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A grammar of Mundabli : a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon

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Citation

Voll, R. M. (2017, October 26). *A grammar of Mundabli : a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon*. *LOT dissertation series*. LOT, Utrecht. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/56258>

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Title: A grammar of Mundabli : a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon

Date: 2017-10-26

CHAPTER 6

Pronouns

This chapter deals with pronouns, i.e. forms which replace a noun or, more specifically, a whole noun phrase. While pronouns usually stand on their own, they can also occur in apposition with a noun. They cannot function as noun modifiers. Noun modifiers which also sometimes head a noun phrase, such as e.g. demonstratives, possessive pronouns etc. are treated in Chapter 7. Personal pronouns, which were discussed in §5.1.1 with regard to agreement, are treated here in more detail (§6.1). They make up the greatest part of this chapter. Shorter sections are devoted to the tonal dummy subject (§6.2), the impersonal subject pronoun (§6.3), interrogative pronouns (§6.4) and indefinite pronouns (§6.5).

6.1 Personal pronouns

I use the term ‘personal pronouns’ to refer to all first, second and third person preverbal and non-preverbal pronouns, including third person pronouns of noun classes other than Class 1 or Class 2. Personal pronouns are morphologically and semantically simple,¹ consisting of a single morpheme and representing nouns with single referents. In Mundabli, first and second person personal pronouns inflect for number while third person pronouns inflect for noun class. Table 6.1 gives an overview of all personal pronouns.

¹While earlier accounts, such as Good et al. (2011: 128-129) posited the existence of compound pronouns, I think that the phenomenon can be better described as a phrasal phenomenon, namely inclusory conjunction of pronouns. For details, see §7.2.2.2.

| person | gender | SG | PL |
|--------|--------|-----------|------------|
| 1st | | mī | bī |
| 2nd | | wà | bēn |
| 3rd | 1/2 | wù | bǒ |
| | 3/10 | wú | yí |
| | 3/7a | wú | kí |
| | 7/8 | kí | bí |
| | 9/10 | yì | yí |
| | 19/18 | fǐ | mú |
| | 6a | | mú |
| | 3a | | wú |
| | 8a | | bí |
| | 10a | | yí |
| 7b | | kí | |

Table 6.1: Overview of personal pronouns (non-preverbal forms)

In order to keep things simple, Table 6.1 contains only non-preverbal forms. Mundabli personal pronouns distinguish three forms: a preverbal (PVB) form, a non-preverbal (NPVB) form, and a third form which is used when a pronoun is the object of a postposition (for more on postpositions and postpositional phrases, see §10.2.2 and §11.3). The distinction between so-called preverbal pronouns, which occur in direct preverbal position, and non-preverbal pronouns, which occur elsewhere, is attested in all Yemne-Kimbi languages. As Good et al. (2011: 113) point out, “all the languages of the area show at least a partial distinction between two sets of pronouns [...]. Functionally, the distinction falls roughly along the lines of subject/non-subject pronouns, but subjects can take on the non-preverbal forms in certain contexts (e.g., when they are in focus, which often entails not being immediately preverbal).”. Table 6.2 and Table 6.3 show these three forms for all pronouns.

| person | gender | SG | | | PL | | |
|--------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | PVB | NPVB | PP | PVB | NPVB | PP |
| 1st | | N | mī | mí | bī | bī | bí |
| 2nd | | à | wà | wá | bēn | bēn | bén |
| 3rd | 1/2 | wù | wù | wú | bǒ | bǒ | bǒ |
| | 3/10 | wū | wú | wú | yī | yí | yí |
| | 3/7a | wū | wú | wú | kī | kí | kí |
| | 7/8 | kī | kí | kí | bī | bí | bí |
| | 9/10 | yì | yì | yí | yī | yí | yí |
| | 19/18 | fī | fǐ | fí | mū | mú | mú |

Table 6.2: Preverbal, non-preverbal and object of postposition forms for 1st and 2nd person personal pronouns and paired genders

| gender | PVB | NPVB | PP |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 6a | mū | mú | mú |
| 3a | wū | wú | wú |
| 8a | bī | bí | bí |
| 10a | yī | yí | yí |
| 7b | kī | kí | kí |

Table 6.3: Preverbal, non-preverbal and object of postposition forms of single gender personal pronouns

The following features, which are relatively frequent in the wider area, do not exist in Mundabli: Mundabli has neither logophoric pronouns nor reflexive pronouns. Although logophoric pronouns are common in the wider area (e.g., Aghem (Hyman 1979: 50-51), Noni (Hyman 1981: 15-16) and Bafut (Tamanji 2009: 57-59)), they have not been reported for any of the Yemne-Kimbi languages.² Whether a pronoun is used in a logophoric or non-logophoric sense in Mundabli can only be inferred from the context. Thus, a sentence like (78) has two possible interpretations.

- (78) wù dzě yē wù dǐ tǐú
 CL1 say(b) COMP CL1 F1 come(b)
 She_i says that she_{i/j} will come (later today).

Reflexivity is not encoded grammatically. In some contexts in which other languages might use reflexive constructions, Mundabli uses constructions involving the nouns **gbē** ‘body’, as in (79), or **fō** ‘head’, often in conjunction with a possessive pronoun.

- (79) wù jí gbē wú
 CL1 rub(c) CL3.body CL3;3SG.POSS
 ‘She put on lotion.’ (lit.: She rubbed her body.)

The lack of reflexive pronouns is not surprising as reflexive pronouns are not common in the area. They are neither attested for Noni (Beboid; Hyman 1981: 18) nor for Bafut (Mbam-Nkam; Tamanji 2009: 57-59, 70-74) or for any of the other Yemne-Kimbi languages.

Furthermore, Mundabli distinguishes neither inclusive and exclusive, nor dual and plural pronouns.³ However, in Mundabli, inclusive or exclusive meanings are sometimes contained in the semantics of inclusory conjunction constructions. E.g., the inclusory conjunction **bī by-ā wà** could be translated as ‘you and I’, thus expressing the same reference as a first person dual inclusive pronoun in other languages (see §7.2.2.2 for details).

²The language Naki, on the other hand, which is spoken in lower Fungom but grouped with the Beboid languages, does have an antilogophoric pronoun (Good et al. 2011: 154).

³An inclusive/exclusive distinction does exist in Noni (Beboid; Hyman 1981: 15) and Aghem (Ring; Hyman 1979: 47).

6.1.1 Preverbal pronouns

The segmental shape of preverbal pronouns differs from that of non-preverbal pronouns only in the case of the first and second person singular pronoun. Preverbal pronouns take the shape **N** for the first person singular and **à** for the second person singular. The corresponding non-preverbal pronouns are **mī** and **wà**. The difference between the two forms reflects what Good et al. have observed for all Yemne-Kimbi languages: “[...] Preverbal pronouns tend to be phonologically reduced and, impressionistically, show prosodic dependence on the following verb, while Non-preverbal pronouns tend to be prosodically free.” (Good et al. 2011: 113).

Table 6.4 gives an overview of all preverbal pronouns. The second person singular pronoun **à** and the Class 1 and Class 9 pronouns **wù** and **yì** bear a low tone. The other pronouns bear a mid tone,⁴ except for the Class 2 (or third person plural) pronoun **bǔ** which bears a superhigh tone. There is no simple explanation in terms of floating tones for the tonal difference between preverbal and non-preverbal pronouns. Neither of the two can be derived from the other by referring to regular tonal processes.

| person | gender | SG | PL |
|--------|--------|-----------|------------|
| 1st | | N | bī |
| 2nd | | à | bēn |
| 3rd | 1/2 | wù | bǔ |
| | 3/10 | wū | yī |
| | 3/7a | wū | kī |
| | 7/8 | kī | bī |
| | 9/10 | yì | yī |
| | 19/18 | fī | mū |
| | 6a | | mū |
| | 3a | | wū |
| | 8a | | bī |
| | 10a | | yī |
| 7b | | kī | |

Table 6.4: Preverbal forms of personal pronouns

The first person preverbal pronoun **N** differs from the other pronouns regarding both its phonological and its syntactic behaviour. It is usually not syllabic and, specifically in negative sentences, its syntactic behaviour is different from that of other pronouns. Instead of preceding the negative marker **ā** like other pronouns do, see (80a) and (80b), the first person preverbal pronoun follows the negative marker, thus directly preceding the first element

⁴The first person singular pronoun can in rare cases be syllabic, in which case it bears a superhigh tone. However, it is not quite clear under which conditions this is the case. This grammar does not contain an example.

of the verbal core (80c). The relevant pronouns in these and the following examples are underlined.

- (80) a. bǎ ā tʃyé wō
 CL2 NEG know(c) NEG
 ‘He doesn’t know.’
 b. wà ā tʃyé wō
 2SG NEG know(c) NEG
 ‘You don’t know.’
 c. ā n=tʃyé wō
 NEG 1SG = know(c) NEG
 ‘I don’t know.’

Examples (81)-(84) contain instances of preverbal pronouns.

- (81) ǒ, n=dí f-án, ŋ=kǒ kù kpī mī
 INTERJ 1SG = be(b) PROX-here 1SG = HAB cry(a) CL9/10.death 1SG
 wān
 CL1.child
 ‘Oh! I am here mourning my child’s death.’
 (82) bī kù dzí gàn kyēn mī
 1PL cry(a) walk_around(b) go(a) CL7/8.soul in
 ‘We are crying in the soul.’
 (83) wù sé dzá á mō~mō
 CL1 be_hot(c) CL7.mouth ADVLZ ONE~RED
 ‘She is very active!’ (lit.: She is very hot in her mouth.)
 (84) bǎ dzí mǎ múntù mī múntù mī
 CL2 travel(b) only CL7/8.car in CL7/8.car in
 ‘They only ever travel by car.’

It is worth noting that second person singular pronouns take a mid tone when they form the subject of an “irrealis clause”,⁵ as in (85) and (86). More research is needed to determine the exact nature of this tone change.

- (85) n=dí kǎ-fō dzī wá lā yē ā gān
 1SG = be(b) NMLZ-report(a) CL9.road 2SG.PP DAT SUBORD 2SG go(a)
 dǎ wān w-ā yē
 see(a) CL1.child CL1-2SG.POSS QUOT.Q

⁵See Lovegren (2013: pp.91-93) on the ‘irrealis’ category in Mungbam.

‘Can I show you the way to your child?’

- (86) Pě bɔŋ kē gān wù yē ní ŋkɔ byé yē
 P. call(a) return(c) go(a) CL1 COMP CL1.mother N. B. COMP
 yó tʃū ā tʃū mū mū mbí
 go_up(c) come(b) 2SG come(b) take(a) drink(b) CL6.palm_wine

‘Pe called her to come back: Mother of Ngko of Bie! You should come and drink your wine.’⁶

6.1.2 Non-preverbal pronouns

Only the first and second person singular non-preverbal pronoun differ segmentally from the respective preverbal pronouns. Table 6.5 gives an overview of all non-preverbal pronouns. Like in the preverbal forms, the second person singular pronoun and the Class 1 and Class 9 pronoun bear a low tone and the other non-third person pronouns (first person singular and plural and second person plural) bear a mid tone. Unlike the respective preverbal pronouns, all other non-preverbal (third person) pronouns bear a superhigh tone.

| person | gender | SG | PL |
|--------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 1st | | mī | bī |
| 2nd | | wà | bēn |
| 3rd | 1/2 | wù | bɔ |
| | 3/10 | wú | yí |
| | 3/7a | wú | kí |
| | 7/8 | kí | bí |
| | 9/10 | yì | yí |
| | 19/18 | fí | mú |
| | 6a | mú | |
| | 3a | wú | |
| 8a | bí | | |
| 10a | yí | | |
| 7b | kí | | |

Table 6.5: Non-preverbal forms of personal pronouns

Examples (87)-(90) show non-preverbal pronouns in context. The non-preverbal pronouns in the examples are underlined.

- (87) yē gǎn tsē mī ā ntsɔ́m mū-ŋ-gē~ŋ-gē
 COMP go(a) find(a) 1SG COM CL6.soil CL6-N-be_red(a)~RED

‘...: Go and find me some red soil!’

⁶Pe is the short form for ‘Petrus’.

- (88) tó á kà dī yē bē kà bú sō wù áká
 there P3 be(b) COMP IMPERS P3 give_birth(c) first CL1 like

‘If they had born him first instead of...’⁷

- (89) ká bǎ kà mū kpān, wù tsú bǎ
 COND CL2 P3 drink(b) be_full(b) CL1 hit(b) CL2

‘When they had drunk enough, he beat them.’

- (90) à mī tén wú kyà mī
 2SG CONSEC dry(c) CL3 CL9.basket in

‘and then you dry it [the soaked corn] in a basket.’

6.1.3 Pronouns as objects of the comitative preposition ā

All third person pronouns which normally bear a superhigh tone in non-preverbal position, i.e. all third person pronouns of classes other than Class 1 and 9, are realized with a LH rising tone when they are the object of a comitative preposition, as e.g. in (91).

- (91) wù gān [ā bǎ] dǎwō
 3SG go(a) COM CL2 CL1/2.water_place

‘[and] he went with them to the stream.’

Pronouns with low tones retain their tones after the comitative preposition and nouns generally don’t change their tone patterns. It is possible that the underlying tone pattern of the comitative preposition ā is in fact ML. The falling tone ML is commonly pronounced like a mid tone when it occurs in non-final position. A floating low, on the other hand, docks to the right, turning a subsequent superhigh tone into a LH rising tone, cf. §3.4.2. For more on the comitative construction, see §10.2.1.1 and §11.3.3.

6.1.4 Pronouns as objects of postpositions

Table 6.6 shows the form of pronouns when they are the object of a postposition. Segmentally, they are identical with the non-preverbal pronouns, but their tones differ. The Class 2 (or third person plural) pronoun is realized bǎ with a low/high rising tone and all other pronouns bear a high tone when headed by a postposition. Thus, the distinction between Class 1 and Class 3/3a and the distinction between Class 9 and Class 10/10a are neutralized when the pronoun is the object of a postposition.

⁷While the speaker was trying to come up with the name, the listener intervened: “Cypren”.

| person | gender | SG | PL |
|--------|--------|-----------|------------|
| 1st | | mí | bí |
| 2nd | | wá | bén |
| 3rd | 1/2 | wú | bǒ |
| | 3/10 | wú | yí |
| | 3/7a | wú | kí |
| | 7/8 | kí | bí |
| | 9/10 | yí | yí |
| | 19/18 | fí | mú |
| | 6a | mú | |
| | 3a | wú | |
| | 8a | bí | |
| | 10a | yí | |
| | 7b | kí | |

Table 6.6: Forms of personal pronouns when they are the object of a postposition

Examples (92)-(96) contain various instances of pronouns which are the object of a postposition. Postpositional phrases in the examples are enclosed in square brackets.

- (92) wù fò tʃú [mí lā], yē lòn b-ó
 CL1 tell(a).IPFV come(b).IPFV 1SG.PP DAT COMP CL8.suffering CL8-DET
 yí nìm tí mī
 eat(b).IPFV sit(a).IPFV surprisingly 1SG

‘She told me: I am suffering.’

- (93) bǒ fò tʃú [bí lā] yē bǒ tsè
 CL2 tell(a).IPFV come(b).IPFV 1PL.PP DAT COMP CL2 search(a)
 dzí gàn kpó
 walk_around(b) go(a) CL3/7a.money

‘They are telling us that they are searching for money.’

- (94) à bòn gàn kpé (é), wù dzé tʃú
 2SG call(a) go(a) CL1.woman INTERJ CL1 say(b).IPFV come(b).IPFV
 [wá lā] yē (o) kpó wú dǐ mě
 2SG.PP DAT COMP INTERJ CL3/7a.money CL3;3SG.POSS be(b) only
 kām bī-kpōn, bwē
 CL7/8.thousand CL8-five CL1/2.friend

‘If you call a woman, she will tell you that her price is always 5000 francs, my friend.’

- (95) nsōŋ wū dzé [wú lā] yē wà, à dǐ
 CL1.friend CL1;3SG.POSS say(b) CL1PP DAT COMP 2SG, 2SG be(b)
 kpé bǒ
 CL1.woman CL1.bad

‘Her friend said to her: You are a bad woman!’

- (96) bā dzé gàn [bǒ lā] yē bán bō á
 IMPERS say(b) go(a) CL2PP DAT COMP CL1/2.outside be_bad(a) ADVLZ
 kī-lī
 NMLZ-be_strong(a)

‘They are telling them that [the world] outside is very bad.’

The postposition *lā*, which roughly translates into English as ‘for’, is the postposition which is most common with pronominal objects. Other postpositions occur more commonly with full nouns as objects. However, there are also examples of pronouns as objects of other postpositions; see (97) and (98).

- (97) à mī nīm ʃi bá dè nā bō
 2SG CONSEC sit(a) go_down(a) exactly CL9.place SUBORD IMPERS
 kpā f-ś gū, ā fi-ŋgī [wá
 light_fire(a).IPFV LOC-REL CL3/7a.fire COM CL19-water 2SG.PP
 kân]
 hands.LOC

‘Then (you will) sit down exactly where they make fire, with a bit of water in your hand.’

- (98) yǎ nō ʃi y-ś kè kpī y-ś
 CL9/10.year SUBORD CL9/10.fowl CL10-DET P3 die(b) CL10-REL
 [yí mī] ...
 CL10.PP in ...

‘The year in which the chickens died ...’

The first person pronoun is realized as *míŋ* with a final velar nasal when it precedes a postposition which begins with a velar consonant, see (99).

- (99) m = bú mó à, dǐ mān nō à tǎn k-ś
 1SG = ask(b) CS.QUOT Q be(b) what SUBORD 2SG refuse(b) CL7-REL
 mbí m-ś [míŋ kân] ā
 CL6.wine CL6-DET 1SG.PP hands.LOC QUOT.Q

‘I asked [her]: Why is it, that you refuse the wine from my hands?.’

The postposition *kân*, as contained in (97) and (99), meaning roughly ‘in someone’s hands’ is derived from the noun *kè* ‘hand/s’. It is one of several

postpositions derived from body parts, many of which are formally identical to the body part nouns. The postpositional phrase involving the owner of the body part as the object of the postposition differs structurally from the possessive phrase involving body part and owner. For more on comparable constructions, see §10.2.2.1.

6.1.5 Benefactive pronouns

The first person singular pronoun **mī** ‘1_{SG}’ and the interrogative pronoun **ndè** ‘who’ have special benefactive forms. The label benefactive is meant to show that the referent of the pronoun is commonly the recipient or benefactor of an action. The forms are **ndá** for the first person singular pronoun and **ndyén** for the interrogative pronoun ‘who’. The choice between the first person singular non-preverbal pronoun and the first person singular benefactive pronoun in this context seems to be free, but the benefactive pronoun is clearly preferred. For illustration, examples are given in (100). The postpositional phrase is enclosed in square brackets in this and the following examples. While example (100a) employs the first person singular non-preverbal pronoun, (100b) uses the special benefactive pronoun. The first person singular benefactive pronoun is followed by the postposition **lā** ‘for’. Benefactive forms in this and the following examples are glossed DAT.

- (100) a. à mī tʃú fě [mí lā]
2_{SG} CONSEC come(b) give(b) 1_{SG}.PP DAT
 ‘[...] and then you come and give it to me!’
- b. gbàm ká mī tsò dzī dzóŋ [ndá lā]
CL7_b.God COND CONSEC show(a) CL9.way CL9.good 1_{SG}.DAT DAT
first, ...
 first
 ‘First, God would show me the right way...’

The interrogative benefactive pronoun **ndyén** ‘for/to whom’ can be followed by a postposition but is usually not. It often stands alone, representing the whole “postpositional phrase” as seen in (101b), which contrasts with (101a). Like with the first person singular pronoun, the use of the benefactive form **ndyén** is not obligatory, but it seems to be preferred.

- (101) a. fě fě ndè kpě [ĩ ntí lā]
P1 give(b) who CL3.money LOC N. DAT
 ‘Who gave Ntie money (earlier today)?’
- b. nùŋfù fě fě kpě w-ó [ndyén]
N. P1 give(b) CL3.money CL3-DET who.DAT
 ‘Who did Nyungfu give the money to (earlier today)?’

The benefactive object can be preceded by the locative marker ʔ, as in (102). However, the presence of the marker is not obligatory. For more on the encoding of benefactives (or datives), see §10.2 and §11.3.5.

- (102) ǎ dzú wú ɲgò nō wù kà dzé w-ɔ
 ADVLZ CL3.WORD CL3;3SG.POSS upon SUBORD CL1 P3 say(b) CL3-REL
 [ʔ ndá lā] yē bī ká kán gbō school
 LOC 1SG.DAT DAT COMP 1PL F2 have(c) CL3.house CL1.school

‘According to what he said to me, that we will have a school, [...]’

6.1.6 Compound pronouns

What had been analyzed as compound pronouns in (Good et al. 2011: 128-129) has been reanalyzed as a special case of inclusory conjunction and is treated accordingly in §7.2.2.2.

6.2 The dummy subject

The dummy subject consists of a floating low tone which precedes the verbal complex when the subject follows the verb. This is the case when the subject is in focus (see §14.2.3 for details). The dummy subject directly precedes the verb complex and causes a subsequent element with a superhigh tone, such as e.g., a class B verb, like **tsú** ‘hit’ in (103) or the hodiernal past (P1) marker **fǒ** in (104), to be realized with a LH rising tone. When the subsequent element does not have a superhigh tone, as e.g. in (105), its tone pattern is not affected and the dummy subject is not detectable.

- (103) tsú ɲkɔ̃ ɲùŋfù
 DS.hit(b) N. N.

◊‘NGKO hit Nyungfu.’

- (104) fǎ fǒ ndè kpɔ̃ ʔ ntí lā
 DS.P1 give(b) who CL3/7a.money LOC N. DAT

◊‘Who gave money to Ntie?’

- (105) yíŋ ndè gbō w-ɛ́n
 DS.build(c) who CL3.house CL3-DEM.PROX

◊‘Who built this house?’

I use the term ‘dummy subject’ for convenience, although I am aware that the Mundabli phenomenon does not meet the common definition of the term. In the long run, it would be good to revise the current analysis. In fact, the phenomenon seems to be more reminiscent of the ‘disfluentive verb forms’ described in Good (2010: pp.8-10 and 18) for the related language Naki.

6.3 The impersonal subject pronoun *bā*

The impersonal subject pronoun *bā* is used when the identity of the agent is irrelevant, e.g. in cases where some languages would employ a passive. Examples of the impersonal subject pronoun *bā* are found in (106) and (107). The agent in both examples is human, but it is not a specific person or group of people. The impersonal pronoun *bā* is formally distinct from the Class 2 (or third person plural) pronoun *bǎ*.

- (106) *then* wù mī mū ŋmkpǎŋ k-ɔ́ *bā* ká nīm
then CL1 CONSEC take(a) CL7/8.stool CL7-DET IMPERS HAB sit(a)
 k-ɔ́ kǐ wǒ, wù mū dè y-ɔ́ *bā* ká nīm
 CL7-REL CL7PP on CL1 take(a) CL9.place CL9-DET IMPERS HAB sit(a)
 f-ɔ́, wù mū fyē dʒi jɪ í dzò
 LOC-REL CL1 take(a) turn(c) put(a) go_down(a) LOC down

‘Then he took the stool that people sit on, he took the part that one sits on, he took it and turned it upside down.’

- (107) à mī gàn dè gbō wān w-ā
 2SG CONSEC go(a) see(a) CL3.house CL1.child CL1-2SG.POSS
 sè *bā* nà̀n tsè fín *and then*
 house_front.LOC IMPERS fix(a) CL7/8.bundle_of_grass there and then
bā mí dʒi mù-nám í gbō w-ɔ́
 IMPERS CONSEC put(a) CL18-cloth_strip LOC CL3.house CL3-DET
 sè
 house_front.LOC

‘You will then go and see on the frontside of your child’s house that a bundle of grass is fixed there, and small long strips of cloth are attached to the front of the house.’

In fact, the use of the impersonal pronoun in Mundabli essentially corresponds to the use of the French impersonal pronoun *on*. Like French *on*, it is also used in hortative-like constructions, as in (108).

- (108) tʃū, *bā* yī
 come(b) IMPERS eat(b)

‘Come, let us eat!’

6.4 Interrogative pronouns

Mundabli uses two interrogative pronouns: *ndè* ‘who’ and *mān* ‘what’. While interrogatives are treated in detail in Chapter 15.1, here I will discuss those aspects which are relevant to the general discussion of pronouns.

The interrogative pronouns **mān** ‘what’ and **ndè** ‘who’ are treated in some detail in §15.1.2.10 which deals specifically with agreement in interrogative pronouns. They allow, or even require, noun class marking under certain circumstances. However, as pointed out in §15.1.2.10, both interrogative pronouns can only take one of the agreement prefixes, namely **ki-** (Class 7) for **mān** and **bɔ-** (Class 2) for **ndè**. The agreement prefixes are used when the speaker already has a referent in mind, i.e. it implies a certain degree of definiteness. Examples (109) and (110) illustrate the use of interrogative pronouns with and without agreement prefixes.

(109) *ɲùŋfù fě mān ntí lā*
N. give(b) what N. DAT

◊‘What did Nyungfu give Ntie?’

(110) *dě kì-mān, ɲùŋfù fě fě k-ɔ í ntí lā*
be(b) CL7-what N. P1 give(b) CL7-REL LOC N. DAT

◊‘What is it that Nyungfu gave to Ntie?’

6.5 Indefinite pronouns

The indefinite pronoun **kì-mān** ‘whatever’ or ‘anything’ is identical to the prefix-bearing form of the interrogative pronoun. This is a so-called ‘free-choice indefinite’ (Haspelmath 2011). As Haspelmath points out, “[i]ndefinites that express free choice, and more generally indefinites that translate as any-indefinites in English, seem to have a greater tendency to be interrogative-based than indefinites that are used in affirmative declarative realis sentences (roughly corresponding to English some-indefinites)”. Mundabli seems to confirm this observation, since only its free-choice indefinites are based on interrogatives. Examples of indefinite pronouns are presented in (111) and (112).

(111) *ká wù dzyè kě ɲām b-ɔ wú lā, kě kì-mān*
COND CL1 cook(a) even CL8a.fufu CL8a-DET CL1PP DAT even CL7-what
dō, ká wù yí wù yí wù yí, wù mū jú
stay(b) COND CL1 eat(b) CL1 eat(b) CL1 eat(b) CL1 take(a) come(b)
nsóm mū-ntjín m-ɔ, wù fě gàn ɲwóm
CL19/18.crumb CL18-small CL18-DET CL1 give(b) go(a) CL2.children
b-ɔ lā
CL2-DET DAT

‘When she cooks, even [if it’s only] fufu, for herself, even whatever [small thing] remains, when she eats, she eats and eats, she takes [only] little crumbs and gives [them] to the children.’

- (112) à dzě kì-mān wú lā, wù ā wǐ wō
 2SG say(b) CL7-what CL1PP DAT CL1 NEG hear(c).IPFV NEG
 ◊‘Whatever you say to him, he does not listen.’