ* | *mṳ́* | 'drink' |
| *jĭ* | *jḭ́* | 'eat' |
| *kŏ* | *kọ́* | 'catch' |
| *sɔ̆* | *syá* | 'swim' |

Table 21: Mundabli verb stems

The segmental form of the Perfective is identical to that of the Imperative. The opposition between Perfective and Imperfective is marked via tonal changes and, in CV stems, frequently is marked with ablaut as well, with a shift between a plain and a pharyngealized vowel. Pharyngealized vowels are transcribed with a "◌̤". (See section 3.3.2.2 for additional discussion of these vowels.) In most cases the Imperfective is predictable given the form of the Perfective stem.

As mentioned in 3.3.2.3, each verb belongs to one of three tone classes. Tense and modality are marked by tonal changes on the verb as well as independent formatives. No verbal derivational suffixes have been found.

### *3.3.5 Example sentences*

The example sentences should give a basic impression of the syntax of Mundabli. The first sentence is taken from a narrative, the second one is taken from a recipe for corn beer. The glossing given is tentative.

(10) MUNDABLI

a. *Dɨ̌ ŋgwò mɔ̀nɔ̄ mān nə̄ à mū wɔ̄ wù yɛ̄ mò kə̌ dyà*
COP sort 1.man what REL 2s.PVB marry 1.DET 3s COMP 1.person HAB see.IPFV
*wɔ̄ wú lā yɛ̄?*
NEG 3s for Q
"What kind of man is it whom you've married that nobody can see him?"

b. *Kə́ mù gé à tŭ fɨ̌ bḯ yá fɔ̄ wɔ́.*
when 6a.PRO settle 2s.PVB skim disappear exit ascend 5.head 5.DET
"When it [the beer] has settled, you skim the top."

## 3.4 Ajumbu

### *3.4.1 Overview*

Ajumbu is a one-village language associated with ISO 639-3 code [muc] and described in earlier sources (e.g., Hamm et al. (2002)) under a name like Mbu' or Mbuk. We adopt the name Ajumbu here because it appears to be shifting towards becoming the standard English name for the village in Lower Fungom and because of issues regarding proper identification of the village due to the phonetic overlap between the name Mbu' and names of other villages of the region, for example the village of Buu (see section 3.3), also in Lower Fungom, the village of Bu found to the south of Wum where Laimbue [lmx] is spoken, as well as the area of Bum, where a Central Ring language also known as Bum [bmv] is spoken. (See also below for discussion of another village named Mbuk in the Bum area.) The name Ajumbu does not suffer from such potential misapprehensions and, since it appears to have been accepted without problem by the local community, is, therefore, considerably more practical as an English name.

Hombert (1980:96) seems to classify the village of Ajumbu as speaking a Ring variety, though he does not appear to have surveyed the language of the village specifically. Hamm et al. (2002:13) classify it as speaking a Beboid variety on the basis of lexicostatistical evidence, and theirs is the first work we are aware of to provide any data on its language, in the form of a wordlist. Our own impression is that Ajumbu is quite distinctive in the Lower Fungom context and any genealogical classification is premature.

While Ajumbu does not have any clearly established close relatives, we believe, on the basis

of several hours of elicitation on the part of Di Carlo, that an (essentially) extinct language locally referred to as Lung (see Troyer et al. (1995:9–10)), which has, perhaps, up to four remaining rememberers was a close relative of Ajumbu (and would have been spoken in an adjacent area).

Ajumbu's geographic location on the southern fringe of Lower Fungom puts it in contact with the Mmen language, in particular with Mmen speakers in the village of Fungom, and Mmen is an important second language among the Ajumbu. This is unusual for the area where outside Ring languages, otherwise, are not of such significance, and it may explain some distinctive features of Ajumbu as compared to the other Yemne-Kimbi languages.

Chilver and Kaberry (1974:39–40) give a short wordlist for a language they identify as Mbuk, but which refers to a different village, in the Bum area, which is reported to speak its own language Lamberty (2002:3). Speakers of Ajumbu have said that the language of this village is the same as that of Ajumbu (though "mixed" with "Bum" elements). We have not been able to verify this and, based on a casual examination of Chilver and Kaberry's (1974) wordlist for Mbuk, such a relationship is not obvious. Nevertheless, we believe the possibility of a connection merits further investigation.

The description of Ajumbu given here is the result of several weeks of field work conducted by Good primarily in 2010, but also including data from briefer periods of work in 2005 and 2007.

### *3.4.2 Phonology*

#### 3.4.2.1 Consonants

A preliminary inventory of the Ajumbu consonant inventory is presented in table 22.

| | Labial | Dental | Alveolo-Palatal | Palatal | Velar | Labiovelar | Glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosives | b | t d | | | k g | kp gb | ' |
| Fricatives | f v | s z | sh (zh) | | gh | | |
| Affricates | | ts dz | c j | | | | |
| Nasals | m | n | | ny | ŋ | | |
| Liquids | | l | | | | | |
| Glides | | | | ɥ y | | w | |

Table 22: Ajumbu consonants

The presence of a *v* and a *gh* in Ajumbu is unusual in the Yemne-Kimbi context but such

sounds are found in at least one nearby Ring language, Aghem (and presumably others, though descriptions are not available) (Hyman 1979b:3) and is possibly indicative of Ajumbu's close contact relationship with Mmen via the village of Fungom. While *v* does not appear to be a rare sound in the language, and is even found in the word for a basic body part, *vʉ́* 'nose', *gh* has only been encountered as the first segment in a few verbs such as *ghɔ́mnɔ̀* 'be careful' and *ghélɔ̀* 'look for trouble', suggesting it may have entered the language via borrowing.

Contact may also be relevant to understanding the presence of what is described as a phonemic glottal stop in table 22, but, which phonetically, may be better described as a kind of glottalization since a clear stop is not articulated when this sound is found and, following the glottalization, one frequently hears a non-glottalized echo vowel. Like *gh*, this sound has only been encountered in a few verbs, for example, *fwà'* 'work' (which phonetically was often realized along the [fwà$^{ʔ}$ā]).

A phonetic *zh* was noted in at least one word *zhī* 'egg', but it may represent an allophone of *z*.

The sound *ɥ* appears as an allophone of *w* before *ʉ* but also has phonemic status. Its realization as an allophone of *w* can be most straightforwardly seen in parts of the concord system where an agreeing stem contains a *ʉ* and the concord marker would be expected to be *w* (e.g., for Class 1—see section 3.4.3.2). Thus, in the Class 1 possessive paradigm, one can oppose the first singular possessive *wɔ̀ŋ* with the third singular *ɥʉ̀*. At the same time, one finds words like *ɥāfɔ́* 'whip' contrasting with *wà*, the Class 1 second singular possessive, providing evidence for the phonemic status of *ɥ* as well.

In terms of syllable structure, both initial nasal-obstruent clusters and consonant-glide sequences are found. The nasal-obstruent clusters need not involve homorganic nasals if the initial nasal is a noun class prefix (see section 3.4.3.2). Consonant-glide sequences, at least in some cases, contrast with phonetically similar complex vowels (see section 3.4.2.2). Coda *m* and *ny* have been frequently encountered, but coda *n* does not appear to be present.

#### 3.4.2.2 Vowels

A preliminary inventory of Ajumbu vowels is given in table 23.

A noteworthy feature of the Ajumbu vowel inventory is the presence of a front rounded vowel

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| i ʉ | (ɨ) | u |
| e | | o |
| ɛ | ə | ɔ |
| | a | |

Table 23: Ajumbu vowels

which phonetically is often characterized by a significant amount of noise, at times resembling a whistle. Rounded front vowels of any sort have not otherwise been encountered in the languages of Lower Fungom. An example of a minimal pair for *u* and *ʉ* in Ajumbu is *kú* 'head' vs. *kʉ́* 'village'. Another example of a word containing this vowel is *vʉ́* 'nose'. A phonetic high central vowel (higher than *ə*) has been heard in some words beginning with a *dz*, for example, *dzɨ̀* 'elephant' and *dzɨ́* 'travel', suggesting the possibility of an unrounded counterpart to *ʉ* which may also be associated with noise, in this case realized as affrication of the preceding consonant. That this sound was not encountered more broadly could be the result of its being conflated with *ə* during elicitation, and this aspect of the system, therefore, merits further attention.

Ajumbu also allows at least several vowel combinations, perhaps analyzable as diphthongs, which contrast with glide-vowel sequences. These all involve a high vowel followed by a lower vowel, heard as *ə*, *a*, or *ɔ*, but it is not clear that these vowels are fully contrastive in this position. For example, *ɔ* may be an alternative realization of *ə* after round vowels. Some examples of words containing the vowel combinations that have been found include *kíá* 'grow' (which contrasts with *kyâ* 'move'), *gìə* 'prepare' (which contrasts with the root for *-gyə* 'other'), *kúɔ́* 'be strong' (compare with *fwɔ̂* 'hair'), and *fʉ̄ɔ̀* 'animal' (compare with *kɥɔ́* 'catch').[10]

Perceptually (and, at least in the few cases where it was checked, instrumentally), vowels in the first syllables of verbs were were relatively long. This indicates that there is a short/long vowel opposition in the language. However, its status a possible marker of lexical contrasts, as opposed to being a grammatical marker that a given element is a verb, has not been established.

[10] The tones of the word *-gyə* are variable depending on the class of the noun it modifies.

#### 3.4.2.3 Tones

To this point, an analysis of the Ajumbu tone system as employing a three-way tone contrast (with associated contours) has been sufficient, though it should be pointed out that in other languages of the area, clear evidence for four tone levels only emerged after relatively extensive investigation, well beyond the level of work that has been done for Ajumbu. A low/high minimal pair can be found in *dzɨ̀* 'elephant' and *dzɨ́* 'mouth'. Justification for an intermediate tone comes from the phrasal pair *bwə̄ gyə̀* '9.goat 9.other' and *bwə́ gyə́* '10.goat 10.other'. The pronominal system also suggests the need for at least three tone levels since the third person plural Non-Preverbal pronoun *bwá* is higher than the others, while, at the same time, in the remaining pronouns there appear to be at least two additional levels, with higher-toned first person singular *mə̄* and third person singular *wē* against lower-toned second singular *wə̀* and first plural *sà* (see section 3.4.3.1).

Contour tones are found in Ajumbu, though they do not appear to be as frequent or as extensive in inventory as in some of the other languages of the area. The strongest evidence for distinctive contours is for falling tones, as in, for example, *nkɔ̀* 'pot'. The pronominal system also shows apparently distinctive contours in, for example, the Class 5 proximal demonstrative *yɛ̂* and the Class 9 proximal demonstrative *yɛ̀*. Surface rising tones were often heard in elicited imperatives, and this appears to be contrastive, though a more precise analysis of this pattern is not possible at present.

### *3.4.3 Pronouns and noun classes*

#### 3.4.3.1 Pronouns

Ajumbu Preverbal and Non-Preverbal personal pronouns are presented in table 24. The alternate from *ū* for the third singular subject pronoun was attested in a text and not found in elicitation with the primary consultant.

Like other languages of the area, Ajumbu has a separate set of pronouns for each of its noun classes. A noteworthy feature of this aspect of its pronominal system that has not yet been encountered elsewhere in Yemne-Kimbi (though not all languages have been carefully examined in this regard) is the fact that there is both a tonal and a segmental distinction for the Class 9 pronoun

| | PREVERBAL | | NON-PREVERBAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SG | PL | SG | PL |
| 1st | *m̄* | *sə̀* | *mə̄* | *sà* |
| 2nd | *wə̀* | *bə̀* | *wə̀* | *bè* |
| 3rd | *wə̄/ū* | *bə̄* | *wē* | *bwá* |

Table 24: Ajumbu personal pronouns

versus Class 10 pronoun, which are *yē* and *yə́* respectively. More usually, one finds Class 9/10 forms to be segmentally homophonous but tonally distinct.

Ajumbu also makes use of compound pronouns which are formed by placing two pronouns together without the use of any segmental marker of conjunction. Some of the compound forms encountered are given in table 25. The list is not exhaustive, though these are the forms whose meanings are relatively secure. These compound pronouns are comparable (though not as elaborated) as what is described for Noni (Hyman 1981:17–18). As with other languages of the area, a plural pronoun is used as the first element of the compound even though it is not interpreted as plural in the translation but, rather, seems to contribute primarily meaning for person. Thus, to say "me and him" one uses a form that literally translates along the lines of "us–him" (*sàwé*). There is also a strategy for combining pronouns using the element *bə̄* 'with', which yields structures with more compositional semantics. Compound pronouns of the type seen in table 25 appear to be an areal phenomenon (Cysouw 2003:171–181)—see also the discussion of Mundabli compound pronouns in section 3.3.3.

| PRONOUN | GLOSS | TRANSLATION |
|---|---|---|
| *sàwə̂* | '1p.2s' | "you (sg.) and me" |
| *sàwé* | '1p.3s' | "me and him" |
| *bwâwé* | '3p.3s' | "him and him", "them and him" |
| *bèwé* | '2p.3s' | "you (sg.) and him" |

Table 25: Ajumbu compound pronouns

#### 3.4.3.2 Noun classes

The Ajumbu noun class system is schematized in table 26, and examples of nouns from each of the classes are given in table 27. Class 5 is productively associated with two plural classes, which is why it appears twice in the singular column of the table. A notable feature of the system is that

it is relatively reduced compared to other languages of the area.

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ø- | w`- | 2 | a- | b´- |
| 5 | Ø- | y´- | 6 | a- | y´- |
| 5 | Ø- | k´- | 7(a) | kə-...(-lə) | k´- |
| 7 | kə- | k´- | 8 | bə | b´- |
| 9 | `- | y`- | 10 | ´- | y´- |
| 19 | fə- | f´ | 18 | m- | m´ |
| 6a | m- | m´- | | | |

Table 26: Ajumbu noun classes

The *a-* prefix on nouns for classes 2 and 6 is also appears as the concord marker in some cases instead of a marker with the consonant *b* or *y*, otherwise associated with classes 2 and 6, respectively. This is found, for example, with the number 'two' (higher numbers were not systematically examined) and nominal modifiers with meanings like 'other', 'old', and 'all' (see (12b) for an example). A comparable, though less extensive, pattern like this is found in Naki (see section 3.7.3.2).

In disyllabic roots, which appear to always end in a ə, the suffixal portion of Class 7a does not appear giving pairs like *lāmə/kəlāmə* 'tongue/tongues'.

As can be seen in the examples from Classes 18 and 6 in table 27, the nasal prefix in these classes does not assimilate for place with a following consonant.

| | SINGULAR | | PLURAL | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *ŋkú* | 2 | *āŋkú* | 'chief' |
| 5 | *shá* | 6 | *āshá* | 'sand' |
| 5 | *kú* | 7a | *kākúló* | 'head' |
| 7 | *kākwāfə* | 8 | *bākwāfə* | 'bone' |
| 9 | *bwə* | 10 | *bwó* | 'goat' |
| 19 | *fənyòŋ* | 18 | *m̀nyòŋ* | 'bird' |
| 6a | *mgyóŋ* | | | 'water' |

Table 27: Ajumbu noun classe examples

Some of the noun class markers are dropped from nouns which are followed by concordial elements, in a pattern similar to, though not as grammatically complex as, what has been described for Aghem (Hyman 1979b:27–28; 2010). While not exhaustively examined, this phenomenon seems to only affect Classes 7 (including prefixal portion of 7a), 8, and 19. Thus, one finds alternations

like *kəkwāfə* for 'bone' in its citation form against *kwāfə kə́ŋ* 'my bone' where the presence of the postnominal possessor is associated with loss of the prefix. By way of comparison, in the plural form for this word, one has forms *bəkwāfə* and *kwāfə bə́ŋ*. Something comparable has been found in the Ji group (see section 3.3.3.2) within Yemne-Kimbi. Example (12a) below shows an instance of such prefix loss from a text, involving the Class 7 word for 'chair'.

### *3.4.4 Verb morphology*

Some representative examples of verb stem forms are given in table 28. The verb forms were elicited by asking for the form of the verb in a frame like *SUBJECT has X-ed* and *SUBJECT is X-ing*, with the indicated tones being the tones found when those frames were used. In all likelihood, this data collection method is obscuring important generalizations. Nevertheless, it gives some indication of the range of stem alternations found in Ajumbu. The examples in the table 28 do not indicate that, in the first syllable of verbs, the vowels were perceptually quite long, possibly indicating the presence of contrastive vowel length in the language, as briefly mentioned in section 3.4.2.2.

| PERFECTIVE | IMPERFECTIVE | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|
| *fwɛ́ny* | *fwɔ́n* | 'clear grass' |
| *kɛ́* | *kɛ̂* | 'hold' |
| *kyà* | *tə̀* | 'move' |
| *kɥɔ́* | *kɥɔ́* | 'catch' |
| *mány* | *mɛ́* | 'suck' |
| *mánysə* | *mánysə* | 'suckle' |
| *mɨ̀ny* | *mɛ̀* | 'take' |
| *ŋwàfə* | *ŋwàfə* | 'breathe' |
| *ŋwɔ́* | *ŋ́* | 'drink' |

Table 28: Ajumbu verb stems

As can be seen in table 28 some stems do not appear to show a Perfective/Imperfective distinctions, some mark it primarily tonally (at least in the elicitation frame used), and some mark it with alternations of the segmental material of the stem. Imperative and Perfective stems appear to make use of the same stem, against the in the Imperfective. The stem alternations seem to be at least partly predictable based on the form of the Perfective, but detailed analysis has yet to be undertaken. It is somewhat striking that, to the extent that one can generalize, Imperfective forms

are more likely to be shorter in form than Perfective forms, in the reverse of the more usual pattern in the area. (See for example, the alternations seen in Koshin in section 3.5.4, in Fang in section 3.6.4, and in Naki in section 3.7.4.)

In cases where the verb stem shows exactly the same verb form in the Perfective and Imperfective, this does not mean these oppositions can not be explicitly marked in the relevant utterance, as indicated in the data in (11). Both of the examples show the same segmental material and the same tone on the verb stem, but the following particle (of unclear grammatical status) shows a high or a low tone depending on the tense/aspect of clause. (However, since detailed investigation into the verbal system of Ajumbu has not yet been undertaken, the extent to which aspect, as opposed to tense, may be governing the tonal alternation seen in (11) is not known.)

(11) a. *ŋkú wə kɥɔ́ kɔ́*
1.chief 1.DET catch.PFV PRT.PFV
"the chief has caught"

b. *ŋkú wə kɥɔ́ kə̀*
1.chief 1.DET catch.IPFV PRT.IPFV
"the chief is catching"

A verb pair in the table, *mány* 'suck' and *mánysə̄* 'suckle' shows a possible derivational relationship via a Causative suffix. While other possible derivational pairings like this have been found, there is as of yet no evidence for productive suffixal extensions in Ajumbu.

### *3.4.5 Example sentences*

In (12) three sample sentences from a text collected in Ajumbu are given in order to give a sense of some basic syntactic constructions in the language. The glossing should be taken as tentative, and morphosyntactic categories may be coded via tone that have not yet been determined. Tone is likely to be less accurately transcribed than in the single word examples. Noun classes are only indicated when this is clear from the collected data.

(12) a. *Nə̄ gyòŋ kpɔ́ nə̄ sò sî nshyàŋ mìny nə̄ ŋkyàŋ kə̀.*
SUBD Gyong died SUBD Soh Sih Nshyang take SUBD? 7.chair 7.DET
"As Gyong died, so Soh Sih Nshyang took the chair (of the chief)."

b. *Sə̀ tə́ ānɛ̄ bə́ nə̄ sə̀ kə́ŋ kə̄ ānɛ̄ ātsáló.*
1p.PVB COP 2.people 2.DET SUBD 1p.PVB love PRT 2.people 2.all
"We are the people who love everyone."

c. *Tā bɛ́ shì bá, sə̀ nə́ kə̀ bə̄.*
until come descend now 1p.PVB climb still palm
"Until now, we still climb palm trees."

## 3.5 Koshin

### *3.5.1 Overview*

Koshin is a one-village language spoken in the eastern part of Lower Fungom. Hombert's (1980) survey of Beboid noun classes included information on this language and a brief wordlist appears in Chilver and Kaberry (1974:37–40), which is the earliest documentation of the language we are aware of.

Koshin oral tradition holds that the Koshin people are relatively recent migrants to Lower Fungom, having originated in the Oku [oku] area with a period of settlement at an intermediate location in or around the village of Sawi, between Oku and their present location. While we cannot verify this historical scenario, we believe that a relatively recent historical migration of the Koshin to Lower Fungom is reasonable given their peripheral position in the region and the lack of specific affinities between Koshin and Mungbam or Ji, the two groups, which by virtue of the diversification seem like the best candidates for being relatively old inhabitants of the area. To the extent that Koshin does show a linguistic connection to another Lower Fungom language, the best candidate is Fang, which also is relatively likely to be a newcomer to the area (see section 3.6.1).

The facts of Koshin reported on here are primarily based on relatively intense fieldwork by Good over a several week period in 2008, but also include data from less intensive fieldwork on the language in 2005 and 2007.

### *3.5.2 Phonology*

#### 3.5.2.1 Consonants

A preliminary inventory of the Koshin consonant inventory is given in table 29.

| | Labial | Dental | Alveolo-Palatal | Palatal | Velar | Labiovelar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosives | b | t d | | | k g | kp gb |
| Fricatives | f | s (z) | sh (zh) | | | |
| Affricates | | ts dz | c j | | | |
| Nasals | m | n | | ny | ŋ | |
| Liquids | | l | | | | |
| Glides | | | | y | | w |

Table 29: Koshin consonants

There are alternative pronunciation of *dz* and *j* as fricatives *z* and *zh* respectively. Accordingly, *j* and *zh* do not appear to be phonemic, which is why they are indicated in parentheses. Relevant examples include *dzì* 'elephant', also realized along the lines of *zì*, and *jì* 'eat', also realized along the lines of *zhì*.

Koshin shows syllable structures comparable to other languages of the area, allowing nasal-obstruent initial clusters, some consonant-glide clusters, and nasal codas. As will be discussed in section 3.5.2.2, Koshin also shows contrastive nasalization in its vowel system. In at least some cases, such nasalization can be traced to historical nasal codas. However, whatever process resulted in nasalization from such a source has not resulted in the lack of such codas synchronically as evidenced by words like *jɻ̀m* 'back', *wín* 'eye', and *shàŋ* 'finger'.

Because Koshin appears to have a series of fricating vowels (see section 3.5.2.2), it might be the case that some of the consonants listed in table 29 are instead the reflex of other consonants before such vowels. Therefore, the segment inventory provided here is more likely to overcount than to undercount phonemic distinctions.

### 3.5.2.2 Vowels

A preliminary inventory of the Koshin plain vowel inventory is given in table 30.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ɻ | ɻ̩ | ʯ |
| i | | u |
| e | ə | |
| ɛ | | ɔ |
| (æ) | a | |

Table 30: Koshin plain vowels

No clear minimal pair has been found between [u] and [o], and *u* is chosen here for this vowel

since it sounds phonetically closer to [u]. The front vowel system of Koshin is structural comparable to that found in the Abar and Biya varieties of Mungbam (see table 3), though it is written here with different symbols which we believe are more in accord with the comparative phonetic realizations of these vowels across the varieties.

There are a few words which appear to have a sound like *æ*. Two examples are *wǽ* 'breath' and *tǽ* 'swim'. However, due to the relatively low occurrence of this sound and the independent presence of diphthongs in Koshin, as will be discussed shortly below, it may be that this is not a true phoneme but, rather, the realization of some vowel combination, perhaps along the lines of /ɛa/. Alternatively, it may be an alternate phonetic realization (or misapprehension) of *ɛ* in some cases where it is recorded.

The vowels *i̱*, *ɨ̱*, and *u̱* in the table signify a "super-high" set of high vowels which cause frication on some preceding consonants. They are not always easily distinguished from the vowels *i*, *ə*, and *u*, respectively, and some of the transcriptions here are likely to not mark the distinction accurately. Tentative minimal pairs of this series of vowels with phonetically similar vowels are: *bí̱* 'dogs' and *bí* 'kola nut'; *kɨ̱́* 'head' and the Class 7 associative marker *kə̄*; and *bú̱* 'hunger' and *bū* 'sky'.

Koshin also employs contrastive nasalization in its vowel system, though a full inventory of nasalized vowels has not yet been established. This appears to be a unique aspect of Koshin in the context of Yemne-Kimbi. Some examples of words with nasalized vowels are *jṵ̀ò̰* 'grass type', *tɨ̰́* 'touch', *tɛ̰́* (a name), *nshṵ́ó̰* 'sand', *kə̄tṵ́* 'ear'. As might be expected, the phonetic realization of nasal vowels shows some variation in quality from corresponding oral vowels. Based on the available data, it does not appear as though all oral vowels have a corresponding nasal counterpart, though the examples just given should not be taken to be exhaustive. Some oral/nasal minimal or near minimal pairs include: *jṵ̀ò̰* 'snake' vs. *jùà* 'stream'; *kə̄bɔ̰̄* 'waist' vs. *kə̄bɔ̄* 'calabash'; and *tɛ̰́* (a name) vs. *tǽ* 'swim'. Some words seem to alternate between ending with a lightly articulated coronal nasal and having a nasal vowel, at least based on auditory impressions.

Phonetically complex vowels are found in Koshin words which indicate the possible presence of diphthongs. Examples of words containing these sounds are *tīɛ̄n* 'look', *jùà* 'stream', and *nshúɔ́* 'sand'. The examples are illustrative of the fact that the sequences that have been noted all involve

a higher vowel followed by a lower vowel. It is not always clear if these should be transcribed as glide-vowel sequences or vowel-vowel sequences or if, perhaps, there may be a contrast between the two possibilities as found in Ajumbu (see section 3.4.2.2). Nor is it clear if the initial part of these complex vowels should be identified with the super-high vowel series or the high one.

#### 3.5.2.3 Tones

Koshin makes use of at least three contrastive tone levels, in addition to contour tones, with a three-way tonal minimal pair being *jùà* 'stream', *jūā* 'bee', and *júá* 'soup'. For the most part, three levels has been sufficient to characterize the encountered tonal distinctions, but there has been some data which suggests that, perhaps, four levels are warranted. Relevant examples are given in (13).

(13) a. *yɛ́ nɔ̀mə̄*
9.PVB bite.IPFV
"it has been biting"

b. *yɛ̋ nɔ̀mə̄*
10.PVB bite.IPFV
"they have been biting"

In (13), two tonally minimally contrasting sentences are given involving the Class 9/10 subject pronouns which are distinguished solely via tone. As indicated, at least in surface terms, the sentence with the lower-toned Class 9 subject pronoun in (13a) shows three clear pitch levels, with the subject having the highest tone. The sentence in (13b) also shows three clear pitch levels, again with the highest tone on the subject, but, in this case, the Class 10 subject's tone is higher than the tone in the corresponding sentence with the Class 9 pronoun. Obviously, sentence pairs like those in (13) do not conclusively argue for tone levels since one could, for example, posit a process like downstep to account for the four surface levels rather than positing four underlying tones. Nevertheless, such a pattern indicates that the possibility that there are four basic tone levels needs to be considered seriously, especially given that other languages of Lower Fungom that have been more extensively investigated have shown clearer evidence for four tones—these are Mungbam (section 3.2.2.3), Mundabli (section 3.3.2.3), and Naki (section 3.7.2.3).

As with the other languages of the area, tonal contours are found, with an example of a fall being found in the word *ncê* 'sneeze (n.)' and a rise in *fǐ* 'float'. At this point, no clear contrasts have been found among possible falling or rising contours, and it seems likely that the actual contours are significantly less than the logically possible ones. However, it would be premature to suggest that there is only one possible fall and one possible rise, especially since the system of verbal tonal inflection remains underexplored.

### *3.5.3 Pronouns and noun classes*

#### 3.5.3.1 Pronouns

A tentative inventory of the Non-Preverbal Koshin personal pronouns is presented in table 31. The available information on the pronominal system of Koshin is sparse compared to other aspects of its grammar, and the data should be considered somewhat tentative. Preverbal pronouns are comparable, though they are reduced along the lines of what is found in other Yemne-Kimbi languages.

| SG | PL |
|---|---|
| *mə̄* | *sɨ̄* |
| *wə̄* | *mbīñ* |
| *wū* | *bɔ́* |

Table 31: Koshin Non-Preverbal personal pronouns

#### 3.5.3.2 Noun classes

The noun class system of Koshin is schematized in table 32 and examples of nouns from each of the classes are given in table 33.

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ø- | w`- | 2 | bə- | b´- |
| 3 | $^{w}$- | w´- | 4 | $^{y}$- | y´- |
| 5 | Ø- | w´- | 13 | tɛ- | t´- |
| 7 | kə- | k´- | 8 | bə- | b´- |
| 9 | `- | y`- | 10 | ´- | y´- |
| 19 | fə(N)- | f´- | 18 | N- | m´- |
| 6a | N- | m´- | | | |
| 14 | bə- | b´- | | | |

Table 32: Koshin noun classes

A noteworthy feature of the Koshin noun class system is the presence of plural Class 13, which is otherwise only found in Fang within the Yemne-Kimbi group. The vowel in the prefix for Class 13 seems to be most frequently something like *ɛ*, though it has also been heard as a centralized vowel (like *ə*) in some cases. Hombert (1980:87) writes the vowel as *o*, which does not match our impressions but could be another indicator of such variable pronunciation. There is some fluctuation in the pronunciation of the vowels indicated as *ə* in the other prefixes, and it may be the case that they are better treated as *i̱*.

| | SINGULAR | | PLURAL | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *bá* | 2 | *bəbá* | 'father' |
| 3 | *wí* | 4 | *jí* | 'eye' |
| 5 | *ki̱* | 13 | *tɛ̄ki̱* | 'head' |
| 7 | *kəfúm* | 8 | *bəfúm* | 'hardship' |
| 9 | *shì* | 10 | *shî* | 'fowl' |
| 19 | *fənshyə̂* | 18 | *nshyə̂* | 'hare' |
| 6a | *ndyɛ̱* | | | 'tears' |
| 14 | *bənī* | | | 'fufu' |

Table 33: Koshin noun class examples

Like Ji (see section 3.3.3.2) and Fang (see section 3.6.3.2), Koshin Class 3/4 is generally marked by labializing/palatalizing consonant mutations. In addition to the example provided in table 33, other examples of words in this class are *gbīā*/*dzīā* 'house', *wín*/*jín* 'tooth, leaf', *kpīñ*/*tsīñ* 'firewood', and *kpə̂*/*kə̂* 'day' (see also Hombert (1980:89)). The factors that determine the precise realization of the consonant alternations are not known. There are also nouns showing Class 3/4 concord but which do not exhibit consonant mutations. Examples include *ŋgə́nə́*/*ŋgə́* 'egg', which maintains a singular/plural stem distinction despite not exhibiting any consonant mutation, and *gbi̱* 'foot' which has the same form in the singular and plural.

The Class 19 prefix behaves somewhat unusually in the Yemne-Kimbi context sometimes taking a form like *fəN-* (see table 33 for an example), with a final assimilating nasal, as though it is a historical fusion of Class 19 and Class 18. At the same time, there are also cases where this nasal is not found, as in, for example, *fəgbīā*/*ndzīā* 'hut', which is based on the word *gbīā*/*dzīā* 'house' and *fətúnə́*/*ntúnə́* 'small ear', which is based on *kətú̱*/*bətú̱* 'ear' (and which also shows an expected stem alternation reminiscent of what is found in Class 7a in languages like Mungbam—see section

3.2.3.2).

The Class 6a nouns that have been collected frequently end with a nasal consonant or a nasalized vowel, for example, in the words *njɔ̂ŋ* 'saliva' and *mfwɔ̰̃* 'blood'. However, this is not an exceptionless pattern as the word for 'water' has the form *ndi̧*. Nevertheless, it may be reasonable to represent the form of the noun class marking for Class 6a as something along the lines of *N...N* rather than what is given in table 32.

Nouns beginning with nasal-obstruent clusters can be from Class 6 and 18, as expected from the indicated prefixes, but also Classes 1/2 and Classes 5/13. Two examples are the Class 1/2 noun *mbɔ̀ŋ/bə̀mbɔ̀ŋ* 'cow' and the Class 5/13 noun *mbɛ̄n/tɛ̄mbɛ̄n* 'breast'.

### *3.5.4 Verb morphology*

Some representative examples of verb stem forms are given in table 34. The verb forms were elicited by asking for the form of the verb in a frame like *SUBJECT has X-ed* and *SUBJECT is X-ing*, with the indicated tones being the tones found when those frames were used. On the whole, the Koshin system of marking the Perfective and Imperfective opposition is morphologically simpler than what is found in other languages of the Yemne-Kimbi group, for example Mungbam (see section 3.2.4), Mundabli (see section 3.3.4), and Ajumbu (see section 3.4.4). As with the other languages of the area, the Imperative form of the verb patterns segmentally with the Perfective rather than the Imperfective.

| PERFECTIVE | IMPERFECTIVE | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|
| *kpə̀* | *kpə̄* | 'die' |
| *gə̀* | *gə̀n* | 'go' |
| *jâ* | *jɔ̄bə́* | 'be sick' |
| *tɨ̂m* | *tɨ̄mə́* | 'stand' |
| *bɔ̰̀* | *bɔ̄nə̀* | 'approach' |
| *sìsə̀* | *sīsə́* | 'laugh' |

Table 34: Koshin verb stems

As seen in table 34, there can be no difference in the segmental shape of stems in the Perfective/Imperfective alternation or, in the case of some monosyllabic stems, material of the shape (C)ə can be added to the Perfective to form a CVCV Imperfective, though the verb for 'go' is an excep-

tion to this generalization with the added material only giving a CVC shape. It is not the case the monosyllabic verbs must uniformly be lengthened, however, as indicated by the verb 'die'. Verbs that are disyllabic in the Perfective do not show any segmental alternations in the Imperfective. At the current level of understanding, the consonant of any segmental extension found in the Imperfective cannot be predicted, except for the fact that in Perfective stems with nasalized vowels, it appears that it will always be a nasal consonant.

The fact that all of the disyllabic forms in table 34 end in ə is not coincidental: This seems to result from a general restriction on the shape of verb stems, though one clear exception has been noted in the verb *lúfú* 'refuse', which also shows unusual tone patterns (suggesting it might historically derive from a compound structure). Another possible exception is found in (14a).

### *3.5.5 Example sentences*

In (14) two sample sentences from a text collected in Koshin are offered in order to give a sense of some basic syntactic constructions of the language. The glossing should be taken as tentative, and morphosyntactic categories may be coded via tone that have not yet been determined. Noun classes are only indicated when this is clear from the collected data. Tone is likely to be less accurately transcribed than in the single word examples. Each of the sentences contains one element from Cameroonian Pidgin [wes]. In (14a), this is the initial word *so*, and, in (14b), this is the word *sotee* meaning something like 'long time'. The word glossed as 'leave' in (14a) has only been noted in this example, and it should perhaps better be glossed along the lines of 'abandon'. It has what appears to be unusual form for a disyllabic verb ending in *a* rather than ə.

(14) a. So *bə́ ká gwá fə́ bə́ ká tīká bānyɛ́ bə̄bə̀ Sáwì.*
so 3p.PVB CONT separate exit 3p.PVB CONT leave 2.brother 2.their Sawe
"They then separated and left their brothers from Sawi."

b. *Bə̀ ká nê ká nî kə̀ bà wə́ mə̀* sotee *ká dí*
3p.PVB CONT leave CONT walk PRT.PROG 5.bank 5.DET LOC so.long CONT come
*jɪ̄ɛ̃ fə́ bə̄ mə̀fə́ wɛ̄n.*
reach place 3p.PVB be there now
"They then went along the banks until they came and reached where there are today."

## 3.6 Fang

### *3.6.1 Overview*

Fang is a one-village language spoken in the southeastern part of Lower Fungom. This is a completely separate language from the variety known as Fang [fan] associated with the Beti language cluster, which comprises Narrow Bantu languages spoken in southern Cameroon and bordering countries, and the name overlap appears to be coincidental. The Fang do, however, claim a historical connection to one other group and one place with *fang* in their names. The group is speakers of Befang [bby], spoken to the south of Wum, which is part of the Menchum group of languages (see Boum (1980)). The Fang do not claim a common linguistic origin with the Befang, but they do claim a history of friendship with them. The place is the town of Bafang found in the Bamileke area of the West Region of Cameroon, from which the Fang claim a geographic origin.

For similar reasons as with Koshin (see section 3.5.1)—namely its peripheral geographic position in Lower Fungom and the lack of clear linguistic affinity to the diversified groups in the region's interior—it seems reasonable to consider seriously that Fang is, indeed, a relatively recent entry to the area as described in the oral histories (though we cannot verify a specific origin in Bafang). Fang is, by far, the most populous village in Lower Fungom, as well as the most spoken language.

We are unaware of any documentation of Fang before the wordlist found in Hamm et al. (2002:30–32). Before that publication, Fang and Koshin were treated as varieties of the same language. While there is at least one prominent grammatical connection between them in the Yemne-Kimbi context—the presence of a noun class that can be associated with Class 13—it would be premature to suggest any particularly close relationship between the two, and the earlier conflation of the two varieties under one language appears to have resulted from a lack of data and the fact that the Koshin and Fang often learn each other's languages.

The facts of Fang presented here are primarily the result of work done by Mve and Tchiemouo in 2010, with some supplementary information provided from work conducted by Good in 2005. Of the languages sketched here, Fang has seen the least research, and the description given in this section must, therefore, be considered the most tentative.

### *3.6.2 Phonology*

#### 3.6.2.1 Consonants

A preliminary inventory of the Fang consonant inventory is given in table 35.

| | Labial | Dental | Alveolo-Palatal | Palatal | Velar | Labiovelar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosives | b (p) | t d | | | k g | kp gb |
| Fricatives | f v | s | zh | | | |
| Affricates | | ts | c j | | | |
| Nasals | m (ɱ) | n | | ny | ŋ | |
| Liquids | | l | | | | |
| Glides | | | | y | | w |

Table 35: Fang consonants

The Fang consonant system is, for the most part, expected in the local context, with the clear exceptions of a marginal nasal sound, here treated as *ɱ*, and one instance recorded of a *p*. The *ɱ* has been found, to this point, only at the beginning of the word for 'person' in both its singular and plural forms, *ɱə* and *ɱìm*. While some sort of contrast with a plain *m* appears to be found at the beginning of this word, it perhaps should be analyzed differently with another good candidate being the phonetic realization of a long initial nasal sequence, as transcribed by Hamm et al. (2002:20), or as some sort of articulatory fusion of a *mw* sequence, as suggested by comparison, for example, with the Koshin word for 'person' *mwìn*. A *p* was encountered in a third person possessive form *pí*, showing Class 2 agreement. Its possible phonemic status is not clear.

Nasal-obstruent sequences are found in initial position in Fang, at least in Classes 1/2 and 6a, as are consonant-glide clusters, as in words like *gwəfə́* 'drive' and *dwàlə́* 'star'. Only nasals have been found in coda position.

#### 3.6.2.2 Vowels

A preliminary inventory of the Fang vowel inventory is given in table 36. Clear minimal pairs have not been found for some phonetically close vowels, and the front and back series are more likely to overcount phonemic distinctions than to undercount them.

As with other languages of the area, Fang has a set of super-high vowels which can be associated with frication when following certain consonants. These are indicated as *i̯* and *u̯*. Given the

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| i̱ | | u̱ |
| i | | u |
| e | ə | o |
| ɛ | | ɔ |
| | a | |

Table 36: Fang vowels

early stages of investigation for Fang and the fact that, in other languages of the area, these vowels were not always immediately recognized, it would seem inadvisable to read particular significance into the lack of a clear attestation of a super-high central vowel in the language at present. Examples of words containing super-high vowels are *mbi̱* 'world' and *gú̱* 'fire'. The latter word was sometimes heard as something like [gy̰], underscoring the fricating nature of these vowels.

Examples of vowel combinations have been found, for example in the words *yúə́* 'skin' and *tə̂* 'horn'. However, it has not yet been established if Fang has a robust opposition between glide-vowel combinations and vowel-vowel combinations as is found in a language like Ajumbu (see section 3.4.2.2).

Impressionistically, vowels seem to be longer when associated with contour tones than level tones, though length on its own in such cases does not appear to be contrastive in and of itself. There are other cases of noticeable differences in vowel length in surface forms, for instance the second vowel in a word like *tə̄wésə́* 'culverts' is noticeably longer than the last while this is not true for a word like *bə̄kófə́* 'bones'. (Both of these vowels are the first vowel of the root.) Therefore, it seems reasonable to consider the possibility that vowel length can be contrastive in the language, though we do not have strong evidence for this at this point.

#### 3.6.2.3 Tones

Investigation into Fang has not been extensive enough to determine precisely how many tone levels there are in the language, but, as with other languages of the area, there is good evidence for at least three tone levels, and various contour patterns are also attested, including both rising tones, as in the word *gǐ* 'egg', and falling tones, as in the word *tsâ* 'five'. Since we have not, at present, collected unambiguous tonal minimal pairs where the tone levels have been carefully checked, we do not offer specific examples here in case they turn out to be misleading. We do note, however,

that, as in other Yemne-Kimbi languages, Class 9/10 is solely marked by tone changes, offering numerous tonal minimal pairs.

As a first attempt at transcribing tone for Fang, we have employed a three-level transcription system involving high, mid, and low levels. However, such transcriptions should be interpreted with necessary caution.

### *3.6.3 Pronouns and noun classes*

#### 3.6.3.1 Pronouns

Examples of Fang Preverbal and Non-Preverbal pronouns are given in table 37.

| | PREVERBAL | | NON-PREVERBAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SG | PL | SG | PL |
| 1st | *mɔ́* | *tə̀* | *myɔ́* | *byə̀n* |
| 2nd | *wê* | *nə̀* | *wə̀* | *nə̀n* |
| 3rd | *wɔ́* | *bɔ́* | *wɔ́n* | *búnɔ̀* |

Table 37: Fang personal pronouns

While data has not been systematically collected on different tense-aspect configurations and pronominal realization, there is clear evidence for significant alternations in the realization of at least of some of the pronouns in different tense-aspect contexts. For instance, in addition to the forms presented in table 37, the second singular pronoun was observed to surface with segmental form of *a* or as a form beginning with *y* in preverbal contexts with the apparent conditioning factor of the change being the tense-aspect of the relevant clause. Accordingly, while the forms in table 37 represent an initial attempt to arrive at something like a "basic" pronominal inventory for Fang, the presentation must be interpreted as a significant simplification of the actual system. Even with limited information available, the Fang pronominal system is striking for the relative lack of predictability of the forms for the Preverbal set on the basis of the Non-Preverbal set.

#### 3.6.3.2 Noun classes

The noun class system of Fang is schematized in table 38, and examples of nouns from each of the classes are given in table 39. We are not able to assign abstract tone patterns, at this point, to

the concords associated with the noun classes, and the fact that this is not marked should not be taken as an indication of any neutralization of tonal distinctions found elsewhere in Yemne-Kimbi. Prefixes appear to be generally associated with a low (or at least not high) tone.

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ø- | w- | 2 | bə- | b- |
| 3 | $^{w}$- | w- | 4 | $^{y}$- | y- |
| 5 | Ø- | w- | 13 | tə- | t- |
| 7 | Ø/kə- | k- | 8 | bə- | b- |
| 9 | ̀- | y- | 10 | ́- | y- |
| 19 | fə- | f- | 18 | mə- | m- |
| 6a | N- | m- | | | |
| 14 | bə- | b- | | | |

Table 38: Fang noun classes

| | SINGULAR | | PLURAL | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *ŋkúŋ* | 2 | *bəŋkúŋ* | 'chief' |
| 3 | *wən* | 4 | *jən* | 'tooth' |
| 5 | *búŋ* | 13 | *təbúŋ* | 'mountain' |
| 7 | *kófə* | 8 | *bəkófə* | 'hardship' |
| 9 | *nyàm* | 10 | *nyám* | 'animal' |
| 19 | *fəmásə́* | 18 | *məmásə́* | 'cat' |
| 6a | *njəm* | | | 'water' |
| 14 | *bədyɛ̄lə* | | | 'bridge' |

Table 39: Fang noun class examples

A noteworthy feature of the Fang noun class system in the context of the Yemne-Kimbi group is the presence of Class 13, otherwise only found in Koshin (see section 3.5.3.2). Class 3/4 does not appear to be as common in Fang as some of the other languages of the area (like Koshin or Mundabli, as described in section 3.5.3.2 and section 3.3.3.2 respectively). Class 7 nouns appear both with and without a prefix while Class 8 nouns appear to always show a prefix. Table 39 gives an example of a noun without a prefix in Class 7, and an example of one with a prefix is *kədəm*/*bədəm* 'chest'.

Irregular plurals appear to be comparatively common in Fang, and a number have been found in Class 5/13, where they involve the addition of an extra syllable following the root in the plural, as in words like *lím*/*təlímkpə* 'tongue' and *gən*/*təgəntə* 'feather'. Such patterns are reminiscent of what is called Class 7a here for other languages of the area (see section 3.1), though the "suffixal" portion

of the plural in Fang does not have a form that is straightforwardly predictable, if predictable at all.

### *3.6.4 Verb morphology*

Insufficient numbers of verbs have been collected for Fang to establish basic patterns in the verbal system, though, as with other languages of the area, some verbs have been found with distinct Perfective and Imperfective stems. Also, as would be expected, there appear to be at least two distinct verbal tone classes as evidence by the near minimal pairs *jì* 'pour' and *zhí* 'eat'. Some sample verbs, with their Perfective and Imperfective forms are given in table 40.

| PERFECTIVE | IMPERFECTIVE | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|
| *zhí* | *zhī* | 'eat' |
| *wám* | *wámkpɔ́* | 'shout' |
| *tàn* | *tàntə* | 'jump' |
| *fəfə́* | *fɔ́fɔ́* | 'fly' |
| *jəmə̄* | *jɔ́mɔ́* | 'sing' |

Table 40: Fang verb stems

### *3.6.5 Example sentences*

In (15), examples are given of some sentences in Fang from the beginning of a text. Glossing and transcription should be considered more tentative than for the other languages described here. Noun classes are only indicated when this is clear from the collected data.

(15) a. *Dìlə kə̂n nə dò ntá ntòŋ.*
7.place 7.DEM PST be still forest
"The place was still forest."

b. *Tə nə́ kə́lə́ ké jì.*
1p.PVB PST have NEG 5.road
"We have not had any road."

c. *ŋ̀m kpû bə dó nə tɛ̀lə́ ntá bə́fàŋ.*
2.person 2.my 3p.PVB also PST settle still? Befang
"My people also settled in Befang."

## 3.7 Naki

### *3.7.1 Overview*

Naki is the one (Eastern) Beboid language spoken in Lower Fungom, and it has been investigated somewhat extensively since 2004 by Good. The majority of this investigation has been done on the Mekaf variety of the language which is quite similar to the Mashi variety, spoken in Lower Fungom, but not exactly the same. Naki is spoken by several thousand speakers, with several hundred of them in Mashi.

The first reference to Naki in the published literature that we are aware of is in Westermann and Bryan (1952:116,120), under the name Mekaf. Chilver and Kaberry (1974:37–40) give a short wordlist, Hombert (1980) provides a sketch of its noun class system, Kum (2002, 2007) describes aspects of Naki phonology and noun and noun class morphology, and Good (2010) treats aspects of information structure encoding in the language. These all cover the Mekaf variety of the language. The only published data specifically on the Mashi variety we are aware of is the wordlist in Hamm et al. (2002:30–32).

Inhabitants of Lower Fungom generally perceive Naki to be quite different linguistically from the region's other languages. This is consistent with Naki oral history that suggests they are recent arrivals in the area from the northeast.

### *3.7.2 Phonology*

#### 3.7.2.1 Consonants

A preliminary Naki consonant inventory is presented in table 41.

| | Labial | Dental | Alveolo-Palatal | Palatal | Velar | Labiovelar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosives | b | t d | | | k g | kp gb |
| Fricatives | f | s | sh | | | |
| Affricates | | ts dz | c j | | | |
| Nasals | m | n | | ny | ŋ | |
| Liquids | | l | | | | |
| Glides | | | | y | | w |

Table 41: Naki consonants

Table 41 is largely in agreement with Kum (2002:57) once one takes into account the fact that

he treats consonant-glide sequences as single phonemes. There is, however, one more substantive discrepancy insofar as he treats a voiced alveopalatal fricative *zh* as being in phonemic opposition to *j* and *y*, which has not been found in the data that has formed the basis of this study. Some of his examples of words containing *zh* have been recording instead with *j* and, while *zh* has been recorded phonetically in the context of the present study, it appears to be an alternate variant of *y*. Future work will have to verify the status of *zh*, though it seems more likely that it is not a true phoneme.

A number of Cw and Cy clusters are attested. One of the Cy combinations, *fy* is realized with the expected form [fj] for many speakers, but for others as a sound which perceptually sounds like a doubly articulated fricative [f͡ʃ]. This same sound is also found in the Class 19 diminutive prefix *fi-*, suggesting it may be better written as *fyi-*. Less usual instances of Cw clusters in the language involve *cw* and *jw* as in words like *cwâd* 'a little' and *jwād* 'flour type'. Words with initial nasal-obstruent clusters are found, but appear to be restricted to Class 1 and Class 6a (see section 3.7.3.2).

The most striking aspect of Naki consonantal phonology in the areal context is that, in addition to allowing words with sonorant codas, one also finds words with obstruent codas across the labial, alveolar, and velar places of articulation. These are written here as *b*, *d*, and *g*, though, since there is no voicing contrast word finally, the *d* and *g* should not be viewed as opposed to their voiceless counterparts in this position. The voiced series is chosen in writing these sounds due to the fact that Naki lacks a *p*/*b* distinction, and it seemed desirable to write these final sounds using consonants from the same series. The actual phonetic realization of these final obstruents can be somewhat variable. The final *b* is fairly consistently realized along the lines of a sound perceptually like [p]. Final *d* and *g* alternate between sounds like [t] and [k] and [ɾ] and [x] respectively.

#### 3.7.2.2 Vowels

A preliminary Naki vowel inventory is presented in table 42. The vowel symbols should be taken to represent rough phonemic categories rather than strict phonetic transcriptions. One (older) consultant appeared to have a "noisy" front high vowel, in opposition to a non-noisy one, in the word

*bì* ‘goat’, though this is not indicated in the table. Kum (2002:32) proposes the same phonemic vowel inventory as that presented here.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| i | | u |
| e | | o |
| ɛ | ə | ɔ |
| | a | |

Table 42: Naki vowels

The most difficult distinction to establish in the vowel system has between the two pairs of mid vowels. The issues here are both perceptual, insofar as the distinction can be difficult to perceive, especially for the front pair and phonological since there appear to be some places where *ɛ* is an allophone of *ə*, in particular after *y*. Thus, while one can find a surface minimal pair between *ɛ* and *e* in the forms of the Class 9 article *yɛ̀* and Class 9 distal demonstrative *yè*, given that other forms of the article have a schwa as their vowel (e.g., the Class 2 form is *wə̀*), it may be that the *ɛ* in *yɛ̀* is an alternative realization of *ə*.

Nevertheless, a good potential minimal (or near minimal) pair has been encountered for each of the contrasts. For *e*/*ɛ*, the distinction appears to be found in the words *mé* ‘see’ (phonetically closer to [mɪ]) and *āmɛ́* ‘neck’.[11] For *o*/*ɔ*, the distinction appears to be found in the words *bòd* ‘sky’ vs. *bɔ́d* ‘fire’, with the vowels in each word being somewhat lower perceptually than the transcription implies.

#### 3.7.2.3 Tones

There is clear evidence for the presence of four tone levels in Naki, as exemplified by the set of words *gí* ‘egg’, *lī* ‘tongue’, *shè* ‘fowl’, and *mǖ* ‘person’. The treatment of *mǖ* as super low as opposed to *gí* as super high reflects an impression regarding relative frequency, though this is not yet well substantiated. Contour tones are also frequently encountered, and some examples include *ŋkǔŋ* ‘chief’, *nyàm* ‘animals’, and *bâm* ‘2.my’. As suggested by these examples, the inventory of falling tones appears to be larger than that of rising tones. Strong evidence for four tone levels was

[11] This minimal pair was proposed by Kum (2002:30), as well, but with the reverse vocalic transcription. This discrepancy seems likely due to the fact that the relevant distinction is not phonetically precisely one of height, leading to different judgements about how best to characterize the vowels phonetically.

uncovered only relatively recently which means that many of the tonal transcriptions below are likely to contain inaccuracies due to an earlier supposition that there were only three tone levels.

Especially on verbs, contour tones appear to play a greater role in Naki surface phonology than in some other languages of the area. Specifically, it has been noted that forms with similar pitch transitions between Naki and the other languages seem more likely to be associated in Naki with whistling patterns containing contours on the various whistled "beats".

### *3.7.3 Pronouns and noun classes*

#### 3.7.3.1 Pronouns

The Naki personal pronouns are presented in table 43. As can be seen, the Preverbal and Non-Preverbal paradigms are only clearly different in the first person plural. Tones are not indicated for the Preverbal pronouns since their tonal realization is affected by the tense and aspect of the following verb, making it difficult to determine any basic tone for them.

| | PREVERBAL | | NON-PREVERBAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SG | PL | SG | PL |
| 1st | *mi* | *ki* | *mī* | *sì* |
| 2nd | *wə* | *be* | *wə̀* | *bè* |
| 3rd | *lu* | *bu* | *lù* | *bú* |

Table 43: Naki personal pronouns

A third person antilogophoric pronoun with form *we* (without clearly established tone) has also been found in a text (see (16c)). This pronoun shows a form parallel to that of the Class 1 demonstrative *wè*. Attempts were specifically made to see if Naki makes use of compound pronouns, but none were found.

#### 3.7.3.2 Noun classes

The Naki noun class system is schematized in table 44, and examples of nouns from each of the classes are given in table 45. The presentation illustrates only the most regular patterns and exceptional plurals are not infrequent. The forms reflect those encountered when working with most consultants, but some variation has been found, for example, the Class 14 prefix for one

(older) speaker was noted as *wə-* rather than *u-*. The tones of class prefixes appear to be restricted to lower tones and to be at least partly predictable based on the tone of the stem, with higher-toned stems associated with higher-toned prefixes (see also Hombert (1980:93–94)).

| | SINGULAR | | | PLURAL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ø- | w`- | 2 | bu- | b´- |
| 3 | Ø- | w´- | 6 | Ø/-ŋ | n´- |
| 7 | a- | k´- | 8 | bi- | b´- |
| 9 | `- | y`- | 10 | ´- | y´- |
| 19 | fi- | fy´- | 18 | N- | m´- |
| 14 | u- | w´ | | | |
| 6a | N- | m´- | | | |

Table 44: Naki noun classes

| | SINGULAR | | PLURAL | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *ŋkùng* | 2 | *bùŋkùŋ* | 'chief' |
| 3 | *gí* | 6 | *gɔ́ŋ* | 'egg' |
| 7 | *ànyɛ̄nə̄* | 8 | *bìnyɛ̄nə̄* | 'bird' |
| 9 | *shè* | 10 | *shé* | 'fowl' |
| 19 | *fībúd* | 18 | *mbúd* | 'cat' |
| 14 | *ūnə̄* | | | 'fufu' |
| 6a | *ŋgú* | | | 'water' |

Table 45: Examples of Naki noun classes

Class 14 concord forms appear to be completely homophonous with those for Class 3. The same is true for Class 18 and Class 6a concords. Class 7 concord generally involves a *k*, as indicated, but, in some cases (e.g., the number 'one') it shows an *a*, as found in the noun prefix. A comparable pattern is found in the Ajumbu noun class system (see section 3.4.3.2).

The initial *b* in classes 2 and 8 has been observed to drop in some contexts (though more frequently for Class 8). Class 6 marking has the form of a velar nasal suffix in many nouns (all monosyllabic) which, by virtue of creating closed syllables, can trigger predictable vowel alternations in the root, for example the *i~ə* alternation seen for the word for 'egg' in table 45. (See Hombert (1980:90) for further examples of nouns marked in this way.) There are also Class 3/4 words showing no change in the noun stem, for example the word *bɔ́d* 'fire/gun'.

### *3.7.4 Verb morphology*

Examples of Naki Perfective/Imperfective stems are given in table 46. The stems were collected by examining the Imperative form and the form of the verb in the expression *SUBJECT was X-ing*. (The past tense was used for this since, somewhat surprisingly, the present continuous uses the Perfective stem.) The tones should be taken as a rough indication of the tonal relationship between the verb pairs, but are likely to be incorrect in terms of absolute levels and, possibly, in terms of the presence of contours since the data reported in table 46 was collected at a time when the Naki tone system was less understood than it is at present.

| PERFECTIVE | IMPERFECTIVE | GLOSS |
|---|---|---|
| *kpɛ́* | *kpén* | 'die' |
| *kú* | *kwɔ́n* | 'catch fish' |
| *lâd* | *lâdshī* | 'go to bush' |
| *yím* | *yīmkí* | 'cut' |
| *nyàglɔ́* | *nyáglɔ̀* | 'write' |
| *sɛ̄mfí* | *sémfī* | 'laugh' |

Table 46: Naki verb stems

As indicated by the examples in the table, disyllabic verbs in Naki have not been observed to show stem changes across the two forms. The indicated tone changes for such verbs should not be taken as resulting from the Perfective/Imperfective distinction since they are also connected to the two different elicitation frames. In monosyllabic verbs, a key distinction appears to be whether a verb is vowel or consonant final. Vowel final monosyllabic verbs show Imperfective forms with final nasal consonants and a vowel which has undergone changes as compared to the Perfective (which are not always obviously predictable). Consonant-final monosyllabic verbs form the Imperfective by adding a suffix along the lines of *ki* to the Perfective, whose initial consonant changes to a *sh* after a *d*. These generalizations probably represent the dominant patterns, but some less common patterns may have yet to be discovered.

### *3.7.5 Example sentences*

In (16) three sample sentences from texts collected in Naki are given in order to give a sense of some basic syntactic constructions of the language. The glossing should be taken as tentative,

and morphosyntactic categories may be coded via tone that have not yet been determined. Tone is likely to be less accurately transcribed here than in the single word examples. The first three examples in (16) are drawn from the same story, while the last is part of a recipe for corn beer.

(16) a. *Àcɔ̄m kâm dzɛ̀ ágé kū Kànsī bú Ādzō.*
7.story 7.my stand A.go catch 1.Bushbaby with 7.Rooster
"My story is about Bushbaby and Rooster."

b. *Dzə̀m kə̀ lílə́ sháŋ lə̄ lù àtīə̀ lù fwɔ́nə̄.*
9.leopard then insert 10.finger COMP 3s A.say 3s feel
"The leopard then inserted his fingers saying that he was feeling (around)."

c. *Lù kə̀ dɔ́ kù ímə̄ Kànsī kə̀ lə̄ wè lākā.*
3s then give 9.rope there 1.Bushbaby hand COMP 3s.ALOG receive
"He$_i$ then gave rope to the bushbaby$_j$, so that that he$_j$ could have it."

d. *W' àdzì dzə́ŋ áyú nú, áyúshɛ̂ nú, ányínâ nú.*
2s A.take 6.maize, A.peel 6.PRON A.crush 6.PRON A.soak 6.PRON
"You take maize, peel it, crush it, and soak it."

### 3.8 Kung

Due to its classification as a Central Ring language, the present authors have not investigated Kung linguistically. Though little work has been done on the language, Roland Kießling (personal communication, July 2008), based on initial data collection, believes its classification within Central Ring is plausible, if not yet proven. The only publication we are aware of on Kung is the SIL survey of Troyer et al. (1995), which does not contain any data on the language itself other than the results of a lexicostatistical survey. Oral histories indicate the Kung are relative latecomers to the region, and their movement to the area appears to be associated with decline of a language that was spoken in the region earlier known as Lung, which, as discussed in section 3.4.1, was most likely very closely related to Ajumbu.

Due to the lack of work on Kung, it is possible that some of the linguistic generalizations attributed to "Lower Fungom" above do not adequately take into account the grammatical features of this language.

# 4 Concluding remarks: Lower Fungom in its Bantoid context

While the focus of this study has been to present a state-of-the-art overview of the grammars of languages of Lower Fungom, in particular those of the Yemne-Kimbi group, we would like to conclude by making a few remarks on the possible historical causes of the region's linguistic diversity, based largely on an impressionistic examination of its linguistic diversity.

The dominant interpretation of the area's diversity has been that it is the result of fragmentation of languages which shared a relatively recent common ancestor. This comes through most clearly through the Western Beboid label that has been used for what we here rename as the Yemne-Kimbi group (see section 2.2). However, in looking at the grammatical patterns of the languages of the region, while they all show a wide range of similarities, we have yet to find a shared innovation which could be used to substantiate their treatment as a genetic unit. Mungbam, in particular, is problematic in this regard due to the conservative nature of the formal expression of its noun class system—otherwise, we might be able to use the innovative marking of Class 9/10 on the noun solely via tone as a possible shared innovation for a putative Beboid group.

Accordingly, while evidence for a genetic unit consisting of all or some of the Yemne-Kimbi languages may eventually be uncovered, our current impression is that it is just as likely that the closest relatives of at least some of the Yemne-Kimbi languages will lie outside of the region. In other words, comparative studies should seriously consider the possibility that there are Yemne-Kimbi languages which are relatively recently intrusive to Lower Fungom (just as Kung and Naki clearly are), with strong candidates being Koshin and Fang. Indeed, our present impression is that, even if the initial impetus behind the formulation of Western Beboid may become partly verified by virtue of the establishment of a close relationship holding among some Yemne-Kimbi languages, it is actually quite unlikely that this will be found for all of them.

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[Removed for anonymity.]

**Glossing abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1…19(a) (without “s” or “p”) | noun classes |
| 1,2,3 (with “s” or “p”) | person |
| A | inflectional marker with form *a* |
| ALOG | antilogophoric pronoun |
| BEN | benefactive |
| COMP | complementizer |
| CONS | consecutive |
| CONT | continuous |
| COP | copula |
| DEM | demonstrative |
| DET | determiner |
| EMPH | emphatic marker |
| IPFV | imperfective |
| LOC | locative |
| NEG | negative |
| p | plural |
| PFV | perfective |
| POSS | possessive |
| PRON | pronoun |
| PROG | progressive |
| PRT | particle |
| PST | past |
| PST1 | hodiernal past |
| PST2 | recent past |
| PST3 | distant past |
| PVB | Preverbal pronoun |
| NPVB | Non-Preverbal pronoun |
| Q | question marker |
| s | singular |
| SUBD | subordinator |
| VEN | venitive |
| VFOC | verum focus |

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