

DIVINATION DISCOURSE IN BEZEN

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse one divination session in Bezen, a Southern Jukunoid language. Usually, divination is analysed by anthropologists, approaching the topic with questions particular to this field of study. In this article, the divination session is viewed from a linguistic perspective. The internal macro-structuring of the session is described, using instruments from conversational analysis which consider linguistic and extra-linguistic phenomena. A further focus is the syntactic organization of the addresses to the deities and their answers as well as the rhetorical devices employed in the discourse.

kikpír

kitín àkàn ní àrē ànèkpē ànjāg ònī ēhīj ádag ònī isàr ádf bēzēn ámú Kàmèrùn. àkàn kíkýār bānī ēyí ànjēkpē ànjāg bózi ádf. á kàtīj àkàn ání bānī ēyí àryāj kūzān isàr únī òbū ètsīm. ówūr àrī úhír èhīn ádag èkīm. èkīm ní ósūr nē nē. bānī ēyí áhír ēhīj ádag èkīm ní ásur nē nē.

Keywords: divination, discourse analysis, Southern Jukunoid, Cameroon

1. Introduction

Divination is a common practice among many Cameroonian and Nigerian communities. During divination sessions, a ritual specialist communicates, on behalf of the client, with deities in order to find solutions for social or health problems. There are different types of divination: some diviners are possessed by a supernatural power, others read the signs of modified items and again others rely on fixed texts.¹ In Bezen, a Southern-Jukunoid language spoken in one community in North-Western Cameroon, the second type of divination is employed: diviners modify items and read their replies for their customers.

In the past, divination mainly attracted the attention of anthropologists (van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers 1985; Peek 1991a; Schott 1997; Hammond-Tooke 2002; Kutalek 2003; Myhre 2006; Tonah 2006). Divination has been described, among others, for the Mambila in Northern Cameroon by Zeitlyn (1990, 1993), for the Tiv, north-western Nigerian neighbours of the Bezen, by Bohannan (1975), for the Yoruba (Salami 2002), and for Chadic groups living on the Jos plateau in Central Nigeria (Danfulani 1995, 2000).² As such, divination has been interpreted against the background of different anthropological schools. Devisch (1985: 54–68) summarizes the different approaches to divination as “(structural)-functionalist”, “external, cognitive” and “internal, semiotic and semantic”. Proponents of the first two schools applied external theories to interpret divination. Some scholars of the structural-functionalist approach, such as Turner in his early period (1969, 1975), used Freudian psychoanalysis, arguing that “divination can convert what appears as fearsome for the individual or the group so as to provide emotional reassurance” (Devisch 1985: 55). Proponents of the Manchester School focused “on the conservative function of divination in sustaining or restoring the social order and ensuring conformity with traditional cultural patterns” (Devisch 1985: 57). Scholars following the external, cognitive approach presupposed a positivistic view of the world. They argued that divination was a tool to explain the unorderedly (Devisch 1985: 63). Devisch (1985: 68ff.) himself advocates the third, “internal, semiotic and semantic approach”. As the name already suggests, scholars following this path avoid applying external frameworks on their subject of study. Instead, the “praxeological approach” [...] takes into account the specific divination event, differing types of divination, clients’ problems, and the subsequent dynamics of the sessions which lead to practical action in the larger cultural context” (Peek 1991c: 11).

Only few authors such as Abbink (1993), Parkin (1991) and Werbner (1973) focused on the language of divination sessions. Abbink, for example, (1993) describes the practice of entrail-reading among the Me’en in south-western Ethiopia. He represents the utterances of the diviner in English, explaining central Me’en concepts of the divination process in detail.

¹ See Devisch (1985) and Peek (1991c) for overviews of different classifications of divination.

² We have to consider, though, that the practice of divination might change over time or disappear altogether due to the growing influence of Christianity and Islam. We should especially exercise caution in instances where the literature is already several decades old and not assume that the practice is still vivid.

Abbink (1993: 717) shows that it is not the ritual expert alone who defines the meaning of the entrail-reading but rather the assembled group of clients, onlookers and the ritual expert who discursively negotiate the interpretations. He (Abbink 1993: 705, italics in the original) concludes that “the divinatory reading of *entrails* is a specific discursive genre in itself, understanding of which can help in more fully assessing the range of human discourse and cultural communication”.

Parkin (1991) analyses the speeches of three different diviners in Kenya: the “Arab” diviner, the “Swahili” diviner and the “Giriama” diviner. The speeches of the diviners are summarized in English, central Swahili concepts are discussed in detail. Parkin, (183, italics in the original), similarly to Abbink (1993), observes that it is not the diviner that prescribes the meaning of the divination, instead, it is the collaboration between client and diviner that generates the outcome of a divination session.

“[...] by his nods, cues, and statements of agreement, the patient helps the diviner, encouraging him to proceed from one possibility to another. So, while *we* may think of the patient as being led to a cure by the diviner, the patient also guides the diviner in this attempt to reach a satisfactory diagnosis, converting an unmanageably large number of interpretations into a more limited number.”

Werbner (1973) analyses two instances of domestic divination among the Kalanga in Botswana. However, the discourse is represented in English, and again, only the central Kalanga concepts are represented and discussed.

One main shortcoming of the three afore-mentioned works (Abbink 1993; Parkin 1991; Werbner 1973) is that the divination discourse is only represented in an English translation and the analyses are restricted to a few lexical items. Authors such as Adegbite (1993), Danfulani (1995) and Danfulani & Haruna (2000) do present the original texts. However, they miss out word-to-word glossing. Danfulani (1995) provides a thorough ethnographic description of divination among three Chadic-speaking groups of the Jos-plateau in Nigeria. The divination discourse is represented at length in the English language and the Chadic versions are banished to the appendix, which renders the handling rather tedious. Adegbite’s (1993) short article reports on the rich findings of his unpublished PhD thesis³ on healer/diviner-client interaction among the Yoruba, which unfortunately was not accessible to me. The article suggests that the thesis contains analyses of the structure of the divination sessions, their morphosyntactic forms and their rhetoric devices.

Systematic linguistic analyses of divination texts have been rare in the literature, which has also been observed by Peek (1991c: 13): “Of the many dynamic elements in divination, the dramaturgical and linguistic are least understood.” He thus concludes that „[t]he appropriate analysis should focus on the esthetic elements, semiotic patterning, dramaturgical features and transformational processes of the diviner and the divinatory congregation” Peek (1991c: 11).

Authors have often focused on the central concepts and rhetorical figures but have not considered the syntactic form of the questions and answers.⁴ The lack of representation of the original discourse renders research in the particularities of divination discourse impossible and prevents comparative studies. The aim of this work is to offer a detailed description of a divination session in Bezen, to analyze the syntactic form of the addresses to the deities and their answers, and the metaphors employed in the divination discourse.

To achieve this goal, the author applies methods of linguistic conversation analysis as proposed by Brinker & Sager (2010), Deppermann (2008) and Clift 2016. In the course of analysis, first of all, the thematic structure of the discourse is detected: the phases as the biggest units, the sequences and the turns as the smallest units. For the analysis of the questions and replies of the chains the concept of adjacency pairs has been found fruitful. An adjacency pair is defined as “the minimal sequence in interaction”. It is composed of two turns which are adjacently placed and have been produced by different speakers. The components of an adjacency pair are called “‘first pair parts’ (FPPs) and ‘second pair parts’ (SPPs)” (Clift 2016:

³ The full reference is: Adegbite, Adewale Bandele. 1991. *Some features of language use in Yoruba traditional medicine*. Dissertation. University of Ibadan.

⁴ David Zeitlyn’s recent work published 2020 at Routledge *Mambila divination: framing questions, constructing answers* might have filled this gap. Unfortunately, I do not have access to the book.

64). The adjacency relationship is considered to be universal in the languages of the world (Clift 2016: 76).

2. Bezen cosmology

In spite of intensive missionary work by Catholic and Protestant priests in Furu-Awa, the Bezen speakers, especially the elderly people, still practice their own religion. The supreme deity **igbim**, which has created the world, is rather unimportant in the daily life of the Bezen. It is the ancestors **bōhú** and the deities **bākān** or **ēkim** (Sg. **ōkim**) with which the Bezen are preoccupied on a daily basis.⁵ There are communal and personal **bākān**, local and imported ones. Every compound has its shrines to which offerings are made when necessary (Kempf 2018). Furthermore, witchcraft, **bōsī** or **ōsī**, is a disturbing factor in the village. Envious members of the community, **bānī bōsī** (or also simple **bōsī**), ‘people of witchcraft’, may use substances to harm others. The Bezen believe in reincarnation; thus, every Bezen person knows which reincarnated ancestor he or she is. The Bezen identify ritual experts as **bānī kēfin**. This category includes **bānī ékim**, ‘people of deities’/‘priests’, **bānī ātsī**, ‘people of medicine’/‘healers’ and **bānī isār**, ‘people of divination’/‘diviners’. The latter help their clients to find out the causes of diseases and misfortune. The further treatment is conducted by the other two groups of specialists.

3 Divination in Bezen

In Bezen, there are three different types of divination: diviners may use **āḡmī** ‘leaves’, **ókūn** ‘horn’ or **ābīdā**⁶ ‘chains’ for their work. Every Bezen diviner is specialized in one particular type of divination. The Bezen conceptualize divination as a way of seeing, as presented in ex. 1–3 in Table 1. Furthermore, it is described with the verb **ōndóg**, which actually means ‘shake’ or ‘dance’ (ex. 4 and 9). However, it was explained to me that it means ‘rub’ here, since in the past there has been a divination method using a certain medicine that was rubbed between the palms. The serial verbs **ēmén ērí** ‘cut see’ are used in the context of divination with leaves (ex. 7 and 8). The exact meaning of this expression is not known to me yet, however, the diviner uses a machete and a small hoe blade in the divination with leaves. At the beginning of the session, he cuts the ground with the machete and hits it on the blade every time he poses his question.

The serial verb phrases **ōkú adī**⁷ (ex. 10) and **ezì ōrú anìn** (ex. 11) occur in the context of divination with **ābīdā** and describe the act of cleaning the beads prior to starting a new divination session or turning to a new topic. The chains are capable of hearing everything that is going on around them, but they need to forget anything they heard before for the divination session. The diviner takes a stalk of grass and sweeps it over the chains in order to delete this information.⁸

| |
|---|
| Table 1. Lexicon of Bezen divination |
|---|

⁵ Bezen speakers translate **bākān** and **ēkim** as ‘jujus’ in Cameroonian English and Cameroonian Pidgin English.

⁶ The Bezen speakers translate **ābīdā**, as ‘beads’ to English, which is one of Cameroon’s official languages. English is also probably the source for the loan **ābīdā**. There is a phonetic resemblance between the two words: compare the Bezen segment [bid] and the English [bi:d]. The prefixing of an **a-** to the noun might be due to an integration of **beads** into the Bezen noun-class system, in which nouns with the prefix **bi-** are singular and the prefix **a-** indicates plural. The Bezen language does not allow consonant clusters; therefore, the final [s] might have been exchanged with [á]

⁷ The verb **adī** ‘sweep’ belongs to a certain class of verbs in which the tone of the initial vowel is assigned according to the TAM category the verb is used with; it is therefore not marked in these verbs (see Kempf 2017).

⁸ The Mambila diviners change the topic in divination the same way (Zeitlyn, p.c.).



Figure 1. The *ōnī isàr* (l.) and his assistant (r.) stacking the leaves and the hoe blade. Source: author.

When the stacking of the leaves and blade is finished, the client informs the diviner about the topic he wishes to inquire. The diviner repeats the request in the form of polar questions, framed in conditional clauses, combined with an order on how they should signalise their answer, as presented in the following example (1):

(1.) Bzna140903-1.148

| | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| àrì | bōhú | útāŋ | iyì | kpìn | |
| COND\be | ancestor | from.SG.back | 3sg | tie | |
| àrì | bōhú | útāŋ | iyì | kín | rèn |
| COND\be | ancestor | from.SG.back | 3sg | NEG | untie |

‘If it is an ancestor from his side, tie! If it is not an ancestor from his side, loose!’



Figure 2. The diviner hitting the blade with the machete after pronouncing the formula. Source: author.

After a formula such as in (1) is pronounced, the diviner hits the hoe blade with a machete (Fig. 2), creating a high pitch sound and thus rendering a specific rhythm to the performance. Every formula is repeated seven times and the machete is also hit seven times, the counting being observed by the client. After the formula has been repeated the appropriate number of times, the diviner and his assistant grasp the leaves by their stalks and pull them apart. If the leaves cannot be pulled apart (**akpìn** ‘tie’), the answer is positive, loosening (**erèn** ‘loose’) of the leaves symbolises a negative answer. The diviner pronounces the replies of the deities, which are unambiguous, as presented by the locking or loosening of the leaves. With every broader question being answered, a more specific follow-up question is posed, until the client and the diviner have identified the reincarnated person and the person who is responsible for the appeasement visit beyond doubt.

Divination with **àbīdá** shall be analysed in detail in this article. **àbīdá** are four chains, each consisting of four dried mango-peelings that are tied to each other, as can be seen in Fig.

3. Antoni Ofi obtained them during an initiation process. Two chains speak with one voice hence the diviner always addresses one pair at a time. He poses his question, then turns the chains and reads the answer to the client (Fig. 3). Since the chains may err, the diviner poses his question several times, every time turning the chains and only stopping when he has received a satisfying reply. After this, the procedure is repeated, the diviner asks the second pair of chains the same question in order to confirm the first result.⁹ If the pairs disagree, the process has to be repeated.

The diviner reports that at a young age he realized that he was able to read the chains, an ability which he inherited from an ancestor, whose reincarnation he is. At the age of 18, he requested to be initiated into the practice by an experienced diviner. His reaction to the medicine he was given by the senior diviner confirmed his suspicion that he himself had the gift.



Figure 3. The diviner Antoni Ofi addresses the chains. Arama Fidelis, the customer, awaits the reply.

In the course of the initiation, certain medicines were rubbed under the diviner's armpits, which are active until today. To reactivate the medicine, he holds the chains under his armpits at the beginning of the divination session.

3.1 Case study: Divination with àbīdā

The divination session with àbīdā is 24 minutes long and is stored together with the supplementary elicitation in two different clips named Bzna140903-3 and Bzna140903-4 at the DoBeS archive of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen (also the divination session with àḡmī, under Bzna140903-1). Both clips have been fully transcribed, translated and annotated with interlinear glossing using the annotation tools ELAN and Field Linguist's Toolbox. As such, every sentence has a label, for example Bzna140903-3.30 and can easily be located in the complete text in the archive. The labels refer to the language name (Bzn), the fact, that is primary data (a), the date (YYMMDD), the number of recordings of that day and the sentence number. The transcriptions and interpretations have been conducted by the author, Arama Fidelis (AF), and Robert Amah Shita (RAS), the latter two referred to in the

⁹ This "consistency check" is also known from the Mambila spider divination (Zeitlyn 1990: 661).

following as “the language experts”, during the same stay in 2014 and during a field trip in 2016, and have been confirmed by the diviner himself in 2016.¹⁰

3.2 Analysis: The core phase of the interaction

Due to the staged nature of the performance, not all phases of a naturally occurring event can be identified here. Ideally, an interaction is divided into three phases, an opening phase, a core phase and an ending (Brinker & Sager 2010: 91ff.). In this divination session, the greeting has not been recorded since it preceded the arrangement of the recording situation. The ending can also be considered as incomplete since it only marks the end of the recording but not the parting of the participants. Therefore, the author focuses on the core phase of the interaction for the analysis, which can be subdivided into six sequences, as presented in Table 2. The sequences can be subdivided according to the discourse structure, the topics treated in them and the handling of the chains. The sequences are separated from each other by the diviner clearing the chains. This happens through a verbal appeal and the simultaneous act of brushing a leaf over the chains.

| Seq. | Sentence nr. ¹¹ | Content | Function |
|------|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. | [3.001-3.011] | My grandchild is crying at night. Is it an ancestor from my side or the side of my wife? | Description of the problem by the client |
| | [3.024] | Clearing beads: Take it out! | Delimitation of topics |
| 2. | [3.025-3.041] | Beads, wake up! | Waking up and motivation of the objects by the diviner |
| | [3.042] | Clearing beads: Take it out! | Delimitation of topics |
| 3. | [3.043-3.062] | Will I live or will I die? | Questioning the objects concerning the diviner’s destiny |
| | [3.063] | Clearing beads: Take it out! | Delimitation of topics |
| 4. | [3.064-3.332] [4.001-4.104] | The client’s grandchild is crying at night. What is the reason? | Questioning the objects concerning the problem of the client: the crying baby |
| | [4.105-4.106] | Clearing beads: Take it out! | Delimitation of topics |
| 5. | [4.107-4.111] | I am hunting in vain. Why? | Description of the problem by the client |
| 6. | [4.112-4.174] | The client is hunting in vain. Why? | Questioning the objects concerning the problem of the client: bad luck in hunting |

The client has two problems which he wants the chains to be interrogated for. After the client has presented his first problem (Seq. 1), the diviner brings out his chains. However, he cannot start his divination immediately: first of all, he has to clear them of anything they had heard while being stored in the diviner’s house. Since the session takes place in the morning, the diviner has to wake the objects up and feed them (Seq. 2). After this procedure, the diviner asks the objects about his own destiny (Seq. 3).¹² Before the diviner can ask the chains about

¹⁰ The identities of the diviner and the translators have not been anonymized due to their explicit wish. In a context, where there are few written historical documents about a community, the community members are more concerned about visibility than about protecting their identities.

¹¹ These numbers refer to the numbers that occur at the end of sentence labels, as in: Bzna140903-3.001. Thus, [3.001-3.011] means that the sequence is 11 sentences long.

¹² It is not clear which function the interrogation about the diviner’s destiny in the third sequence has. It might be that the diviner simply uses the opportunity to ask about his fate or it might be a way of warming up the chains. It has been reported that diviners who use horn, *ókūn*, for divination also interrogate the items concerning their own destiny at the beginning of the consultation. Antoni Oga, on the contrary, interrogates the leaves concerning a problem he encountered in his household after having asked about his client’s issue.

his client's issue in Seq. 4, he has to clear them. A clearing also marks the end of this interrogation. In Seq. 5, the client describes his second problem, which is interrogated in Seq. 6.

Due to the limited space of an article, not all sequences can be dealt with in detail. In the following, the “waking up”-Seq. 2 and the divination concerning the client's first problem in Seq. 4 are analysed in detail.

The “waking-up sequence” has a monological structure. The diviner poses several appeals to the chains and argues with them but he does not report their answers to the client. The first appeal to the chains to wake up is indirect, it is a simple assertion that the day has already broken (ex. (2)). The diviner orders the chains to tell him the truth (ex. (3)).¹³

(2.) Bzna140903-3.025

ēyí **áāŋ=mí** **àbīdá**
PL.eyes move.across=PFV beads

‘The day has broken, beads.’

(3.) Bzna140903-3.026

ø-tsēm **byēn byēn byēn byēn** **ø-kí-ētsēm** **éhín kín**
IMP-tell really really really really IMP-NEG-tell PL.lies NEG

‘Tell us only the truth, don't tell lies!’

(4.) Bzna140903-3.028

ākàn d-átī **ámúŋ=ní** **kíkyār** **pár** **pár**
story 1PL-SUB\shoot here=DEF all entirely entirely

y-èzi **ōrú**
3SG-OBL\take exit

‘All that we have said here, he should take it out.’

(5.) Bzna140903-3.030

w-áná-ērī

2SG-FUT-eat

‘You will eat.’

The delimitation of the sequences in Table 2 is an approximate model, since the sequences can overlap. In ex. (4), a clearing request is posed: the chains shall forget all the other things that they have heard. Finally, in ex. (5), the diviner feeds the chains by picking up grains from the floor and sprinkling them on the chains.¹⁴ The diviner tries to appease the chains by calling them **nàgbǎ** ‘first wife’. He stresses the urgency of the matter by explaining to them that ‘it is hot’, **òtsùn**, and ‘it is bitter’, **ònyùn**. The appeals in (2)–(5) are repeated two to three times in varied forms.

After having woken up the chains (Seq. 2), the diviner interrogates them about his own destiny (Seq. 3). This part is omitted here and we directly skip to the divination concerning the client's problem in the fourth sequence. This sequence has a triadic form: the diviner acts as a communicative mediator between the client and the supernatural powers as represented by the chains. AOf explained to me that the chains do not understand common people, only diviners, who cooperate with the chains. The client poses a question and the diviner repeats it for the chains.

An overview of the questions and answers that are posed in Seq. 4 is presented in Table 3. Altogether, the diviner addresses the chains concerning eleven different topics, for the purpose of simplicity called “questions” or “Q” in the table. The questions are repeated/rephrased several times and every time the chains provide an answer which might differ from the previous one. The repetitions or rephrasings are indicated as “R” in the table and summarize the addresses to both pairs of chains. Q3, for example, is repeated three times and Q5 16 times.

¹³ Danfulani and Haruna (2000: 401) show that among the Mupun, a Chadic group living on the Jos plateau in Nigeria, the diviner also pleads with the pebbles to tell him the truth.

¹⁴ Turner (1975: 324f.) reports on a certain type of divination among the Ndembu, which is called **dawulang'ang'a** (**ku-dawula** means ‘eat early’; **ng'ang'a** ‘diviner’). The phrase **dawulang'ang'a dawula** ‘eat early, doctor, eat early’ is repeated as a refrain at the beginning of the divination session. It is possible that among the Ndembu, the initial refrain has been established as the name for this type of divination itself.

As can be seen from the question-answer sequences, most of the initial questions come

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------|
| Q1: [3.068-3.102] | AF: ‘Did somebody die in the compound?’ Answer: ‘No, a bākān is requesting a sacrifice.’ | → 10R |
| Q2: [3.104-3.127] | AF intervenes: ‘Maybe it is bōsī ?’ Answer: ‘No, it is not bōsī .’ | → 7R |
| Q3: [3.128-3.146] | AF: ‘Is it a bākān , which is unsatisfied?’ Answer: ‘Yes, it is a bākān .’ | → 3R |
| Q4: [3.147-3.180] | AF: ‘Which of my two bākān ? Is it kùlōzù ?’ Answer: ‘It is not kùlōzù .’ | → 12R |
| Q5: [3.181-3.217] | AF: ‘Is it ōkīm bútḡān ?’ Answer: ‘Yes, it is ōkīm bútḡān .’ | → 16R |
| Q6: [3.221-3.236] | AOf takes the initiative: AOf just recently sacrificed to ōkīm bútḡān . AOf pleads ōkīm bútḡān for patience: AOf needs to harvest his crops before he can bring a sacrifice! AOf: ‘Shall he sacrifice now?’ Answer: ‘Yes.’ | → 4R |
| Q7: [3.252-3.286] | AF: ‘What is wrong with Charity’s child?’ Answer: ‘A male relative from AF’s side has to come and discuss the problem.’ | → 8R |
| Q8: [3.289-3.332] | AF: ‘Shall Simon come and discuss the problem with the family?’ Answer: ‘Yes, Simon should come with his bākān and discuss with the family. Furthermore, the bōhú , the ancestral spirit reincarnated in the baby requests food.’ | → 11R |
| Q9: [4.026-4.050] | AOf: ‘Who will bring food to the ancestor?’ AF proposes Simon. Answer: ‘She will go.’ [Implies the possibility that the baby will die.] | → 5R |
| Q10: [4.051-4.064] | AF intervenes: Will the baby die? Answer: ‘The baby cries because of the food. They should bring the child to her grandparents.’ | → 7R |
| N1: [4.065-4.075] | Negotiation between AF and AOf: Who can bring the food to the child? They agree to test Saduna, the baby’s grandfather from her father’s side. | |
| Q11: [4.076-4.089] | AOf/AF: ‘Shall they bring the child to Saduna?’ Answer: ‘Yes, everything will be fine then.’ | → 6R |

from the client, AF (Q1-3, Q5, Q7, Q8). Furthermore, the client poses questions, whenever the answer of the chains is ambiguous or worrying, as in Q4 and Q10, respectively. The diviner AOf takes the initiative only twice, in Q6 and Q9. In N1, the diviner and the client negotiate together who can be tested next.

Even though the presentation in Table 3 is simplified, the highly ambiguous nature of the divination session becomes evident. The actual addresses to the chains are mostly not framed as polar questions, but as declarative sentences. And the answers of the chains that are also pronounced by the diviner are also not simple “yes” or “no” replies but declarative statements which do not necessarily fit to the question. Since both, the addresses to the chains and their answers are pronounced by the diviner, it is rather difficult for an outsider to tell whether it is the diviner or the chains speaking, especially because no modification of the voice is involved. It is particularly difficult to differentiate an answer to a question from the next address of the diviner since there is no pause between these utterances. It is the sequential and formulaic nature of the discourse, the handling of the chains and syntactic clues that help cultural in- and

outsiders to make sense of the session. The diviner addresses the chains verbally, turns them and reads their reply out loud to the client. He continues in this order until a satisfying reply has been given by the chains.

In the following, two address-reply adjacency pairs from Q4 (Table 3) are presented. AOf is the diviner, AOf_B is the diviner reporting the reply of the supernatural powers represented by the chains.

(6.) AOf: Bzna140903-3.156
kō ārī kùlōzù tírī
 QUOT be deity(sp.) now
 ‘That it is **kùlōzù**, now!’
 TC: 00:09:56.124 - 00:09:57.718

[Turns chains after saying this.]

Bzna140903-3.157
ø-kú ìyì ø-kú ìyì
 IMP-hold 3SG IMP-hold 3SG
 ‘Catch it, catch it!’
 TC: 00:09:57.836 - 00:09:59.109

[Short pause, reading the pattern of the chains]

(7.) AOf_B: Bzna140903-3.158a
y-áñi-énin ēyir áraní
 3SG-SUB\HAB-SUB-worry body like.this
 ‘As he is worried like this.’
 TC: 00:09:59.665 - 00:10:00.900

(8.) AOf Bzna140903-3.158b
àmì kō ārī kùlōzù ní áyī
 1SG QUOT be deity(sp.) DEF SUB-do
bázì=ní
 PL.matters=DEF
 ‘I (said) that it is **kùlōzù** who causes the problems
 TC: 00:10:00.900 - 00:10:02.703

[Turns chains after saying this.]

Bzna140903-3.159
ámú úmā_āđī émí
 LOC LOC\SG.compound there
 in the compound there.’
 TC: 00:10:02.800 - 00:10:03.854

[Pause, almost 1 second, reading the pattern of the chains]

(9.) AOf_B: Bzna140903-3.160a
èè y-ātám ēsī àbì ūnū kēníŋ
 yes 3SG-throw heads with that like.this
 ‘Yes, they met quarreling on this topic.’
 TC: 00:10:04.785 - 00:10:06.566

In the first pair part (FPP) in (6), Antoni Ofi orders the chains to point to a certain **bākān** ‘deity’ named **kùlōzù** as the causer of his client’s problem, turning them while speaking. After the address, a short pause occurs, in which the diviner reads the form of the chains. In (7), we see the answer of the chains, the second pair part (SPP). They tell the client that somebody is aggrieved. However, the agent is not specified here, but merely referred to by the 3sg pronominal prefix **y-**. A few sentences before, the chains described the deity as a **bākān** which

“lives at the edge”, which excludes the possibility that it is **kùlòzù** since **kùlòzù** lives at the center of the compound. Immediately after the answer of the chains in (8), the diviner repeats his former appeal, this time framed in a reported speech, insisting that **kùlòzù** is the culprit. The answer again is highly ambiguous and open for interpretation (ex. (9)).

For Bezen speakers it is an easy task to distinguish the chains’ language from the language of the diviner, probably because they are used to the sequencing of divination discourse since their childhood. In the following, I analyse which clues and syntactic forms help them to understand the divination procedure.

3.2.1 The addresses to the chains: the first pair parts

The addresses of the diviner to the chains may have different forms, some of which have already been presented in the previous examples (6) and (8).

- I. Declarative addresses
 - a) simple declarative sentences
 - b) indirect speech, introduced by the complementizer **kō** ‘that’¹⁵
 - c) direct addressing of the chains, calling them by their name **àbīdá**
- II. Addresses in the irrealis modality ‘X should do Y’
- III. Questions
 - a) polar questions with clause final question particle **â**
 - b) content questions with question pronouns **èsìŋ** ‘what?’ and **ānìŋ** ‘who?’
- IV. Orders to the chains:
 - a) **kú X ānì àmì** ‘hold X give me’ → ‘catch it for me!’
 - b) **tūn àmì** ‘tell me!’
- V. Formula: **X āryáŋ kāsìŋ** ‘What does X say?’

Most of the time the diviner addresses the objects in the declarative modality, either simple sentences Ia) or reported speech introduced by the quotative marker **kō** Ib). In the addresses, the main clause of the reported speech is often reduced to the 1sg pronoun **àmì**, as in (8) or omitted altogether, as in (6). The diviner may call the beads by their name, **àbīdá** Ic) (examples (3), (15), (18)) or may address them by uttering sentences in the irrealis modality II. Polar questions IIIa) (18) and content questions IIIb) are also part of the diviner’s repertoire of addresses to the objects. Orders to the beads framed in the verb serialization in IVa) are uttered in instances, in which the chains shall point to a certain **bākān**. The order **tūn àmì** ‘tell me’ in IVb) shall emphasize the request of the diviner. The formula presented in V) is only used when a new topic is being questioned or when the diviner turns to the other pair of beads. The formula is not obligatory in these cases, but it does not occur in other instances. It is thus a clear indicator that the diviner is addressing the chains concerning the client’s issue.

Examples (10)–(11) show how one question may be framed in different syntactic forms: In ex. (10), the diviner turns to the second pair of beads with a question that he has already tested on the first pair. Thus, he pronounces the formula **àkàbù āryáŋ kāsìŋ** ‘What does Akabu say?’. The name **àkàbù** refers to the client, Arama Fidelis. The formula is followed by a complement clause, introduced by **kō**.¹⁶ When the diviner repeats this address to the same pair of chains, he omits the formula as in (11). The main clause is also omitted here and the address starts with **kō**. This complementizer is an important structuring device, which, among other factors, such as the mechanic modification of the beads, indicates the change of speaker (compare also with ex. (6) and (8)).

¹⁵ **kō** might be a loan from the Hausa clause linker **koo** (p.c. Georg Ziegelmeyer and Ulrike Zoch). Although Bezen speakers are not multilingual with Hausa nowadays, in the past there might have been language contact, since the Bezen trace their origin to the Taraba state in Nigeria which is closer to the Hausa-speaking area further in the North of the country. Today, the Bezen speakers are fluent in Jukun and Cameroonian Pidgin English alongside their mother tongue and further languages.

¹⁶ A similar formula is used by Antoni Oga. In his version, the verb **āryáŋ** ‘say’ is omitted, reducing the formula to the client’s name, **Àkàbù**, and the question pronoun **kāsìŋ** ‘what’: **àkàbù kāsìŋ** ‘Akabu, what?’. He also uses it whenever he starts to question a new topic. In the third sequence in which Antoni Ofi interrogates the **àbīdá** concerning his own destiny, he asks: **māryáŋ kāsìŋ** ‘what did I say?’.

(10.) Bzna140903-3.098

ø-rí àkàbù āryáŋ kāsìŋ kō kīsī ūmā_ādī
 IMP-see Àkàbù say what QUOT SG.head SG.compound
iyì kùhú òwūn òlīm òwūn òkīb émí=mí
 3SG death kill SG.man kill SG.woman there=PFV
 ‘See, what does Akabu say, that somebody was killed in his compound.’

(11.) Bzna140903-3.101

kò kùhú òwūn ònī=mí
 QUOT death kill SG.person=PFV
 ‘That somebody was killed.’

The sentences in (10)–(11) are part of Q1 in table 3. It is an inquiry, whether somebody has died in AF’s compound. Such a question is perfectly reasonable in the Bezen context even though no death has occurred recently: If somebody is sick or experiences a lot of misfortune in life, there is the possibility that the person is already dead, her or his soul already being sucked out by **bānī bōsī** ‘witches’ but the body still continuing to live. The question whether somebody has died is refused by the chains. In the next step, the client raises the question whether witches are responsible for his misfortune (Q2 in table 3). The sentence in (12) shows how the diviner translates the client’s request to the chains, expressing it via two juxtaposed declarative sentences.

(12.) Bzna140903-3.124

āk-òwūn ònī úmā_ādī émí=mí bōsī
 3PL.CPT-kill SG.person LOC\SG.compound there=PERF witch
āk-òwūn ònī émí
 CPT-kill SG.person there
 ‘They came and killed a person in the compound there. Witches have killed somebody there.’

The examples in (13) are addresses by the diviner to the beads which are pronounced in order to clarify a question raised by the client: Arama Fidelis wants to know what is wrong with his granddaughter (Q7 in Table 3). The hypothesis proposed by the diviner that ‘she should go’ means that the reincarnated ancestor shall return to the world of the ancestors, which implies that the baby would die ((13a) and (13b)). The verbs carry a low tone on their initial vowels to indicate the obligative modality.¹⁷ In (13c) the diviner poses a content question and in the last sentence in (13d) he orders the chains to report to him about the destiny of the child (see also ex. (6) for another order to the beads).

(13.a) Bzna140903-3.268

y-èhìŋ ùmīn
 3SG-OBL\go finally
 ‘She should go at once.’

(13b) Bzna140903-3.269

y-èsìm ùtāŋ ānīn tírī
 3SG-OBL\turn SG.back leave now
 ‘She should go back now.’

(13c) Bzna140903-3.270

kīrīg=ní áyī =ní ārī èsìŋ
 SG.thing=DEF ADH\happen=DEF be what
 ‘What is happening?’

(13d) Bzna140903-3.271

ø-tūn àmì ámú kīsī ìzīn=ní
 IMP-tell 1SG LOC SG.head SG.child=DEF
 ‘Tell me about the child!’

3.2.2 The answers of the chains: the second pair parts

The answers of the chains do show formal similarities to the addresses. In particular, they can have the following forms:

¹⁷ In verbal serialisation, only the first verb is inflected for the obligative. The second verb in series occurs in its unmarked form (Kempf 2017).

1. Yes/no answers to the questions of the diviner
2. Indirect speech
3. Advices to the client, expressed in a) obligative or adhortative modality b) future tense

Yes/no answers are introduced by the interjections **èè** ‘yes’ or **éiyé** ‘no’. Indirect speech is also used in the answers of the beads, however, different from the addresses, the main clauses are not omitted here. The deities may also give pieces of advice to the client in the obligative or adhortative modality or foresee the future, expressed in the future tense.

In example (14), the diviner reports to the client what the chains have told him. It is the final answer of the first pair of beads in Q1, Table 3. The second pair of beads will come to a different conclusion later. The main clause is not omitted in (14a), as is the case in the addresses to the beads. It is not clear who is considered to be the source of the utterances of the answers, as it is merely referred to by the 3sg pronominal prefix **y-**. Possible sources may be **bòhú**, an ancestor, **bākān**, a deity, or **àbídá**, the chains themselves. They give a direct answer in form of the interjection **éiyé** ‘no’ to the client’s question, refusing death in his compound. The source of the problem, which is only hinted at in the 3sg pronoun **iyi**, is further specified in the following sentence (14b): “she calls herself a woman”, **òkīb**. The client interprets that it is a female deity, which is asking for a sacrifice.

(14.a) Bzna140903-3.095

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| y-àryáŋ | àbì | àmì | kō | éiyé | bózi=ní | àdàn |
| 3SG-say | with | 1SG | QUOT | no | SG.matter=DEF | OBL\do.wrong |
| àdàn | óbū | iyi | | | | |
| do.wrong | LOC\hands | 3SG | | | | |

‘It tells me: “No!”. If the matter fails, it fails because of him/her.’

(14b) Bzna140903-3.097

| | | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| onī | àn-âwū=ní | y-ēgbín | inī | iyi | kō |
| SG.person | NOM-come=DEF | 3SG-call | REFL | 3SG | QUOT |
| y-ārī | òkīb | â | | | |
| 3SG-be | SG.woman | Q | | | |

‘The person who keeps coming calls herself a woman, isn’t it?’

The reply in (14b) is ambiguous, since the diviner does not explicitly say that the culprit is a woman but that “the person calls herself a woman”. This means that the person might actually be somebody else, or not really a woman. The sentence thus opens up space for interpretation, which the client uses.

In (15a) we can see an advice to the client, expressed in the obligative modality. It is one of the replies to a question from Q5 in which the diviner is asking whether it is **òkīm bútŋān**, the deity of the Kuteb, who is responsible for AF’s troubles. The reply is ambiguous, since it is not directly answering AOf’s question. However, an explicit advice is given to the client that he and his family shall ‘discuss the problem’ **àryáŋ bózi**. It is not clear to me what that really implies. It seems to involve more than just a gathering of the family and talking about family-internal problems but also includes a sacrifice to the ancestors.

(15.a) Bzna140903-3.208a

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------|
| èè | n-àryáŋ | bózi=ní |
| yes | 2PL-OBL\discuss | SG.matter=DEF |

‘Yes, you should discuss the problem.’

(15b) Bzna140903-3.298

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| mhm̄ | iyi | òkīb=ní | ání-āk-ānán | ámú | âkpá | iyi | tírī |
| aha | 3sg | woman=DEF | FUT-CPT-lie | LOC | LOC\SG.bed | 3SG | now |
| àbì | kīsī | iyi | | | | | |
| with | SG.head | 3SG | | | | | |

‘Aha, she, the woman (the baby) will come and lie in her bed alive.’

In (15b), the diviner delivers a positive message to his client, that the baby will be fine again. It is a reply to Q8, in which the diviner asks whether Simon has to come and negotiate with the ancestor. The beads are not answering the question directly but foresee a positive future for the child, who is referred to as **iyi** ‘she’ and **òkīb** ‘woman’ here. In (14b), **òkīb** was

used to refer to a female deity. The fact that the diviner does not use specific references in form of names, but pronouns and generic nouns that refer to different people/deities creates ambiguity and opens space for interpretation.

3.2.3 Rhetorical devices in the language of divination

Bezen speakers are aware that the language of the divination is different from everyday discourse. During the transcription process, the language experts often said:

- “The beads have their own language.”
- “The language of these diviners is different! So I don’t know what it means there.”
- “The language of the beads cannot be understood by anybody. The diviner translates what the beads are saying.”

There is also a name for the language of divination, **kūzān ādī isār** ‘language of the home of divination’. However, in Bezen, the particularity of the language of divination lies in the obscurity of certain replies of the chains containing metaphors and ambiguous references rather than in specific unintelligible lexical items or syntax.

The language of the **ōnī isār** as well as the language of the **ābīdā** exhibit metaphors and repetitions of lexical items: In ex. (4) and (5), the diviner enforces his plea by repeating the modifying ideophones **byēn** ‘really’¹⁸ and **pār** ‘entirely’, respectively. The language of the diviner furthermore contains parallelisms which are defined as copied or similar syntactic structures in adjacent clauses (ex. (4), (7), (10)). In ex. (4), the first clause contains the verb **ētsēm** ‘tell’ in the imperative modality, modified by the ideophone **byēn**, which is repeated four times. The second clause contains the same verb, but in the negated imperative. In ex. (7), the **ōnī isār** orders the **ābīdā** to point to a certain deity, to which his client then can sacrifice. The clause **kú iyī** ‘Catch it!’ is repeated once. In ex. (10), the diviner reports AF’s hypothesis, that somebody in his compound has died, that ‘death has killed a man, a woman there’. The verb **ōwùn** ‘kill’ is repeated once in the clause: it is accompanied by the direct object **ōlīm** ‘man’ in the first VP and by **ōkīb** ‘woman’ in the second. The following example (16) is a particularly nice instance of parallelism: the diviner lists three possible culprits for the problem of his client: a **bōsī** ‘witch’, a **bākān** ‘deity’ or nothing at all, expressed in the reduplicated verb **ātság** ‘be absent’. Syntactically, he utters three conditional sentences. In the protasis, we find the verb **arī** ‘be’, marked by the Obligative low tone on the initial vowel marking the conditional, followed by the potential culprit, respectively. In the apodosis, a request is repeated, expressed in the verb **ótūn** ‘tell’ and the object, encoded in the 1sg pronoun **āmī**. The Imperative is indicated by the missing initial vowel.

(16.) Bzna140903-3.259

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| kīrig=ní | áyī | īzīn=ní | ókpōg | àrī | bōsī |
| SG.thing=DEF | ADH\do | SG.child=DEF | ADH\cry | OBL\be | witch |
| ø-tūn | āmī | àrī | bākān | ø-tūn | āmī |
| IMP-tell | 1sg | OBL\be | deity | IMP-tell | 1SG |
| ātság | ø-tūn | āmī | ābīdā | arī | bózī |
| OBL\be.absent | IMP-tell | 1SG | beads | OBL\be | SG.matter |
| | | | | ūwúŋ | other |

‘The thing that made the child cry, if it is a witch, tell me, if it is a deity, tell me, if there is nothing else, tell me, beads!’

The function of the repetitions and parallelisms is to reinforce the requests to the objects in order to persuade them to cooperate with the diviner, which is especially visible in ex. (4), (5), (7) and (16).

Furthermore, the diviner uses metonymies and metaphors, which are restricted to ritual language, for example, the metonymy **kīsī** ‘head’, represents the whole person, whose destiny

¹⁸ It is likely that **byēn** [bʲɛ̃n] ‘really’ is a loan from French **bien** [bʲɛ̃] ‘well’. The segments and the semantics of the lexemes are similar, the nasalization of [ɛ̃] in the French version is translated into a final [n] in Bezen, due to the lack of nasalized vowels in the language. It could also be that Bezen **byēn** is an over-correct pronunciation of the French word. French is one of the official languages in Cameroon and has therefore a higher status than Bezen. Even though it is not widely spoken in the North- and Southwestern regions, Bezen speakers learn it in schools and pick up French words when travelling to French-speaking cities as Yaoundé and Douala.

is questioned in the divination session. In (17), it is the client who reports his problem to the **ōnī isàr** (Q1 in Table 3). He lists himself, expressed in the NP **kīsī àmì** ‘my head’ and his children, as possible victims of death.

(17.) Bzna140903-3.070

èè kīsī àmì àbì bélím àmì úmā ādī
 yes SG.head 1SG with PL.children 1SG LOC\SG.compound
kīkyār kūhú ōkú èzì=mí
 all death hold 1PL.O=PFV

‘Yes, my head and all my children in my compound, death has caught us.’

This metonymy is also used by the diviner in examples (10) and (13d). However, in these examples it is not clear that **kīsī** is a metonymy for the person. The example in (10) could be interpreted in a way that AF is referred to as the head of the compound. However, this interpretation was refused by the language experts. **kīsī ūmā-ādī**, which literally means ‘head of compound’ has been translated freely as ‘people of the compound’. In (13d), the prepositional phrase **ámú kīsī** ‘on head’ has been grammaticalized to ‘about’. Alternatively, the adverb **bózī** ‘about’ can be used to introduce the topic of a discussion.

kīsī ‘head’ seems to be a central image in ritual discourse in Bezen, it is also used in a witchcraft ordeal. There, we find the construction **āryāŋ á kīsī POSS**, lit. ‘speak on somebody’s head’ which is explained to mean ‘to speak about somebody with a deity’. It might be connected with the practice of placing a little bag containing powerful items on the accused person’s head during the ordeals.

In ex. (17) **kūhú** ‘death’ is encoded as a personified agent that can act with volition by the diviner (see also ex. (10) and (11)). The euphemism **ānán ākpá óbī** ‘to sleep on a bad bed’ shall express that the person will be sick or even die (ex. (18)). It has clearly been identified as belonging to **kūzān ādī isàr** ‘language of divination’ by the language experts.

(18.) Bzna140903-4.049

y-āk-ānán á àkpá ó-bī dídóg â àbīdá
 3SG-CPT-lie LOC bed SG-bad still Q beads

‘It comes and sleeps on a bad bed? Beads?’

In ex. (15b), the imagery of the bed is also used in an answer of the chains, the child will lie in her bed **àbì kīsī yì** ‘with her head’, which is interpreted as a positive reply by the client.

The chains use the noun **īlīg** ‘ropes’ (Sg. **ūlīg**) as a metaphor for a lethal agent.¹⁹ In (19a), the diviner asks the objects about his own destiny, foreseeing his own death. In (19b), it is the destiny of his client that the diviner is inquiring about (Q2 in table 3). He accuses **bōsī** ‘witches’ to have killed the victim using **īlīg** ‘ropes’ as instruments.

(19.a) Bzna140903-3.045a

èè īlīg án-āk-ākpīn àmì báyīŋ án-ōsū àmì
 yes PL.ropes FUT-CPT-tie 1SG blood FUT-descend 1SG

‘Yes, ropes will come to tie me and I will be bleeding.’

(18b) Bzna140903-3.107

ārī bōsī áwū àbì īlīg=ní ák-ākpīn ówūn
 be witch ADH\come with PL.ropes=DEF ADH\CPT-ADH\tie ADH\kill
ōnī émí
 SG.person there

‘They are the witches who have come with the ropes there in order to come and tie and kill the person there.’

Another metaphor that can be found in the language of the chains is ‘smile’, expressed in the verb **āsí** and the cognate noun **āsī**. A smile or a smiling person is connoted positively across cultures to represent friendliness, wellbeing or happiness. In Bezen divination discourse, it is

¹⁹ This metaphor also often occurs in the discourse of entrail-reading among the Me’en in Ethiopia (Abbink 1993: 722). Abbink concludes that: ‘The image itself stems from the days of slavery before the second world war, when Me’en were also carried off like that.’ (1993: 722). The Bezen may have also suffered under slave hunts in the past (see Storch 2011: 96; van Beek 2012: 302); Thus, the imagery might also have its origin there.

used as a symbol for wellbeing. In ex. (20a), the diviner reports to the client that no **bōsī** is involved in his problem (answer of the Q2 complex in Table 3). He foresees that everything will be fine, expressed in the verbal serialisation **ōsū āṅī** ‘descend stay’ and the PP **àbì āsī ènī** ‘with your smile’.

(20.a) Bzna140903-3.125

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|----------|
| àn-ârì | únū | ùtúṅ | bōsī=ní | kití | n-ôṣū | |
| NOM-be | this | SG.possession | witch=DEF | then | 2PL-FUT\descend | |
| āṅī | àbì | āsī | ènī | ámú | úní | â |
| stay | with | smile | 2PL.POSS | LOC | SG.mouth | Q |

‘Concerning this your witch, you will live with your smile on your face, isn’t it?’

(20b) Bzna140903-3.200

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| àà | y-āsī | būhyūṅ | būhyūṅ |
| yes | 3SG-smile | illness | illness |

‘Yes, he (AF) smiles unhappily.’

In (20b), the chains reply to the diviner, using an oxymoron to confirm the unhappiness of the client (Q6 in Table 3). The contradiction arises through the combination of the verb **āsī** ‘smile’ and the repeated noun **būhyūṅ** ‘illness’. Prototypically, illness is associated with sadness, thus, people do not smile if they are sick. Furthermore, syntactically, the sentence is interesting since **āsī** is actually intransitive and only allows the cognate noun **āsī** to accompany it. In 20b), **būhyūṅ** ‘illness’ occupies the position of the cognate noun.

4. Conclusion

This article contributes to the linguistic study of divination discourse in Africa. It is a detailed account of one particular divination session in Bezen, a Southern Jukunoid minority language spoken in the North-West Region of Cameroon. The analysis of the interactions between the diviner and his client shows that the client dominates the discourse in terms of choosing the questions, whereas the diviner serves as a mediator between the client and the deities. The client initiates eight of eleven questions, and the diviner himself brings forward his own questions only twice. The diviner transfers the questions of the client to the chains and reports back their replies. Different from former accounts of divination, in Bezen, the diviner does not pose only polar questions to the objects, but also addresses them in declarative sentences. This creates a problem for the analysis since it becomes difficult to keep apart the addresses from the answers. However, an analysis of the syntactic structure of the utterances reveals differences between these two speech event types. Whereas in the addresses to the deities the indirect speech is introduced by the quotative marker **kō**, omitting the main clause, the replies constitute reported speech in its complete form, including the main clause and the complement clause introduced by **kō**.

Apart from a description of the syntactic form of the addresses to and answers from the chains, this article also discusses central rhetoric devices of **kūzān ādī isār**. The urgency of the requests of the diviner are emphasized by repetitions and parallelisms. The particularity of **kūzān ādī isār** is marked by metonymies, metaphors and exymora. The metonymy **kīsī** ‘head’ is a central image in Bezen ritual discourse, it stands for the person and its destiny. The metaphor **īlīg** ‘ropes’ may denote a supernatural malevolent agent which is able to cause illness or to kill a person or an instrument used by **bānī bōsī** ‘witches’/‘wizards’ for the same cause.

Due to the limited data, the present article can only be a glimpse at Bezen divination discourse. However, the data, limited as it is, gives us an insight into the cosmology of the Bezen people and can be included in comparative studies of divination discourse in sub-Saharan Africa.

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Transcription. The transcription follows the IPA, the only deviation is the palatal approximant *j* which is written as *y* in this work, following an Africanist tradition.

Abbreviations. The following abbreviations are used: 1 = first person; ADH = adhortative; CPE = Cameroonian Pidgin English; CPT = centripetal; DEF = definitive; FUT = future; HAB = habitual; IMP = Imperative; LOC = locative; N = negotiation; NEG = negation; O = object; OBL = Obligative; PFV = Perfective; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PROG = progressive; Q = question; QUOT = quotative; R = repetition/rephrasing; SG = singular; SUB = subordination; TC = time code.

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