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

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# Chapter 7

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## Pronouns

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The Nchane pronoun is defined by its coreferential characteristic. In other words, a pronoun has coreference with a noun phrase or in certain cases a larger discourse portion, for which it is substitutable. The various kinds of Nchane pronouns are presented in this chapter, with the largest portion of the chapter dedicated to personal pronouns, including simple and complex forms, which are presented in §7.1. This section also presents the so-called “class pronouns”, which constitute a large subset of third-person pronouns.

Substantial attention is given to locative pronouns and the adverbial pronouns in sections 7.2 and 7.3 respectively. The chapter concludes with relatively short sections on the impersonal subject pronoun (§7.4), dummy subjects (§7.5), question word pronouns (§7.6) and other pronominals (§7.7). Note that relativizers, which have a possible analysis as relative pronouns, are described in Chapter 12.

### 7.1 Personal pronouns

This section describes the Nchane personal pronoun system, including simple and complex forms, as well as what I refer to for the sake of convenience as “class pronouns”. The conventional category of personal pronouns includes those which encode person and number categories and typically apply primarily to humans. Class pronouns always belong to the third-person category, but also encode the category of

noun class, with third-person human referents expressed through the gender 1/2 pronouns. These two types of pronouns are considered as belonging to a single set of personal pronouns.

The Nchane simple personal pronouns are given in Table 7.1, with preverbal and postverbal varieties listed separately. The pronouns for classes 16 and 18 appear in parentheses to indicate their rarity.

Person	Gender	SG		PL	
		Preverbal	Postverbal	Preverbal	Postverbal
1 <sup>st</sup>		mē	mè	bē	bè
2 <sup>nd</sup>		wō	wò	bēŋ	bèŋ
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1/2	wù	wù	bó, bō	bó
	3/4	wū	wú	yī	yí
	5/6	chī	chí	wō	wó
	7/8	kī	kí	bī	bí
	9/10	yì, yī	yì	yī, yí	yí
	14/6a	bvū	bvú	mōŋ	mó
	19/18a	fī	fí	mūŋ	mú
	13			chī	yí
	16	(fē)	(fó)		
	18	(ā)	(wó)		

Table 7.1 Nchane personal pronouns.

The table illustrates that pronouns appearing in preverbal and postverbal positions are mostly segmentally identical for each person and number referent, but usually differ tonally. Furthermore, the class pronouns usually conservatively reflect the common agreement forms associated with their respective noun classes.

In terms of tone, there are two primary patterns observed which appear to distinguish class pronouns from those referring to people (which are henceforth referred to as “human pronouns”). Class pronouns mostly have a mid tone on preverbal forms and a high tone on postverbal forms. Exceptions are classes 1 and 9, which have a low tone on pronouns in both positions, consistent with the characterization of these classes as “low tone classes” in most of the nearby Western Grassfields languages (Hyman 1980). The class 9 and class 10 pronouns have two tonal realizations each. The source of the variation has not been identified, but could be phonological context.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, the human pronouns tend to have a mid tone

<sup>51</sup> I have observed that native speakers are acutely aware of the high grammatical tone associated with class 10, as evidenced by over-correction in cases of class ambiguity. It is believed that, because of this awareness, the realization of phonological output is sometimes altered to accommodate the perceived “highness” of class 10 forms.

in the preverbal position and a low tone in the postverbal position. As with classes 9 and 10, the third-person plural preverbal pronoun has two unexplained tonal variants.

The fact that almost all pronouns have a mid tone in preverbal position and a low tone (in the case of human pronouns) or a high tone (in the case of class pronouns) in postverbal position suggests that these tones are associated with their respective clausal positions rather than with the lexical items themselves or with specific grammatical roles. This hypothesis, while not formally investigated, is supported by example (16.20), the relevant portion of which is given below for convenience, where the postverbal focused 2SG “subject” is realized with a low tone rather than a mid tone. (See §11.4 for a discussion of how pronouns in such constructions are interpreted in terms of grammatical relations.)

- (16.20)    nē    jálè    gē    wò  
              if    wrong    do    2SG

*‘[Or] if YOU...did wrong...’*

Marriage.4.6

While the tones of pronouns in postverbal position are very stable, usually surfacing as given in the table, the tone on the preverbal pronouns are sometimes affected by grammatical tones associated with certain constructions (e.g., Durative, Stimulus, Hortative, etc.). These tone changes are discussed in the relevant sections in the verb chapter (Chapter 9).

The 1PL pronouns are often realized with a half-long vowel. This length is likely due to syllable reduction, a hypothesis that is supported by the Noni cognates **bēsèn** ‘1PL(exclusive)’ and **bēènè** ‘1PL(inclusive)’ (from Hyman 1981: 15), which show disyllabic forms. (Nchane generally does not distinguish between *inclusive* and *exclusive* categories, although such a distinction is observable in some of the complex pronouns described later in this section.)

Pronouns are used anaphorically, replacing an already mentioned and discourse-accessible referent, or one that is understood without full mention. Examples of simple pronouns are given in (7.1)-(7.6), which also illustrate pronouns in various syntactic and semantic roles.

- (7.1)    wù    ké    wò  
          3SG    know    2SG

*‘He knows you.’*

- (7.2)    wù    ná    mē    Ø-ŋgwě  
          3SG    give    1SG.PRO    c1-fishing.pole

*‘He gave me a fishing pole.’*

Fishing.1.2

- (7.3) **mē**      gē      n-tō      bē      bī-gē  
 1SG.PRO    P3    1SG-come    with    c8-tooth  
*'I brought some money.'* (lit. *come with teeth*)      Fire.1.4

- (7.4) **bā-mī**      bá-dùdē      lēg-è      Ø-ɲō      fè      **bēŋ**      lē  
 c2-person    c2-many    beg-PROG    c1-god    at    2PL    APPL  
*'...many people will be praying to God for you,'*      Marriage.4.1

- (7.5) **ñsā**      y-ē      bí:      **wù**      lē,  
 c9.friend    c9-3SG.POSS    ask    3SG    APPL  
*'Her friend asked her,...'*      What-goes-around.2.2

- (7.6) **bó**      tú      bē      **wù**      jīŋ  
 3PL    return    with    3SG    back  
*'...they returned back with him.'*      Land Dispute.2.2

The class pronouns function the same as human pronouns and are illustrated in (7.7)-(7.9). Class pronouns in postverbal position are somewhat rare, since inferable Objects are usually omitted (see §11.1.1 for more details) and inferable objects of prepositions are usually referred to through non-agreeing locative pronouns (see §7.2).

- (7.7) **yī**      kāsè      yī      tú      Ø-mū      wū      wōŋ  
 c9    return    c9    become    c1-person    c1AM    c3.world  
*'It (goat) turned back into a human.'* <sup>52</sup>      Two Wives.6.3

- (7.8) **wù**      ɲilē      **kí**  
 3SG    hide    c7  
*'He hid it (calabash).'*

- (7.9) **ñ-tó**      bē      **yī**  
 1SG-come    with    c9  
*'I will bring it (rat poison).'*      What-goes-around.3.3

<sup>52</sup> Note that the second c9 pronoun in this example is considered to be preverbal rather than postverbal.

(7.10)      wù      jēj-é      chúlē  
              3SG      walk-PROG      well  
              *'It (the cow) is walking well.'*

(7.12)    **b5**    **jí**  
              **c2**    eat  
              *'The cows ate.'*

(7.14)

bī-ntā	bé	bà-ŋwà,	mw-ê:	mw-âŋ	mūŋ-chī,
c8-chair	with	c2-book	c18a-thing	c18a-1SG.POSS	c18a-all

...

bà-ŋwà	b-âŋ	...	bā-sālifikè
c2-book	c2-1SG.POSS	...	c2-certificate

...

<b>bō</b>	té	gè	fyē	bà-chi
c2	also	P3	burn	c2-all

*‘Chairs and books, all my things, ...my books, ...certificates, ...they also all burned.’*

Fire.5.6-8

The pronominal forms generally share the segmental shape of their corresponding class prefixes (or their historical shape in some cases), as previously mentioned. However, the class 2 pronoun **bú** (or third-person plural) appears to be an innovation, with the conservative pronoun **bā** currently used as an impersonal

pronoun (described in §7.3), although there are times when the two pronominal forms are presumably used in place of the other. (While the pronominal forms are different, both pronouns usually license the same class 2 agreement forms. Only rarely is the form **bɔ-** seen as an agreement marker.)

This phenomenon is reminiscent of what is observed in some nearby Western Grassfields languages. Hyman points out that the third-person pronouns in some of those languages resemble the proximal demonstrative or the word for ‘body’, with the original third-person pronoun forms sometimes utilized for logophoric reference (2018a: 201). However, these innovated third-person pronouns are reflected throughout the noun class pronoun systems, suggesting common third-person root forms. The Nchane case appears to involve the class 2 pronoun only, rather than all third-person pronouns. In addition, there is obviously no correlation between the class 2 pronoun and the proximal demonstrative (**nē**) or the word for ‘body’ (**yē**), but it does bear a striking resemblance to the third-person plural possessive pronoun root **b̃**.

Pronouns for the locative classes are rare and are identical to their locative pronoun counterparts (treated in §7.2), which are coreferential with prepositional phrases. Consequently, instances of these pronouns are often ambiguous regarding the type of antecedent with which they are coreferential. The antecedents in (7.15)-(7.18) are considered to be locativized nouns, and as such are illustrative of locative class pronouns.

- (7.15) **fɛ**    jùŋ  
c16    old

*‘It (the fireplace site) is old.’*

- (7.16) wù    jīlè    **fɔ**  
3SG    hide    c16

*‘He hid it (the palm of his hand).’*

- (7.17) **ā**    yù    bó  
c18    kill    3PL

*‘It (their stomachs) hurts them.’*

What-goes-around.9.15

- (7.18) wù    jīlè    **wɔ**  
3SG    hide    c18

*‘He hid it (his hand, or lit. at his arm).’*



A system of compound pronouns is observed in Nchane which enables the expression of specific combinations of referents. These complex pronouns are formed by combining various simple pronouns into a single structure, a special type of pronominal construction only observed in languages spoken in Cameroon (Cysouw 2009: 183). The Nchane compound pronouns are summarized in Table 7.2.

The dashed line in the table indicates that there are two series of compound pronouns, one based on first person and one on second person. In both series, the base form, appearing to the far left, denotes a plural referent which includes the referent of the second part, appearing to the right. In other words, the base form expresses the notion of “plural” (in addition to either first or second person). The second part denotes the other member(s) of the reference. Thus, the first part is “incorporative” rather than additive (see Cysouw 2009: 171).

Example	Gloss	Meaning
bēsáwò	1PL.2SG	“me + you.SG”
bēsáwù	1PL.3SG	“me + him/her”
bēsábèŋ	1PL.2PL	“me + you.PL”
bēsábó	1PL.3PL	“me + them”
bēnéwù	2PL.3SG	“you.PL + him/her”
bēnēbó	2PL.3PL	“you.PL + them”

Table 7.2 Nchane compound personal pronouns.

The first person-based compound pronouns are formed by joining **bēsá** with one of the non first-person pronouns (i.e., **wò**, **wù**, **bèŋ** and **bó**). The form **bēsá** appears to be cognate with the Noni first-person exclusive pronoun **bēsèn** (Hyman 1981: 15), although this base form is used to construct inclusive as well as exclusive Nchane compound pronouns. This pronoun element resembles the first-person plural pronoun **bē**, which might be a derivative, as was implied earlier in this section.

Examples (7.19) and (7.20) show compound first-person pronouns in preverbal position and (7.21) and (7.22) show them in postverbal position. The examples show that an *inclusive:exclusive* distinction is expressed through these compound pronouns. The pronouns in (7.19) and (7.21) are understood as excluding the addressee, while those in (7.20) and (7.22) specifically include the addressee.

- (7.19) **bēsáwù**    bɔ̃        à-jɔ̃  
 1PL.3SG    descend    c18-water

‘We (me plus him/her) went down to the stream.’

Fishing.1.3

- (7.20) **bēsáwò** bŭ-dé bé lā mwēnē  
 1PL.2SG exit-COMPL 1PL.FUT go.goal c3.garden  
*‘We (me plus you) shall go to the farm.’* Jealous Husband.1.4

- (7.21) Ø-ñfɔŋ gē yéŋ **bēsābó** lē  
 c1-chief P3 see 1PL.3PL APPL  
*‘The chief saw us (me plus them).’*

- (7.22) tádà gē nā **bēsáwò** bvū-lē:  
 T. P3 give 1PL.2SG c14-fufu  
*‘Tada gave us (me plus you) fufu.’*

The second person-based compound pronouns are formed by joining **bēné** with a third-person pronoun (i.e., **wù** or **bó**). The **bēné** element is cognate with the Noni first-person inclusive pronoun **bè:nè** (Hyman 1981: 15). These compound pronouns also may appear in preverbal and postverbal positions, as shown in (7.23)<sup>53</sup> and (7.24).

- (7.23) **bēnéwù** bé jí mw-ē:  
 2PL.3SG P1 eat c18a-thing  
*‘You all (you plus he/she) ate something.’*

- (7.24) Ø-ñfɔŋ gē yéŋ **bēnēbó** lē  
 c1-chief P3 see 2PL.3PL APPL  
*‘The chief saw you all (you plus them).’*

Observe that this base form expresses incorporative plurality as with the first-person base form **bēsā**, which was suggested as a possible source for the first-person plural pronoun **bē**. This base form, however, expresses second person plural rather first person, in spite of sharing the **bē** element.

<sup>53</sup> In this example, the H of the P1 marker following the complex pronoun is observed not to be downdrifted. A concerted study of the tonal behavior of complex pronouns has not been carried out and, therefore, this tonal realization is unexplained.

The base part of the compound pronouns can also be used with full nouns, as seen in (7.25) and (7.26), a phenomenon also observed for the nearby Ring language Aghem (Hyman 1979: 54–5).

- (7.25) **bēsá-Ø-kwā:**      bē    bē    làd-é,  
 1PL-c1-wife.1SG.POSS    1PL    P1    go.goal-PROG
- wū    jù      tū:      bvū-lê:    nōnō  
 3SG    COP(N)    carry    c14-fufu    empty
- ‘I and my wife were going (to the farm to do work) and she CARRIED FUFU WITHOUT SOUP.’*  
 Jealous Husband.19.1

- (7.26) Ø-ñfōŋ    gē    yéŋ    **bēnē-táda**    lē  
 c1-chief    P3    see    2PL-T.      APPL
- ‘The chief saw you all (you and Tada).’*

The Beboid languages Mungong and Noni also have compound pronouns (Boutwell 2014b: 25; and Hyman 1981: 17–8 respectively). Following attempted targeted elicitation, Naki (Beboid) is reported to not have them (Good et al. 2011: 63). As a part of the same study of Naki, compound nouns were attested in Ajumbu (Yemne-Kimbi) (Good et al. 2011: 42).

Mundabli (Yemne-Kimbi) was earlier reported as having compound pronouns as well, but the analysis was changed to that of “inclusory conjunction” constructions (Voll 2017: 167–72). This type of construction involves the conjoining of two nominals via a conjunction, with the first nominal described as an “inclusory conjoint”, which denotes the entire set (Haspelmath 2007a: 33). Indeed, in contrast to Nchane, Mundabli appears to have a conjunctive element in these constructions. Nevertheless, the Mundabli inclusory conjunction constructions and the Nchane compound pronouns accomplish similar semantic output and should therefore be considered as two varieties of the same phenomenon. Note that the presence of compound pronouns has not been attested in any of the other Beboid languages.

## 7.2 Locative pronouns

There are three locative pronouns **fɔ́**, **yɔ́** and **yú**, which are coreferential with prepositional phrases headed by the three main prepositions **fɛ̀** ‘at’, **à** ‘in’ and **yè** ‘on’ respectively.<sup>54</sup> Each of these pronouns is presented in this section. As will be seen in the various examples below, the locative pronouns encode not only coreference with a nominal, but also the spatial deictic semantics associated with the preposition heading the coreferential prepositional phrase.

The corpus contains no occurrences of these pronouns in preverbal position, most likely because the canonical position for prepositional phrases is postverbal. Therefore, I assume that the locative pronouns are limited to postverbal position. The pronoun **yú** is also coreferential with Comitative Obliques, which are introduced by the conjunction/preposition **bɛ́** ‘with’. While this pronominal reference is not strictly locative, both types of **yú** coreference are described in this section for convenience.

Prepositional phrases headed by the preposition **fɛ̀** ‘at’ can be referenced with the locative pronoun **fɔ́** ‘there’, which is illustrated in examples (7.27)–(7.29). Note that the preposition **fɛ̀** is used to express motion towards as well as away from, but can also express static location with some verbs (i.e., “be at” someplace). Examples of the corresponding pronoun that is coreferential with a prepositional phrase expressing motion towards are lacking in the data.

- (7.27)    wù    já        **fɔ́**        wù    kwē    fɛ̀-yēlē,  
           3SG   leave    there    3SG   home   c16-way
- wù    tó        wù    shī    wù    fuf-è    shēŋ  
           3SG   come    3SG   sit     3SG   rest-PROG   c9.liver

*‘He left (the farm) and returned home, and he sat and relaxed.’*

Jealous Husband.16

- (7.28)    wù    mō    wù    búse    m̃-bà:    **fɔ́**,    wù    ná  
           3SG   RES   3SG   remove   c6a-soup   there   3SG   give

Ø-jwɛ̀:                                    lē  
  c1-husband.3SG.POSS        APPL

*‘She just removed soup from there (the leaf) and gave [it] to her husband.’*

Jealous Husband.13

<sup>54</sup> The words **fɛ̀nè** ‘there’ and **yànè** ‘here’ are treated as locational adverbs and are described in §8.6, although they could be interpreted as locative pronouns as well. Perhaps the primary difference between these words and the locative pronouns presented here is that antecedents for these words are not clearly identifiable as they are for the locative pronouns.

- (7.29) Ø-kwēsé wú kán-è màn-kàlà wē-ē wù  
 c1-woman c1REL fry-PROG c6a-cassava.puff c1-ANA1 3SG

jù fǔ bē n̄sā y-è  
 COP(N) there with c9.friend c9-3SG.POSS

*‘...the woman who was frying cassava puff was there (in the neighborhood) with her friend.’* What-goes-around.2.1

The referent object<sup>55</sup> of the pronoun usually occurs earlier in the text, or the referent object is inferable or generic, as in the previous examples. In rare cases, it is present in the same sentence as the pronoun, as in (7.30), where the relative clause demands the use of the resumptive pronoun. (This appears to be a special case, since relative clauses usually do not have resumptive pronouns. See Chapter 12 for more details.)

- (7.30) ↑(bvū-jú) bvù bè gè gwē fǔ, bē gē  
 c14-place c14REL 1PL P3 fall there 1PL P3
- bíd-ě bā-mbīlè yúfè bāmī bá gē tō  
 ask-PROG c2-question ten c2-person c2REL P3 come
- kī bó yéŋ bè lē  
 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

The locative pronoun **yǔ** ‘inside’ is coreferential with prepositional phrases headed by the preposition **à** ‘in’. It is rare in the text data, occurring only three times. Examples (7.31) and (7.32) clearly show the substitutive role of the pronoun, while example (7.33) provides an illustration from the text data.

- (7.31) wū dè: byán à Ø-ká lē  
 3SG cook c10.palmnuts in c1-barrel APPL

*‘He cooked palm nuts in a barrel.’*

<sup>55</sup> The term “referent object” is used here rather than simply “referent” to account for the fact that the locative pronoun is coreferential with the entire prepositional phrase rather than only the object of the prepositional phrase.

- (7.32) wū dè: byán yǎo  
 3SG cook c10.palmnuts inside  
*'He cooked palm nuts in it (a barrel).'*

- (7.33) bā gē jò yǎo, bā kē bā chùg-è  
 they put c9.water inside c2 begin c2 wash-PROG  
*'...they put water inside (the trough) and begin washing (the palm nuts)...*  
 Making Palm Oil.1.5

The final locative pronoun **yú** 'on.it' is coreferential with prepositional phrases headed by the preposition **yè** 'on', as in (7.34) and (7.35).

- (7.34) wù gē kǐ-chídē kē-è fē-kū, wù fǐsé  
 3SG put c7-food.mat c7-ANA1 c16-down 3SG twist  
 yē **yú**, wù fǐsé yē **yú**  
 c9.body on.it 3SG twist c9.body on.it  
*'...she put the food mat on the ground and twisted her body on it multiple times...*  
 Two Wives.3.6
- (7.35) Ø-tán wú-mù lé byèn bú **yú**  
 c1-time c1-some COP c9.fish exit on.it  
*'Sometimes, fish will come out on it (the fishing line).'* Fishing.1.8

As mentioned above, this pronoun is also coreferential with Comitative Obliques. But the data suggests that this pronoun can only refer to INSTRUMENTS and not ACCOMPANIMENT, even though both of these semantic roles are expressed through Comitative Obliques. Referential ACCOMPANIMENT obliques maintain the conjunction/preposition **bé** followed by an appropriate personal pronoun (see (7.9) and (7.11) above). One possible exception is described at the end of this section.

Example (7.36) illustrates the locative pronoun **yú** which is coreferential with a Comitative Oblique. The pronoun (in example b) has the same semantic role and occurs in the same position in the clause as its referent object (in example a), which appears in square brackets. (Although the speaker substituted "medicine" for "poison", the set of examples clearly shows the syntactic and semantic structures of the base sentence which correspond to the sentence with the pronoun.)

- (7.36) a. wù mō wù chú ntāŋ, lē  
 3SG RES 3SG respond suggest COMP
- S<sub>(AGENT)</sub>
- bé bé mē wū wò, tū mē  
 1PL.COND <sup>P</sup>COP 1SG.PRO c1REL 2SG then 1SG.PRO
- V O<sub>(EXP)</sub> OCOM<sub>(INSTR)</sub>  
 m̄-bé j̄-yū wā wù [bé Ø-ńlò]  
 1SG-P1 1SG-kill already 3SG with c1-poison
- 'She then suggested, "If I were you, I would have killed him with poison."'*  
 What-goes-around.3.1
- b. lē Ø-kwēsé wé-ē dú nō,  
 SET c1-woman c1-ANA1 say like.that
- mē mō gē: mē j̄-jò j̄chē yī  
 1SG.PRO RES go 1SG.PRO 1SG-take c9.medicine c9REL
- S<sub>(AGENT)</sub> V O<sub>(EXP)</sub> OCOM<sub>(INSTR)</sub>  
 bā yú-yí bī-kfūnè yú,  
 c2 kill-DISTR.PROG c8-rat on.it
- mē ŋ-gē: à mǎŋ-kǎlǎ mà-à lē  
 1SG.PRO 1SG-put in c6a-cassava.puff c6a-ANA1 APPL
- 'As that woman said so, I went and brought medicine that kills rats and put it in that cassava puff.'*  
 What-goes-around.9.14

This pronoun often occurs as a resumptive pronoun in nonrestrictive relative clauses that provide additional information regarding the referent object (i.e., the relative clause's head) (cf. (7.30)). The referent object is given in square brackets in (7.37) and (7.38).

- (7.37) [bī-dádè] bī bā sǎŋ-ě yé yú  
 c8-palm.branch c8REL they thatch-PROG c10.house on.it
- '...palm branches, which they thatch houses with.'* King of Trees.1.3

- (7.38) bós kô: [bá Dāmūmê], wù bós gē jō  
 3PL catch pa D. c1REL 3PL P3 take

bós dāŋ jō yú  
 3PL cross c9.stream on.it

*'...they captured Pa Damume, whom they used in crossing the stream.'*  
 (lit. *whom they crossed the stream with him*) Land Dispute.2.3

The data have a few examples of **yú** which appear to express the notion of existence or living and are possibly cases of coreference with an ACCOMPANIMENT oblique. Most of these examples have the pronoun following a copula or some other element of the verb complex. The pronoun is understood to refer to a generic, inferable Comitative Oblique referent, such as 'life' or some other contextually relevant entity. For example, in (7.39) the referent must be something like 'with the fufu', while that in (7.40) is less transparent, but could be something like 'with life'.

- (7.39) Ø-jwā:, kéfē wó fān-è fy-ē: gē,  
 c1-husband.1SG.POSS VET 2SG fear-PROG c19-thing NEG2

m̄-bà: lé yú  
 c6a-soup COP on.it

*'My husband, don't fear anything, there is soup.'* (lit. *soup is with the fufu(?)*) Jealous Husband.2.2

- (7.40) Ø-kwēsé wú-mù gè bé yú wū gè  
 c1-woman c1-some P3 <sup>P</sup>COP on.it c1REL P3

kāŋ-ē m̄ŋ-kàlà Ø-ntè wè lē  
 fry-PROG c6a-cassava.puff c1-quarter up APPL

*'There was a woman who was frying cassava puff in that quarter.'* (lit. *a certain woman was with life(?)*) What-goes-around.1.4





- (7.43) lē fí dó fí nù nɔ̃,  
SET c19 SIT c19 COP(N) like.that

bɔ̃: bā-ā gē kwī-yè bā-chī  
c2.child c2-ANA1 P3 die-DISTR c2-all

*'As it was so, all those children died (one after another).'*

What-goes-around.10.1

In example (7.44), the pronoun is acting as a discourse deictic, where the antecedent is the thing said by someone earlier. The reference is to the proposition made through the utterance, that they should poison the beggar.

- (7.44) lē Ø-kwēsé wé-ē dú nɔ̃,  
SET c1-woman c1-ANA1 say like.that

mē mɔ̃ gē mē j̃-jò j̃chē  
1SG.PRO RES go 1SG.PRO 1SG-take c9.medicine

yī bā yú:-yí bī-kfūnè yú,  
c9REL they kill-DISTR.PROG c8-rat on.it

mē j̃-gē: ä mǎŋ-kälä mà-à lē  
1SG.PRO 1SG-put in c6a-cassava.puff c6a-ANA1 APPL

*'As that woman said so, I went and brought medicine that kills rats and put [it] in that cassava puff.'*

What-goes-around.9.14

The adverbial pronoun in (7.45) appears to be part of a conventionalized prepositional phrase translated as “so”. A clear antecedent is not apparent, suggesting that this prepositional phrase is a discourse device of some kind, perhaps indicating a topic shift. As this is the only example of the construction in the text data, it is not possible to substantiate this hypothesis. The prepositional phrase is realized at a higher tonal register and the pronoun itself has a long vowel.

- (7.45) ↑(yè nɔ̃: lè), fí mó fī nù lē  
on like.that APPL c19 RES c19 COP(N) SET

bā-mī bá-dùdē lēg-è Ø-nɔ̃ fè bèn lē  
c2-person c2-many beg-PROG c1-god at 2PL APPL

*'So, many people will be praying to God for you,'*

Marriage.4.1

This pronoun has a secondary function of introducing certain support clauses and complement clauses. See §§13.2.2 and 13.3 for descriptions of these other uses of *nò*.

As stated in the introduction to this section, the form *nē* is rare in the data, and the analysis is tentative at this time. But as (7.46) and (7.47) show, it can co-occur with *nò*, resulting in constructions that may be interpreted as “since this, then...”. In (7.46), the speaker seems to be saying that, as a result of his speaking, his behavior will change. In (7.47), the people thought that, since his house burned down, then he would go hang himself.

- (7.46)    *nò*            *ɲ-jèm-é*            *à-bèŋ*            *nē*  
              like.that    1SG-speak-PROG    c18-today    like.this

*‘As I am saying this today, ...’*

Jealous Husband.22

- (7.47)    *bā-mī*            *gè*    *ké-é*            *lē*  
              c2-person    P3    know-PROG    COMP

*nò*            *Ø-lá*            *chī-nē*            *fyé*    *nē*  
              like.that    c5-compound    c5-PROX    burn    like.this

*‘People were knowing that as this (my) compound burned like this, ...’*

Fire.26

The form of *nē*, along with the apparent proximal semantics, suggests a connection between this pronoun and the proximal demonstrative, possibly even that they are one and the same, with the use presented here representing a second function of the demonstrative. However, the form *nò* has no such demonstrative counterpart and seems to form a contrasting pair with *nē*. More research is needed for a more complete analysis.

## 7.4 The impersonal subject pronoun

The pronoun **bā**, an obviously conservative reflex of Proto-Bantu class 2 \***ba-**, is used as an impersonal subject pronoun and is glossed as ‘they’, with the word **bā-mī** ‘people’ the pronoun’s antecedent. It is only used for human referents, where the 3PL pronoun **bó** would otherwise be appropriate. The impersonal subject pronoun is used whenever the agent is generic or the precise identity of the agent is unimportant. The subjects in examples (7.48) and (7.49), taken from historical and procedural texts respectively, are both generic entities, referring to “people” in general.

- (7.48) fē mū gē shílē fó, **bā** gē té-ŋé fó à  
 at c1-person P3 sit there they P3 call there in

Ø-jī ch-é lē  
 c5-name c5-3SG.POSS APPL

*‘At the place each person settled, they called the place by his name.’*  
 History.4.1

- (7.49) **bā** gē: jō: yí jē: yō, kì yī  
 they put c9.water c9REL cold inside COMP(K) c9

jē-sē m-mē:  
 cool-CAUS c6a-oil

*‘...they add cold water to cool the oil.’* Making Palm Oil.1.10

The agents in example (7.50) are not necessarily generic as are those in the above examples. Here there were particular people who helped remove things from the burning houses, and the speaker surely is aware of the identities of many of them. However, while the impersonal pronoun refers to these particular people, their identities are unimportant. Therefore, the impersonal subject pronoun is used.

- (7.50) mw-ē: mú yē kwè, mú-mū  
 c18a-thing c18aREL in home c18a-some

**bā** būsè, mú-mú fyē  
 they remove c18a-some burn

*‘The things in the house, some they removed, some burned.’* Fire.5.1

*'As the woman was going, she stood and the husband wondered what would happen.'* (lit. *it is what is*) Jealous Husband.4.2

- |           |            |     |         |                |
|-----------|------------|-----|---------|----------------|
| kēm-è     | mù-ŋà      | wù  | ghá     | Ø-mù-mù        |
| have-PROG | c18a-power | 3SG | surpass | c1-person-some |

Sun and Wind.1.1

As demonstrated in §6.5, certain noun modifiers are observed that can function pronominally. In other words, they occur not as modifiers in a noun phrase, but rather as the lone nominal element of a noun phrase and are coreferential with a full noun referent. These noun modifiers include possessive pronouns, the proximal demonstrative, the indefinite demonstrative, and numbers. Their occurrence as pronouns is uncommon in the text corpus. See §6.5 for specific examples.