

ANIMATE AND INANIMATE PRONOMINAL SYSTEMS
IN NGYEMBOON-BAMILEKE

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This paper examines the different pronominal systems of the Ngyemboon language: subject, direct object, indirect object, possessive, demonstrative, relative and locative. Where applicable, separate systems are described for animate and inanimate referents. The animate pronouns are presented in a series of charts in which the main division is between "singular" and "plural". In examining both simple and complex pronouns, the author finds that the various forms can be displayed symmetrically in a single chart by treating certain "quasi-dual" pronouns as complex singular forms. The article then examines the derivation of complex pronouns, demonstrating that the separate parts are pluralized for different reasons. The Ngyemboon language also turns out to be one of the few in which both separate logophoric and consecutive pronouns are attested. In examining the locative pronouns, certain anaphoric forms are posited to be historical reflexes of earlier Proto-Bantu class 16 and 18 prefixes.

Cet article examine les différents systèmes pronominaux de la langue Ngyemboon: sujet, objet direct, objet indirect, possessif, démonstratif, relatif et locatif. Là où cela est approprié, des systèmes distincts sont décrits pour les référents animés et inanimés. Les pronoms animés sont présentés en une série de tableaux graphiques où la division principale se fait entre "singulier" et "pluriel". A l'examen des pronoms simples et complexes, l'auteur arrive à la conclusion que les différentes formes peuvent être disposées symétriquement dans un seul tableau graphique, en traitant certains pronoms "quasi-duel" comme des formes complexes du singulier. L'article examine ensuite la dérivation des pronoms complexes, et établit que les différentes parties sont mises au pluriel pour différentes raisons. Il s'avère également que la langue Ngyemboon est l'une des rares où l'on trouve à la fois un pronom logophorique et un pronom consécutif. L'examen des pronoms locatifs conduit l'auteur à penser que certaines formes anaphoriques sont des vestiges historiques des anciens préfixes proto-bantous des classes 16 et 18.

0. INTRODUCTION

The present paper¹ examines the animate and inanimate pronominal systems of the Ngyemboon-Bamileke language². As shown in the following sections, these systems are sometimes separate and sometimes the same.

This paper will use the various orthographic symbols which are presently in use for the Ngyemboon language (the reader interested in the phonological rules specifying the pronunciation of these symbols is referred to Anderson (1976) for the consonants and vowels and Anderson (1983) for the tonal perturbations). The only orthographical difference between this paper and the accepted orthography is that this paper marks low tone with a grave accent which allows us to distinguish between low tone morphemes and toneless morphemes (with toneless morphemes taking their surface tone from adjacent morphemes). Our symbols are therefore the following:

(1)

Symbols

Consonants				Vowels	
p	t	k	,	i	u
b	d	g		e	o
m	n	ŋ		ɛ	a
pf	ts	c			
f	s	sh			
v	z	j			
	l				
ʷ	y	w			
				Tones	
				á	: high
				ǎ	: rising
				â	: falling
				à	: low

The semivowel ʷ above is the rounded front semivowel identical in quality to the French u but very short in duration and only found between a syllable-initial consonant and a following vowel, where it contrasts with the other semivowels y and w (Anderson 1982, pp. 60-61, 65). The tones marked in this paper are the surface tones derived after various tonal rules (Anderson, 1983) have operated, with the unique exception of the ubiquitous downstep which is not orthographically marked.

1. ANIMATE SUBJECT PRONOUNS

The first sets of pronouns to be discussed will be those which occupy the normal position. The animate pronouns found in this position may vary according to whether or not the subject is "focused" (stressed, new information, asserted information) or not. The following pair of sentences show typical constructions with the subject respectively unfocused and focused:

- (2) à kà zà' bmàb 'he cut the meat' (yesterday)
 he P₂ cut meat
- (3) yé nzò kà zà' mbàb 'he cut the meat' (yesterday)
 he SF P₂ cut meat

In the preceding examples, the word kà glossed as "P₂" is the "yesterday past tense marker" and the word nzò glossed as "SF" is the "subject focus marker". The difference in focus in the English gloss is marked by underlining the subject to indicate the phonological stress usually placed on a focused or emphasized element. In Ngyemboon, this same focus is represented for third person singular subjects by a separate pronoun in addition to the presence of the SF marker. The full range of non-consecutive subject pronouns found in focused and unfocused constructions is displayed in the following chart:

(4)

Person	<u>Animate Subject Pronouns</u>		
	Singular	Singular	Plural
	[+FOC]	[-FOC]	[+/-FOC]
1	mèn	mèn/N	pêg
1 + 2		pógò	pégè
2	gù	gù/ò	pí
2 + 3		pí yè	pía pò
3	yé	à	pób/pó
1 + 3		pèg yè	pégà pò*
3 + 4		pó yé	póbà pǎ

The preceding chart of animate subject pronouns shows that only simple singular pronouns have separate focused and unfocused forms and that what was probably the (fuller) focused forms for first and second person singular may now be used as well in unfocused constructions. The Ngyemboon language, like many of its Grassfields Bantu and Narrow Bantu neighbors, has both complex (referring to more than one "person") "plural" pronouns and separate complex "quasi-dual" forms. The Ngyemboon "quasi-duals" are not "true duals" in that they do not signify dual numerality within a single "person", but always signal duality by combining two separate singular "persons" into a single complex pronoun. These quasi-dual pronouns (without separate focused and unfocused forms) are therefore listed in the chart in the singular column in those rows with double numerals (eg. 1 + 3). The respective complex plural forms indicate that at least one of the "persons" is represented by more than one individual. Thus, the plural 2 + 3 pronoun can indicate three semantic possibilities: 2 sg + 3 pl, 2 pl + 3 sg or 2 pl + 3 pl. It will also be noticed that there are both dual and plural "fourth person" (other third person) complex pronouns. These fourth person forms are only grammaticalized when in combination with third person forms. Finally, the asterisked 1 + 3 (*) plural form is also used for cases which include optional second or fourth persons in the group. This expansion could be symbolized by adding parentheses to indicate optionality, resulting in the following formula: 1(+2)+3(+4).

The "complex" pronouns in the preceding chart are quite easily derived with the slight exception of the more opaque 1 + 2 combinations. All the complex pronouns refer to two separate "persons". The complex form is constructed by combining two singular forms according to a "person hierarchy" where first person precedes second person and both precede third and fourth persons. The fascinating part of the complex pronoun construction is that the "plurality of the combination" is marked on the first of the two pronouns, even though that specific "person" is only present in the singular. This plurality is added to the underlying person markers as shown below, with the additional obligatory vowel assimilation of the 1 + 2 combination:

(5) Complex Dual Subject Pronoun Derivation

1+2 --> meŋ + ɔ --> peg + ɔ --> pɔɔ
 2+3 --> gu + ye --> pi + ye
 1+3 --> meŋ + ye --> peg + ye
 3+4 --> ye + ye --> pɔ + ye

Just as the plurality of dual combinations is indicated by pluralizing the first of the two forms, the plurality of complex plural subjects is also marked on the first pronoun of the set. The complex plural subjects, however, additionally mark the "plurality of one/both of the person groups" on the second pronoun of the set, together with an additional a vowel to separate the two forms. With these plural forms, the 1 + 2 combination also undergoes obligatory consonant elision and vowel simplification, while the 3 + 4 combination optionally undergoes consonant elision and vowel assimilation, as below:

(6) Complex Plural Subject Pronoun Derivation

1+2 --> meŋ + ɔ --> peg + ɔ --> peg + a + pi --> pege
 2+3 --> gu + ye --> pi + ye --> pi + a + pɔ
 1+3 --> meŋ + ye --> peg + ye --> peg + a + pɔ
 3+4 --> ye + ye --> pɔb + ye --> pɔb + a + pɔ --> paa pɔ

The really fascinating aspects of this pluralization of the second pronoun is that it does not signal that a plural number of that particular "person" is involved, but rather that one of the "persons" involved is plural. Thus, the form 2 + 3 begins with gu + ye signaling the two "persons" involved, then changes the first pronoun from gu to pi to signal the "plurality of the combination", and finally adds an a and pluralizes the second pronoun from ye to pɔ to signal that at least one of the "persons" (either 2 or 3) is present in plural number. This is clearly shown by the fact that the resulting complex pia pɔ is proper for situations where the first person is plural and the second person is only singular, even though because of the rules for complex pronouns it is the second person pronoun that gets pluralized to show the plurality of the first. This conclusively demonstrates that the singular/plural distinction of the second pronoun of a complex pronoun set signals the plurality of either/both of the participating members.

One subject pronoun not listed in the preceding chart is the indefinite ("INDEF") subject pronoun **mé** (meaning "someone" or "some people"). This is the only indefinite pronoun in Ngyemboon and it is only in subject position that an indefinite referent may be pronominalized. In addition, this form is restricted to constructions where the subject is unfocused, but it may refer to either singular or plural unspecified persons, as below:

- (7) **mé** **kâ** **zà'** **mbàb** 'Someone/some people cut the meat'
 INDEP P₂ cut meat (yesterday)

Before proceeding to the inanimate pronouns, one final comment is in order. As seen in the chart at the beginning of this section, all of the plural forms, whether quasi-dual or plural, begin with the consonant **p**. This **p** is the concord consonant for noun class 2 nouns which is the class that contains most plural animate nouns. This concord **p**, therefore, appears to be a remnant of an earlier stage of development where the pronoun root was preceded by the full noun class 2 prefix. At this earlier stage, noun class 2 was uniquely identified with human plural referents, a characteristic which has been obscured slightly in today's Ngyemboon where non-animate nouns also occur. It should be pointed out that this **p** reflex is characteristic of plural nouns only in the subject position, changing to other consonants for other grammatical functions, as described in the various sections further below.

2. INANIMATE SUBJECT PRONOUNS

Now that we have examined the various animate pronouns, we can turn to their inanimate counterparts. These inanimate pronouns refer back to the noun class of their singular or plural referents by combining its concord vowel with its concord tone. Examples of such concord pronouns are shown below:

- (8) (**àp**ɔɔn), á **kâ** **gwě** (the bag) 'it (cl. 7) fell'
 bag it P₂ fall
- (9) (**èp**ɔɔn), é **kâ** **gwě** (the bags) 'they (cl. 8) fell'
 bags it P₂ fall

In the preceding examples, the Ngyemboon words enclosed in parentheses are meant to indicate that they are present in the close linguistic context, but not necessarily immediately preceding the sentences in focus. The change in the subject pronoun from the underlined high tone **á** to the underlined high tone **é** shows two of the four possible subject forms (those referring to noun classes 7 and 8 respectively). Since the Ngyemboon concord system follows the Bantu practice of assigning odd numbers to singular nouns and the even numbers to plural nouns (see Anderson 1980:38), we can construct the following chart for the ten Ngyemboon noun classes:

(10) Inanimate Subject Pronouns (-FOC only)

	Singular	Plural	
cl. 1	â		cl. 2
cl. 3			cl. 4
cl. 5		é	cl. 6
cl. 7	á		cl. 8
cl. 9	è		cl. 10

This chart shows that classes 1, 7 and 9 each have their own unique subject pronoun and that all of the plural classes share a common form with the two remaining singular classes. Due to the occurrence of two a vowels, two e vowels, two high tone and two low tones, we can restructure our chart to highlight the four symmetrical forms, as below:

(11) Inanimate Subject Pronoun Forms

cl. 1	â	è	cl. 9
cl. 7	á	é	other

This chart shows that classes 1 and 9 take low tone concord in Ngyemboon as is commonly found in Bantu languages. Examples of each of the noun classes together with their respective subject pronouns can be found in Anderson (1980:48). It should be added that since animate nouns also fit into the noun class system (usually occurring in noun gender 1/2), a Ngyemboon speaker can choose to refer to a person by using the "inanimate" forms instead of the much more frequent "animate" ones. While the animate third person singular form â is the same as the inanimate class 1 â, the possibility of using either pɔ́ or é for the animate plural referents shows the overlap of the two systems. It should be noticed that whereas animate singular pronouns have both focused and unfocused forms, inanimate pronouns have no such distinction. If the speaker wants to focus an inanimate referent, he must use an alternate strategy involving the invariant "anaphoric adjective" ηwé (meaning 'the one already mentioned'), as below:

(12) âpɔ́on ηwé nzɔ́ kâ gwé 'the already mentioned sac fell'
sac ANPH SF P₂ fall

This ends our discussion of the separate animate and inanimate pronouns found sentence-initially in the subject position.

3. CONSECUTIVE AND LOGOPHORIC PRONOUNS

In Ngyemboon, as in some other Grassfields Bantu languages in the area (Mundani language in Wiesemann, p. 90), there are two special pronouns which are used to refer back to the same subject as the preceding clause. These two pronouns, referred to as the consecutive and the logophoric, occur each one in their own grammatical environment.

The consecutive pronoun occurs whenever the subject of the second of two coordinate clauses refers back to the identical referent indicated to in the first. The form of this pronoun (labeled "CON") is that of a high tone homorganic syllabic nasal consonant. In the following pair of examples, this (underlined) high tone nasal consonant is contrasted with its (also underlined) low tone counterpart (meaning "I"):

- (13) \dot{a} kà zà' mbàb, ń gwó' 'He cut the meat, and (he)
 he P₂ cut meat, CON pound pounded it'
- (14) \dot{a} kà zà' mbàb, ń gwó' 'He cut the meat, and I
 he P₂ cut meat, I pound pounded it'

The minimal tonal and semantic contrasts between the two preceding sentences highlight the crucial role played by tone in determining the identity of referents in Ngyemboon.

The logophoric pronoun, on the other hand, only occurs as the subject of an imbedded clause in indirect discourse. The referent of this imbedded clause must be identical to the referent of the main clause for this logophoric pronoun to be used. The form of this pronoun (labeled "LOG") is segmentally the same as the focused third person singular pronoun, though the tone is a high-low falling, as shown in the following example:

- (15) \dot{a} gđon ngyé, yé kà zà' mbàb 'He₁ said that he₁
 he say that, LOG P₂ cut meat cut the meat'

The subscripts in the preceding example show that the subject of both clauses refers to the same referent in the real world. As in other languages with consecutive and logophoric pronouns (Wiesemann, p. 89), the contrast between "same subject" and "different subject" is shown by the contrast between the special (logophoric and consecutive) forms and the normal forms. Thus, the Ngyemboon speaker can show that the two referents are not identical by switching to the normal unfocused pronouns, as shown in the following examples:

- (16) \dot{a} gđon ngyé, \dot{a} kà zà' mbàb 'He₁ said that he₂
 he say that, he P₂ cut meat cut the meat'
- (17) \dot{a} kà zà' mbàb, \dot{a} gwó' 'He₁ cut the meat, and he₂
 he P₂ cut meat, he pound pounded it'

This concludes our sections on the various subject pronouns, both those which occur sentence-initial and those which occur in special kinds of relationships in multi-clause sentences.

4. DIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS

We now turn our attention to direct objects which differ greatly from subjects in that both animate and inanimate referents are referred to by one set of pronouns, as seen in the following example:

- (18) *ñ kà cyŕa yé* 'I hit him/it'
 I P₂ hit him/it

While the object pronoun in the preceding example resembles its focused subject counterpart, most of the object pronouns resemble the unfocused subject pronouns preceded by the concord consonant *w* (of noun class 1) instead of the *p* (of noun class 2), as shown in the following chart:

Person	<u>Direct Object Pronouns</u>		
	Singular		Plural
	+FOC	-FOC	+/-FOC
1	<i>wòn</i>	<i>wón/-ón</i>	<i>wég</i>
1+2		<i>wógó</i>	<i>wégè</i>
2	<i>gú</i>	<i>gú/-ó</i>	<i>gWí</i>
2+3		<i>gWí yé</i>	<i>gWia pǎ</i>
3	<i>yé</i>	<i>yé/-é</i>	<i>wób</i>
3+1		<i>wég yé</i>	<i>wégà pǎ</i>
3+4		<i>wób yé</i>	<i>wóbà pǎ</i>

The simple singular object pronouns may be elided in sentences where they do not co-occur with the object focus (OF) marker *pǎ*, as shown in the following sentences where the second person singular pronoun optionally changes to its elided form:

- (20) *â kà cyŕa pǎ gú* 'He hit you' (yesterday)
 he P₂ hit OF you
- (21) *â kà cyŕ-ó* 'He hit you' (yesterday)
 he P₂ hit you

5. INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS

As with direct objects, indirect objects do not have separate pronominal forms for referring to animate versus inanimate referents. This may be due to the fact that all indirect objects are by nature animate. The indirect object pronouns are always preceded by one of two separate markers, the noun *mbwó* meaning 'hand' or the preposition *né* meaning 'to', as shown in the following examples:

- (22) *â kà gǔon mbwó mēŋ...* 'He said to me...'
 he P₂ say hand me (yesterday)
- (23) *â kà gǔon né mēŋ...* 'He said to me, ...'
 he P₂ say to me (yesterday)

The following chart shows the different indirect object pronouns, whose segments are identical to the focused animate subject pronouns, but whose tones are often different:

(24)

<u>Indirect Object Pronouns</u>		
	Singular	Plural
	+/-FOC	+/-FOC
1	mēŋ	pèg
1+2	pògò	pégè
2	gū	pì
2+3	pì yé	pía pǎ
3	yé	pób
3+1	pèg yé	pégà pǎ
3+4	pób yè	póbà pǎ

An interesting transformation can be performed on certain ditransitive sentences if the direct object is an inanimate noun. If this condition is met, the indirect object pronoun may be fronted and changed into a direct object pronoun resulting in two direct objects in the same sentence, as shown in the two synonymous examples below:

(25) à kà nà nkáb mē pób 'He gave money to them'
 he P₂ give money to them

(26) à kà nà wób nkáb 'He gave them money'
 he P₂ give them money

The change of the indirect object pób to the direct object wób as well as its being moved inside the direct object nkáb shows that it has been made into a second direct object in the same clause.

6. POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

The possessive pronouns are most often associated with a noun but occasionally stand completely alone. The following examples show that they have both focused and unfocused variants, with the unfocused one able to be moved in front of the noun:

(27)

ñdà yòŋ	'my house'
yòŋ ndá	'my house'
ñdá mēŋ	' <u>my</u> house'
*mēŋ ndá	' <u>my</u> house'

Since unfocused possessive pronouns (like yòŋ above) are formed by a complex process which adds a concord consonant (like y) and a concord tone (like the low tone for class 9 nouns like 'house') to the toneless pronominal root (like -òŋ indicating first person singular), they must be carefully examined for variations. We will first look at the pronominal roots, which are displayed in the following chart:

(28)		<u>Possessive Pronoun</u>		
Person		Singular		Plural
	+FOC		-FOC	+/-FOC
1	meŋ		-oŋ	-eg
1+2		-ogo		-ege
2	gu		-u	-i
2+3		-i ye		-ia po
3	ye		-e	-ob/-o
1+3		-eg ye		-ega po
3+4		-o ye		-oba po

The preceding chart resembles greatly that for animate subject pronouns with two major changes. First, all the preceding roots are inherently toneless. They take their phonetic tone from the adjacent concord prefix. The second change is that all the p consonants indicating "plurality" for subject pronouns are replaced for possessive pronouns with one of the following five concord consonants: p, m, s, y, or w. These five concord consonants are prefixed onto the roots, with the following phonological changes when certain combinations co-occur:

(29)	s + u -->	shu
	y + u -->	ju
	w + u -->	gu
	y + i -->	gi
	w + i -->	gwi

The only remaining element in the construction is the complex interaction of the underlying tones. The various tonal perturbations involved with possessive pronouns including both low and high concord tones are explained in Anderson (1978).

7. DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

The demonstrative pronouns are like the preceding possessive pronouns in that they are preceded by a concord consonant. On the other hand, they do not take a concord tone, but have their own stable tonal pattern. As in most Grassfield Bantu languages, there are three demonstrative pronouns which correspond to first, second and third person, as below:

(30)	<u>Demonstrative Pronouns</u>	
	-oŋ	'this' (near speaker)
	-e	'that' (near hearer)
	-i	'that' (away from both speaker and hearer)

Since the preceding roots can be preceded by any of the five concord consonants, the same morpho-phonological rules with relation to *w* and *y* in combination with *i* (shown in (26) above) also apply here. Additional information on these forms can be found in Anderson (1980:43).

8. RELATIVE PRONOUN

The relative pronoun root (labelled "REL") is *-ie* which must be preceded by the concord consonant corresponding to the head noun. Once again, since the concord consonants *w* and *y* can immediately precede the vowel *i*, the morpho-phonological rules in (26) also apply here, as shown by the following example:

- (31) *ñká' gWie pó jú* 'the field that they bought'
 field REL they buy

The reader interested in additional examples can find them by referring to Anderson (1980:40).

9. LOCATIVE PRONOUNS

Ngyemboon contains three demonstrative pronouns which correspond to the locative pronouns in English. These pronouns have three separate forms: a full form consisting of the pronoun following the noun *jyù* 'meaning 'place', an elided form where the two become one word, and a final short form consisting of just the pronoun (with the concord *y* consonant referring to noun class 7, the class of *jyù*'), as shown in the chart below:

(32)	<u>Full Forms</u>	<u>Elided Forms</u>	<u>Pronouns</u>	<u>English Gloss</u>
	<i>jyù' yðŋ</i>	<i>jyù'ðŋ</i>	<i>yðŋ</i>	'here' (near speaker)
	<i>jyù' yê</i>	<i>jyù'ê</i>	<i>yê</i>	'there' (near hearer)
	<i>jyù' gɪ</i>	<i>jyù'ù</i>	<i>gɪ</i>	'over there' (away from both)

While the pronouns above are identical with the demonstrative pronoun roots preceded by the concord consonant *y*, Leroy has shown that the parallel forms in nearby Mankon begin with a *g* consonant which she posits to be a reflex of the **p* of the Proto-Bantu (PB) class 16 prefix **pá* (1983:111). Although the Ngyemboon 'distant' form *gɪ* is pronounced phonetically [gyi] and therefore begins with a voiced velar fricative, the parallel form [gwi] is the one that is built on the labio-velar *w* (of noun classes 1 and 3). It is the following high front vowel which causes the semivowels *w* and *y* to be preceded by the velar fricative. It thus appears that Ngyemboon has lost the reflex of PB class 16 that is still retained in these time words in nearby Mankon.

10. CONCLUSION

The present paper has examined the various pronominal systems of Ngyemboon-Bamileke paying special attention when separate systems exist for animate and inanimate referents and when they have been neutralized. In fact, completely separate systems exist today only in the subject position. The object position has neutralized the animate/inanimate distinction in favor of forms similar to animate subjects. Most of the other pronominal systems have neutralized any animate/inanimate distinctions in favor of the inanimate forms represented by the noun class concord system. The personal pronouns are a mix of an animate root referring to the person and a concord prefix referring to the noun class of the noun possessed. In addition, while the personal pronoun roots may be preceded by any of the five concord consonants, subject and indirect object pronouns have neutralized in favor of the animate plural *p* (of noun class 2) while direct object pronouns are preceded by the animate singular *w* (of noun class 1).

The present paper has also posited various rules for forming the various complex pronouns which refer to more than one of the "persons" (first, second, third and fourth). These complex forms were composed by putting the two singular forms together (with respect to their own hierarchy), pluralizing the first form to show the plurality of the total group, and pluralizing the second form if either of the separate "persons" is plural. These same basic forms characterize many of the different pronominal systems with various changes taking place in initial consonants and tone patterns. Of particular interest in this regard was the process by which an animate indirect object may become a direct object in the absence of another animate direct object.

In our section on subject pronouns in various multiple-clause sentences, we found the presence of both logophoric and consecutive pronouns. Both of these special pronouns were used to refer back to the identical referent indicated by the subject in the preceding clause. In these same multi-clause environments, the presence of the normal unfocused subject pronoun actually indicated that the two referents were in fact different objects in the real world.

The final items of interest were the special anaphoric locative pronouns which appear to be historical reflexes of earlier Proto-Bantu class 16 and 18 prefixes. The reflex of the PB class 18 is of special significance due to its reported rarity outside of narrow Bantu boundaries.

NOTES

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²The Ngyemboon dialect of the Bamileke language group is spoken in the Northwestern corner of the Western Province of the United Republic of Cameroon.

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