

# THE DENYA NOUN CLASS SYSTEM

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The aim of this article is to describe the noun class system of Denya, a Bantu language spoken in Akwaya Sub-Division, Upper Banyang Sub-Division in the South-West Province, Republic of Cameroon. Denya is also spoken in parts of Nigeria.

The language has been analysed as having ten noun classes which function to mark the number of the noun and its gender. The classification of the noun into various classes is motivated partly by the semantics of the noun as in genders 1/2 and 9/10. Other nouns are classified by the phonemic realisation of the noun prefix

A study of the various nouns shows that there is a gradual shifting from Proto-Bantu.

Le but de cet article est de décrire les classes nominales en Denya, une langue Bantoue parlée dans les arrondissements d'Akwaya, et de Haut Banyang dans la Province du Sud-Ouest en République du Cameroun. Cette langue est aussi parlée au Nigéria.

La langue Denya a dix classes qui marquent le nombre des noms et les différents genres. La classification des noms dans les différentes classes est motivée en partie par la classification au niveau sémantique comme c'est par exemple le cas dans les classes nominales 1/2 et 9/10. La classification d'autres noms est motivée par le comportement phonologique des préfixes. Il ressort des données décrites dans cet article que le comportement des noms se démarque progressivement du Proto-Bantou.

## 0. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to describe the noun class system of Denya<sup>1</sup> using the commonly adopted system of labelling noun classes in Bantu languages (Meeussen, 1962).

Denya is spoken mainly in Akwaya Sub-Division and Upper Banyang Sub-Division of the South-West Province of the Republic of Cameroon, and in Nigeria, by approximately 20,000 inhabitants. It is a Southern Bantoid language belonging to the Nyang sub-group. (Williamson 1971). Denya is made up of four main dialects, namely: Takamada, Basho, Bitieku, and Bajwa. Takamanda and Basho are named after villages located in the centre of their respective dialect areas. The other two, Bitieku and Bajwa, are named after the clans which speak them.

## 1. OVERVIEW OF VOWELS, CONSONANTS, AND TONE

### 1.1 VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

Denya has a seven vowel system: **a, e, ε, i, ɔ, o, u**.

The consonant phonemes of Denya may be represented as follows:

(1)	Voiceless plosive	<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>k</b>	<b>kp</b>	
	Voiced plosive	<b>b</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>gb</b>	
	Nasal	<b>m</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>ɲ</b>	<b>ŋ</b>	<b>ŋm</b>
	Voiceless fricative	<b>f</b>	<b>s</b>			<b>h</b>
	Voiced fricative	<b>v</b>				
	Voiceless affricate			<b>tʃ</b>		(continued...)

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Voiced affricate		<b>dʒ</b>	
Lateral	<b>l</b>		
Flap	<b>r</b>		
Approximant		<b>y</b>	<b>w</b>

## 1.2 TONE

Denya has two level tones, high [´] and low [˘], and two contour tones, rising [ˆ] and falling [ˆ]; and a downstep high [ˆˆ].

## 2. THE NOUN CLASSES

The language has been analysed as having ten noun classes, which function to mark the number of the noun and its gender (see §4). The markers of the nouns and the various concord markers are cognate with Proto-Bantu noun prefixes (cf. Meeussen 1962 for Proto-Bantu forms). They are therefore numbered here according to their cognate Proto-Bantu noun classes.

The following criteria have been used to establish the individual noun classes as contrastive:

- (a) the occurrence of the nouns with a specific set of concord elements,
- (b) the noun prefixes,
- (c) the pairing of a certain class with another class as singular and plural.

This criterion can of course not be applied when the singular/plural dichotomy is irrelevant (i.e. for mass, abstract nouns, and single class genders, etc.).

### THE NOUN PREFIXES

In this section, each class is taken in turn and the noun prefix is identified and correlated with its Proto-Bantu equivalent:

- (2) a. **Class 1 N-, me-** *Proto-Bantu: \*mu-*

<b>m̄-fwà</b>	chief
<b>m̄-tè</b>	father
<b>m̄-fwé</b>	slave
<b>m̄-ndè</b>	man
<b>m̄-ndê</b>	woman
<b>m̄-nò</b>	husband

- b. **Class 2 a-** *Proto-Bantu: \*ba-*

<b>à-fwà</b>	chiefs
<b>à-fwé</b>	slaves
<b>à-ndè</b>	men
<b>à-ndê</b>	woman
<b>à-nò</b>	husbands

c. *Class 3 me-*, *Proto-Bantu: \*mu-*

mè-kpò	head
mè-wè	fire
mè-kě	pasture

Class 3 nouns look like Proto-Bantu Class 4 nouns. Class 3 has been chosen because it is a singular class, while Class 4 is plural.

d. *Class 5 ne-* *Proto-Bantu: \*i-*

nè-gò	navel
nè-gbò	death
nè-kò	parcel
nè-bé	precipice
nè-byé	birth
nè-gílí	charcoal
nè-gyǎ	crab
nè-mbê	breast
nè-ŋkǒ	shoulder

Nouns with the prefix **ne-** have been designated as Class 5, because **ne-** resembles Proto-Bantu Class 5 *\*le-* as reconstructed by Welmers (1973:165).

e. *Class 6 ma-* *Proto-Bantu: \*ma-*

mà-kpò	heads
mà-wè	fires
mà-kě	pastures
mà-gò	navels
mà-gbò	deaths
mà-kò	parcels

*Classes 6 and 6a* are distinguished from each other by their possessives.

f. *Class 6a ma-* *Proto-Bantu: \*ma-*

mà-nǎ	water
mà-wě	oil
mà-tyé	spittle
mà-nǒ	blood
mà-twò	ashes

g. *Class 7 ge-* *Proto-Bantu: \*ki-*

gé-bà	bag
gè-pú	house
gè-kú	wooden bowl
gè-pǎ	mud
gè-pà	wound
gé-ŋkò	bumble bee

<b>gè-ηòηò</b>	caterpillar
<b>gé-bwí</b>	forest
<b>gè-kpèlè</b>	grub (from wood)
<b>gè-nòmè</b>	dry season
<b>gè-ηòηò</b>	bumble bee

h. *Class 8 u-, o- Proto-Bantu: \*bi-*

<b>ú-bà</b>	bags
<b>ù-pú</b>	houses
<b>ù-kú</b>	wooden bowls
<b>ù-pǎ</b>	mud
<b>ù-pà</b>	wounds
<b>ú-ηkò</b>	bumble bees
<b>ù-ηòηò</b>	caterpillars
<b>ú-bwí</b>	forests
<b>ù-kpèlè</b>	grubs (from wood)
<b>ò-nòmè</b>	dry seasons
<b>ò-ηòηò</b>	bumble bees

In Class 8, **u** > **o** as a result of vowel lowering.

i. *Class 9 N-, me- Proto-Bantu: \*N-*

<b>ṁ-myò</b>	snake
<b>ṅ-ηmè</b>	goat
<b>ṁ-pò</b>	cow
<b>ṁ-myǒ</b>	porcupine
<b>ṅ-kúmǒ</b>	crows
<b>ṅ-kòm</b>	green grasshopper
<b>ṅ-kòmèwó</b>	snail
<b>mè-ṅà</b>	meat
<b>mè-sè</b>	monkey
<b>mè-wè</b>	tortoise

j. *Class 10 N-, me- Proto-Bantu: \*N-*

<b>ṁ-myò</b>	snakes
<b>ṅ-ηmè</b>	goats
<b>ṁ-pò</b>	cows
<b>ṁ-myǒ</b>	porcupines
<b>ṅ-kúmǒ</b>	crows
<b>mè-ṅà</b>	meat
<b>mè-sè</b>	monkey
<b>mè-wè</b>	tortoise

k. *Class 13 de- Proto-Bantu: \*tu-*

<b>dè-sǎ</b>	cutlasses
<b>dè-tè</b>	duikers

<b>dè-tò</b>	axes
<b>dè-kwòné</b>	mudfishes
<b>dè-nò</b>	bicycle
<b>dè-fǒ</b>	brain
<b>dè-bì</b>	excrement
<b>dè-bà</b>	dirt
<b>dè-fĩ</b>	pus
<b>dè-fwé</b>	slavery

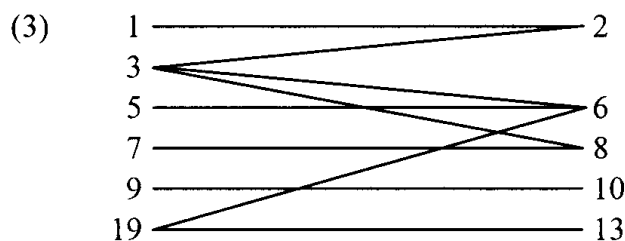
1. *Class 19* ε- *Proto-Bantu: \*pi-*

<b>è-sǎ</b>	cutlass
<b>è-tè</b>	duiker
<b>è-tò</b>	axe
<b>è-kwòné</b>	mudfish
<b>è-bě</b>	river
<b>è-bá</b>	fufu
<b>è-bòbá</b>	blouse
<b>è-tù</b>	ear
<b>è-nò</b>	centipede
<b>è-só</b>	drought
<b>è-vò</b>	musical instrument
<b>è-wě</b>	firewood
<b>è-tògèfò</b>	cattle egret
<b>è-nókù</b>	toe
<b>è-ndò</b>	bat

3. THE NOUN GENDERS

Nouns of the classes described in the previous section frequently pair up as to singular and plural. This pairing is commonly referred to as GENDER. There are other nouns that remain unpaired, in which case they form single class genders. In the double class genders, one class marks the member nouns for singular and the other for plural. In the single class genders, the members are mass nouns, collective nouns or abstract nouns, etc.

In the diagram below, double class genders are indicated by lines joining two class members. The numbers on the left refer to singular nouns, those on the right to plural nouns (except for Gender 6a, which deals with liquids).



Class 6 is the most widely used class.

Table 1. The Relative Size of Genders

<i>Double Class Genders</i>			<i>Single Class Genders</i>		
Gender	No. of Nouns	%	Gender	No. of Nouns	%
1/2	100	15.92	1	35	5.57
3/6	57	9.07	2	17	2.70
3/2	5	0.79	3	27	4.29
3/8	4	0.63	5	24	3.82
5/6	39	6.21	6a	30	4.77
7/8	104	16.56	7	45	7.16
9/10	41	6.52	8	29	4.61
19/6	18	2.86	13	13	2.07
19/13	25	3.98	19	15	2.38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>62.60</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>37.40</b>

The following facts are apparent from the above table:

1. Of the nouns in this sample, 62.54% are count nouns having a singular and plural.
2. Gender 1/2 and 7/8 are the most typical double class genders. They account for 32% of the count nouns.

### 3.1 THE SEMANTICS OF THE NOUN GENDERS

In the past, Bantu noun classes may have been based on a semantic classification of the nouns, but now it appears to be to a certain extent an arbitrary system in which no one class contains nouns of only one semantic class. Class 6a refers to uncountable nouns.

There are still, however, some correlations worth noting between semantics and the noun classes in Denya:

- a. Most nouns which have a human referent are in Gender 1/2.
- b. Many liquids are found in Gender 6a.
- c. Many paired body parts are found in Gender 7/13.
- d. Many animals are found in Gender 9/10.

### 3.2 THE DOUBLE CLASS GENDERS

Examples of each double class Gender are presented below:

(3)	a. <i>Gender 1/2</i>	<b>N-, me-</b>	and	<b>a-</b>	
	<b>m-byà</b>	flute		<b>à-mbyà</b>	flutes
	<b>m-fwà</b>	chief		<b>à-fwà</b>	chiefs
	<b>n-tè</b>	father		<b>à-ntè</b>	fathers
	<b>mè-fwé</b>	slave		<b>à-fwé</b>	slaves
	<b>m-bì</b>	thread		<b>à-mbì</b>	threads
	<b>mè-nò</b>	husband		<b>à-nò</b>	husbands
	<b>mè-ŋkě</b>	stranger		<b>à-ŋkě</b>	strangers
	<b>mè-ŋmô</b>	brother		<b>à-ŋmô</b>	brothers
	<b>mè-ndè</b>	man		<b>à-ndè</b>	men

b. <i>Gender 3/2</i>	<b>me-</b>	and	<b>a-</b>	
<b>mè-mbè</b>	star		<b>à-mbè</b>	stars
<b>mè-gò</b>	python		<b>à-gò</b>	pythons
<b>mè-wúmbù</b>	mole		<b>à-wúmbù</b>	moles
<b>mè-swámì</b>	palm nut		<b>á-swámì</b>	palm nuts
<b>mé-má</b>	kernel		<b>á-má</b>	kernels
c. <i>Gender 3/6</i>	<b>me-</b>	and	<b>ma-</b>	
<b>mè-gò</b>	palm oil tree		<b>mà-gò</b>	palm oil trees
<b>mè-kpò</b>	head		<b>mà-kpò</b>	heads
<b>mè-lù</b>	space		<b>mà-lù</b>	spaces
<b>mè-ló</b>	fairy		<b>mà-ló</b>	fairies
d. <i>Gender 3/8</i>	<b>me-</b>	and	<b>u-</b>	
<b>mè-kì</b>	gorilla		<b>ù-kì</b>	gorillas
<b>mè-kwálá</b>	leopard		<b>ù-kwálá</b>	leopards
<b>mè-kwèdè</b>	pig		<b>ù-kwèdè</b>	pigs
<b>mè-sò mèkě</b>	baboon		<b>ù-sò mèkě</b>	baboons
e. <i>Genders 5/6</i>	<b>ne-</b>	and	<b>ma-</b>	
<b>nè-gò</b>	navel		<b>mà-gò</b>	navels
<b>nè-ntó</b>	pimple		<b>mà-ntó</b>	pimples
<b>nè-ṅá</b>	hawk		<b>mà-ṅá</b>	hawks
<b>nè-mê</b>	sickness		<b>mà-mê</b>	sicknesses
<b>nè-gílí</b>	charcoal		<b>mà-gílí</b>	charcoals
<b>nè-dzwo</b>	debt		<b>mà-dzwo</b>	debts
<b>/nè-bà/</b>	marriage		<b>/mà-bà/</b>	marriages
f. <i>Genders 7/8</i>	<b>ge-</b>	and	<b>u-, o-</b>	
<b>gè-bò</b>	placenta		<b>ù-bò</b>	placentas
<b>gè-fère</b>	joint		<b>ù-fère</b>	joints
<b>gè-ká</b>	leg		<b>ù-ká</b>	legs
<b>gè-ṅòṅò</b>	bumble bee		<b>ù-ṅòṅò</b>	bumble bees
<b>gé-bwí</b>	forest		<b>ó-bwí</b>	forests
<b>gè-nòmè</b>	dry season		<b>ò-nòmè</b>	dry seasons
<b>gè-ṅòṅò</b>	bumble bee		<b>ò-ṅòṅò</b>	bumble bees
g. <i>Gender 9/10</i>	<b>me-, N-</b>	and	<b>me-, N-</b>	

There seems to be a merger between class 9 and class 3. Their singular and plural forms are distinguished only in the pronominal system. This is seen in some of the prefixes below:

<b>m̄-myò</b>	snake	<b>m̄-myò</b>	snakes
<b>m̄-pò</b>	cows	<b>m̄-pò</b>	cows
<b>ṅ-ṅmè</b>	goat	<b>ṅ-ṅmè</b>	goats
<b>m̄-myõ</b>	porcupine	<b>m̄-myõ</b>	porcupines

<b>jà-tʃwè-jìtʃwè</b>	sunbird	<b>jà-tʃwè-jìtʃwè</b>	sunbirds
<b>ń-<sup>4</sup>dóŋ</b>	jigger	<b>ń-<sup>4</sup>dóŋ</b>	jiggers
<b>ń-pò-màtũ</b>	donkey	<b>ń-pò-màtũ</b>	donkeys
<b>mè-sè</b>	monkey	<b>mè-sè</b>	monkeys
<b>mè-wè</b>	tortoise	<b>mè-wè</b>	tortoises
<b>h. Gender 19/6</b>			
<b>ε-</b>	and	<b>ma-</b>	
<b>è-kàmùwò</b>	fairy tale	<b>mà-kàmùwò</b>	fairy tales
<b>è-bé</b>	law	<b>mà-bé</b>	laws
<b>è-fě</b>	mirror	<b>mà-fě</b>	mirrors
<b>è-kwò</b>	song	<b>mà-kwò</b>	songs
<b>è-nà</b>	thigh	<b>mà-nà</b>	thighs
<b>è-pǎ</b>	ceremony	<b>mà-pǎ</b>	ceremonies
<b>è-tù</b>	ear	<b>mà-tù</b>	ears
<b>è-tárávé</b>	rock	<b>mà-tárávé</b>	rocks
<b>è-kàmè</b>	story	<b>mà-kàmè</b>	stories
<b>é-<sup>4</sup>kpâ</b>	basket (a type)	<b>má-<sup>4</sup>kpâ</b>	baskets (a type)
<b>é-<sup>4</sup>kpê</b>	canoe	<b>má-<sup>4</sup>kpê</b>	canoes
<b>é-<sup>4</sup>kpélé</b>	drum (a type)	<b>má-<sup>4</sup>kpélé</b>	drums (a type)
<b>è-tà</b>	jaw	<b>mà-tà</b>	jaws
<b>è-tògèfò</b>	cattle egret	<b>mà-tògèfò</b>	cattle egrets
<b>è-tʃyè</b>	bridge	<b>mà-tʃyè</b>	bridges
<b>é-dìmbá</b>	clay pot (a type)	<b>má-dìmbá</b>	clay pots
<b>é-fímbò</b>	mouse	<b>má-fímbò</b>	mice
<b>é-fógéyù</b>	umbrella	<b>má-fógéyù</b>	umbrellas
<b>è-gbà</b>	armpit	<b>mà-gbà</b>	armpits
<b>è-gó-<sup>4</sup>ŋŋmè</b>	sheep	<b>mà-gó-<sup>4</sup>ŋŋmè</b>	sheep
<b>é-dzàgèmpwìrì</b>	butterfly	<b>má-dzàgèmpwìrì</b>	butterflies
<b>è-pǎ</b>	feast	<b>mà-pǎ</b>	feasts
<b>i. Genders 19/13</b>			
<b>ε-</b>	and	<b>de-</b>	
<b>è-sǎ</b>	cutlass	<b>dè-sǎ</b>	cutlasses
<b>è-tò</b>	axe	<b>dè-tò</b>	axes
<b>è-<sup>4</sup>nwòné</b>	bird	<b>dè-<sup>4</sup>nwòné</b>	birds
<b>è-kwì</b>	maggot	<b>dè-kwì</b>	maggots
<b>è-bábálè</b>	sunfly	<b>dè-bábálè</b>	sunflies
<b>è-kwòné</b>	mudfish	<b>dè-kwòné</b>	mudfishes
<b>è-kù</b>	water buck	<b>dè-kù</b>	water bucks
<b>é-fó-mègìlì</b>	mite	<b>dé-fó-mègìlì</b>	mites
<b>é-fò</b>	tick	<b>dé-fò</b>	ticks
<b>é-gómé</b>	locust	<b>dé-gómé</b>	locusts
<b>è-kàndá</b>	belt	<b>dè-kàndá</b>	belts
<b>é-<sup>4</sup>kpókpógélé</b>	table	<b>dé-<sup>4</sup>kpókpógélé</b>	tables
<b>è-kwìyá</b>	wooden spoon	<b>dè-kwìyá</b>	wooden spoons
<b>è-kwòlè</b>	moth	<b>dè-kwòlè</b>	moths
<b>è-lá-gèfwà</b>	crown	<b>dè-làré-gèfwà</b>	crowns



<b>è-lù</b>	onion	<b>dè-lù</b>	onions
<b>è-mbê</b>	bow	<b>dé-mbê</b>	bows
<b>é-mpǒ</b>	straw	<b>dé-mpǒ</b>	straws
<b>è-ndò</b>	bat	<b>dè-ndò</b>	bats

### 3.3 THE SINGLE CLASS GENDERS

Examples of each single class gender are presented below:

(4) a. *Gender 1* me-, N-

<b>mè-ṣě-gètě</b>	successor
<b>mè-sà</b>	hunger
<b>mè-tù</b>	load
<b>mé-mbàmé-ṁpò</b>	herder
<b>mé-mbàmé-mágóṁmè</b>	shepherd
<b>ṁ-má</b>	mother
<b>ṁ-fó</b>	filaria
<b>ṁ-tṣwó</b>	dwarf
<b>ṁ-dě</b>	cloth
<b>ṁ-tṣù</b>	thatching grass

b. *Gender 2* a-

<b>á-kàrà</b>	blade (a type)
<b>à-kpáṅkpá</b>	pan
<b>à-kpàrà</b>	prostitute
<b>à-sòlè</b>	clay dish
<b>à-tyê</b>	chimpanzee
<b>à-mwáwè</b>	smoke

c. *Gender 3* me-

<b>mè-ně</b>	vegetable (a type)
<b>mé-ndzvé-ṁtṣì</b>	husk
<b>mè-nò-mèlò</b>	city
<b>mè-ṁàmyè</b>	body
<b>mè-sàré</b>	diarrhoea
<b>mè-sò</b>	back

d. *Gender 5* ne-

<b>nè-bá</b>	harmattan
<b>nè-bò</b>	fortune
<b>né-bómé</b>	foundation
<b>nè-mè</b>	clay
<b>né-ṁwú</b>	cotton
<b>nè-bù</b>	sky

e. *Gender 6* ma-

mà-b̀	name
mà-b̃	eczema
mà-gílí	charcoal
mà-nánà	banana
mà-k̀	news
mà-ẁ	diaphragm
mà-t̀	crutches

f. *Gender 7* ge-

gé-bé	time
gé-bê	swamp
gé-b̃	sleeping mat
gé-f̀	mould
gè-fwìnì	fever
gè-dzé	love
gè-kó	cloud
gé-lálè	barn
gé-lérè	knot
gè-ndé	hat
gè-pà	wound
gè-pèlè	he-goat
gè-sàsà	epilepsy

g. *Gender 8* u-

ù-bá	leprosy
ù-kà	medicine
ù-kì	liver
ù-kwó	bed
ù-là	thread
ù-lèrè	mucus
ù-ló	ladder
ú-ndyǎ	palm tree
ù-t̀	power
ù-wyá	week

h. *Gender 13* de-

dè-mbèlé	dew
dè-bà	dirt
dè-bì	excrement
dè-fí	pus
dè-f̃	brain
dè-kpá	scabies
dè-ǹ	bicycle

i. *Gender 19 á-*

è-bò	raven
è-kpà	partridge
è-lú	tobacco
è-nò	centipede
è-tè	smith
é-trúkáŋ	lamp
è-wù	hawk

3.4 NOUN PREFIX VARIATION

There are some classes that have irregular markers in their gender systems. In these classes there is instead an alternation of **m-** for singular and **b-** for plural. Examples are as follows:

(5) *Gender 1/2 N-, me-/a- Proto-Bantu: \*mu-, \*ba*

<b>m-ǎ</b>	child	<b>b-ǎ</b>	children
<b>m-ǔ</b>	person	<b>b-ǔ</b>	persons

(6) *Gender 7/8 ge-/u- Proto-Bantu: \*ki-, \*bi*

This irregular gender contains only one example:

<b>dzy-à</b>	leaf	<b>by-à</b>	leaves
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The form **bò** is an irregular noun that occurs in Denya. It is used to mark plurality of the following nouns:

(7) <b>ŋ-gwèt</b>	book	<b>bò ŋ-gwèt</b>	books
<b>à-ŋwâ</b>	cat	<b>bò à-ŋwâ</b>	cats
<b>m-fǎ</b>	month	<b>bò m-fǎ</b>	months

(8) *Gender 19/6*

The merger between formerly distinctive **bV-** and **mV-** prefixes by a general phonological rule makes it difficult to know the original shape of the nominal prefix in class 6. The stems show irregularities which suggest a nasal noun prefix in class 6. Two examples have been discovered so far:

<b>è-bwò</b>	hand	<b>àm-ù</b>	hands
<b>dám-bó-ŋjì</b>	eye	<b>àm-è</b>	eyes

3.5 LOAN WORDS AND THE GENDER SYSTEM

Loan words have entered the language both from neighbouring African languages and from English. Many loan words from African languages are phonologically similar to the original words in Denya. Thus, they generally have a sequence of segments which may be analysed into a prefix and a root, even though the language from which the word is borrowed no longer has a functioning noun class system like that in Denya. Efik for example, has provided loan words for Denya, such as **étúrúkáŋ**, 'matches',

and **ékpémé**, 'bottle'. Efik no longer has a functioning noun class system, but the relics of former initial vowels are easily adapted into Denya: **é-trúkáj** and **é-kpómé** in Denya are Class 3 words. Similarly, the Igbo word **ákpú**, 'cassava', has been borrowed into Denya as **á-kpú**, 'cassava fufu' (Class 2).

Loan words from English present a difficult problem, since phonologically they are often not easily analysable into a prefix and a root. Such words include:

- (9) **dáwè** towel (Class 1)  
**grítà** grater (Class 1)  
**kòfí** coffee (Class 1)  
**tí** tea (Class 1)  
**brèd** bread (Class 1)

#### 4. CONCORD MARKERS

In the previous sections the noun classes, the noun prefixes and the noun genders have been discussed. In this section, the forms and distribution of the concordial morphemes are displayed and discussed.

The distribution of the eight sets of concords given in table 2 below will be described.<sup>2</sup> The following stem classes take the first set of concord prefixes:

- a. possessive pronouns
- b. relative pronouns
- c. subject pronoun
- d. adjectival prefixes
- e. numerals.

The examples in (10) illustrate some of the concord data presented below in table 2.

- (10) a. **m-fwà à-kwé** The chief has fallen.  
c1<sup>3</sup>-chief 3s-fall
- b. **tàmbì dzì à-ńú mànà** Tambi (particularly) drank water.  
c1.Tambi c1.him 3s-drink c6a.water
- c. **dáńì à-ńé dzì** Danyi ate it.  
c1.Danyi 3s-eat c1.it

Table 2. Concord Markers<sup>4</sup>

Cl.	Noun Pfx	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
1	N-, me-	àwà	à-	à-	àyì	L	dzì	àyínà	mè-
2	a-	bâ	á-	á-	ábí	L	èbwó	bínà	à-
3	me-	èwâ	è-	è-	èwì	H	éwú	èwénà	mè-
5	ne-	ènâ	á	èńé	èńíníndé	né	èńì	èwénà	nè-
6	ma-	àyâ	á-	á-	áyí	–	ádzí	àyínà	mà-
6a	ma-	àmâ	à	mà-	mí	–	mámí	mínà	mà-

<sup>2</sup> The meanings given for the various stems can only be approximate: a more precise statement will have to be made in the description of the grammatical system.

<sup>3</sup> The abbreviation 'c1' stands for 'Class 1', and likewise with the other noun classes.

<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of the column labels 'I', 'II', etc., see next page.

Cl.	Noun Pfx	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
7	ge-	èyâ	gè-	gè-	èyígé	gé	gédzì	èyínâ	gè-
8	u-, o-	èbâ	ù-	ù-	bí	—	úbí	èbínâ	ù-
9	N-	àwâ	à-	à	yí	—	dzì	àyínâ	mè-
10	N-	èyâ	è-	è-	yí	—	édzì	èyínâ	mè-
19	è-	èwâ	è-	è-	èwì	H	éwú	èwínâ	mè-
13	de-	ètâ	dè-	dè-	ètíré	dé	détí	ètírenâ	dè-

*Columns:* I = possessive pronoun (1s.), II = numerals, III = subject prefix, IV = relative pronoun, V = associative marker, VI = object and subject pronoun, VII = determiners, VIII = adjectival concord. Some of these are treated in detail below.

An examination of these concord markers reveals that Classes 1 and 9 are very close. The only difference is in the relative pronoun. This shows that there is a merger taking place between these two classes. The next two classes to note are 3 and 19. All that distinguishes them is the determiners. This again shows that a merger is occurring between these two classes.

Furthermore, the reader will note that all nominal prefixes and adjectival prefixes have a low tone. This is also true of the subject prefix, except for Classes 2 and 6. In the tonal pattern of the prefix, Denya is much like Proto-Bantu.

The concord system should be interpreted cumulatively; i.e. any difference in any one of the markers constitutes a class difference.

#### 4.1 DETERMINERS

Among its determiners (in column VII above), Denya distinguishes two demonstrative pronouns whose main difference is the relative distance from the speaker and addressee being referred to. The forms encountered with the various noun classes are as follows:

Table 3. Determiners

Class	this (near)	Gloss	that (far)	Gloss
1	m̄-fwà àyínâ	this chief	m̄-fwà àyimbò	that chief
2	à-fwà àbínâ	these chiefs	à-fwà àbímbò	those chiefs
3	mè-kpò èwínâ	this head	mè-kpò èwímbò	that head
5	nè-kò ènínínâ	this parcel	nè-kò ènínímbò	that parcel
6	mà-kpò àyínâ	these heads	mà-kpò àyímbò	those heads
6a	mà-nǎ mínâ	this water	mà-nǎ mímbò	that water
7	gè-ká èyínâ	this leg	gè-ká èyímbò	that leg
8	ù-ká èbínâ	these legs	ù-ká èbímbò	those legs
9	m̄-pò àyínâ	this cow	m̄-pò àyimbò	that cow
10	m̄-pò èyínâ	these cows	m̄-pò èyímbò	those cows
19	è-bá èwénâ	this fufu	è-bá èwémbò	that fufu
13	dè-tò ètírenâ	these axes	dè-tò ètímbò	those axes

The tones of the first column are generally falling at the end of the morpheme. In the second column, the falling tones become low.

## 4.2 POSSESSIVES

The possessive pronouns (in column I) will be shown here in greater detail. In table 2 only the first person singular, 'my', is displayed. In Denya, the possessive follows the noun it modifies.

Table 4. Possessive Pronouns

Class	my	your	his/hers	ours	your (pl)	their
1	àwà	àwě	àwũ	èsé	ènú	èbwó
2	bâ	bě	èbĩ	dè-èsé	dè-ènú	dè-èbwó
3	èwâ	èwě	èwũ	àyì-èsé	àyì-ènú	àyì-èbwó
5	ènâ	èné	èní	ènè	ènú	èbwó
6	àyâ	àdzyě	àdзі	àyì-èsé	àyì-ènú	àyì-èbwó
6a	àmâ	àmyě	àmĩ	àmì-èsé	àmì-ènú	àmì-èbwó
7	èyâ	èdzyě	èdзі	àyì-gèsé	èyì-gènú	èyì-gèbwó
8	èbâ	èbyě	àbĩ	àbì-èsé	àbì-ènú	èbì-èbwó
9	àwâ	àwě	àwũ	àwè-èsé	àwè-ènú	àwè-èbwó
10	èyâ	èdzyě	èdзі	èyì-èsé	èyì-ènú	èyì-èbwó
19	èwâ	èwě	èwũ	àyì-èsé	àyì-ènú	àyì-èbwó
13	ètâ	ètyě	ètĩ	dè-èsé	dè-ènú	àyì-èbwó

The possessive pronouns are formed by taking the Class 1 morpheme and attaching it to the various prefixes. The only exception is Class 5. Furthermore, the table above shows that the first person singular 'my' has a falling tone at the end of the possessive pronoun, except in Class 1. The second and the third person singular all take the rising tone. The tones of the three plural possessives are either high or low.

- (11) a. **àm-fwà** **à-wà** my chief (Class 1)  
 c1-chief c1-my  
 b. **à-fwà** **bâ** my chiefs (Class 2)  
 c2-chief c2.my

## 4.3 THE NUMERALS

Numerals in Denya behave like adjectives. Syntactically, the numeral appears immediately after the noun it modifies, with no connecting marker. Each Denya numeral from one to fourteen consists of a numeral root which agrees with the noun it follows. From fifteen and above, the numerals become invariable across classes. Thus, it is the numerals from 'one' to 'fourteen' that are discussed here, as illustrated below.

- (12) a. **à-fwà** **á-péá** two chiefs  
 c2-chief c2-two  
 b. **gè-pú** **gé-mâ** one house  
 c7-house c7-one

All plural prefixes take a high tone, while all singular nouns take both high and low. Table 5 displays the numeral stems from 'one' to 'fourteen'.

Table 5. Numerals 'one' to 'fourteen'

	<i>one</i>	<i>two</i>	<i>three</i>	<i>four</i>	<i>five</i>	<i>six</i>	<i>seven</i>	<i>eight</i>
Class	-mâ	-péá	-lé	-nî	-tâ	-kéné	-kéné nè à mà	-nè
1	à-mâ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	á-péá	á-lé	á-nî	á-tâ	á-kéné	á-kéné nè à mà	á-nè
3	mé-mâ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	né-mâ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	—	á-péá	á-lé	á-nî	á-tâ	á-kéné	á-kéné nè à mà	á-nè
7	gé-mâ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
7a	é-mâ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
8	—	ú-péá	ú-lé	ú-nî	ú-tâ	ú-kéné	ú-kéné nè à mà	ú-nì
9	à-mâ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10	—	é-péá	é-lé	é-nî	é-tâ	é-kéné	é-kéné nè à mà	é-nì
13	—	dé-péá	dé-lé	dé-nî	dé-tâ	dé-kéné	dé-kéné nè à mà	dé-nì

	<i>nine</i>	<i>ten</i>	<i>eleven</i>	<i>twelve</i>	<i>thirteen</i>	<i>fourteen</i>
Class	-nê nè à mà	-fyâ	-fyâ nè à mà	-fyâ nè épéá	-fyâ nè élé	-fyâ nè énî
1	á-nê nè à mà	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	á-fyâ	á-fyâ nè à mà	á-fyâ nè épéá	á-fyâ nè élé	á-fyâ nè énî
3	mé-nê nè à mà	—	—	—	—	—
5	né-nê nè à mà	—	—	—	—	—
6	—	á-fyâ	á-fyâ nè à mà	á-fyâ nè épéá	á-fyâ nè élé	á-fyâ nè énî
7	gé-nê nè à mà	—	—	—	—	—
8	—	ú-fyâ	ú-fyâ nè à mà	ú-fyâ nè épéá	ú-fyâ nè élé	ú-fyâ nè énî
9	á-nê nè à mà	—	—	—	—	—
10	—	é-fyâ	é-fyâ nè à mà	é-fyâ nè épéá	é-fyâ nè élé	é-fyâ nè énî
19	é-nê nè à mà	—	—	—	—	—
13	—	dé-fyâ	dé-fyâ nè à mà	dé-fyâ nè épéá	dé-fyâ nè élé	dé-fyâ nè énî

The base of the Denya numeral system is twenty. For instance, forty is made up of two twenties and one hundred is made up of five twenties and so forth. The numeral system from fifteen and above is shown in table 6.

Table 6. Numerals above fourteen

15	<b>nèkù</b>	35	<b>èsǎ mèsò nèkù</b>
16	<b>nèkù nè àmà</b>	40	<b>ùsǎ úpéá</b>
17	<b>nèkù nè épéá</b>	50	<b>ùsǎ úpéá mèsò éfyâ</b>
18	<b>nèkù nè èlé</b>	60	<b>ùsà úlé</b>
19	<b>nèkù nè éní</b>	70	<b>ùsà úlé mèsò éfyâ</b>
20	<b>èsǎ</b>	80	<b>ùsà úní</b>
21	<b>èsǎ mèsò àmà</b>	90	<b>ùsà úní mèsò éfyâ</b>
22	<b>èsǎ mèsò épéá</b>	100	<b>ùsǎ útá</b>
23	<b>èsǎ mèsò élé</b>	200	<b>ùsǎ úfyâ</b>
24	<b>èsǎ mèsò éní</b>	300	<b>èsǎ nèkù</b>
25	<b>èsǎ mèsò étá</b>	400	<b>ùsǎ èsà</b>
30	<b>èsǎ mèsò éfyâ</b>	500	<b>ùsǎ èsà mèsò ùsà útá</b>

#### 4.4 THE ASSOCIATIVE MARKER (AM)

The Associative (or Genitive) markers displayed in column V of table 2 occur between two nouns to indicate that the class membership of the first noun determines the class membership of the AM. The occurrence of the AM in a noun phrase is illustrated in (13).

- (13) a. **nè-bà**      **né**      **m-fwà**      the marriage of the chief  
           c5-marriage    c5.AM    c1-chief
- b. **gé-bà**    **gé**      **mè-ndê**      the bag of a woman  
           c7-bag    c7.AM    c1-woman
- c. **dè-nò**      **dé**      **mè-ndè**      the bicycle of the man  
           c13-bicycle    c13.AM    c1-man
- d. **è-là**      '      **mé-ndzò**      [**èlá médzó**] the cap of a thief  
           c7a-cap    c19.AM    c1-thief
- e. **mè-kpò**      '      **gè-ɲàɲà**      [**mèkpó gèɲàɲà**] the head of a lion  
           c3-head    c19.AM    c7-lion

#### 4.5 RELATIVE CLAUSE

Relative clauses follow the noun which they modify in the same sentence in Denya. A sentence having a relative clause may be considered to be a combination of two separate sentences, with either the same or different subjects, one sentence serving to modify a specific noun in the other sentence. Below are some examples:

- (14) a. **mè-ndê**    **àyì**      **á-tfwò**      **fâ**    **à-mè**  
           c1-woman    c1.who    3s-come    here    3s-sick  
           The woman who came here is sick.



b. à-nà      ìm-mè    è-yà      álú      kwókwólé    nè      gè-pú      è-yâ  
 3s-bought c1-land c1-which beside near      with c7-house c7-my  
 He bought the plot which is near my house.

c. gè-pú      èyígé      dé-pǔ      mà-nǎ      élé      gè-pú      è-yâ  
 c7-house c7-which 1s-drink c6a-water is c7-house c7-my  
 The house where I drank water is mine.

In Denya, **ání**, which means 'how many', is invariable across the classes.

#### 4.6 ADJECTIVES

Almost all adjectives in Denya are derived from verbs. Morphologically, reduplication takes place and some of the adjectives agree with the class of the noun they follow. Adjectives derived from verbs are very few and are illustrated as follows:

(15) a. gè-pú      gè-ló-géló      beautiful house  
 c7-house c7-beautiful

b. nè-kò      nè-bò-nèbò      bad parcel  
 c5-parcel c5-bad

c. mèt-ndè      mèt-tò-mètò      strong man  
 c1-man c1-strong

There is also a case where reduplication occurs, but the resulting adjective does not agree with the noun it follows:

(16) mèt-tì      rìbà-rìbà      dirty road  
 c3-road dirty

Some are inherently adjectives. Two examples have been discovered so far:

(17) a. gè-nò      kò      small stick  
 c7-stick small

b. mèt-pà      kpà      big animal  
 c9-animal big

#### 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The data collected and analysed for this study show that Denya still has Proto-Bantu-type noun classes. The classification of a noun into a class is motivated both by the phonemic realisation of the noun prefix and by the semantics of the noun. Gender 1/2, and 9/10 are still strongly determined by semantics, in that gender 1/2 is made up of human beings while gender 9/10 is mostly made up of animals.

The function of the Denya concord marker underlies and co-ordinates the noun phrase structure in which it operates. In a noun phrase, the head noun determines the concord and sets of agreements in the noun phrase including numerals, pronouns, demonstratives, adjectives, verbal prefixes. Underlying forms also undergo phonemic and tonal derivations to surface forms. Classes 1 and 9 continue to have a Proto-Bantu low

tone concord, as seen in many Bantu languages. Some other classes, however, also take a low tone concord marker.

In Denya, there is a general collapsing of and shifting of Proto-Bantu classes. Proto-Bantu concordial consonant segments have been lost over time in many of the Denya prefixes. Some of them continue to exist on some noun prefixes.

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