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

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Chapter 9

The verb and verb complex

This chapter describes the formal characteristics of the Nchane verb and the verb complex. Verbal morphology is presented in §9.1, followed by a discussion of the grammatical high tone clitic in §9.2. This high tone clitic is associated with Imperative and Hortative constructions, as well as several of the preverbal elements of the verb complex, which are treated in §9.3. A group of postverbal particles, which I treat as adverbs, is described in §9.4. Section 9.5 deals with a small group of words that function similarly to the adverbs in §9.4, but which differ from them in terms of formal properties and are thus more difficult to categorize. The chapter ends with a presentation of attributive verbs in §9.6.

The term ‘auxiliary’ is conventionally used as a label for verbs and verb-like words that are used in a secondary fashion, adding grammatical information to the verbal expression, such as tense or aspect. I use the term in this work as a means of grouping together a set of words that occur in the preverbal position of the verb complex. While many of these words are clearly related to active main verbs, the sources for several of them have not been identified.

Below is a generalized schema of the verb complex, where SM refers to subject agreement.

[AUXILIARY SM-VERB-suffix ADVERB]_{VERB COMPLEX}

This section discusses the form of Nchane verbs, including the few affixes observed in the data. About half of Nchane verb roots are monosyllabic, with the majority of these roots having a CV or CGV syllable shape. Verbs with disyllabic roots include a significant number with obvious or suspected verbal extension remnants. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that Nchane verbs have a preference for monosyllabic roots.

Nchane verbs are relatively simple in their morphology, as seen in all Beboid languages. The only prefix that is possible is subject agreement. Suffixes are also relatively limited, with apparently just one suffix slot available. This slot may be occupied by the Progressive suffix, the Distributive suffix or the Causative suffix. Verbs may be marked with Progressive and Distributive simultaneously, but the two suffixes fuse into a single suffixal form, thus occupying a single suffix position. More details are given in the sections below.

As mentioned above, the only verb prefix observed is subject agreement. Although only first-person singular subjects are phonologically bound, and thus morphological elements of the verb, subject agreement as a category is discussed here, since the bound and unbound forms occur in the same positions relative to other elements of the verb complex, as well as generally functioning in the same way.

In canonical sentences, all verbs and verb-like words (i.e., auxiliary verbs) usually require a preceding subject element. The subject noun phrase precedes the initial verbal element, whether that is the main verb or an auxiliary verb. When the verb complex contains multiple verbs or auxiliary verbs in addition to the main verb, then each verbal element following the initial verbal element is usually preceded by a subject agreement marker. This pattern of subject agreement is illustrated in (9.1), which has a full noun subject and (9.2), which has a pronoun subject.

- (9.1) Ø-bā wɛ-ɛ́ bɛ́ wù dú lɛ́
c1-pa c1-ANA1 P1 3SG say COMP
“‘That pa said that,’” What-goes-around.9.10
- (9.2) wù mō wù búɛ́ m̃-bà: fɔ́,
3SG RES 3SG remove c6a-soup there
‘She just removed soup from there (the leaf)...’ Jealous Husband.13

First-person singular subject agreement is realized as a homorganic nasal and is distinguished from other subject agreement forms in at least three ways:

First, it appears to be a reduced form derived from the unbound first-person singular pronoun **mē**, which is glossed as ‘1SG.PRO’ to differentiate it from the

reduced, subject agreement form ‘1SG’. In contrast, the other agreement forms appear to be unreduced, being segmentally identical to their pronominal counterparts, such as postverbal pronouns and relativizers.

Second, first-person singular subject agreement is phonologically bound to the main verb and verb auxiliaries, while the other subject agreement forms are unbound.

Third, they have a wider distribution than other subject agreement markers, usually occurring on the first verbal element of the verb complex, even when a full subject pronoun is present. The contrastive behavior is illustrated in (9.3), which has a first-person singular unbound pronoun and subject agreement, and (9.4), which has only a third-person singular unbound pronoun preceding the main verb and no subject agreement.

- (9.3) mē ĩ̃-gē: à mǎŋ-kàlà mā-ā lē
 1SG.PRO 1SG-put in c6a-cassava.puff c6a-ANA1 APPL
 ‘...I put [the poison] in the cassava puff.’ What-goes-around.9.14

- (9.4) wù gē à Ø-ŋkà: lē
 3SG put in c1-basket APPL
 ‘...she put [the fufu] in a basket.’ Jealous Husband.3.1

This wider distribution pattern extends to constructions with the P3 marker (see example (9.15)), with the homorganic nasal prefixing both the P3 marker and the main verb that follows. As will be pointed out in §9.3.1, the P3 marker is usually not followed by subject agreement marking other than first-person singular subjects.

The first-person singular subject agreement prefix might be considered a clitic. In fact, a similar homorganic subject marker is treated as such in nearby Mundabli (Voll 2017: 56–7). Its reduced form and the fact that it has word-like functions but phonological characteristics of an affix are consistent with the description of clitics given by Spencer and Luís (2012). Additional support for this analysis would seem to be its inclusion in a subject agreement system where all the other members are unbound forms. However, the prefix analysis is maintained, given that it is supported by the syntax, with the homorganic nasal occurring multiple times, marking agreement on verbs and auxiliary verbs.

A final comment to be made regarding subject agreement has to do with the numerous iterations of subject marking in Nchane clauses. It seems that most verbal elements, including auxiliaries which express tense and aspect, as well as the main verb, must be preceded by a subject element. Multiple subject marking such as this can be referred to as “Hyperagreement” (see for example Carstens 2011).

As stated above, subject agreement forms other than first person singular for Nchane are segmentally identical to pronominal forms.⁶¹ Therefore, sentences which contain a single lexical verb and one or more auxiliaries are syntactically similar if not identical to those which contain multiple lexical verbs such as conjoined clauses and serial verb constructions. Consequently, for the most part, the current analysis makes no distinction between “subject pronouns” and “subject agreement markers”.

9.1.2 Progressive

Non-progressive/Progressive is the primary aspectual distinction made in Nchane, with all main verbs expressing one of these aspects. Non-progressive aspect is perfective in nature and has zero marking, as in example (9.5). Progressive aspect is an imperfective aspect and expresses an action that is in process. It is indicated by the suffix *-é*, as illustrated in example (9.6). Note that the nasal vowel of the verb in (9.5) is realized as VN when the verb is marked with the progressive suffix as in (9.6).

- (9.5) wù kɛ̃: bvũ-lɛ̃:
 3SG stir c14-food
 ‘She cooked (by stirring) food.’ (just now)

- (9.6) wù kɛ̃n-é bvũ-lɛ̃:
 3SG stir-PROG c14-food
 ‘She is cooking (or stirring) food.’

The high tone of the Progressive suffix is realized as a low tone whenever certain high-toned grammatical elements precede it in the clause, as demonstrated in example (9.7). See §9.2 for a discussion of this phenomenon.

- (9.7) ɲjì lé wú fɔ̃:s-è bĩ-gɛ̃
 N. COP 3SG.FUT borrow-PROG c8-teeth
 ‘Nji will be borrowing money.’ (lit. *teeth*)

There are three different realizations of the Progressive suffix, depending on the syllable shape of the verb. Verbs with the syllable shapes CV and CVN (which are phonemically the same) take the suffix *-é*, as shown above. The suffix is realized through vowel ablaut in verbs with CVCV shape. These verbs almost exhaustively

⁶¹ Segmentally distinct subject agreement forms for 2SG (*ā*) and 2PL (*mē*) were initially identified in two separate texts. Subsequently, these forms were rejected by language consultants, who replaced them with the pronominal-like forms (*wā* and *bēŋ* respectively). It is probable that these distinct agreement markers represent older forms that have largely fallen into disuse.

(9.8) lē bō lēg-é Ø-⁴kfúlá
 COMP 3PL run-PROG c1-hyena

Inheritance.8

(9.9) njì gē bí-í wù lē
 N. P3 follow-PROG 3SG APPL

The different progressive marking strategies are summarized in Table 9.1.

Strategy	Syllable shape	Non-progressive	Progressive	Gloss
-é	CV̆	kē:	kēné	<i>stir</i>
		fō:	fōné	<i>sharpen</i>
	CVN	tōŋ	tōné	<i>fry</i>
		lēŋ	lēné	<i>work</i>
ε→é	CVCV	kémè	kémě	<i>have</i>
		jīŋè	jīné	<i>look</i>
V→V́:	CV	bì	bí:	<i>follow</i>
		ṗá	ṗá:	<i>give</i>

(9.10) Ø-gvúnē ... chì bā fèl-é bī-tēgē yū
c5-palm.chaff ... c5REL they make-PROG c8-pillow on.it

King of Trees.1.3

In these cases, I assume that a suppressed C₂ is realized, revealing an older form of the verb stem. Support for this hypothesis is found in the verb **bífé** ‘ask’ from

the neighboring Noni language, whose progressive form is **bi:te**. Compare these forms with **bi:** and **bídě**, the Nchane forms of the same verb.⁶² The crucial element in the comparison is the CVCV shape of the non-progressive form of the Noni verb, suggesting that the protoform likely had a second consonant in the non-progressive form. The result of this alternative Progressive marking strategy for CV verbs is that it is often unpredictable what the surface form of the progressive verb form will take based on the perfective form of a verb.

Table 9.2 gives examples of verbs in their non-progressive and progressive forms, organized by tone group. The Non-progressive forms are given in their utterance-final form, which often results in the tone of H and M verbs being realized with a falling contour. In sentence internal context, these verbs are usually realized as level H or M tones respectively, although the contour tone of disyllabic M nouns is usually maintained in this context as well.

Tone group	Non-progressive	Progressive	Gloss
H	bî:	bídě	<i>ask</i>
	kô:	kó:lě	<i>catch</i>
	bín̩	bíně	<i>dance</i>
	tón̩	tóně	<i>fry</i>
	tén̩	téně	<i>call</i>
	kémè	kémě	<i>have</i>
	kwé	kwé:	<i>die</i>
	yú	yú:	<i>kill</i>
	ná	ná:	<i>give</i>
M	bō	bōgé	<i>descend</i>
	chū	chūlé	<i>ignite</i>
	fwē:	fwē:dé	<i>burn</i>
	kē:	kē:né	<i>stir</i>
	yā̃	yā̃né	<i>vomit</i>
	sū̃	sū̃né	<i>beat</i>
	lē̃	lē̃né	<i>work</i>
	jī̃	jī̃né	<i>look</i>
L	bì	bí:	<i>follow</i>
	jù	jú:	<i>fight</i>

Table 9.2 Utterance final perfective and progressive forms of selected verbs.

The data shows possible complementary distribution between the M and L groups, with M verbs having CVC-V progressive forms and L verbs CV-V. More research

⁶² Note that Noni is observed to have a **fɛ~te** alternation for a small number of verbs having the shape **CVfɛ** (see Hyman (1981: 47)). No attempt is made to explain the role of the consonants in this alternation.

would be needed to verify that these results are not an artifact of the limited number of L verbs in the data.

Note that speakers sometimes perceive the V_1 in progressive forms with CVC-V realizations as long, even though the duration is usually of “normal” short length or what might be described as half-long. I have chosen not to represent this perceived length in the examples. Also note that the H of the progressive is usually realized as SH when the progressive form has a CVC-V shape and the verb is a H verb. I suggest that the Progressive H is realized as SH in this context in order to maintain contrast in the tonal environment.

There are numerous exceptions to the generalized presentation of Progressive marking presented in this section. For example, in Table 9.2 we see that the progressive form for the H verb **t́** ‘come’ does not have a surface H tone as we expect. The verb otherwise appears to behave as a H tone verb. No satisfactory explanation is available. In addition, the verb **kwé** ‘die’ appears to have the same form for Non-progressive and Progressive. One possible explanation for this is that the CGV shape is less open to vowel copying, but this is unconfirmed. Another possible explanation for unexpected Progressive forms is competing strategies, as is observed for some verbs. For example, the verb **jù** ‘fight’ has two alternate progressive forms, **jú:** and **jùdé**. And as mentioned above, some speakers perceive vowel length when others apparently do not.

9.1.3 Distributive

Another verb suffix is the Distributive **-yè**, illustrated by the elicited paradigms in (9.11) and (9.12), which give the non-suffixed form for comparison. The meaning added by the suffix is usually either “one-after-another” or “successive times”, with the context helping the hearer to arrive at a proper interpretation. These examples also demonstrate that the distributive suffix fuses with Progressive marking, resulting in the form **-yí**.

- (9.11) a. *tádà gē sē: Ø-bīlīkán*
T. P3 cut c1-papaya

‘Tada cut the papaya (once).’

- b. *tádà gē sē:-yè Ø-bīlīkán*
T. P3 cut-DISTR c1-papaya

‘Tada cut the papaya (into pieces).’

- c. *tádà gē sē:-yí Ø-bīlīkán*
T. P3 cut-DISTR.PROG c1-papaya

‘Tada was cutting the papaya (into pieces).’

- (9.12) a. $j\bar{a}\eta$ $g\bar{e}$ $ch\bar{e}:\eta$
 c9.rain P3 drop

'The rain dripped (one drop).'

- b. $j\bar{a}\eta$ $ch\bar{e}:\eta-y\acute{i}$ $l\bar{a}$
 c9.rain drop-DISTR.PROG FOC

'The rain is dripping.'

This suffix is not very common in the data corpus and elicitation efforts reveal that the extension is not productive, with only a small number of verbs identified which can take it. Examples (9.13) and (9.14) come from the text corpus and reveal that slightly different interpretations of distributive action are possible through **-yē**. My language consultants informed me that the sentence in (9.13) is interpreted as successive actions. The sentence would still be grammatical without DISTR, but the extension apparently brings focus to the act of dying of each individual child, following their ingestion of poison.⁶³

- (9.13) $b\bar{a}:$ $b\bar{a}-\bar{a}$ $g\bar{e}$ $kw\bar{e}-y\bar{e}$ $b\bar{a}-ch\bar{i}$
 c2.child c2-ANA1 P3 die-DISTR c2-all

'...all those children died (one after another).' What-goes-around.10.1

A slightly different interpretation is called for in example (9.14), where the Distributive functions in describing the use of rat poison. The “medicine” is presumably commonly used by many individuals to kill many rats.

- (9.14) $j\bar{a}ch\bar{e}$, $y\bar{i}$ $b\bar{a}$ $y\acute{u}-y\acute{i}$ $b\bar{i}-kf\bar{u}n\bar{e}$ $y\acute{u}$
 c9.medicine c9REL they kill-DISTR.PROG c8-rat on.it

'...medicine, that they are killing rats with...' What-goes-around.9.14

⁶³ Noni (Hyman 1981: 36) and Mungong (Boutwell 2014b: 31–2) are both observed to also have a distributive extension, the forms being **-yē** and **-shə** respectively. In both of these Beboid languages, they are reported to express pluractionality, with either multiple agents carrying out an action or with one agent carrying out an action multiple times. In addition, in both languages a secondary sense of the extension is completeness, where the action is repeated to the point where the action cannot be carried out again (e.g., completely cutting something up). This sense is unconfirmed for the Nchane Distributive. In neither Noni or Mungong is successive action observed as a part of the extension's semantics.

Disyllabic verbs taking the extension have not been observed. Therefore, it is unknown how the Distributive and Progressive suffixes would behave in such a context.

9.1.4 Causative

The status of **-sɛ**, the Causative suffix, in Nchane is tenuous. A few nearby languages have been documented as having an active Causative extension. These include Limbum (Fransen 1995: 205) and fellow Beoid language Noni (Hyman 1981: 38), although these descriptions are from 20-30 years ago, and it is possible that the suffix is no longer active in these languages. Recent works in the nearby Yemne-Kimbi languages do not observe an active Causative suffix. Aghem was observed to have a decaying Causative (Anderson 1979: 81). The Causative in Nchane is likely in a similar state, evidenced primarily in a number of lexicalized forms given in Table 9.3, which also includes potential candidates for the original source of the stems when possible.

The variable tone observed on the grammaticalized suffixes in the table has several possible explanations. Some of these word forms might not really have a historical Causative suffix, although the semantics of most is suggestive of a such an analysis. Another possible explanation is that the variable tone represents different degrees of lexicalization. As will be shown below, the active suffix itself does not present with a consistent suffixal tone. Therefore, it is not possible to confidently posit a tone for the current Causative suffix or its previous form.

A small number of causative verbs in Table 9.3 present with word-final **she** rather than **sɛ**. These words might represent cases of Distributive-Causative fusing, similar to what is observed with co-occurrences of Distributive and Progressive marking (see §9.1.3), but involving lenition of the Causative consonant and no change to the vowel. Such a hypothesis seems appropriate in view of the semantics of some of these derived forms. For example, the causative verb “spill” could be interpreted as multiple instances of “pour”.

Stem	Gloss	Causative form	Gloss
--	--	bāṅsè	'stumble'
--	--	bōnsé	'groan'
bīṅ	'dance'	bēṅsé	'roll'
bú	'exit'	būsē	'remove'
dáṅ	'jump'	dāṅsé	'spread' (e.g., fire)
--	--	jēsē	'praise'
jí	'curse'	jīsè	'annoy'
fē	'pass'	fēsé	'arrive'
--	--	fyēṅsē	'resemble'
--	--	fínsé	'mix'
--	--	físé	'twist'
--	--	fōsè	'borrow'
fū	'pour'	fūshē	'spill'
--	--	gōsē	'grind'
gū ⁶⁴	'buy'	gīsē	'sell'
yē	'see'	yēsè	'uncover'
--	--	yísé	'fill'
ká	ITER	kásè	'return'
--	--	kōṅsé	'awaken'
--	--	kōsē	'barter'
--	--	kūsē	'alter'
lē	'hurt'	lāṅsè	'wound'
--	--	lēsé	'disappear'
lé	'enter'	lésé	'dress'
--	--	māsè	'admire'
--	--	mēsé	'complete'
shī	'sit'	shīshé	'lower'
--	--	tāshē	'add, join'
--	--	chīṅsé	'send'

Table 9.3 Possible lexicalized Nchane causatives.

As eluded to above, while the Causative does not appear to be a productive verbal extension in Nchane, there are two clear examples of a Causative suffix in the text corpus, given in (9.15) and (9.16). In these cases, the Causative allows for the verb to take an Object complement.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ This verb is realized utterance finally with a falling L tone.

⁶⁵ In example (9.15), the Object "airplane" is inferable and, therefore, omitted as described in §11.1.1.

- (9.15) lē bē gē tú j'ēŋ n̄fúmè, mē ŋ-gē n-dū
 SET 1PL P3 return back N. 1SG.PRO 1SG-P3 1SG-say

Ø-mū wú gè chid-é lé lē, wú fē
 c1-person c1REL P3 pull-PROG APPL COMP 3SG.HORT make

Ø-àfyôŋ wú bō-sé fè-kū: (f)è-kū:
 c1-airplane 3SG.HORT descend-CAUS c16-ground c16-ground

lē mē j̄-yēsē bō: b-àŋ lē fē-mēnē
 COMP 1SG.PRO 1SG-greet c2.child c2-1SG.POSS APPL c16-garden

'As we were coming back from Nfume, I said to the pilot that he should reduce the height so that I could greet my children at the farm.'

Training.1.17

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

jē-sē m̄-mē:
 cool-CAUS c6a-oil

'...they add cold water to cool the oil.'

Making Palm Oil.1.10

Note that example (9.15) is somewhat remarkable as, in addition to the Causative extension, it utilizes the verb **fē** 'make', which is how causative constructions are routinely formed, which is illustrated in (9.17).

- (9.17) Ø-sōŋō fí-í kì chī fē: jàŋ tó
 c5-oil.palm help-PROG COMP(K) c5 make c9.rain come

'Palm trees help to make the rain come.'

King of Trees.1.7

9.2 The Irrealis/Imperfective H tone

As observed in §9.1.2, the high tone associated with the Progressive suffix is usually unrealized on that suffix whenever it is preceded by certain high-toned elements. This phenomenon is restricted to specific grammatical markers and/or constructions, such that it is better explained as a result of a grammatical high tone clitic rather than a tonological process.

Irrealis as a grammaticalized category is not widely reported among the languages of the area (although it is observed for nearby Mungbam (Lovegren 2013: 188) where it is argued for based on the tonal behavior of certain conjugations). Nevertheless, this high tone clitic can be described as expressing something

approaching Irrealis mood, while also characterizing Imperfective constructions. The relationship between Irrealis and Imperfective is perhaps derived from both categories expressing incomplete, and therefore unrealized, predications. A connection between the two is recognized in other languages (see for example Fleischman 1995), and appears to be dictated by the facts of Nchane grammar, which are presented below.

To illustrate the behavior of this grammatical tone, a paradigm is presented in Table 9.4 consisting of five different conjugations of verbs from each of the tone groups (H, M and L). The morpheme on which the grammatical H tone is realized is bolded for illustration purposes. The P0 forms serve as a base for comparison. With each verb, the Progressive suffix of the indicative Progressive forms have a high tone. The high tone is realized on the verb in the Imperative conjugation.⁶⁶ The subject element to the left of the verb is realized with the high tone to indicate Hortative mood. In Hortative-Progressive conjugations, the subject is again realized with the high tone, but the Progressive suffix has a low tone.⁶⁷

Example	Free translation		Verb form
jí (H verb)		<i>eat</i>	
wō jí fĩ-mbì	<i>You ate a kola nut.</i>		P0
wō jí-í fĩ-mbì	<i>You are eating a kola nut.</i>		PROG
wō ↑jí fĩ-mbì	<i>Eat a kola nut!</i>		IMP
wó jí fĩ-mbì	<i>You should eat a kola nut.</i>		HORT
wó jì-ì fĩ-mbì	<i>You should be eating a kola nut.</i>		HORT-PROG
kēmè (M verb)		<i>have</i>	
wō kēmè bĩ-gê	<i>You had money.</i>		P0
wō kēm-é bĩ-gê	<i>You are having money.</i>		PROG
wō kēmé bĩ-gê	<i>Have money!</i>		IMP
wó kēmè bĩ-gê	<i>*You should have money.</i>		HORT
wó kēm-è bĩ-gê	<i>You should be having money.</i>		HORT-PROG
gù (L verb)		<i>buy</i>	
wō gù fĩ-mbì	<i>You bought a kola nut.</i>		P0
wō gūd-é fĩ-mbì	<i>You are buying a kola nut.</i>		PROG
wō gú: fĩ-mbì	<i>Buy a kola nut!</i>		IMP
wó gū fĩ-mbì	<i>You should buy a kola nut.</i>		HORT
wó gūd-è fĩ-mbì	<i>You should be buying a kola nut.</i>		HORT-PROG

Table 9.4 Realization of grammatical tone in H, M and L tone verbs in clauses with expressions of modality.

⁶⁶ The ↑ symbol on the Imperative H verb indicates that the register is raised in order to accommodate the H Imperative marking on a lexically H verb.

⁶⁷ The non-progressive hortative form for ‘have’ is ungrammatical, presumably due to a semantic constraint.

This paradigm is representative of how the grammatical high tone behaves in various constructions in which a verb with a Progressive suffix is realized with low tone rather than a high tone. The markers and constructions displaying this behavior, and therefore believed to be associated with the grammatical H, are Future, Hortative, Habitual, Durative, Situative, Still, and Iterative. Other constructions which likely involve this high tone clitic are Imperative and Conditional.⁶⁸ Furthermore, sentences with multiple Progressive verbs show that only the Progressive suffix of the first verb is realized with a high tone, while the remaining verbs have a low tone on the suffix, as illustrated in (9.18).

- (9.18) b́ó gē lán-é, b́ó yén-è bà-ḡkě,
 3PL P3 rejoice-PROG 3PL sing-PROG c2-song
- b́ó bín-è Ø-bíně
 3PL dance-PROG c5-dance

*'They were rejoicing, singing and dancing.'*⁶⁹

Lake.5.3

The reader is encouraged to be mindful of the grammatical H tone clitic and its association with the various markers listed above, most of which are presented in §9.2. No generalized glossing is used for indicating the H clitic, since this would not be very helpful in indicating the specific functions of each marker or construction type. Instead, glossing is provided for individual moods and aspects. The remainder of this section describes Imperative constructions and Hortative constructions, both of which are expressed through the grammatical H tone by itself, without segmental marking.

9.2.1 Imperative

Commands are formed by a H tone placed on the verb, as in (9.19) and (9.20). The underlying form of the verb in (9.19) is **j̄** and that for the verb in (9.20) is **chūgē**. As mentioned above, if the verb is disyllabic, then the H tone associates with both syllables of some verbs, but only with the ultimate syllable of other verbs, as is the case in (9.20). No explanation for this variation is available. Another unexplained peculiarity is that the vowel of some monosyllabic verbs lengthens in the Imperative

⁶⁸ The Progressive suffix in conditional constructions are sometimes observed with a low tone. But other times it appears that the conditional high tone is realized at the clause level, with various elements of the clause having a high tone and/or a higher tonal register. In the few instances of this in the data corpus, the tone on the Progressive suffix is sometimes high as well. See §13.2.4 for a description of Conditional constructions.

⁶⁹ The clause **b́ó bínè bíně** illustrates the occurrence of a cognate deverbal noun object, which has been argued as evidence in other languages that there are no true intransitive verbs. However, it is more likely for Nchane that a number of verbs which are often intransitive in English, like 'dance' and 'sing', are usually or even strictly transitive. There are plenty of Nchane verbs which present as intransitive (e.g., 'cry', 'sleep' 'die' and 'breathe').

(9.19) jó: mw-ē: mw-òŋ mū-chī
 take.IMP c18a-thing c18a-2SG.POSS c18a-all

Two Wives.7.2

Jealous Husband.9

'You, catch termites.'

'You should follow him.'

Examples (9.23) and (9.24) show that the Hortative H tone is realized as a SH tone when the subject element is lexically H, represented in these examples by the nouns **chíjī** and **kwēsé** respectively. The realization of the SH on the predicate

adjective element in example (9.24) is somewhat unexpected and I have no good explanation for this occurrence. Note further the SH tone realized on the class 1 relativizer, which is underlyingly M or H.

- (9.23) lē Ø-chǐjī bó tó chègē
 COMP c1-father.HORT c1.3PL.POSS come quickly
'[she said] that their father should come quickly...'
 What-goes-around.9.4

- (9.24) wō wǔ Ø-kwēsě ká lē
 2SG c1REL c1-woman.HORT promise COMP
'You the girl should promise that...'
 Marriage.5.4

Example (9.25) shows that the H tone clitic occurs on the subject pronoun as well as the subject agreement marker, with the Resultative marker **mō** intervening. It also shows that the H tone associated with Progressive aspect is changed to a L tone when the clause is marked with Hortative H tone. This alternation apparently has no effect on the Hortative H tone realized on the subject. This alternation is further illustrated in examples (9.26) and (9.27).

- (9.25) wú mō wú bì-ì táda lē
 3SG.HORT RES 3SG follow-PROG T. APPL
'He should just be following Tada.'

- (9.26) wó bì-ì wù lē
 2SG.HORT follow-PROG 3SG APPL
'You should be following him.'

- (9.27) béŋ gè-è lē kì-ŋ-kòŋē
 2PL.HORT do-PROG COMP c7-NMZR-want
'You should be showing love...' (lit. you should be doing so that love)
 Marriage.7

9.3 Preverbal elements

The verb complex includes a position to the left of the main verb. This “slot” may be occupied by one of several words, each dealing in some way with the temporal situation of the predication. These include tense markers and aspectual markers, each of which are discussed in the sections below. As mentioned in §9.1.1, subject

agreement is usually observed between the various auxiliaries and the main verb. Exceptions are noted in the relevant sections below.

9.3.1 Tense

Non-future tense expression is accomplished through various tense particles, or auxiliary verbs, which precede the main verb. Future tense is realized as a high tone clitic as well as a copula. Table 9.5 presents a frame to illustrate the tenses, where the main verb is given in its non-progressive form. The same paradigm is possible using a progressive verb, with the tense elements identical in both cases.

Tense	Example					Time Frame
P0	wù			jí	bvũ-lê:	just now or not specific
P1	wù	bé	wũ	jí	bvũ-lê:	some hours ago
P2	wù	ché	wũ	jí	bvũ-lê:	yesterday or some days ago
P3	wù	gē		jí	bvũ-lê:	more than several days ago
FUT	wù	lé	wú	jí	bvũ-lê:	sometime in future
	3SG		3SG	eat	c14-food	
	<i>‘She ate/will eat food.’</i>					

Table 9.5 Paradigm of Nchane tenses.

The concept of “time frame” as presented in this description should be understood as a general indication of the time reference. However, the various tenses may be used according to the given context to communicate relative proximity of time of occurrence between two separate events. For example, stories are often situated in the past using P3, with references to earlier events within the context of the story utilizing P1, even though the actual time difference between the two events is more than “several hours”. See examples (9.32) and (9.33) below for illustrations of relative time reference.

The description presented here does not attempt to elucidate the finer details of the system, but recognizes that, in many cases, Nchane tense does not simply reflect a linear measurement of time. In some cases, it can be viewed as an interplay between time and remoteness, with remoteness characterized not only in terms of linear time, but also degree of certainty or other expressions of pragmatic concerns. The reader is encouraged to consider the findings of Botne and Kershner (2008), who detail some of these extra-temporal uses of tense in several Bantu languages.

Note that present tense is not a part of the Nchane tense system. Present events or states are commonly expressed through the use of Progressive aspect or, in some cases, through the use of the copula *lé*, although clauses involving the copula can have an immediate past reading in certain contexts.

The bare form of the verb (usually interpretable as P0) is often interpreted as expressing immediate past tense, or generic past tense, where the specific time of the

event is either unknown or unimportant. This tense is illustrated in examples (9.28) and (9.29).

- (9.28) bē yú Ø-nā:
 1PL kill c1-cow
 'We killed the cow.' (just now or recently)

- (9.29) wū kèŋ bvū-lê:
 3SG cook c14-food
 'She cooked food.' (sometime in the past)

In longer strings of discourse, the tense, usually P3, is often established in the initial sentence or in the setting section, with P0 utilized in the following clauses. (See also the description preceding example (9.40) for more discussion of this point.)

Events that occurred between several minutes and several hours ago are indicated through the particle **bé** (P1), which is possibly related to the verb **bí** 'to follow'. This tense is illustrated in examples (9.30) and (9.31).

- (9.30) kībó **bé** wū bèn fwē
 K. P1 3SG ascend front
 'Kibbo went ahead.'

- (9.31) bē **bé** bē bòn bì-nfùnè
 1PL P1 1PL plant c8-corn
 'We planted corn.'

In stories, P1 is often used in background events or in quoted speech, as in (9.32) and (9.33) respectively. In both cases, its use indicates that the speaker considers the predication with P1 to have taken place only a short while before the events in the mainline of the story and reflecting relative rather than linear temporal distance. In other words, the actual time difference between events might be more than several hours. Note that example (9.33) comes from a third-person narrative text about a husband and wife. In this sentence, the husband is telling his friends about the events that occurred earlier in the text.

- (9.32) b́ó kwě̀è b́ó gē: b́ó fésè fē-b́ó-kfúŋ, nū
 3PL be.home 3PL go 3PL arrive c16-3PL-home COP(N)

b́ó: bá Ø-kwésě wē-è wū **bé** nā
 c2.child c2AM c1-woman c1-ANA1 c1REL P1 give

kì-nfè: kē-è m̀an-kàlà mā-ā
 c7-blind.man c7-ANA1 c6a-cassava.puff c6a-ANA1

'They went and arrived at their home, being the children of that woman who gave that blindman those cassava puffs.'

What-goes-around.8.2

- (9.33) bēsá Ø-kwā: bē **bé** làd-é, wū nù
 1PL c1-wife.1SG.POSS 1PL P1 go.goal-PROG 3SG COP(N)

tú-ú bvū-lē: nōnō
 carry-PROG c14-food empty

“I and my wife were going (to the farm to do work) and she CARRIED FUFU WITHOUT SOUP.”

Jealous Husband.19.1

Events that occurred approximately one to three days ago are indicated by the particle **ché** (P2), as seen in examples (9.34) and (9.35). It possibly comes from the verb **ché** ‘stay’.⁷⁰

- (9.34) chílá **ché** wū gù nàŋ
 Ch. P2 3SG buy c9.meat

‘Chila bought meat.’ (e.g., yesterday)

- (9.35) jàŋ **ché** yī tō
 c9.rain P2 c9 come

‘The rain came.’ (a few days ago)

This tense is found in the text corpus only once, with the example given in (9.36). It follows example (9.32) in the text by several sentences and distinguishes this event (the woman coming and deceiving) from the P1 event (the mother giving the poisoned cassava puffs to the blind man).

⁷⁰ The gloss of this verb is perhaps insufficient, since it usually expresses the notion of residing or staying overnight at a location.

- (9.36) Ø-kwēsé wé-é chfú lē, b̥z: bā-nē dú lē,
c1-woman c1-ANA1 reply COMP c2.child c2-PROX say COMP

b̥ b̥ lē b̥ jí m̥n-kàlà mà
3PL COP 3PL eat c6a-cassava.puff c6aREL

Ø-kwēsé wú-mù **chí** t̥ wú lē: b̥ m̥
c1-woman c1-some P2 come c1REL deceive with 1SG.PRO

'The woman answered that "These children are saying that they ate cassava puffs, which a certain woman came who deceived me ..."'

What-goes-around.9.13

Events that occurred four days or more ago are indicated by the marker **gē** (P3) as in (9.37)-(9.39). It is not known if this form is related to an active verb. But one possibility is that it comes from the verb **gē** 'put', that has the alternative forms **gē:** and **g̥ē**. Another candidate is the verb **gē:** 'go'. This tense is distinct from P1 and P2 in that there is no subject agreement marker preceding the main verb (or any auxiliary verb that might follow). First person singular is an exception to this generality, with subject agreement almost always occurring in this case, as illustrated in (9.39). This reduced agreement marking suggests that the P3 marker has undergone greater grammaticalization than the other past tense markers.

- (9.37) b̥ **gē** jí Ø-bèlèk̥n̥
1PL P3 eat c1-papaya

'We ate a papaya.' (e.g., last week)

- (9.38) bā-mī bā j̥chānī **g̥ē** t̥ w̥n̥ wū
c2-person c2AM N. P3 come c3.village c3AM

tíkālè lē
T. APPL

'The Nchane people came (a long time ago) from the Tikari tribe.'

History.1.1

- (9.39) m̥ **gē** j̥-jā ŋ-gē: Ø-j̥-j̥n̥
1SG.PRO P3 1SG-leave 1SG-go c1-NMZR-walk

'I left and went on a journey...'

Fire.1.2

The P3 tense can be described as the narrative past and is used extensively in story-telling. In some texts, P3 is used liberally throughout the text. But more often, P3 is used only in the introduction with little or no tense marking in the rest of the text. Example (9.40) comes from a text where P3 occurs twice in the first sentence, with no tense marking throughout the remaining text until the final sentence.

- (9.40) Ø-jú chí fwí chí mē ŋ-gè ñ-lā
 c5-day c5AM front c5REL 1SG.PRO 1SG-P3 1SG-go.goal
- byéŋ, ñsàŋ y-àŋ wú gè jō mē,
 c10.fish c9.friend c9-1SG.POSS 3SG P3 take 1SG.PRO
- wú já mē Ø-ŋgwě
 3SG give 1SG.PRO c1-fishing.pole

*'The first day that I went fishing (many years ago), my friend took me.
 He gave me a fishing pole.'* Fishing.1.1-2

Examples (9.41) and (9.42) show that future events are indicated by the copula **lé** and a H tone clitic that docks on the subject agreement element occurring between the copula and the main verb. When the subject agreement is already carrying a H tone, the future H tone is usually realized as a SH (super high) tone, as illustrated in (9.42). See Chapter 10 for a detailed description of Nchane copulas and their various functions.

- (9.41) āŋkāŋ lé wú kásé
 A. COP 3SG.FUT return
- 'Akang will return.'*
- (9.42) b́ó lé b́ǒ gù fī-mbì
 3PL COP 3PL.FUT buy c19-kola.nut
- 'They will buy a kola nut.'*

The verb **bū** 'exit' in its progressive form is also sometimes used in near future expressions. As with future expressions involving the copula, a H tone clitic is present on the subject agreement element to the right, as illustrated in example (9.43).

- (9.43) ñjì būd-é wú sūŋ Ø-mwā
 N. exit-PROG 3SG.FUT beat c1-child
- 'Nji will beat the child.'*

Example (9.46) is another illustration of the copula's function as a perfect marker. The completed "action" of women surpassing provides the context for the speaker's encouragement for husbands to stop being suspicious of their wives. In this case, the Perfect reading is reinforced by the co-occurrence of the postverbal adverb **wá** 'already' (see §9.4).

- (9.46) nē Ø-mù kēm-é Ø-kwē:, wū chínè mū-m-bíjē
if c1-person have-PROG c1-wife 3SG abandon c18a-NMZR-suspect

lē, ñjē bī-késé lé bō ghà wā
APPL reason c2-woman COP 3PL surpass already

'If a man has a wife, he stops suspecting her a lot, because women are already wiser.' (lit. ...women have already surpassed or conquered [us/me].)
Jealous Husband.23

A past tense example of the copula's expression of perfect is given in (9.47). In this text about a house fire, the speaker states at the beginning that his house had burned down. Then he begins to describe the context leading up to the event. In this section, there is a series of sentences with the P3-COP sequence, each giving background information, setting the stage for when he discovered his house was burning. Note that the copula has two forms differentiating Past and non-Past tenses. See §10.1.1 for more details.

- (9.47) bē gē **bé** bē yú: bī-tādā
1PL P3 ^PCOP 1PL hear c8-shout

'We had heard shouting.'

Fire.1.15

9.3.3 Habitual

Habitual aspect is formed analytically through the use of the verb **tó** 'come' in the preverbal position, illustrated in examples (9.48) and (9.49). These examples show that both Progressive and non-Progressive verbs can be used in habitual expressions. The tone on the Habitual marker is realized as SH when preceding a H tone verb, irrespective of the intervening subject element. It can also be seen in these examples that the P3 auxiliary precedes the Habitual auxiliary, and there is no subject marking intervening, which is as expected with P3 tense constructions.

- (9.48) tādā gē tǒ wù bín-è bé bā-mī:
T. P3 HAB 3SG dance-PROG with c2-person

'Tada was always dancing with people.'

- (9.49) tādā gē tǒ wù bíj bé bā-mī:
T. P3 HAB 3SG dance with c2-person

'Tada always danced with people.'

The meaning of Habitual is further illustrated in examples (9.50)-(9.52), where the actions are regularly occurring. Example (9.50) is taken from a text

(9.50) bā tʰ bā ténè chē b'é Ø-gvúnē
 they HAB c2 dry c10.palm.kernels with c5-chaff
 'They always dry the palm kernels and chaff.' Making Palm Oil.1.15

(9.51) wù b́é lég'é l̀ò à Ø-kwḗsé wú-mù
 3SG P1 beg FOC in c1-woman c1-certain

lē, wú ṭ́ wū k̄āŋ-è m̀àŋ-kàlà
 APPL c1REL HAB 3SG fry-PROG c6a-cassava.puff

'He asked for [cassava puff] from a certain woman who is always frying cassava puffs.'

What-goes-around.9.10

(9.52) jád-ē á-bèn̩ gēn-ē fwé, m̩-báj gē
 leave-PROG c18-day go-PROG front 1SG-still NEG2

 n̩-t̩s m̩-b̩j̩n̩è Ø-kwā: gē
 1SG-HAB 1SG-suspect c1-wife.1SG.POSS NEG2

‘From this day forward, I will not suspect my wife.’ Jealous Husband.22

The word **tú** ‘return’ is fundamentally a verb that functions semantically in multiple ways depending on its syntactic context. As a main verb, it occurs a few times in the text data and is distinguished by taking a locative complement. The other uses are in expressions of duration and of sequence, and realized when the marker occurs in the preverbal auxiliary slot. Both of these grammatical functions are treated in turn below in this section.

Durative aspect is expressed through the addition of the verb **tú** ‘return’. As examples (9.53) and (9.54) show, Durative aspect is used to express an action that is occurring over a relatively long period of time. In other words, it adds a sense of longevity to the occurring action. These expressions contrast with plain progressive expressions presented in §9.1.2, which only express that the action is ongoing, but without any reference to length of duration. Note that Durative aspect only occurs with verbs in Progressive form.

- (9.53) Ø-jwē: **tú** wū jīŋ-è nò bī-nì
 c1-husband return 3SG look-PROG as c8-buttock

shīŋsh-é Ø-kwē:, kī-dōŋ tá wù
 shake-PROG c1-wife.3SG.POSS c7-jealousy grow 3SG

'The husband was watching (the whole time) how her buttocks were shaking, and he was jealous.' Jealous Husband.4.1

- (9.54) wū **tú** wū kēn-è à-kfúŋ, wū báŋ
 3SG return 3SG stir-PROG c18-outside 3SG still

nù yē yī nàŋ
 COP(N) c9.body c9AM c9.animal

'She remained going around outside, still being an animal.'

Two Wives.4.10

When **tú** occurs before a main verb in non-progressive form, it is orienting two sequential events or periods of time to each other at the discourse level.⁷¹ The action in example (9.55) occurs after a man and his wife go to their farm to do work. The sequential **tú** serves to link this sentence with the previous one, providing discourse cohesion. This same function is illustrated in example (9.56), which takes place after a woman has put corn flour into a pot of boiling water.

- (9.55) mé **ń-tú** ŋ-gē: ñ-jí
 1SG.PRO 1SG-then 1SG-go 1SG-eat

'I then went and ate...'

Jealous Husband.20

- (9.56) wū **tú** wū lē:
 3SG then 3SG stand

'She then stood...'

Jealous Husband.4.2

⁷¹ Note that sequential events are routinely expressed through simple juxtaposition and usually with non-progressive verbs, as pointed out in §13.1.1. Therefore, the function of **tú** as a sequential marker is concerned with discourse organization.

Note that the relationship between the two sequential events or periods is often a logical one. For example, the ordered steps for preparing fufu are: boiling water, adding the corn flour, stirring the mixture. This logical ordering is completely transparent in conditional *if-then* constructions, where **tú** occurs in the clause-initial position of the apodosis clause (which always follows the protasis clause). See §13.2.4 for a detailed presentation of these constructions.

9.3.5 Resultative

The word **m̩** ‘RES’ occurs in the preverbal position and expresses a resultative relationship between the action in its clause and a previous clause, as illustrated in examples (9.57)–(9.59). A main verb counterpart for this word has not been identified. Note that in the sentence preceding example (9.59), the man “measures” his neck with a knife while warning a vulture that he will “cut him (the vulture) like this.” Therefore, the “knife cutting him at his neck” is the result of his intended mimicked cutting.

- (9.57) b́ó túŋ Ø-nà wē-è, lē kī-j̩chô kí Ø-nà
 3PL shoot c1-cow c1-ANA1 SET c7-horn c7AM c1-cow

m̩ kī b̩̌ wù, wù kwé
 RES c7 stab 3SG 3SG die

‘They sent that cow (on top of him) so that the cow’s horn then pierced him and he died.’
 Greedy Friends.1.6

- (9.58) ségé wū ǧ̩: wū jí, wú **m̩** wū kwé, w̩̌
 when 3SG go 3SG eat 3SG.HORT RES 3SG die 2SG

fú-dē ā-ŋgē-wù-b̩̌
 rest-COMPL c18-trouble-3SG-hand

‘When he goes and eats, he should then die, and you will rest from the trouble from him.’
 What-goes-around.3.4

- (9.59) fī-ǰ̩ **m̩** fī sē: wù f̩̌-bwé, wù **m̩** wù
 c19-knife RES c19 cut 3SG c16-neck 3SG RES 3SG

gwē wù kwē
 fall 3SG die

‘The knife then cut him at [his] neck, he then fell and died.’
 Greedy Friends.1.21

However, a cause-effect reading is not clear in examples like (9.62), where it seems that a sequential temporal relation between the subordinate and main clauses is expressed. While sequential events are often encoded without the presence of SIT, its presence in this sentence indicates that their “having gone” is somehow relevant to their “arrival at the tree”, rather than the subordinate clause simply serving in discourse cohesion.

- (9.62) lē bós dós bós gē:, bós bú fè kì-tē ky-ē: lē
 SET 3PL SIT 3PL go 3PL arrive at c7-tree c7-ANA1 APPL

'As they (a husband and wife) went [to their farm], they arrived at the tree (in which a man is hiding in order to trick the husband).'

Jealous Husband.3.6

The Situative particle often co-occurs with the Setting marker **lē**. However, native speakers report that the Setting marker is usually considered optional in these sentences, while SIT is not.

9.3.7 Still

The verb **bāŋɛ** 'cover' might be the source for the word **bá** or **bá:** 'still', which precedes the verb and expresses that an action or condition is ongoing and/or current. It is observed occurring only with verbs in progressive form, as examples (9.63) and (9.64) show. Example (9.65) illustrates its use with a copula.

- (9.63) m-bá: n-lég-è, n-tó-ò á-jīshí
 1SG-still 1SG-run-PROG 1SG-come-PROG c18-path

'(They started putting out the fire while) I was still running, coming to the place.'

Fire.4.1

- (9.64) Ø-kwēsé wù kém-é Ø-mwà bá shēgē shēgè,
 c1-woman c1 have-PROG c1-child still small small

wú bá wū yán-è ā-mbēŋ
 c1REL still 3SG suck-PROG c6-breast

'The woman had a child who was still very small, who was still breast-feeding.'

Two Wives.4.6

- (9.65) wū tú wū kēn-è à-kfúŋ,
 3SG return 3SG go.around-PROG c18-outside

wù bá nù yē yī nàŋ
 3SG still COP(N) c9.body c9AM c9.animal

'She remained going around outside, still being an animal.'

Two Wives.4.10

This word is the same one used in certain negative constructions, which is presented in §15.2.

9.3.8 Iterative

The word **ká** ‘ITER’ precedes the main verb and is used to indicate the repetition of an action, as in (9.66)-(9.68).

- (9.66) bā-mī bá bā-nē bá fwē gè bē bó fúnè
 c2-person c2REL c2-four c2REL front P3 ^PCOP 3PL fly
- à Ø-àfyōŋ lē, kēg-è misàzē bō gē: dūmbú rānch
 in c1-airplane APPL begin-PROG M. 3PL go D. R.
- bō gē: ákwètū bō kásè bō tó bō fēsè misàzē
 3PL go A. 3PL return 3PL come 3PL pass M.
- bō gē: nífumè bō **ká** bō kásè bō tó misàzē
 3PL go N. 3PL ITER 3PL return 3PL come M.
- yē bī-bó bī Ø-jú lé m̄bāŋnē j̄chò bì-tēŋ
 in c8-arm c8AM c5-day COP forty plus c8-five

‘The four persons flew from Misaje town, to Dumbu Ranch, to Akweto, then passed over Misaje to Nfume, and back to Misaje in 45 minutes.’

Training.1.10

- (9.67) kì-mā kí bì fō lē, bā gē yēyè
 c7-week c7REL follow there APPL they P3 teach
- kònē Ø-ŋwā wù bī-ŋjīŋī, bā **ká** bā jīŋè
 about c1-book c1AM c8-picture they ITER c2 look.at
- Ø-lēmè chí kì-mā kī fwē
 c5-work c5AM c7-week c7REL front

‘The second week, we studied the picture booklet and reviewed the work treated in the first week.’

Training.1.8

- (9.68) lē wū-nē Ø-kwèsē wū ñùmē ñàŋ, wù **ká**
 COMP c1-PROX c1-woman c1REL COP(N) c9.animal c1REL ITER
- ñūmè Ø-mù wū wùŋ, lé Ø-kwèsē wū nè lè
 COP(N) c1-person c1AM c3.village COP c1-woman 3SG how APPL

‘[He said], “This woman who is an animal and again a human is what kind of woman?”’

Two Wives.7.3

9.4 Postverbal adverbs

Postverbal adverbs, words which modify in some way the meaning of the verb, are presented in this section. These markers include the manner adverbs **chègē** ‘quickly’, **chúlē** ‘well’ and reduplicated infinitives, and the degree adverbs **bá:ŋ** ‘much’, **wèsè** ‘very’ and **wá** ‘already’. The adverb **wá** ‘already’ immediately follows the verb, with any verbal complements present (e.g., objects or locative obliques) following the adverb. The adverbs **chègē** ‘quickly’, **bá:ŋ** ‘much’ and **wèsè** ‘very’ follow verbal complements when present, while the data is inconclusive regarding the precise behavior of **chúlē** ‘well’ and reduplicated infinitives in terms of word order.

Quickly

The manner adverb **chègē** ‘quickly’ immediately follows the verb, as in (9.69), or the complement of the verb, as in (9.70). As the gloss implies, this adverb indicates that the action takes place in a short period of time or with haste.

- (9.69) Ø-chǐǐ bǒ tǒ **chègē**, wú tó
 c1-father.HORT c1.3PL.POSS come quickly 3SG.HORT come
- wú yéŋ fy-ē: fī lē lē
 3SG.HORT see c19-thing c19REL COP APPL

‘Their father should come quickly and see what is happening.’

What-goes-around.9.4

- (9.70) já yē nàŋ yí-nè lē **chègē**
 leave.IMP on c9.meat c9-PROX APPL quickly

‘Go away from this meat quickly!’

Greedy Friends.1.11

The adverb in (9.69) is presumed to be realized with a higher tone as a result of the Hortative H marking. Note that this example appears to be an exception to the general rule that the grammatical H tone can only occur once in a sentence. Here it appears that the H is realized at the clause level, with all elements of the first clause having higher than normal tone, as well as the subject elements of the second clause, but not the verbs. It is presumed that this liberal realization of the grammatical H reflects a pragmatic application of the grammatical H, expressing a great sense of urgency and desire of the speaker.

Well

Another manner adverb is **chúlē** ‘well’, which also follows the verb and expresses that an action is of good quality and/or that a process has progressed to an acceptable point. Lack of data makes it difficult to know if it also follows any complements that are present. This adverb is illustrated in examples (9.71) and (9.72).

- (9.71) wù jēn-í **chúlē**
3SG walk-PROG well

'He is walking well.'

- (9.72) Ø-tán wù m-mē: jē-dě **chúlē**, bā kē bā
c1-time c1REL c6a-oil cool-COMPL well they begin c2

kōl-è bé kī-ntî, bā gēl-è à shā lē
catch-PROG with c7-bowl c2 put-PROG in c9.pot APPL

'When the oil has cooled off well, they start collecting it with a bowl, keeping it in a pot.'
Making Palm Oil.1.11

Reduplicated infinitives

Examples (9.73) and (9.74) show reduplicated infinitives following the main verb and functioning like a manner adverb. These are the only examples in the data of reduplicated infinitives serving as adverbs, thus it is not known if adverbial expressions other than manner are possible. The meaning of the reduplicated infinitive is ultimately connected to the semantics of the lexical verb from which it is derived, but has been grammaticalized into an adverbial sense. In the case of 'run' in (9.73), the reduplicated infinitive adds the adverbial meaning of 'immediately', while reduplication of the infinitive meaning 'hide' in (9.74), gives the reading of 'in secret'. Note that the second iteration is usually pronounced at a lower tonal register, indicated by the non-raised down arrow ↓.

- (9.73) lē bì-ŋkápé yú Ø-ñtōŋ wú-yú, bō gē jà
SET c2-N. hear c1-horn c1-ANA2 3PL P3 leave

ñ-lēgè ↓**ñ-lēgè**, bō lé à-**X** kī
NMZR-run NMZR-run 3PL enter c18-X COMP(K)

bó fí lán- bōy, bó tú bé wù jīŋ
3PL receive L.-B. 3PL return with 3SG back

'After the Nkanchi people heard that news (lit. that horn), they left immediately for X to take Long Boy back.'
Land Dispute.2.2

- (9.74) wù jō wù gē: wù gō **p-pilē** ↓**p-pilē**
3SG take 3SG go 3SG grind NMZR-hide NMZR-hide

'...she took [the corn] and went and ground it secretly.'

Disobedient Child.1.6

These reduplicated infinitives contrast formally with verbs used multiple times, as seen in (9.75), a rare case where the repeated verb **gēn-é** expresses a durative action. The reduplicated adverbial infinitives follow the main verb and have no subject element preceding them, while the repeated verbs have a subject element preceding the first verb in the series. In addition, the repeated verbs maintain their core meaning, while the adverbial reduplicated infinitive has an extended meaning.

- (9.75) lē bó jā bō **gēn-é** **gēn-é** **gēn-è**, bó
 SET 3PL leave 3PL go-PROG go-PROG go-PROG 3PL
 bú fē-dʒō-ntēnē
 arrive c16-water-middle

'As they left and went and went and went, they reached the middle of the river.'
 Smart Monkey.1.9

Much

Examples (9.76)-(9.78) illustrate the degree adverb **bá:ŋ** 'much', which has the alternate form **báŋá**. It follows the verb and, when present, the object, as in (9.76) and (9.77).

- (9.76) lē wū fú:, fī ghá wù **bá:ŋ**, wù gē:
 SET 3SG satisfy c19 surpass 3SG much 3SG go
 wù fú: Ø-lēmè, wù fú: Ø-lēmè
 3SG clear c5-work 3SG clear c5-work

'As he was satisfied (from eating), he was very surprised and he went and cleared a large field.'
 Jealous Husband.15

- (9.77) kī-lūŋ kī-mí, gè bē Ø-jwènsè wū-mū bē
 c7-year c7-some P3 COP c1-man c1-some with
 Ø-kwē: wú-mū bō kōŋ-è yé **bá:ŋ**
 c1-woman.3SG.POSS c1-some 3PL.REL love-PROG c10.body much

'Some years [ago], there was a man and his wife, who loved each other very much.'
 Jealous Husband.1.1

- (9.78) ŋj-fàŋ **báŋá**
 1SG-fear much

'...I was very worried.'

Fire.24

Although it has a similar form to the adverb **bá** ‘still’, described in §9.3.7, their different syntactic distribution patterns and very different semantics suggest that they are in no way related.

Very

Another degree adverb is **wèsè** ‘very’. This adverb often modifies adjectival complements and expresses intensity and/or degree, as in (9.79).

- (9.79) Ø-táŋ wū mē gē j̄-chīlè byēŋ,
c1-time c1REL 1SG.PRO P3 1SG-pull c9.fish
- mē gē m̄-bé lāŋyè **wèsè**
1SG.PRO P3 1SG-^PCOP happy very
- ‘When I caught a fish, I was very happy.’* Fishing.1.10

Example (9.80) shows that it can also follow a verbal complement.

- (9.80) k̄-nf̄ɛ: k̄-nē lé k̄ fūŋ-sè wá
c7-blind.man c7-PROX COP c7 worry-CAUS already
- bā-mī **wèsè** bē k̄-lègè
c2-person very with c7-beg
- ‘...this blindman has already worried people too much with begging.’*
What-goes-around.3.5

The semantics of this adverb and **bá:ŋ** ‘much’ are very similar and it is unclear what differentiates their use.

Already

The adverb **wá** ‘already’ is relatively common in the text data and expresses an action or state that has already occurred. It is exemplified in examples (9.81) and (9.82), which show that it occurs immediately following the verb, with (9.81) also illustrating that it precedes any present complements of the verb.

- (9.81) k̄ gē bá: jí gē,
c7 P3 still eat NEG2
- nō k̄ gē jí **wá** mw-ê:, k̄ fū:
like.that c7 P3 eat already c18a-thing c7 satisfy
- ‘...he did not eat [it] (the cassava puff), as he had already eaten something and was satisfied.’* What-goes-around.5.1

- (9.82) lē jū kinfē:, Ø-kwèsē wē-è būsē shī,
 SET COP(N) soon c1-woman c1-ANA1 remove c9.chicken

bā jù bā yòŋ bā kèŋě **wá**, bā
 they COP(N) c2 cook c2 prepare already c2

kūjè à kī-ŋkámè lē
 wrap in c7-leaf APPL

‘Immediately, that woman took the chicken out, having already cooked and prepared [it], and wrapped in a leaf.’ Jealous Husband.12

The core meaning of **wá** involves temporal focus—contrasting the realization of the action at an earlier time with the presumed alternative (i.e., that the action is currently unrealized). It is not observed to occur with verbs in the Progressive form and often appears to contribute to a past perfect reading, as seen in (9.83).

- (9.83) nē Ø-mù kēm-é Ø-kwē:, wū chínè
 if c1-person have-PROG c1-wife.3SG.POSS 3SG abandon

mū-m-bíŋē lē ŋjē bī-késé lē bō
 c18a-NMZR-suspect APPL reason c2-woman COP 3PL

ghà **wā**
 surpass already

‘If a man has a wife, he stops suspecting her a lot, because women are already wiser.’ (lit. ...they have already surpassed or conquered [us/me].) Jealous Husband.23

9.5 Other adverbs

The adverbs presented in this section differ from those in the previous section in terms of scope and/or restricted distribution. They include **gé** ‘EXCL’, **té** ‘also’ and **là** ‘CE’.

Exclusive

The adverb **gé** ‘EXCL’ expresses exclusivity and represents a second function of the conjunction **gē** ‘or’. It most often immediately follows the verb, but may be preceded by a locative pronoun. Its scope can be the predicate, as in (9.84), or the verb’s complement, as in (9.85).

Determining the adverb’s scope appears to be based on context. For example, the adverb in (9.84) immediately follows the verb “look” and its scope is the predicate. The context for this sentence is a man who is having trouble breathing has asked a woman for help. Rather than helping the man, the woman just looks at him—all

actions other than “looking” are excluded. Although it is plausible that given a different context, the alternative reading of the woman looking only at the man, excluding other people, is possible. But this possibility is unconfirmed.

- (9.84) wū gē jìhè **gé** wù né
 3SG P3 look EXCL 3SG GEST

‘She only looked at him.’

Lake.4.7

In contrast, the adverb in (9.85) follows the verb, but is preceded by the locative pronoun “there”. The adverb’s scope is the complex comitative oblique “trousers and shoes”, which follows the adverb and appears in brackets.

- (9.85) ñ-gē ñ-lē: fó **gé** [bé Ø-lóŋ wù-mùmwà
 1SG-P3 1SG-stand there EXCL with c1-trousers c1-one

 bé bà-lābā bà mē gè ñ-kēm-ē bī-kà:lē]
 with c2-shoe c2REL 1SG.PRO P3 1SG-have-PROG c8-??

‘I stood there only with one pair of trousers and a pair of shoes.’

Fire.6.1

Also

The adverb **té** ‘also’ is used in expressions of subject (or agent) focus, highlighting the argument’s membership in a group of one or more similar lexical items. Its position is somewhat variable, sometimes following the verb, and sometimes preceding it. However, the argument within the scope of the adverb always precedes the adverb.

For example, in the sentence preceding (9.86), a friend encourages a woman that, after poisoning and killing a begging blindman, the woman will rest from his begging. Therefore, the scope of the first adverb in this example is the subject ‘we’—the friend, including herself, and others with the woman in “resting”. The second adverb adds the subject “many people” to the group of those who are “resting”. The scope cannot include the verb itself, since there are no other predicates of which “many people” are agents. In both cases, the scope of the adverb is the subject, which precedes the adverb, although the second adverb also follows the verb. (The source of the vowel length and falling tone pattern of the second adverb is unknown at this time, and the significance of these differences is uncertain.)

- (9.86) bē tē fū-dē, bā-mī bá-dùdē fū-dē tē:
 1PL also rest-COMPL c2-person c2-many rest-COMPL also

ā-wù-bō
 c18-3SG-hand

'We also (in addition to you) will rest, and many people also will rest from his hands (from his begging) ...' What-goes-around.3.5

Likewise, the scope of the adverb in (9.87) is the location “here”, which precedes it. The friend is clearly implying by her question that the blindman comes to other places. Therefore, “here” is being added to the group of other locations to which the blindman is always coming.

- (9.87) nāsā y-ē bí: wù lē, lā: kī-fē:
 c9.friend c9-3SG.POSS ask 3SG APPL Q.COMP c7-blind.man

kī-nē tó kī tò-ò yànè tē lè
 c7-PROX HAB c7 come-PROG here also APPL.QP

'Her friend asked her, "(Does) this blind man also come here?"' What-goes-around.2.2

Example (9.88) further illustrates the function of tē, indicating that the “certificates” belong to the list of items previously stated, all of which burned in the house fire.

- (9.88) mō bā-sālifikè bà mē gè ñ-kém-é
 RES c2-certificate c2REL 1SG.PRO P3 1SG-have-PROG

yūnībāsētī wú tūlūtù kánādà, bā tē gè fyē bà-chì
 university c1AM T. C. c2 also P3 burn c2-all

'Even the certificates that I was having from the University of Toronto, Canada, they also all burned.' Fire.5.8

Examples of this adverb with predicate scope have not been observed.

Counter-expectation

The adverb lā ‘CE’ is rare in the data and is not well understood. The examples show that some kind of counter-expectation is present in the predication and its use may be restricted to direct speech. The adverb can follow an Imperative verb and is used when the speaker is coerced in some way to give a command that he/she does not truly want carried out. The expectation with an imperative is that the speaker giving the command desires that the command be followed. The adverb lā indicates that the

hearer should interpret the desire of the speaker as counter to that associated with a non-modified imperative.

A possible context for (9.89) is the speaker wanting the monkey as a pet, but someone in authority over the speaker has ordered them to have the monkey killed.

- (9.89) yú **là** chá: yí-nè
 kill.IMP CE c9.monkey c9-PROX

'Kill this monkey (although I'd prefer that you didn't).'

The adverb in example (9.90) might be interpreted as a pretense. The woman really does want the blindman to take the poisoned cassava puff. But she wants to appear as if she is annoyed by his begging and is only giving in to his request so that he will be contented for the moment and leave her alone.

- (9.90) wù dú, kó **là** màn-kàlà mā-nē, wó jí
 3SG say catch.IMP CE c6a-cassava.puff c6a-PROX 2SG.HORT eat

'She said (with irritation), "Take this cassava puff, you should eat [it]."'

What-goes-around.4.9

The particle **là** in the next examples appears in questions. In both cases, the speaker is indicating that there is a mismatch between perceived realities. For example, (9.91) occurs just after some children, who were sick, have explained that they had eaten cassava puffs that a beggar had given them, which he had gotten from a certain woman. The children's mother immediately began to cry with great intensity, because she is the one who gave the beggar the cassava puffs, which she had poisoned in order to kill him. She realizes that her children have instead eaten the poisoned food. Her husband is surprised at her emotional outburst and is essentially saying that there is no reason for her to be crying like that.

- (9.91) Ø-jwē: bí: là: lé lá
 c1-husband.3SG.POSS ask Q.COMP COP Q

fī wò bēd-é **là**
 c19REL 2SG cry-PROG CE

'Her husband asked, "So, why are you crying?"' (lit. it is what that you are crying)

What-goes-around.9.12

Example (9.92) also clearly expresses the mismatch between perceived realities. This example comes from a story where a wife devises a plot to trick her husband. She has secretly prepared a full meal, including soup. But the husband only sees her preparing the fufu. Since his wife is preparing the fufu where her husband

can see her, she is apparently inferring that she is also preparing soup or has already done so (particularly since soup is considered a crucial part of the meal). Therefore, he asks his wife if she has soup, while indicating that he believes she does not. A possible appropriate translation might be something more like an accusation, “You don’t *really* have soup, do you!”.

(9.92) wō lé b́é m̀-̀bà: lā
2SG COP with c6a-soup CE

‘So, do you have soup?’

Jealous Husband.2.1

In both of these question examples, the speaker appears to be expressing a belief counter to the facts being presented. In this way, it is possible that they are a type of rhetorical question, where the purpose of the question is less about getting an informative answer and more about expressing a belief in the unreliability of perceptions.

9.6 Attributive verbs

Expressions of attributes such as color and size are accomplished through adjectives in many languages. The word class Adjective, is typically analyzed as a type of nominal modifier. These attributive expressions are sometimes difficult to analyze in African languages, many of which are said to have a very small restricted set of adjectives. Unsurprisingly, Nchane attributives do not offer a clear and simple analysis. It appears, however, that most attributives in Nchane can best be described as a special type of verb which will be referred to as “attributive verbs”. Because the analysis of these attributive words has not been straightforward, one of the primary goals of this section is establishing the verb-hood of such words. See §6.4.6 for a description of the small class of Nchane adjectives and a brief discussion regarding how they differ from attributive verbs.

Both of the attributives in (9.93), **kùgē** ‘big’ and **yídè** ‘black’, are associated with agreeing elements which are virtually indistinguishable as either relativizers or agreeing prefixes (although such agreement elements are not always present, as seen in many of the examples in this section).

(9.93) b́ó bēŋ lē lé kī, kī-kfūnè kī **kùgē** kī
3PL agree COMP COP c7 c7-rat c7REL big c7REL

yídè kē-ē kī lé kī shú m̀byà̀nè yí-yú
black c7-ANA1 c7REL COP c7.FUT tie c9.bell c9-ANA2

‘They agreed that it is him, the fat, black rat, who will tie *THAT* bell (on the cat’s tail).’

Cat and Rats.1.6

The elicited examples (9.94)-(9.96) show behavior of **kùgè** ‘big’ that is consistent with verbs. First, in (9.94) and (9.95), the word appears with high tone on the final vowel **e** which is associated with Progressive aspect. Second, the clause-final focus particle **l̩**, which is typical for intransitive progressives (see §16.3.5), is required. Finally, examples (9.95) and (9.96) display tense marking.

- (9.94) kī-bē: kī-nē **kùg-é** l̩
 c7-calabash c7-PROX big-PROG FOC

‘This calabash is big.’

- (9.95) kī-bē: kī-nē chí **kùg-é** l̩
 c7-calabash c7-PROX P2 big-PROG FOC

‘This calabash was big.’

- (9.96) kī-bē: kī-nē lé kí **kùg-è**
 c7-calabash c7-PROX COP c7.FUT big-PROG

‘This calabash will be big (e.g., it is small now, but it is still growing).’

The attributive word also has an Imperative conjugation form. The command in (9.97) could be said to someone who is considered to be too small or sickly. Alternatively, the verb can be shortened to **kú** (which is the preferred form for at least some speakers).

- (9.97) **kūgē**
 big.IMP

‘Fatten up!’

Preverbal aspectual markers can also precede these attributive words. In (9.98), **bá** ‘still’ occurs before the attributive verb **shēgē** ‘small’, which is repeated to express degree.

- (9.98) Ø-kwēsé wù kēm-é Ø-mwà bá **shēgē** **shēgē**,
 c1-woman c1 have-PROG c1-child still small small

‘The woman had a child who was still very small...’ Two Wives.4.6

The nominalized forms of words that function as attributive verbs are considered abstract nouns and belong to class 14. The non-progressive form of the verb serves as the stem. A partial list of these attributive verbs and their nominalized forms appear in Table 9.6.

Attributive verb	Nominalized form	Gloss
kùgē	bvū-kūgè	'bigness'
ɲɔ̃:ɲē	bvū-ɲɔ̃ɲē	'thinness'
jījē	bvū-jíjè	'heaviness'
jùŋ	bvū-jūnè	'oldness'
yídè	bvū-yídè	'blackness'

Table 9.6 Selected Nchane attributive verbs and their nominalized forms.

