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A grammar of Nchane: A Bantoid (Beboid) language of Cameroon

Boutwell, R.L.

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Author: Boutwell, R.L.
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Chapter 5

Nouns

The characteristics of Nchane nouns are presented in this chapter. Like most of the other languages in the area, Nchane exhibits a robust noun class system, which encourages comparison to the noun class systems of Bantu languages. As the realization of this system is of utmost importance to noun morphology and noun phrase syntax, a large portion of this chapter is dedicated to a description of the noun class system.

I begin in §5.1 with a survey of former treatments of the Nchane noun class system, followed by §5.2, which describes the various noun classes and associated morphology. Singular-plural pairings and semantic characteristics possibly motivating noun class assignment are presented in this section as well. Compound nouns are briefly discussed in §5.3 and borrowed nouns in §5.4. The chapter ends with a presentation of nominalization in §5.5. Note that a closed class of kinship terms fused with a possessive pronoun is described in §6.4.1. Also, a detailed description of Pronouns, a word class sometimes considered a noun subtype, is given in Chapter 7.

5.1 Previous analyses of the Nchane noun class system

Hombert's (1980) comparative study of Beboid noun classes is the earliest systematic description of Nchane noun classes. This work provided a basis for my own preliminary description (Boutwell 2010) and the current analysis continues to largely

follow Hombert's numbering assignments, which are designed to align with Proto-Bantu reconstructions. Some departures are made from these analyses and are pointed out in the relevant sections below.

One other work that should be mentioned is that of Kimbi (2010). This manuscript offers some limited details of the Nchane noun class system, particularly as it is realized through agreement patterns in certain noun modifiers.

5.2 Noun classes

This section is concerned with the Nchane noun class system. A brief introduction is given here, followed by a presentation of the different noun classes and nominal class marking. Next, I describe singular/plural class pairings or "genders" and semantic criterion observed associated with the various noun classes. Details regarding the sample size and distribution of the noun classes is given as well. The section concludes with a look at derivational classes.

Nchane nouns are grouped into 17 distinct noun classes, which are summarized in Table 5.1. The approach used in this work for noun class designations begins with the Bantuist convention of assigning numbers to nouns based on nominal prefixes, but relies on agreement patterns with associated words in a sentence for making final judgements on noun class analyses. The current analysis is largely comparable to that of Hombert's (1980), which utilized the numbering system devised by early Bantuists (Meinhof 1932; Welmers 1973). Note that the classes appear in the table with primary singular and plural pairings on the same line when applicable. Class 13 is a plural class that pairs with classes 3 and 5. Classes 16 and 18, which are described in §5.2.3, usually do not have a plural class pairing.

Class	**Nominal marking**	**Agreement marking**[31]	**Class**	**Nominal marking**	**Agreement marking**[31]
1	Ø-	wu	2	bā-	ba
3	-w-, Ø-	wu/kfu	4	Ø-	yi/che
5	Ø-	chi	6	ā-	a/ka
7	kī-	ki	8	bī-	bi
9	ɔ̀-	yi	10	ɔ́-	yi/che
14	b(v)ū-	b(v)u	6a	māN-, N̄-	maN/ma/mu
19	fī-/fīN-	fi	18a	mū-/mūN-	muN/mu
			13	chī-	chi/yi
16	fɛ̄-	fɛ/fɔ			
18	ā-	a/ya			

Table 5.1 Summary of Nchane noun classes.

[31] The agreement forms appearing in this table represent the primary agreement realizations. See Table 6.1 for a more complete inventory of agreement forms.

The current analysis diverges slightly from Hombert's, resulting in a closer correspondence with the Proto-Bantu system. One of the most important differences is the merging of Hombert's class 25 with class 6a. These differing elements of analysis are discussed in greater detail in the relevant sections below.

Regarding tone, most classes have prefixes with a mid tone. However, several classes have no tone associated with them other than lexical tone assigned to the stem. Class 9 has a floating low tone, while classes 2, 6, 7, 8, 19 and 18a are observed to have some members with a mid tone associated with the noun class prefix in isolation, but realized with a low tone in certain contexts. Noun classes with subgroupings reflecting different tone characteristics is not unique to Nchane. For example, this has been observed for class 7 nouns in Sari (Langhout 2012: 11). For Nchane, it is likely that these tone alternations are a result of tone lowering processes realized in some nouns with stem-initial NC sequences (sometimes only diachronically), as pointed out in §4.4. Note that evidence was given in Chapter 4 for class 1 having a floating L prefix as well.

As mentioned above, noun class assignment is based on agreement patterning observed in other words associated with the noun. These words include most word classes that modify the noun, as well as nominal anaphors like subject and object pronouns and relativizers. Agreement, commonly referred to as concord in the Bantu tradition, is realized through morphological marking that is distinct to a particular set of nouns. [32] Consequently, two nouns might have the same nominal marking, but are considered as belonging to different classes because the agreement paradigms of the two nouns are different (e.g., classes 1 and 5 or 6 and 18). Sometimes, the agreement marking of two noun classes is the same for all but a few modifiers. Nevertheless, any difference in concordant word classes results in different noun class designations (e.g., classes 1 and 3).

Examples (5.1) and (5.2) illustrate agreement marking for classes 1 and 6, where it can be seen that the possessive pronoun and the distal demonstrative agree with their head nouns. The agreement elements have been bolded to make them more easily identifiable.

(5.1) lē Ø-nâ: **w**-ē
COP c1-cow c1-3SG.POSS
'It is his cow.'

[32] I make no distinction between the terms "agreement" and "concord", although one could certainly be made. See Corbett (2006: 5–7) for a discussion regarding the benefits of making such a distinction. For our purposes here, "agreement" is used to express the important generalization that noun classes exhibit control over various word classes, both inside and outside the noun phrase.

(5.2) jɔ́ ā-gīŋ **kà**-gâ
take.IMP c6-egg c6-DIST

'Take those eggs.'

Note that the agreement element associated with the noun classes is often morphologically similar, if not identical, to the noun class prefixes. This is illustrated in (5.3), where the class 7 nominal class prefix **kī-**, is morphologically the same as the subject, object and relativizers, as well as the agreement prefix of the anaphoric demonstrative.

(5.3) bɔ́ béŋ, lɛ̄ lé **kī**, **kī**-kfūnè **kī** kùgè
3PL agree COMP COP c7 c7-rat c7REL big

kī yīdè **ky**-ɛ̄:, **kí** lé **kí** shú
c7REL black c7-ANA1 c7REL COP c7.FUT tie

m̄bāŋē yī-yú
c9.bell c9-ANA2

'They agreed that it is him, the fat, black rat, who will tie that bell.'
Cat and Rats.1.6

5.2.1 Noun class nominal marking

Prefix noun class marking is prevalent in Bantu languages and is maintained in Nchane in eleven of seventeen classes. The remaining classes show a reduction of the prefix observed in Proto-Bantu reconstructions, with zero marking in classes 1, 4, and 5, a tonal element for classes 9 and 10 and a labial glide infix in class 3.

The marking associated with each of the noun classes is described below. Presentation of the noun classes closely follows the organization of the noun classes in Table 5.1, with an orientation around singular/plural pairings when relevant.

Classes 1 and 2

Table 5.2 gives selected examples of classes 1 and 2, which are marked with **Ø-** and **bā-** respectively.

Class 1	**Class 2**	**Gloss**
Ø-chɔ́ŋ	bā-chɔ́ŋ	*'thief'*
Ø-kfúlá	bā-kfúlá	*'hyena'*
Ø-ñsū	bā-ñsū	*'pepper'*
Ø-m̀bēgɛ̄	bà-mbēgɛ̄	*'hill'*
Ø-kùŋ	bā-kùŋ	*'python'*
Ø-ǹsàlà	bā-nsālà	*'needle'*
Ø-ŋ̄kū	bā-ŋkū	*'scabbard'*
Ø-bvúlè	bā-bvúlè	*'lion'*
Ø-kfù	bā-kfù	*'rope'*
Ø-sɛ̄ŋlè	bā-sɛ̄ŋlè	*'okra'*
Ø-m̄būshá	bā-mbūshá	*'cat'*

Table 5.2 Selected examples of class 1 and class 2 nouns.

The zero prefix of class 1 is characteristic of the Beboid languages and also quite common among the other Bantoid languages of the area. However, 80% of nouns in this class possess a root initial syllabic nasal reminiscent of class 1 marking seen in the neighboring Eastern Grassfields language Limbum (Fransen 1995: 100). Oku and Lamnso have also reported nasal prefix variants of class 1 (Blood 1999: 2; Grebe 1984: 66–74 respectively).

It might be argued, therefore, that this nasal represents a class 1 prefix, with class 1 nouns lacking the nasal corresponding to what researchers have designated as class 1a in some Bantu languages (see Maho 1999: 74). This analysis would have two class 1 subgroups with different nominal marking: **N-** for class 1 and **Ø-** for class 1a. One semantic category commonly selected for class 1a in these Bantu languages is "kinship". Nchane kinship terms do in fact tend to lack a nasal onset, giving support to a class 1/1a distinction. However, the class 1 homorganic nasal prefix has become lexicalized onto the noun root, appearing in the class 2 forms as well. Ultimately, I adopt a single class 1 analysis with a single pattern of agreement, with class 1 nouns marked with a zero prefix and nasals (when present) belonging to the stem. Meanwhile, recognition of the two subgroups is maintained as having explanatory value when addressing issues of tone. More on this homorganic nasal is presented in §4.4.

Irregular nominal forms are rare in Nchane. However, suppletion is observed in the singular/plural alternations of the words for 'child' and 'human', both of which belong to gender 1/2. These nouns are shown in Table 5.3.

Class 1	**Class 2**	**Gloss**
mwa̰	bɔ̰:	*'child'*
mū	bā-mì	*'person'*

Table 5.3 Irregular class 1 and class 2 nouns.

Another peculiar realization of gender 1/2 nouns is observed in a handful of nouns, which show remnants of an **u-** prefix as realized by a labial glide following the initial consonant of the stem, illustrated in Table 5.4. These nouns are often kinship terms and likely correspond to a potential class 1a subgrouping. Some of these also take a **bi-** prefix for plural rather than **ba-**. The prefix for 'bananas' can be either **ba-** or **bi-**. Agreement for these words prove that they are class 2 rather than class 8. For example, the phrase 'the women' is **bīkɛ̄sé bāà** rather than ***bīkɛ̄sé byɛ̀**. It is possible that the vowel of this class 2 prefix variant has undergone some kind of vowel assimilation process. But evidence to support this hypothesis is lacking at this time.

Class 1	Class 2	Gloss
chwɛ̄	ba-chɛ́	*'witch'*
gwɛ̄nɛ̄	bā-gɛ̄nɛ̄	*'in-law'*
kwɛ̄sɛ́	bī-kɛ̄sɛ́	*'woman'*
jwɛ̄nsɛ́	bī-lɔ̄nsɛ́	*'man'*
ŋ̄gɔ̄nɛ́	bī-ŋgɔ̄nɛ́	*'banana'*

Table 5.4 Class 1 nouns marked with a vestigial labial glide and class 2 nouns marked with **bi-**.

Classes 3 and 4

Classes 3 and 4 pair together to form a gender and are illustrated in Table 5.5. The singular and plural forms are differentiated by the presence of a labial glide infix for class 3 and zero marking for class 4. The labial glide infix as a marker for class 3 is an innovation of the Beboid languages and the nearby languages identified as the Yemne-Kimbi group (Good et al. 2011), formerly classified as Western Beboid.[33]

Class 3	Class 4	Gloss
gwí	Ø-gí	*'net*
bwɛ̰̄	Ø-bɛ̰̄	*'mosquito'*
kwɛ̄ŋ	Ø-kɛ̄ŋ	*'firewood'*
gwɔ̄ŋ	Ø-gɔ̄ŋ	*'bamboo'*

Table 5.5 Selected examples of gender 3/4 nouns.

As mentioned above, class 4 has a zero prefix, a marking also shared by most of the Beboid languages. Conversely, two of the three Yemne-Kimbi languages, classified as Western Beboid at the time of Hombert's 1980 work, have **-y-** for class

[33] Most of the Beboid and Yemne-Kimbi languages have a labial glide infix as the class 3 marker. Those that do not, utilize **u-** or **Ø-** marking instead. The only other languages in the area observed to have the labial glide infix for class 3 nouns are the Central Ring languages Kom and Men, both of which also have a vowel prefix element (i.e., the class marking has the shape of V-C^{w}) (see Kießling 2010).

4 and the third has **i-** for class 4. The lone Beboid exception is Mungong, which has **(y)i-** for approximately 90% of class 4 nouns. The remaining 10% have zero marking. More details regarding Mungong gender 3/4 is given later in this section.

Roughly 85% of gender 3/4 roots are monosyllabic and 54% have velar onsets, suggesting some kind of regularization. These numbers are significant when compared to other classes. For example, only 56% of class 1 roots are monosyllabic and 37% have velar onsets. For class 7 roots, 51% are monosyllabic and 28% have velar onsets. A similar type of regularization in class 3 roots is also observed in nearby Mundabli, where stem onset alternations of **kp/ts** and **gb/dz** for classes 3 and 10 are observed (Voll 2017: 92–3). Similarly, the Beboid language Sari reports stem onset alternations of velars and +coronal consonants for some class 3 and class 4 roots respectively (Langhout 2015:18).

While this gender is largely quite regular, the three nouns in Table 5.6 exhibit peculiarities worth noting. The word for 'garden' is the lone example of a class 4 noun marked with a prefix. Furthermore, the **[m]:[ŋ]** alternation of the root consonant, is not readily explainable by morphophonological means.

Class 3	**Class 4**	**Gloss**
mwɛ̄	ɛ̄-ŋɛ̄	*'garden'*
jwɛ̄	Ø-dɛ̄	*'mouth'*
ɲ̄shwɛ̄ŋ	Ø-nsɛ̄ŋ	*'palm needle'*

Table 5.6 Irregular gender 3/4 nouns.

Meanwhile, the words for 'mouth' and 'palm needle' both show a spirantized:non-spirantized alternation. The source, and therefore the direction, of this alternation is not clear. One obvious possibility is an historical prefix for class 4, which Hombert (1980) reconstructed as ***i-**. This explanation would constitute a +back:+front opposition for classes 3 and 4 respectively: the back quality of class 3 ***u-** associating with "back" consonants and the front quality of class 4 ***i-** associating with "front" consonants. Indeed, the velar:coronal opposition observed in Sari and Mundabli supports this hypothesis.

A final word regarding the status of class 4 is in order. Many languages in the area report class 4, in spite of the apparent similarity of class 4 agreement with that of class 10. Insufficient attention to the agreement patterns of these two classes in the works on most nearby languages makes arriving at clear conclusions difficult if not impossible. It is clear that for some languages in the area, class 4 has merged with either class 10 or class 6. For languages observed to have classes 4 and 10, it is very likely that, in some cases, class 4 has been maintained in the analyses due to semantic and historical reasons, and for some languages, a difference in nominal marking as well.

The Nchane situation is not entirely clear. Segmentally, the agreement patterns of classes 4 and 10 appear to be identical. The tone on agreement elements is usually the same as well. However, speakers appear to have a high awareness of the grammatical high tone associated with class 10, a sensitivity that seems to be lacking with the plural counterpart of class 3 nouns. In this work, the agreement patterns given for classes 4 and 10 are identical except in a few areas like possessive pronouns, where a higher tone is sometimes observed as a variant for class 10 agreement forms. Since a complete merger remains questionable, I maintain class 4 in the analysis. But a merger is clearly underway.

Before moving on, the Mungong gender 3/4 merits some discussion. This gender in Mungong provides evidence of an ongoing 5>3 merger, with a 6>4 merger appearing to be complete. Three subgroups are observed within the gender designated for convenience as 3/4a, 3/4b and 3/4c, with a distribution rate of 11%, 13% and 76% respectively. Gender 3/4a is very similar to Nchane 3/4, with the nominal marking of **Cw/Ø-**.[34] Gender 3/4c has nominal marking of **Ø-/(y)i-,** while gender 3/4b appears to represent a transitional phase between the other two subgroups, with nominal marking of **Cw/(y)i-**. Examples of each subgroup are given in Table 5.7.

Subgroup	Class 3	Class 4	Gloss
a	kpəŋ	kəŋ	*'firewood'*
	gbə̀	gə̀	*'root'*
b	bwɛ̂	ī-bɛ̂	*'rock'*
	dʒwə	ì-dzə	*'mouth'*
c	gvūnə̀	ī-gvūnə̀	*'feather'*
	túŋ	ī-túŋ	*'axe'*

Table 5.7 Selected examples of Mungong gender 3/4 nouns illustrating three subgroups.

Agreement for class 4 in all subgroups is **yi-**. But agreement patterns for the three class 3 subgroups are mixed, with 3a represented by **wu-**, but the other two subgroups showing occurrences of both **wu-** and **yi-**. Furthermore, there appears to be some speaker variation of some of these 3/4b and 3/4c nouns, both in terms of nominal class marking and agreement. In other words, the inclusion of nouns into the 3/4b and 3/4c subgroups is not fixed at this time.

Classes 3 and 13

A small number of class 3 nouns make their plural with class 13, all of which are presented in Table 5.8. The characteristic labial glide infix seen in class 3 gender 3/4 nouns is not apparent in this gender, although all but one of the words have a labial

[34] Note that the Mungong class 3 labial glide infix is realized as a labiovelar **kp** or **gb** when the stem-initial consonant is a velar. Also note that the 3/4a group shows a strong preference for stem-initial velar consonants, encouraging comparisons with regularization tendencies of Nchane gender 3/4 and of Mundabli, which were noted earlier.

component present in the root's onset. The prefix for class 13 is **chī-**. Note that native speakers sometimes disagree about which nouns belong in this gender. The parentheses around the plural for 'village' indicates that some speakers reject this noun as having a plural form, perhaps reflecting the additional sense of 'world'.

Class 3	**Class 13**	**Gloss**
Ø-ŋ̄gú	chī-ŋgú	*'fire, gun'*
Ø-bīné	chī-bíné	*'dance'* [35]
Ø-ŋ̄gvúlɛ́	chī-ŋgvúlɛ́	*'vein'*
Ø-wą̄:	chī-wą̄:	*'market'*
Ø-wɔ̄ŋ	(chī-wɔ̄ŋ)	*'village'*
Ø-ŋ̄gvū̄ŋ	chī-ŋgvū̄ŋ	*'tail'*
Ø-m̄̀fû:	chī-mfû:	*'stirring stick'*

Table 5.8 Gender 3/13 nouns.

Regarding the designation of "13", Noni marks the same class with **ji-**, which was labeled 13 by Hyman (1981: 9). As for Nchane, the Noni class 13 is a plural class pairing with two singular classes, 3 and 5, to form minor genders, with the prefix markers **to-**, **ti-** and **tə-** respectively. The same genders are also seen in Koshin (Yemne-Kimbi) (Hombert 1980) and the Central Ring languages Kom (Shultz 1997) and Oku (Blood 1999).

While Hombert analyzed this class as 13 for Koshin, he designated it as 27 for Nchane and Noni because two other languages in his Beboid study, Bu and Missong, have the same class, but with the prefixes **kə-** and **ki-** respectively, which differ considerably in form from Koshin's class 13 **to-**. He did not rule out the possibility that 13 and 27 had the same origin, but chose to keep the two separate, allowing the question to remain open. I am not constrained by the challenges entailed by reconstructing the noun class for a family of languages, and choose to align my analysis more closely with the traditional Bantu numbering. Additionally, in support of this analysis is the reconstruction for Proto-Western Grassfields (Hyman 1980), which has ***tí-** for class 13, a form that easily allows for Nchane's **chī-** as a reflex.

Classes 5 and 6

A zero prefix is also observed for class 5. This marking is shared by all the Beboid languages that have class 5 as well as most of the Yemne-Kimbi languages, but is almost nonexistent among other neighboring languages. Lamnso appears to be a rare exception. Class 5 nouns most often pair with class 6 for plural, which has an **ā-** prefix, cognate with Proto-Bantu ***ma-**. This prefix is closer to the Proto-Bantu form as compared with the other Beboid languages that have class 6, represented by the

[35] This word has also been observed as a 5/13 noun.

prefixes **ɛ-** or **Ø-**. Note that, as stated earlier, class 6 in Mungong has apparently completely merged with c4.

Some examples of Nchane gender 5/6 nouns are provided in Table 5.9. The examples show that an additional characteristic of this gender is that the singular forms are very often realized with a high tone that is lacking in the plural form.

Class 5	Class 6	Gloss
Ø-chɛ́mɛ́	ā-nchɛ́mɛ́	*'calf of leg'*
Ø-lá	ā-lā	*'compound'*
Ø-tí:	ā-tí:	*'stomach'*
Ø-gvúnē	ā-gvúnē	*'corpse'*
Ø-lábɛ̀	ā-lābɛ̀	*'web'*

Table 5.9 Selected gender 5/6 nouns.

A number of languages in the area display peculiarities in class 5 and/or its associated plural class, resulting in some analysis challenges. For example, Fang (Yemne-Kimbi) is observed to have some "irregular" plural members in gender 5/13 (e.g., **lím/tə̀límkpə̀** 'tongue'), for which the form of the suffix portion of the plural "is not straightforwardly predictable" (Good et al. 2011: 150). Sari and Naami both have longer stems for class 5 forms when compared to their class 6 forms, with both classes taking zero prefixes (Langhout 2015: 19–20; Tabah 2018a: 5 respectively). Naami also has a few nouns forming a gender 5/6 subgroup which does not have the stem length alternation, but is marked by the prefixes **li-** and **ŋə-** respectively. Some class 5 nouns in Noni are observed to be marked with the suffix **-e** (Hyman 1981: 9). Finally, Mungbam has two class 5 subgroups, marked with **í-** and **ì-** respectively (Lovegren 2013: 121).

The fact that in most of the cases mentioned above, there are multiple realizations for classes 5 and/or 6, suggests that this gender represents a destabilized environment in which changes are currently ongoing. Indeed, slightly more than one third of Nchane gender 5/6 nouns (39%) show a stem alternation, illustrated in Table 5.10, that results in a longer class 5 stem when compared to its class 6 counterpart.

Class 5	Class 6	Gloss
Ø-bélé	ā-bē	*'hail stone'*
Ø-gvúnɛ̀	ā-gvûŋ	*'feather'*
Ø-sɔ́ŋɔ́	ā-sɔ̄ŋ	*'oil palm'*
Ø-ñsūsú	ā-sūŋ	*'cooking stone'*
Ø-jīsɛ́	ā-jī	*'eye'*

Table 5.10 Selected examples of stem length alternation in gender 5/6 nouns.

Two possible analyses to account for this stem alternation involve suffixes. One could analyze a suffix for class 5, as Hyman does for Noni. However, in the Nchane case, this suffix would have multiple realizations with no simple explanation for the various forms. A second analysis calls for a subtractive suffix, resulting in a shorter class 6 form. This analysis is quite abstract and would appear to be difficult to support language internally as well as language externally.

A simpler analysis, and the one adopted here, is that the stem alternation is due to the process of syllable reduction observable in other areas of the grammar (cf. 1PL pronouns described in §7.1 and the realization of the progressive form of certain verbs discussed in §9.1.2). This hypothesis comes with the question of why this phenomenon is limited to this gender within the noun class system. Further research is needed to find a plausible answer.

While the majority of gender 5/6 nouns show no such stem alternation, some nouns are observed to have a different tonal realization on the stems of the singular and plural forms, as noted earlier (see the words for 'compound' and 'web' in Table 5.9 above). This possibly suggests H and L subgroups similar to those observed for Mungbam, and perhaps provides further evidence for the syllable reduction analysis, with the tonal realizations being the result of stray tones left over following the loss of tone bearing units. But without a careful study of the historical forms of these words, it is impossible to give a strong argument in support of this hypothesis.

Finally, Table 5.11 presents two gender 5/6 nouns that have obscure vowel alternations in addition to syllable reduction.

Class 5	**Class 6**	**Gloss**
tɛ́dé	ā-tā	*'stone'*
gɛ́nɛ̄	ā-gíŋ	*'egg'*

Table 5.11 Gender 5/6 nouns with unexplained vowel alternations.

Classes 5 and 13

Some class 5 nouns pair with plural class 13, which has a **chī-** prefix, as mentioned above. Note that there is no stem alternation in this gender. However, some class 5 nouns show a high tone element lacking in the class 13 counterpart, just as was seen with some gender 5/6 nouns. Selected examples are given in Table 5.12.

Class 5	Class 13	Gloss
Ø-lú	chī-lú	*'marriage'*
Ø-kfúŋ	chī-kfūŋ	*'back'*
Ø-lélē	chī-lélē	*'dragonfly'*
Ø-kə̰:	chī-kə̰:	*'fine'* [36]

Table 5.12 Selected gender 5/13 nouns.

Classes 7 and 8

The prefixes for classes 7 and 8 are **kī-** and **bī-** respectively. All Beboid languages have **ki-** and **bi-** classes, although there is some variety for the vowel of class 7 among the various languages. Table 5.13 provides some examples.

Class 7	Class 8	Gloss
kī-yá	bī-yá	*'ram'*
kī-gu̱	bī-gu̱	*'baboon'*
kī-mbɛ́mɛ́	bī-mbɛ́mɛ́	*'caterpillar'*
kī-jāŋ	bī-jāŋ	*'weaver bird'*
kī-ŋkūfē	bī-ŋkūfē	*'bone'*
kī-mbì	bī-mbì	*'hourglass drum'*
kī-kɔ̄	bī-kɔ̄	*'forest'*
kī-ɲchúnē	bī-ɲchúnē	*'bushy area'*
kī-kû:	bī-kû:	*'yam'*
kī-dá:dè	bī-dá:dè	*'palm branch'*
kī-gwɛ̰̄	bī-gwɛ̰̄	*'owl'*
kī-kfūnè	bī-kfūnè	*'rat'*
kī-ŋkɔ̄gɔ́	bī-ŋkɔ̄gɔ́	*'wound'*

Table 5.13 Selected gender 7/8 nouns.

[36] This is a payment for some indescretion, such as adultery.

Classes 9 and 10

Classes 9 and 10 are differentiated by a tone alternation alone. Class 9 nouns have a relative low tone and class 10 a relative high tone. Some examples are given in Table 5.14.

Class 9	**Class 10**	**Gloss**
jɔ́ŋ	jɔ́ŋ	*'star'*
shî	shí	*'chicken'*
kwē	kwē	*'death'*
chą̄	chą̄	*'monkey'*
chējē	chējē	*'hip'*
gwȅ	gwé	*'guinea fowl'*
ñsàŋ	ñsáŋ	*'friend'*
bvŭ	bvú	*'dog'*
jɛ̀bê	jɛ̄bē	*'mushroom'*

Table 5.14 Selected gender 9/10 nouns.

Note that these examples are given in their isolation forms and the associated noun class tone is sometimes only observable when placed into a phrase. For example, while the tone for 'death' and 'monkey' is mid for singular and plural in isolation, the low and high tones associated with classes 9 and 10 respectively are revealed when the nouns are put into tone frames, with the class 9 forms usually realized with a relatively lower tone within the frame as compared to their class 10 counterparts. See §4.5 for more details.

The examples illustrate that a floating tone interacts with the stem tone to produce a variety of surface tone realizations, sometimes in ways that are not easily explainable. Like class 3 above, class 9 shows a strong preference for monosyllabic stems. Furthermore, 73% of the roots have palatal onsets, which hints at the remnants of the Proto-Western Grassfields ***ì-** prefix (Hyman 1980).

While the class marking for classes 9 and 10 is not overly conservative, the low-high alternation is characteristic of a large majority of the languages in the region. The segmentless nature of the marking is observed throughout the Beboid languages, as well as most of the Yemne-Kimbi languages. But in the Grassfields languages, the tones often are carried by some vowel (usually **[i]**) or a nasal consonant.

Classes 14 and 6a

The minor class 14 has a **b(v)ū-** prefix. The fricative element is placed in parentheses to indicate that it is often difficult to hear. In contrast, the fricative in words like **bvŭ** 'dog'(c9) and **bvúlɛ̀** 'lion'(c1) is always very strong. Native speakers perceive the fricative as present in the prefix, and I have transcribed it as such throughout this work. Class 14 is characteristic of the Beboid group, being observed in all the languages with the exception of Chung.

Nearly all of the Yemne-Kimbi languages also have class 14, where it is usually a single class gender populated with mass nouns. Conversely, class 14 nouns in the Beboid languages often may be pluralized, pairing with class 6a, which is marked with the prefix **māN-** in Nchane. This analysis is a departure from earlier works, which designate the plural class as 25. This decision is based on the shared agreement between non-count class 6a and the plural class paired with class 14.[37]

Some young speakers no longer identify certain class 14 nouns as having a grammatical plural form, sometimes using the class 14 **bvū-** with singular and plural expressions. This class is also observed as a single class gender sparsely populated with mass nouns, with liquids usually marked with the prefix **N-** and nonliquids marked with **māN-**. The single class gender 6a also contains abstract nouns derived from predicate adjectives (see §5.2.3). It is not clear if this explains the diminished use of class 6a plurals for class 14 nouns, or if it has more to do with an overall decline in gender 14/6a membership and greater lack of opportunities for plural expression. For example, the occasions to talk about multiple bridges are very few.

All members of gender 14/6a are presented in Table 5.15. The plural of 'fufu' is placed in parentheses to indicate that the plural usage probably indicates "portions" of fufu, while the singular form is most often used as a mass noun expression, and is sometimes used in the language as a generic reference to "food".

Class 14	**Class 6a**	**Gloss**
bvū-shí	māŋ-shí	*'face'*
bvū-kɔ́	māŋ-kɔ́	*'ladder'*
bvū-bīŋɛ̄	mām-bīŋɛ̄	*'bundle'*
bvū-shɛ̄	māŋ-shɛ̄	*'inheritance'*
bvū-kū	māŋ-kū	*'roof'*
bvū-lɛ̰̀:	(mān-lɛ̰̀:)	*'fufu'*
bvū-lɛ̂:	mān-lɛ̂:	*'intestines'*
bvū-tə̂	mān-tə̂	*'cave'*
bvū-dyɛ̂	mān-dyɛ̂	*'bridge'*

Table 5.15 Gender 14/6a nouns.

As a single class gender for noncountable nouns, class 6a has very few members and is very likely disappearing from the language with members moving to other classes (see Table 5.30 for noncount nouns in other classes). As observed above, liquids in this class are marked with a homorganic nasal prefix, presumably with a

[37] Hombert (1980: 92) follows the convention of distinguishing noun classes based on differing nominal prefixes. Therefore, because the plural counterpart to class 14 has a different prefix shape (**maN-**) from the mass noun class 6a (**N-**), the class 25 designation was used. However, additional support for designating the plural counterpart as 6a is the fact that many Bantu languages are observed as having a 14/6 gender (Maho 1999: 190).

mid tone. Nonliquid mass nouns in this class appear to be marked with **māN-**. But the paucity of members makes generalizations dubious. All tokens in the corpus are given in Table 5.16. Note that the status of the **N-** prefix for the word **mɛ̃ː** 'oil' is dubious, since the nasal onset does not appear to be phonetically long.

Class 6a	**Gloss**
m̄-bvu̱ː	*'wine' (gen.)*
ŋ̄-ku̱ː	*'palm kernel oil'*
m̄-mɛ̃ː	*'oil' (gen.)*
māŋ-kfūnɛ̀	*'pus'*
màŋ-kàlà	*'cassava puff'*

Table 5.16 Class 6a mass nouns.

Classes 19 and 18a

The prefix **fī-/fīN-** marks nouns of class 19. This class is quite common in the region and is observed in all the Beboid languages. Among these languages, there is some variation in the prefix vowel, but the consonant is always [f].

Class 19 is normally paired with the plural class 18a (called class 26 by Hombert), which is marked with **mū-/mūN-**. The 18a designation is used for this class to indicate its formal similarity with Proto-Bantu locative class 18 (***mù-**), but no claim is being made that this is its source.[38]

Prefixes with the homorganic nasal are prevalent in this gender, with only 25% of class 19 nouns and 14% of class 18a nouns having no nasal immediately following the CV of the prefix. Hombert's analysis for Nchane generalized the prefixes as **fi-** and **muN-** for this gender (Hombert 1980: 88). The small number of nouns in the current study with no nasal in the class 19 prefix suggests that the prefix nasal is becoming more prevalent.

This gender is illustrated in Table 5.17 with selected examples. The word for 'thing' is the lone irregular gender 19/18a noun observed. The underlying forms **fī-yɛ̀** and **mū-yɛ̀** are contracted in normal speech to be realized as **fyɛ̃ː** and **mwɛ̃ː**.

[38] This class and its **mu-** prefix is observed as an areal feature of the northwestern Bantu A60 group of languages. Maho (1999: 199) offers several different possible sources for this form, but a direct correlation to Proto-Bantu class 18 remains unclear.

Class 19	Class 18a	Gloss
fī-láŋ	mū-láŋ	*'clay pipe'*
fī-ɲí	mū-ɲí	*'bird' (gen.)*
fìŋ-chɔ̄nɛ̄	mùŋ-chɔ̄nɛ̄	*'ground nut'*
fìŋ-kɔ̄	mùŋ-kɔ̄	*'cup'*
fī-kùŋ	mū-kùŋ	*'heart'*
fīm-bì	mūm-bì	*'kola nut'*
fīŋ-chíŋ	mūŋ-chĩŋ	*'palm rat'*
fī-kə̰:	mūŋ-kə̰:	*'calabash for oil'*
fīn-sɛ́sɛ̀	mūn-sɛ́sɛ̀	*'louse'*
fīŋ-yɔ̄ŋà	mūŋ-yɔ̄ŋà	*'pig'*
fīŋ-kɔ̄gɔ́	mūŋ-kɔ̄gɔ́	*'wrist, ankle'*

Table 5.17 Selected gender 19/18a nouns.

5.2.2 Gender and lexical membership

The above section presented the various noun classes and the primary genders each noun class is a member of. In this section the prevalence of the various genders is considered and observations are made regarding possible semantic criteria for class/gender assignment.

Table 5.18 shows the prevalence of each noun gender. The largest genders are 1/2, 7/8 and 9/10, which are shaded in the table. All other genders account for less than 10% each, and it can be seen that single class genders are generally unproductive, with genders 1, 3, 5, 6, 6a, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18a and 13 each having between one and five members.

Gender	Number	Percentage
1/2	105	22%
3/4	18	4%
3/13	7	1%
5/6	28	6%
5/13	14	3%
7/8	157	33%
9/10	67	14%
14/6a	13	3%
19/18a	30	6%
16	5	1%
17	6	1%
1, 3, 5, 6, 6a, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18a, 13	30	6%
TOTAL	480	100%

Table 5.18 Distribution of Nchane genders.[39]

In terms of lexical criteria for class assignment, only a few semantic tendencies are observed. One obvious semantic category is "people". Sixty-eight percent of "people" nouns are found in gender 1/2, which accounts for about one quarter of all gender 1/2 nouns. Some examples are provided in Table 5.19.

Class 1	Class 2	Gloss
mū	bā-mī	*'person' (c1)*
m̄ŋfɔ̀ŋ	bā-mŋfɔ̀ŋ	*'chief' (c1)*
chɔ́ŋ	bā-chɔ́ŋ	*'thief'*
bwē	bā-bwè	*'mother'*
m̄ŋfwâ	bā-mŋfwâ	*'slave'*

Table 5.19 Gender 1/2: People.

Some foods and tools are found in gender 1/2, as well as some animals. Animals as a lexical category are scattered primarily between genders 1/2, 7/8 and 9/10, with a small number also in gender 19/18a. It is possible that gender 1/2 contains a subset of animals—those that are dangerous and/or carnivorous, as seen in Table 5.20. Animals from the cat family, such as lions and leopards, are found in this gender, along with the hyena and the crocodile. Similarly, birds of prey such as the hawk and the vulture, appear in gender 1/2. Carnivores rarely if ever appear in other genders. One possible exception is the domesticated dog, which belongs to gender 9/10.

[39] The number of tokens excludes nouns for which class assignment has not been established due to variable agreement patterning or lack of data.

Class 1	Class 2	Gloss
bvúlè	bā-bvúlè	*'lion'*
ŋ̄gūlú	bā-ŋgūlú	*'vulture'*
kfúlá	bā-kfúlá	*'hyena'*
kùŋ	bā-kùŋ	*'python'*
ŋ̄gáŋ	ba-ŋgáŋ	*'tarantula'*

Table 5.20 Gender 1/2: Dangerous animals and spiders.

Genders 3/4 and 3/13 appear to be miscellaneous genders, although gender 3/13 might include straight objects.

Class 3	Class 13	Gloss
ŋ̄gú	chī-ŋgú	*'gun, rifle'*
n̄fû	chī-nfû	*'stirring stick'*
ŋ̄gvúlɛ́	bā-ŋgvúlɛ́	*'vein'*
ŋ̄gvúŋ	chī-ŋgvúŋ	*'tail'*

Table 5.21 Gender 3/13: Straight objects.

A significant percentage of gender 5/6 is body parts, particularly those which are paired and round. These include the eyes, testes and knees. Other small, round objects are also observed in this gender, including eggs, hailstones, potatoes and rice, suggesting that the quality of 'roundness' might be characteristic of the gender. Table 5.22 provides some examples.

Class 5	Class 6	Gloss
jīsɛ́	ā-jī	*'eye'*
dyā̰	ā-dá	*'testicle'*
ɲṵ̄:	ā-ɲṵ́:	*'knee'*
ḿbɛ́nɛ̀	ā-mbɛ̂ŋ	*'breast'*
gɛ́nɛ̄	ā-gíŋ	*'egg'*
bēlē	ā-bē	*'hailstone'*
tɛ̄dɛ̄	ā-tā	*'stone'*

Table 5.22 Gender 5/6: Round objects.

Gender 5/13 contains miscellaneous nouns.

Certain plants and trees, insects and tools are found in gender 7/8. Many animals are also found here, including those designating male varieties, such as billy goat, ram and rooster. There are also a good number of body parts, including a few

internal organs and the extremities. Examples of these two groups are given in Table 5.23 and Table 5.24.

Class 7	**Class 8**	**Gloss**
kī-bɛ́	bī-bɛ́	*'billy goat'*
kī-ŋgɔ̄nɛ̀	bī-ŋgɔ̄nɛ̀	*'rooster'*
kī-yɔ̀:	bī-yɔ̀:	*'elephant'*
kī-gúŋ	bī-gúŋ	*'baboon'*

Table 5.23 Gender 7/8: Animals, including male varieties.

Class 7	**Class 8**	**Gloss**
kī-láŋɛ̀	bī-láŋɛ̀	*'jaw'*
kī-bɔ́	bī-bɔ́	*'arm'*
kī-kā	bī-kā	*'foot'*
kī-fūfú	bī-fūfú	*'lung'*

Table 5.24 Gender 7/8: Body parts.

This gender also includes numerous nouns that could be viewed negatively, as seen in Table 5.25. Of the twelve "people" nouns found in this gender, all of them may be viewed as defective or incompletely human in some way. These include the words for people who are blind, deaf or lame, as well as prostitutes, orphans and ghosts. Other items found here that could be construed as negative are some insects associated with decay (e.g., maggots), natural disasters and certain illnesses or conditions associated with poor health.

Class 7	**Class 8**	**Gloss**
kī-chífɛ̀	bī-nchífɛ̀	*'deaf person'*
kī-yɔ̀	bī-yɔ̀	*'spirit'*
kī-yúŋ	bī-yúŋ	*'fool'*
kī-ŋkú	bī-ŋkú	*'flood'*
kī-ntɛ̄ŋɛ̄	bī-ntɛ̄ŋɛ̄	*'argument'* [40]
kī-nchɛ́ŋ	bī-nchɛ́ŋ	*'illness'*
kì-ŋkɔ̀gɔ̄	bì-ŋkɔ̀gɔ̄	*'abscess'*

Table 5.25 Gender 7/8: Negative entities.

Gender 9/10 contains some animals and insects. Many of these are viewed as edible, such as goats, antelopes, termites and grasshoppers. The generic terms fish, snake and animal are also found here. Examples of these two groups are given in Table

[40] This noun is derived from the verb **tɛ̄ŋɛ̄** 'argue'.

5.26 and Table 5.27. Also found in this gender are some plants, trees and body parts, including the major reproductive organs.

Class 9	Class 10	Gloss
shī	shí	*'chicken'*
bī	bī	*'goat'*
chą̄	chą̄	*'monkey'*
ŋ̄gɔ̄	ŋ̄gɔ́	*'termite'*
m̄bē	m̄bé	*'grasshopper'*

Table 5.26 Gender 9/10: Edible animals and insects.

Class 9	Class 10	Gloss
yɔ̄	yɔ̄	*'snake' (gen.)*
byɛ̀ŋ	byɛ́ŋ	*'fish' (gen.)*
ɲàŋ	ɲā̀ŋ	*'animal, meat'*

Table 5.27 Gender 9/10: Generic animal terms.

While gender 14/6a is relatively small and contains miscellany, there are at least three nouns in this gender that have a characteristic physical orientation. Ladder, bridge and roof, given in Table 5.28, are each constructed from two or more long "branches" with numerous shorter, transverse, parallel "branches" affixed. More examples would be needed to substantiate this as a defining element for gender assignment.

Class 14	Class 6a	Gloss
bvū-kɔ́	māŋ-kɔ́	*'ladder'*
bvū-dyɛ̄	mān-dyɛ̄	*'bridge'*
bvū-kū	māŋ-kū	*'roof'*

Table 5.28 Gender 14/6a: Items with a ladder orientation.

Gender 19/18a contains a wide range of nouns with no clear lexical unity, with the possible exception of "smallness". Indeed, a significant portion of these nouns might be viewed as small, some of which are given in Table 5.29.

Class 19	**Class 18a**	**Gloss**
fī-ɲí	mū-ɲí	*'bird' (gen.)*
fīŋ-kɔ̄	mūŋ-kɔ̄	*'cup'*
fīn-sɛ́sɛ̀	mūn-sɛ́sɛ̀	*'louse'*
fīm-bì	mūm-bì	*'kola nut'*
fīn-tā̀ŋ	mūn-tā̀ŋ	*'bead'*

Table 5.29 Gender 19/18a: Small items?

However, it is difficult to know with certainty how many of these nouns are in fact derived from another class and how many are underived but assigned to this gender based on small size. See §5.2.3 for discussion of class 19 as a derivational class.

The single class genders by definition contain noncount nouns. All class 6a noncount nouns were presented in Table 5.16, which illustrates two types of noncount nouns—liquids and items that tend to be small and numerous, and therefore perceived of as a mass. Table 5.30 lists the remaining noncount nouns in the corpus, with the noun class of each noun following the gloss. Liquids appear in classes 1, 3, 6, 7 and 9. Note that the class 9 noun for 'water' also refers to 'river', which is countable. Nouns that are treated as mass entities like 'sand' and those which refer to entities with a more amorphous quality such as 'air' and 'light' are also spread out in different classes. Thus, noncount nouns do not appear to display any kind of lexico-semantic unity that would dictate class assignment. Note that 'squirrel' would seem to be countable. Indeed, the Noni cognate is treated as countable.[41]

[41] The Mungong cognate is also noncountable.

Example	Gloss
m̄bɔ̀ŋ	*'marrow' (c1)*
ɲ̀yū	*'light' (gen.) (c1)*
ŋ̄fúŋ	*'storm' (c1)*
ŋ̄kàŋ	*'corn beer' (c1)*
kwā	*'valuables' (c3)*
ɲ̄chwēŋ	*'spring' (c3)*
mṵ̄:	*'sunlight' (c3)*
bwē	*'dew' (c3)*
tā̰:	*'ashes' (c5)*
ā-mbɛ̀ŋ	*'milk' (c6)*
ā-màŋ	*'twin' (c6)*
kī-jíbɛ́	*'darkness' (c7)*
kī-ɲchāŋɔ̀	*'watery oil' (c7)*
kī-búlɛ́	*'sky' (c7)*
bī-fù	*'foam' (c8)*
bī-kālē	*'menses' (c8)*
bī-kānɛ̀	*'fruit' (gen.) (c8)*
ŋ̄kà	*'salt' (c9)*
fī:	*'air' (c9)*
jàŋ	*'rain' (c9)*
jɔ̄	*'water' (c9)*
ŋ̄gā	*'rust' (c10)*
mūŋ-jégè	*'smoke' (c18a)*
mūŋ-shɛ̄:	*'sand' (c18a)*
chī-ká̰	*'squirrel' (c13)*

Table 5.30 Single class gender nouns.

5.2.3 Derivational classes

Certain classes are associated with derivational processes and are described in this section. These include the diminutive class 19, and class 14, which derives abstract nouns from predicate adjectives, as well as the two locative classes designated as 16 and 18. Note that class 7 is observed in a number of Bantu languages as having an augmentative function (Maho 1999: 263). This secondary use of class 7 is observed in limited quantities for Mundabli (Voll 2017: 86) and Sari (Langhout 2015: 22–23), where at least for Sari, it is derogatory as well. However, Nchane class 7 does not appear to function as an augmentative. Furthermore, while Nchane class 7 is observed to be associated with negatively perceived nouns, it cannot be used to derive negative nouns.

Class 14

Class 14 derives abstract nouns from attributive verbs (described in §10.6). The stem of the abstract form always reflects non-progressive morphology, thus there is sometimes an apparent alternation in the stems of the attributive verb and the derived noun. The process appears to be very productive. Some examples are given in Table 5.31.

Attributive verb			**Abstract noun**	
kūgé	*'big'*	→	bvū-kūgè	*'bigness'*
ɲɔ̄ːɲɛ̄	*'small'*	→	bvū-ɲɔ̄ːɲɛ̄	*'smallness'*
jíjè	*'heavy'*	→	bvū-jíjè	*'heaviness'*
jūŋ	*'old'*	→	bvū-jūnè	*'oldness'*
yídé	*'black'*	→	bvū-yídè	*'blackness'*
chɛ̄ŋɛ̄	*'spoiled'*	→	bvū-chɛ̄ŋè	*'spoiled-ness'*

Table 5.31 Selected class 14 abstract nouns derived from attributive verbs.

Class 19

Class 19 as a derivational class of diminutive nouns is reported in neighboring languages, such as Noni (Hyman 1981: 11), Mundabli (Voll 2017: 100) and Mungbam (Lovegren 2013: 124), as well as noted as common among northern Bantu languages (Maho 1999: 88–89). In the past, class 19 was probably used to derive diminutive nouns also in Nchane, but the process is no longer productive. (See also the brief discussion regarding the semantics of c19 nouns in §5.2.2.) Example (5.4) represents a rare exception and shows that the derivational process is similar to those presented above, with the original class prefix being replaced with the class 19 prefix **fī-**. But it should be noted that some speakers do not recognize **fīɲɔ̂** as a derived noun.

(5.4) ɲɔ̄ → fī-ɲɔ̂ *'small knife'*
c9.cutlass c19-cutlass

While diminution is no longer a productive secondary function of class 19, a small number of nouns may be derived, which take on the quality of smallness, but are primarily pejorative expressions. For instance, one can say something like, 'see his small head' as a way of poking fun. Some of these examples are given in Table 5.32. The lexical class is given in parentheses following the lexical form.[42]

[42] Pejorative expression associated with derived diminutive nouns is also reported for Mundabli (Voll 2017: 101) and Mungbam (Lovegren 2013: 124–5).

Lexical Form	Diminutive-pejorative (c19)	Gloss
mwā (c1)	fī-mwā	*'child'*
bā: (c1)	fī-bā:	*'pa'*
kī-kwɛ́: (c7)	fī-kwɛ́:	*'head'*
kī-ndɔ̀ŋ (c7)	fī-ndɔ̀ŋ	*'neck'*
kī-bɔ́ (c7)	fī-bɔ́	*'hand/arm'*
kī-ká: (c7)	fī-ká:	*'leg'*
yē (c9)	fì-yē	*'house'*

Table 5.32 Derived class 19 diminutive-pejorative nouns.

Class 16

The locative class 16 is primarily a derivational class, although the process cannot be said to be productive. The prefix **fɛ̄-** shares its form with the preposition **fɛ̀**, which usually gives a meaning of 'at' or 'on'. Class 16 nouns are derived by removing the original noun class marking and replacing it with the class 16 prefix, as illustrated in example (5.5). An association of this class with Proto-Bantu class 16 ***pà-** is likely, in spite of the morphological differences. The designation reflects similar semantics commonly expressed through the class, and the **f** onset is attested in apparent class 16 reflexes of other Bantoid languages (e.g., Ejagham and Yamba). See Grégoire (1983) for an account of the diversity observed in class 16 reflexes.

(5.5) kì-tānā → fɛ̄-táŋ *'at the fireplace'*
c7-fireplace c16-fireplace

The use of class 16 in context is seen in example (5.6), which also reveals the noun imposing agreement on the modifying anaphoric demonstrative. Note that 'path' is lexically a class 9 noun, which generates the class 9 agreement seen in the phrase **yē yɛ̄-ɛ̀** 'that path'.

(5.6) ɲ̄-yɛ́ŋ Ø-ŋ́fɔ̀ŋ kì-kāŋnī wù ɲù **fɛ̀**-yēlé **fɛ̄**-ɛ̀
1SG-see c1-chief c7-N. c1REL COP(N) c16-path c16-ANA1

*'I saw the chief of Nkanchi, who was there.' (*lit. *at that path)* Fire.10

Examples of likely lexicalized class 16 nouns, which are few in number, are given in Table 5.33. As the table shows, some of these nouns have a stem differing from that of the historical source noun. Furthermore, in some cases the source is no longer identifiable. The word for 'beginning' shows that it is possible for a class 16 noun to ultimately be derived from a verb, although this is the only example in the corpus of this occurrence. Note that the verb is also marked with the nominalizer prefix **N-**. See §5.5 for a description of this prefix.

Source	**Gloss**	**Class 16**	**Gloss**
chyā:ŋ (?)	*'hand' (c9)*	fɛ̄-ká	*'palm of hand'*
bwɛ̄ŋ (?)	*'upper arm' (c3)*	fɛ̄-gbwɛ̀	*'shoulder'*
??	-	fɛ̄-kú	*'down, on ground'*
kɛ̄	*'begin' (v)*	fɛ̄-ŋ-kɛ̀	*'beginning'*

Table 5.33 Class 16 nouns.

In all cases, class 16 nouns have the incorporated meaning of 'at' or 'on'. Class 16 nouns do not appear to have a natural morphological plural. See §8.1.1 for an account of prepositional phrases involving **fɛ̀** 'at'.

Class 18

A second locative class is observed with the prefix **ā-** that is designated as class 18. Like class 16, the semantics of this class motivates its designation, since correspondence between its prefix and that of Proto-Bantu (***mù-**) is doubtful. Note that Nchane class 18 corresponds with Noni class 17 (**ɛ̀-**) (Hyman 1981: 13). The class 18 prefix corresponds to the preposition **à**, which usually gives a meaning of 'in' or 'inside'. Nouns from other classes are locativized in the same way as described for class 16 above and usually have the incorporated meaning 'inside of'. An example derivation is given in (5.7) and an example in context in (5.8).

(5.7) wɔ̄ŋ → ā-wɔ̄ŋ *'in the village'*
c3.village c18-village

(5.8) wū bū bɛ́ kī-chídè **à**-bɔ̄
3SG reach with c7-food.mat c18-hand

'She appeared with a food-mat in (her) hand.' Two Wives.3.4

Like class 16, this class is not well represented in the data, but is populated by a few presumed lexicalized forms, including some body parts and words referring to times of the day. The historical source of these nouns is not always known. The nouns sometimes can have class 8 plurals, although it is possible that the locative significance is lacking in the plural forms and might simply reflect the non-derived plural form, as is likely for the word 'morning', seen in Table 5.34, along with other examples.

Source	Gloss	Class 18	Class 8	Gloss
shɛ̄ŋ	*'liver' (c9)*	ā-shɛ̄ŋ	-	*'stomach'*
ɲɔ̀	*'god' (c1)*	ā-ɲɔ̀	-	*'spirit world'*
??		ā-ŋkáŋá	bī-ŋkáná	*'armpit'*
kī-ntánā	*'morning' (c7)*	ā-ntánā	bī-ntánā	*'in the morning'*
??		ā-ntáŋ	bī-táŋ	*'night'*

Table 5.34 Class 18 nouns.

See §8.1.2 for a description of prepositional phrases headed by **à** 'in' for the purpose of comparison.

5.3 Compound nouns

A relatively small number of noun-noun constructions are observed in Nchane, with the head noun limited to class 1, particularly various kinds of people. Examples are given in Table 5.35.

Example	Gloss
Ø-mū-nché c1-person-medicine (c9)	*'traditional healer'*
Ø-mū-wą́: c1-person-market (c3)	*'trader'*
Ø-mwā-ɲɔ̀ c1-child-god (c1)	*'God's son'*
Ø-bwē-yē c1-mother-house (c9)	*'mother of the house'* [43]
Ø-chī-ŋkfù c1-father-deceased(?)	*'widower'*

Table 5.35 Nchane compound nouns.

Rather than representing compound nouns, these constructions could be associative noun phrases, which have lost the associative marker and the remaining two nouns phonologically incorporated. Noni is observed to have similar optional associative marker loss for all classes with the shape **[wu]** and **[yi]** (i.e., classes 1, 3, 4, 9 and 10). It is likely that optional deletion of these associative markers is common in Nchane natural speech as well, although there is no change in meaning or function

[43] This term refers to the woman who is recognized as the head woman of a home. She is responsible for hosting visitors, preparing meals, etc.

in these cases. One native speaker suggested a difference in meaning between **mū wū kwā** 'man of valuables' and **mūkwā** 'rich man'. But this is unconfirmed.

An attempt at eliciting a plural of a compound noun resulted in example (5.9), which is clearly an associative noun construction. Therefore, the compound noun analysis should be viewed with some suspicion.

(5.9)	bā-mì	bā	wa̰:	*'traders'*
	c2-person	c2AM	c3.market	

5.4 Borrowed nouns

Borrowings are not very common in the data. When they do occur, they usually are assigned to gender 1/2, as seen in Table 5.36.

Class 1	Class 2	Gloss
pyá	bā-pyá	*'avocado' (Cameroon Pidgin English 'pear')*
sɔ̄:gɛ̀	bā-sɔ̄:gɛ̀	*'soldier' (English)*
lɛ̄mú	bā-lɛ̄mú	*'orange' (English 'lemon')*
áfyɔ̀ŋ	bā-áfyɔ̀ŋ	*'airplane' (French 'avion')*
jākí	bā-jākí	*'donkey' (Hausa 'jaki')*
kɔ̀fī	-	*'coffee' (English)*
lɔ̄ŋ	bā-lɔ̄ŋ	*'trousers' (Cameroon Pidgin English 'long')*
māshe̱	bā-māshe̱	*'machine'* [44] *(English)*

Table 5.36 Gender 1/2 borrowed nouns.

The word for 'pineapple', given in example (5.10), is the only borrowed noun observed in gender 5/6. It is possible that it is assigned to this gender because of its round shape.

(5.10)	Ø-nānā	ā-nānā	*'pineapple' (French 'ananas')*
	c5-pineapple	c6-pineapple	

Another possibility is that the shape of the word fits the pattern of class 6, which has the prefix **a-**, and therefore looks like a class 6 noun. However, the Noni cognate is assigned to gender 5/13, with noun class affixes **-e/di-** respectively, thus resulting in forms dissimilar to the French source word. Therefore, while supported language-internally, the hypothesis that it is assigned to c6 because of its segmental form is questionable.

[44] This word is used in reference to a number of mechanical devices, such as motorbikes and chainsaws.

5.5 Nominalization

Nouns may be derived from verbs, which often bring with them extra segments reminiscent of the progressive suffix, but which are more likely reflective of historically longer verb forms. The derivation is accomplished by the addition of the nominalizing prefix **N-**, which precedes the root and which has no apparent effect on phonetic realization in the case of nasal-initial roots. The new stem then takes an appropriate noun class prefix. Most derived nouns are observed in gender 1/2, with a few derived forms seen in gender 7/8 and rarely in other genders. Some examples are given in Table 5.37.

Source	**Gloss**	**Noun (SG)**	**Noun (PL)**	**Gloss**
bì:	*'ask'*	m̄-bīlɛ̀	bā-m-bīlɛ̀	*'question' (1/2)*
jɛ̄ŋɛ̄	*'walk'*	ɲ̄-jɛ̄ŋè	bā-ɲ-jɛ̄ŋè	*'journey' (1/2)*
shī	*'sit'*	ɲ̄-shīlɛ̀	bā-ɲ-shīlɛ̀	*'meeting' (1/2)*
yɛ̄yɛ̀	*'teach'*	ɲ̄-yɛ̄yɛ̀	bā-ɲ-yɛ̄yɛ̀	*'teaching' (1/2)*
m̄byāŋ	*'lie'*	m̄-m̄byāŋ	chī-m-mbyáŋ	*'lie' (5/13)*
táshɛ́	*'join'*	kì-n-tāshɛ́	bì-n-tāshɛ́	*'gathering' (7/8)*
tɛ́ŋɛ́	*'argue'*	kì-n-tɛ̄ŋɛ́	bì-n-tɛ̄ŋɛ́	*'argument' (7/8)*
tɛ̀:	*'tell'*	fì-n-tɛ̄dɛ̄	mù-n-tɛ̄dɛ̄	*'story' (19/18a)*

Table 5.37 Selected examples of nouns derived from verbs.

While derived nouns are rarely seen in other genders such as 5/13 and 19/18a, it is likely that there are few restrictions to which genders can take derived nouns. Semantic criteria might play a role in gender assignment. One known case supports this hypothesis. The derived noun for 'meeting' is normally assigned to gender 1/2. However, it can also appear as **kìŋshīlɛ̀**, a class 7 noun. In this case, it has the added meaning of being regular, for example, 'a weekly meeting'.

Derived nouns behave as normal nouns, appearing in the subject position (example (5.11)) and object position (examples (5.12) and (5.13)). Note also the agreement on the demonstrative dictated by the derived noun in example (5.11).

(5.11) **Ø-ɲ̀-shìlɛ̀** **wú-yú** gɛ̀ bé kɔ̄nɛ̄ bá-mí bá
c1-NMZR-sit c1-ANA2 P3 PCOP about c2-person c2AM

Ø-ḿ-fíjɛ̄ jɛ̄ yī Ø-ɲɔ̀
c1-NMZR-preach c9.word c9AM c1-god

'This meeting was about (or for) preachers.' Training.1.2

(5.12) ↑(bvū-jú) bvù bè gɛ̀ gwē fɔ́, bē gɛ̄
c14-place c14REL 1PL P3 fall there 1PL P3

bíd-ɛ̋ **bā-m-bīlɛ̀** yúfɛ̀ bāmī bá gɛ̄
ask-PROG c2-NMZR-ask ten c2-person c2REL P3

tɔ̄ kī bɔ́ yɛ́ŋ bè lē
come COMP(K) 3PL see 1PL APPL

'At the places where we landed, we asked ten questions of the people who came to see us.' Training.1.18

(5.13) bɔ̄ kɛ̄m-é **kì-n-tɛ̄ŋɛ́**
3PL have-PROG c7-NMZR- argue

'…they were having an argument…' Sun and Wind.1.1