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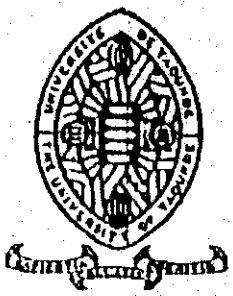

THE NOUN CLASS SYSTEM OF O K U

A Dissertation Presented In Partial Fulfilment Of The Requirements For The Award Of The Master Of Arts Degree (Maîtrise) In Linguistics

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DEDICATION

To my husband,

Mr. MNGO Zachary,

who is so dear to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful realisation of this work cannot be attributed to the efforts of one individual. Financial, material, moral and other forms of support from diverse sources have enabled the realisation of this project, a dream come true.

I thank the Almighty God for His protection and guidance over me throughout the research period. He gave me the courage to go through thick and thin, and bear with patience all the problems encountered during the course of this academic struggle.

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I also address special thanks to the Oku Language Society whose information and material have been of valuable importance.

I owe much appreciation to my typist, Jackie, who happens to be my supervisor's wife.

The list is inexhaustive. To God be the glory.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

CL	Class
VL	Voiceless
VD	Voiced
apt a	alpha point of articulation
Sg.	Singular
pl	plural
Proto-RGB	Proto-Ring Grassfield Bantu
C	Consonant
V	Vowel
Poss:	Possessive Pronoun Prefix
Dem:	Demonstrative prefix
DET:	Determinative prefix
AM:	Associative marker
ASSO:	Associative concord prefix
AP:	Adjectival prefix
NP:	Numeral prefix
/ /:	Obliques: Phonemic transcription
[ ]:	Square brackets: Phonetic transcription
-->:	generates or becomes
R:	Rule
i.e.	that is
[+R]	the feature [+rounded]
[-R]	unrounded (used as a feature).
cons	the feature "consonantal"
cor	the feature "coronal"

n.s: near speaker

n.h: near hearer

F.s&h: Further away from the speaker and hearer

Tone Symbols

´ : high tone

` : low tone

¯ : mid tone

ˆ : falling tone

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to carry out a linguistic analysis of the Oku noun classes.

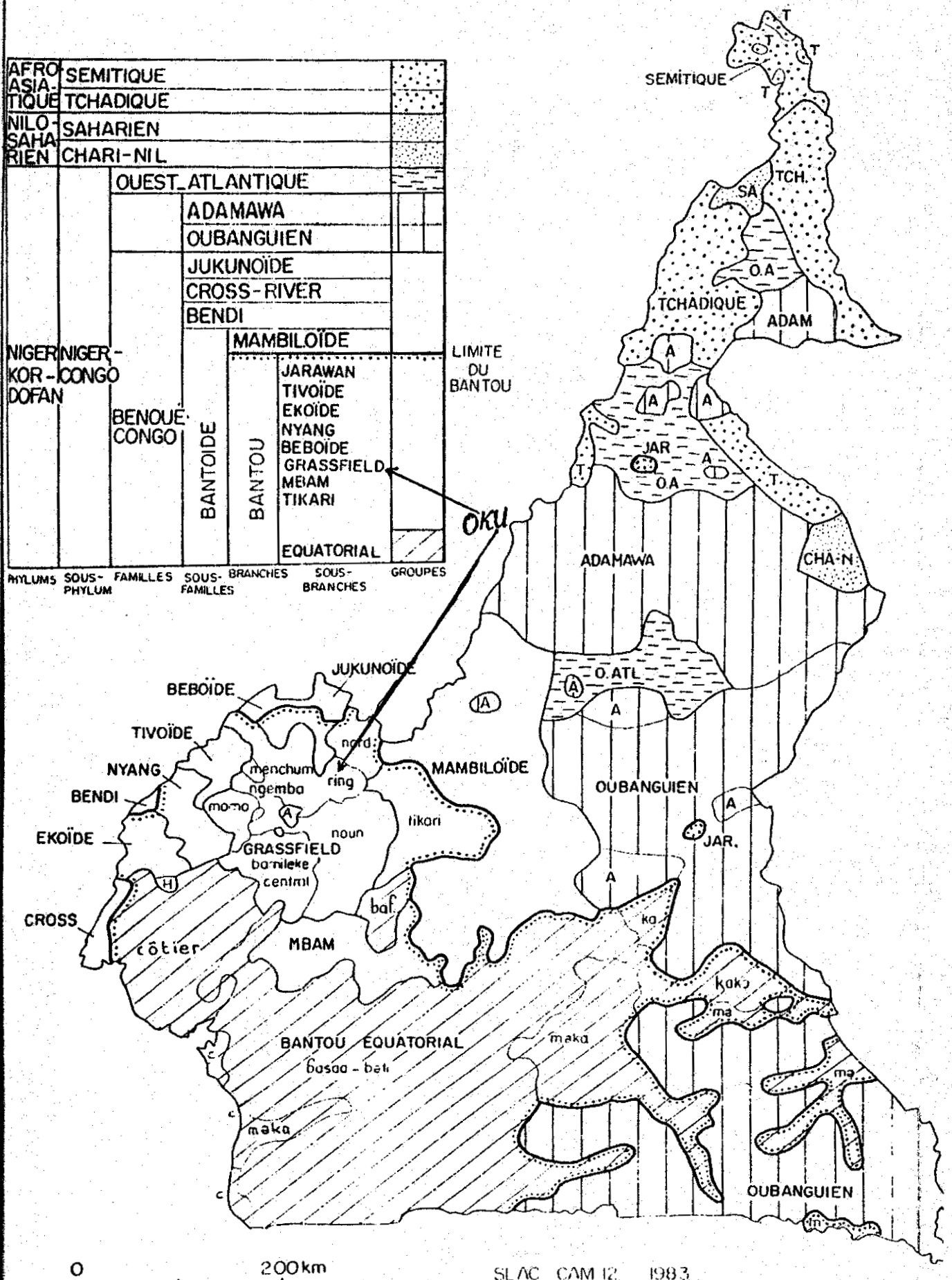
Within this introductory chapter, we shall have a quick look at the geographical location, history and linguistic classification of the language. After reviewing the literature related to Oku, the goal and methodology to be employed will be discussed and data sources stated. The Oku sound system will be briefly discussed.

1.1 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Oku is found in Bui Division in the North-West Province of Cameroon. It should be made clear here that what is usually referred to as "Oku" is the people and their language is referred to as "əb lâm əbkɯo", literally, "language of the Oku."

As a matter of fact, Oku is situated in the South-West end of Bui-Division, North-West Province of Cameroon. It is bounded to the East by Nso. to the West by Kom, to the North by Noni, to the North West by Mbisenaku and to the South by Babungo.

FAMILLES ET GROUPES LINGUISTIQUES AU CAMEROUN



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LINGUISTIC GROUPS IN CAMEROON

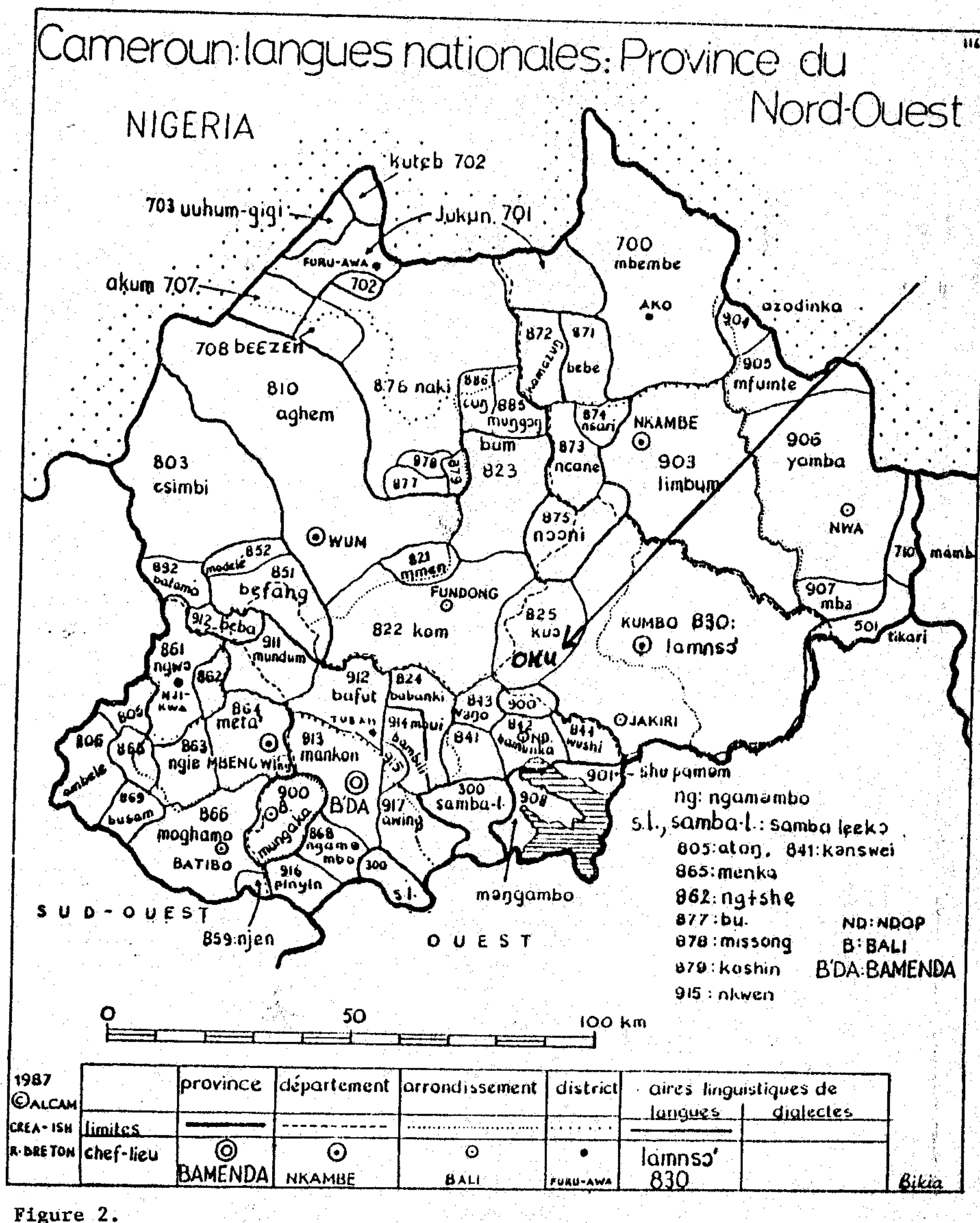

Cameroun: langues nationales: Province du Nord-Ouest
NIGERIA
kutɛb 702
703 uuhum-gigi
Jukun 701
700 mbembe
akum 707
708 bɛɛzɛn
810 aghem
876 naki
803 ɛsimbi
WUM
823 bum
873 ncane
903 limbum
NKAMBE
906 yamba
NWA
azodinka
905 mfumte
822 kom
FUNDONG
825 kuɔ
OKU
KUMBO 830: lamnsɔ'
912 bafut
913 mankon
B'DA
917 awing
864 meta
863 ngie
MBENGWI
866 moghamo
BATIBO
916 pinyin
859 njen
mangambo
samba-l.
OJAKIRI
901 shu pamom
ng: ngamambo
s.l., samba-l.: samba lɛɛkɔ
805: atoŋ, 841: kanswei
865: menka
862: ngɨshe
877: bu.
878: missong
879: koshin
915: nkwen
ND: NDOP
B: BALI
B'DA: BAMENDA
SUD-OUEST
OUEST
710 mamb
907 mba
501 tikari
0 50 100 km
1987 ©ALCAM
CREA-ISH
R. BRETON
province
département
arrondissement
district
aires linguistiques de
langues
dialectes
limites
chef-lieu
BAMENDA
NKAMBE
BALI
FURU-AWA
lamnsɔ' 830
Bikia

Figure 2.

1.2 HISTORY

As oral tradition holds, a certain woman called Yiefon, and her two brothers Jing and Nyanya left Tikari following the death of their parents and decided to move eastwards. They first stopped in an area called "Yiefon Kfîn" (Yiefon's Hill) where Yiefon fell sick, died, and was buried. After their sister's death, they continued their journey eastwards and settled in Kovifem. They lived there until later in the eighteenth century when they had two attacks from chamber raiders who drove them away.

Jing and his brother left the area and settled in Ngongba forest where they lived together, married wives, and extended their families. With the expansion of the family, the need for an increase in land arose. Jing moved and settled in Tavisa (present day Nso) and Nyanya moved West and settled in the present day capital of Oku. While in Oku, Nyanya met with some settlers called the Ntul. The Leader of the Ntul was very friendly and gave his guests an area to settle. Eventually there was intermarriage between the two groups. When Nyanya died, his eldest son Mkong Mote succeeded him. Bam Kintum was the leader of the Ntul people. Mkong Mote being a trickster told Bam Kintum who was already ageing that his sons were wizards and were sapping him so that he could die fast and leave them his wealth. It was the tradition of the Ntul that, everybody who was suspected to be a witch was killed immediately. Bam Kintum, as foolish as he was, killed his oldest sons and by the time he died, none was old enough to withstand serious opposition to his

succession. Thus Mkong Mote seized the throne and made himself leader of the two clans.

Since the Nyanya people were fewer than those of Bam Kintum, the Ntul language survived as the medium of communication for both groups. Nyanya's language which he brought all the way from Bankim disappeared.

It is believed that one of Mkong Mote's sons moved northwest and settled with his family in Mbizenaku.

The name 'Oku' is said to have originated from Nso. The descendant of Nyanya's brother, Jing, who had settled in Nso invited his own descendant to a house mudding ceremony. During this particular ceremony the host did not treat the guests in the accepted and conventional manner. This was considered an unpardonable act of provocation and the invitees threatened to scrape off the mud if they were not satisfied. The host, however, did not take their threats seriously and refused to satisfy them. So they scraped off the mud from the house. Their hosts called them "vikû " meaning "those who scrape." In Lamnso this name remains till today, although the colonial masters changed it to 'OKU'

1.3 LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION.

Oku is spoken by about 60,000 to 65,000 Oku people in Bui Division of the North-West Province of Cameroon. The language is spoken in the whole of Oku without any significant dialectal differences.

GREENBERG (1966), in his classification of African Languages places Oku under the label Bantu, though he does not mention Oku specifically. He names Bantu as a member of the "Bantoid" branch which in turn is a member of Benue-Congo group which is a sub-family of the larger Niger-Congo.

WILLIAMSON (1971), proposed a modification of Greenberg's Bantoid, dividing it into a 'Non-Bantu' sub-group, under "wide Bantu." She fits in OKU as a member of the grasslands Bantu sub-group.

According to GREBE (1984), the Grasslands Bantu is further divided by HYMAN AND VOORHOEVE (1980) in a multinational effort into west Grassfields Bantu and Eastern Grassfields Bantu or Mbam-Nkam.

STALLCUP (1980), a member of the Grassfields Working Group divided the Western Grassfields into four sub-groups: Ring, Menchum, Widikum and Mundani-Njen. For the Ring sub-group he lists fourteen languages. These languages are situated along the Ring Road which encircles the central highlands of the North-West Province.

Another classification of Bantoid which is much newer is that of BLENCH and WILLIAMSON (1987), set forth in the Niger-Congo languages edited by JOHN BENDOR-SAMUEL (1989). In this work Bantoid is divided into Northern and Southern Bantoid. The latter is composed of eleven sub-groups one of which is narrow Bantu. The other 10 groups represent approximately 100 languages spoken in Western Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria, (Watters and Leroy (1989:431). These languages are characterized by the

presence of nasal prefixes in certain noun classes; the beginning fusion of noun classes 6 and 6a; and the presence of a nasal in 6a (Watters and Leroy (1989:437). It should be noted however, that these features are not shared by all of the languages included in this grouping; for example Oku fulfills the first criterion and the third, but it does not fulfill the second criterion at all.

The Ring Languages were generally known as "Central Nkom" by Chilver and Kaberry, who noted that these languages have noun class suffixes as well as prefixes (WILLIAMSON 1971: 266). This is unlike most Bantu Languages which have either noun class prefixes but not both. Richardson, in Linguistic Survey of the Northern Bantu Borderland (Richardson 1957), notes several characteristics common to Ring Languages:

> "A high proportion of velar and post-velar fricatives and non-homorganic consonantal combinations... numerous exotic nasals; central, back unrounded, and front unrounded vowels"

and noun class prefixes along with suffixes unknown in Bantu. Richardson also comments that, "Concord is largely unpredictable by Bantu standards." (RICHARDSON 1957: 56 - 71).

Oku belongs to the Central Ring group, along with Bum, Kom, and Mbizenaku. Watters and Leroy include Babanki in Central Ring rather than North Ring. Oku appears to be closely related to Kom, Mbizenaku, Babanki, and Lamnso?, each of which borders the

Oku territory. One study indicates that Oku and Kom have 71% cognates, and Oku-Lamnso? have 41% cognates (Suinyuy 1985:55). Although Stallcup claims that Oku and Lamnso? are mutually intelligible (Mann and Dalby 1987: 117) with only 41% cognates, this seems unlikely. Suinyuy also calculated an 89% cognate ratio between Oku and Mbizenaku, just to the North West of Oku; however, Mbizenaku should probably be considered a dialect rather than a district language, as the percentage itself suggests, because it is spoken by a group of Oku people who split off not too long ago from the rest of the group and gave themselves the name Mbizenaku (Nforme Ndey, personal communication), Elak - Oku 1991) adopted from Lesley (1992).

Oku is therefore one of the (270) languages spoken in Cameroon. The Oku people call their language

'əblam əbkwo'

"language of the Oku"

Code 825 - of ALCAM refers to it as Kuɔ. The English people call it "Oku," probably an anglicized form of əbkwo. In this work the language will be referred to as Oku.

The linguistic family tree of the Oku language based on Greenberg's (1963) classification, is as follows:

Niger Kordofanian

Niger Congo

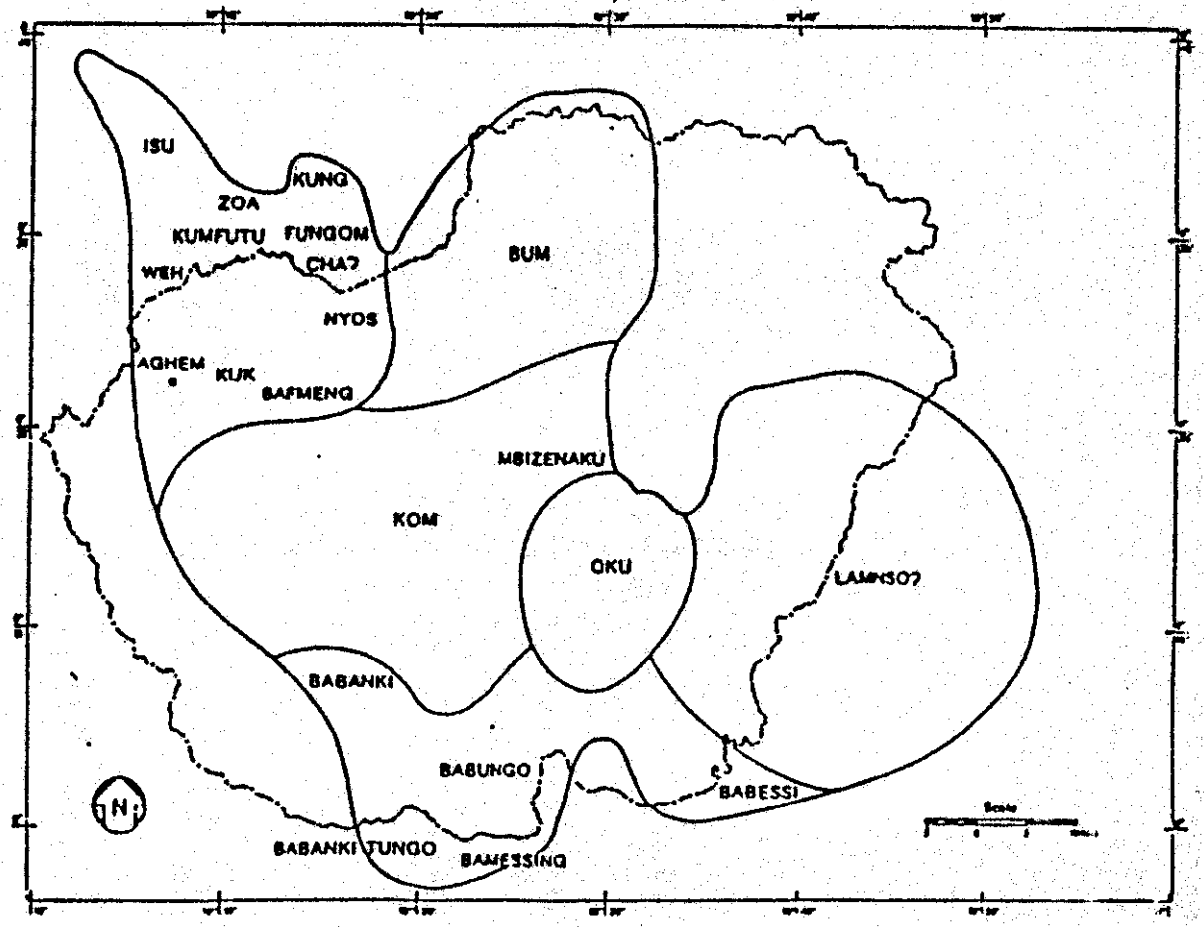
free ?

Benue Congo

Bantoid

Grassfields

Ring



Source: Hyman 1979a:viii

Figure 3. Languages of the Ring subgroup of Western Grassfields Bantu

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature on Oku exposes the language as one of the less exploited languages in the North-West Province of Cameroon. It is only recently that the language has received considerable attention culminating in the creation of the Oku Language Society at the beginning of 1995. Among the most exploited languages of the Ring group to which Oku belongs, mention can be made of Lamnsoʔ , Kom and Aghem.

The earliest work in Oku was a 100-word list by Chilver and Kaberry and was published in 1974. Added to this is an Oku Language Committee charged with the publication of Oku diaries. Recently, some short stories and a number of documents have been written on the language. They include:

- Chúŋ Ghenè əmtɛ̂m mɛ — "Chung and the calabashes"
- Kekuy ə yíò — "The Snake Belt"
- Ghɛsen Taŋ — "Let us Count" by Nkwam Oscar M. published in 1995.
- Mom e nduu əbwɛy — "Mom is going to the market" by Kwei Andrew M. published in 1995.
- Eynyak ɛshiɛ nwaale əblam əbkuo
  "Writing the Oku Alphabet" by Ndifon Roland, published in 1995.
- A phonological Analysis of the Oku Writing Systems, 1994, by Ndifon Roland.
- A Sociolinguistic analysis of the Oku language and its dialects, 1994, by Ndifon Roland.

- A Grammatical Analysis of the Oku Pronoun , 1995, by Ndifon Roland, unpublished.

The major works in the language are the following:

- Hyman (1977), included Oku in his study of the Noun classes of Ring languages.
- Beatrice Suinyuy, a native of Oku and a student at the University of Yaounde, wrote an unpublished paper (1985), entitled "Determining the Linguistic Status of Oku."
- Davis (1992), presented a segmental phonology of Oku. This was an unpublished masters thesis in the University of Texas at Arlington, U.S.A.
- Nforbi (1993), wrote on the Oku verb Morphology; Tense, Aspect and Mood. This is an unpublished thesis in the University of Yaounde.

Davis (1992), and Nforbi (1993) are the only people who have fully analysed the Oku language. The other works mentioned are only sketches and lists of words usually with deficiencies in the domain of tones.

According to Suinyuy (1985), Oku is an independent language.

Davis (1992), presents the sound inventory of the language in her Segmental Phonology of Oku.

Nforbi (1993), wrote on the verb morphology of the language and the rules that characterize the expression of tense, aspect and mood in Oku.

1.5 GOAL AND METHODOLOGY OF WORK

At a time when traditional societies are becoming rare and speakers disappearing either through death or through assimilation into urban life, the continued existence of our diverse folk languages can no longer be ensured through the r present oral mode of transmission. After all if we cannot save people from extinction we can at least save their culture. And what better way than to codify language especially if we consider it as a very significant means of expressing culture.

The noun class system, which is the object of our study is a contribution and progress in linguistic science. The phonology and verb morphology of Oku has been studied and this work does constitute another dimension to the language. This research project, modest as it might be, is a contribution to the description of our national languages. It lays the foundation for more exciting and detailed studies which, it is hoped, will further bring out the grammar of the language. This will eventually throw more light on the structure and rules that govern the language and finally to the establishment of the writing system of the language. Hopefully this will be of benefit to the native speakers who will then be able to boast of knowing not only the structure and the rules of their language but also how to write their own language.

As a matter of fact, it is hoped that a study of this language will make it possible to compare it with other languages, and this might bring about significant generalisations

that will hold true for all the Ring Bantu languages of the country.

Methodology

The study focuses on the noun class system. It will be necessary to use two linguistic theories: the structural and the generative approaches. The key notion in structuralism is that language is a system that can be broken down into smaller units, described scientifically and empirically, contrasted, compared and added up to form a whole. Given the above view, this theory seems apt in describing the noun class system because it means breaking down a noun, studying it empirically and scientifically and then adding it up to form a whole. But there is a catch. In analysing nouns, irregularities are noticed in the morphology whereas it is generally claimed that there are areas of a language that are systematic and regular. To account for this regularity and this systematicity, the solution is to postulate a deeper level where morphophonological regularities exist and a surface level where irregularities are found, but are linked to the former level by phonological rules. We are now in the realm of the generative approach. Consequently, in this work pure structuralism is not used but knowledge is borrowed from the generative theory to fill in gaps otherwise left out.

For the purpose of this study a corpus of about 1,000 words has been used.

After the data collection from native speakers (born and bred in Oku) and cross checking of the data with literate Oku informants around Yaounde, the next step was to translate some of the clauses and sentences into Oku to obtain a more complete data for further analysis.

As for the data analysis, emphasis has been placed on the analytic schema for African languages as proposed by linguists like Hyman and Voorhoeve (1980:81), Stallcup (1977), Wiesemann et al. (1977) etc.

This schema proposes that, in any Bantu language, a large number of noun forms can readily be analysed as consisting of a prefix and a stem. It may be possible to recognise from ten to twenty different prefixes in a given language. Many stems will be found commonly with two of these prefixes; such a pair is ordinarily singular and plural. Some stems may occur with only one prefix; these are usually mass nouns, abstracts and other types for which enumeration is irrelevant. Some stems may be found fairly frequently, with more than two prefixes; this variety is likely to reflect semantic difference in addition to number.

The classes have then been paired into class genders, be it single or double class. To analyse the concord system, adjectives, numerals, etc. have been studied in the form of phrases from which the concordial prefix was then picked out.

All this required a journey into the field. We travelled to Oku, where we had to contact the Oku language committee charged with the delivery of diaries and some short story books.

1.6 THE DATA SOURCES

This work has been realised with a corpus of about 1,000 words, a substantial number of phrases, and a few texts collected through the help of six principal informants. The language informants that we contacted in Yaounde were all natives of Oku who had spent most of their life in Oku. The old, the young, as well as the educated and uneducated were contacted for data elicitation.

NAMES	AGE	PROFESSION	RESIDENCE
1. NDIFON ROLAND	24	Student	Yaounde
2. NKWAN OSCAR	28	Former student	Oku
3. NGUM PETER	45	Pastor	Oku
4. FORNKWA EUGENE	21	Student	Yaounde
5. MNGO GODFREY	60	Farmer	Babessi
6. KWEI ANDREW M.	27	Former Student	Oku

1.7 THE SOUND SYSTEM OF OKU

Although this work is based on the analysis of the various noun classes in Oku, a brief sketch of the sound system is in order here. This will help correctly interpret the material with respect to the use of the phonetic transcription of the data for the purposes of this study.

The Oku sound system comprises 7 vowel phonemes and 18

consonant phonemes. The vowel system will be looked at followed by the consonant system. Next will be the syllable and morpheme structure of the nouns and then a brief summary of the tonal system. The phonetic transcription in this work has been adopted from the General Alphabet of Cameroon Languages (M. Tadadjeu and E. Sadembouo 1984)

1.7.1 Phonemic vowels

The following are the phonemic vowels found in Oku:
i, e, ɛ, ə, a, u, and ɔ. These vowels are exemplified below:

Vowel	Examples	Gloss.
i	ɛyfín	'legs'
e	féè	'hoe'
ɛ	ɛshíè	'eyes'
ə	əbvás	'fire'
a	wán	'child'
u	ɛghúm	'eggs'
ɔ	kekóɔ́	'forest'

/i/ occurs medially and finally in Oku as seen from the following examples:

jím 'back'
əbchíì 'days'

/e/ occurs also medially and finally as in

əmlèk 'oaths'

fée 'hoe'

/ɛ/ occurs in all the positions as illustrated below:

ɛlúúmen 'men'

ɛylɛ́ŋ 'bamboos'

ŋkɛ̀ɛ̀ 'shield'

/ə/ occurs also in all the positions as shown below:

ə̀mtàs 'spoons'

əbvə́s 'fire'

ŋkfə̀ə̀ 'rope'

/a/ occurs medially and finally as in:

wán 'child'

báà 'lion'

/u/ occurs medially and finally as in:

sún 'friend'

kefúù 'medicine'

/ɔ/ occurs word medially and finally as in:

kekɔ̀s 'slave'

ǰfɔ 'river'

i) *Vowel Raising*

The mid rounded back vowel /ɔ/ is raised to /o/ when preceding a lip rounded consonant (m,y). This is captured by the following rule (R1):

R1 is: /ɔ/ -> [o] / --- [+labial]
C

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{syll} \\ -\text{high} \\ +\text{round} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow [+\text{tense}] \; / \; \underset{C}{\text{---}} \; [+\text{cons} \; +\text{lab}]$$

This rule says: the vowel /ɔ/ becomes [o] before a labial segment. This is illustrated in the following examples.

ntɔk 'palace'	ntôm 'fireside stone'
mbɔk 'plain'	mbôm 'God'
ŋkɔ̀k 'juju'	ŋkôm 'saucer'
ɛybɔ́k 'pumbkin'	ɛybôm 'cups
ɛykɔ̂k 'ladders'	ɛykôy 'arms'

ii) *Vowel Lowering*

The mid front [ɛ] is lowered to [æ] when preceded by a

labialized velar consonant (k^w, g^w) and stem-finally.

kwɛn	kwæn 'enough'
kegwɛs	kegwɛs 'the roof top'
mʃíɛ̀	[mʃiæ] why not square brackets here?
ɛylíɛ̀	ɛyliæ
keliɛ̀	keliæ

R2: /ɛ/ --> [æ] / -- #

This rule says: the vowel /ɛ/ becomes [æ] in word final position.

It should be noted that in Oku all the vowels are lengthened in the final position though length is not phonemic. It is possible therefore to have the above vowels lengthened as is illustrated by the following examples:

əbvíì 'woman, wife'

wàŋgáà 'rabbit'

ɛlúúmen 'men'

féè 'hoe'

ŋkèɛ̀ 'shield'

əbtóòy 'assembly'

keghɔ́ɔ̀ 'hand'

Chart of vowel Phonemes.

		Front	Central	Back
High	tense	i		u
	lax			
Mid	tense	e		
	lax	ɛ	ə	ɔ
Low			a	

Figure 4

There are seven vowel phonemes as seen from the above table. There are three front vowels, two back vowels and two central vowels.

Generally, the short vowels occur in closed syllables while long vowels occur stem-finally. Short vowels do occasionally appear in open syllables, and long vowels do occasionally appear in closed syllables as illustrated below.

bílèŋ 'groundnut'

əbchíì 'days'

nà 'cow'

fèè 'rat'

əbkún 'bed'

fekúúnen 'chair'

kebâm 'bag'

báà 'leopard'

1.7.2 CONSONANTS

As mentioned earlier, only twenty consonant phonemes are realized in Oku. These include:

Phoneme	Grapheme	Oku example	Gloss
b	b	bùsé	'cat'
tʃ	ch	chûy	'sun'
d	d	dàlɛ́	'traditional dress'
f	f	féè	'hoe'
g	g	gíɛ̀	'voice'
ɣ	gh	ghón	'children'
dʒ	ǰ	ǰíı	'road'
k	k	kebâk	'umbrella'
l	l	líkfəəy	'evening'
m	m	mànkàà	'tall drum'
ŋ	ŋ	ɛylúŋ	'guitar'
s	s	sún	'friend'
t	t	ketâk	'snail'
v	v	ɛyvêl	'feather'
w	w	wàŋgáà	'rabbit'
y	y	yúò	'snake'
z	z	zək	'heat'

1.7.1.2. CONSONANT MODIFICATIONS

Consonants can be modified phonologically, i.e. either by labialization or palatalization.

i) *Labialization*

A phonological process where a consonant has the roundness of a secondary articulation superimposed on it. It is therefore suggested here that this is as a result of the fact that the semi-vowel coalesces with a preceding consonant in a sequence.

Phoneme	Grapheme	Oku example	Gloss
b^w	bw	əbbwâm	'bags'
f^w	fw	əbfwâ	'things'
k^w	kw	əbkwâk	'farm'
g^w	gw	gwɔ̀	'lips'

ii) Palatalization [*ʲ] /cʲ/

A phonological process where a consonant has the palatal property of another consonant superimposed on it as a secondary articulation. Like labialization, it is suggested

that this comes about through the process of coalescing a palatal glide with a preceding consonant. In Oku we have five examples of palatalized consonants whose account is captured informally by the following rule:

/C + y / -> [C^j]

This rule says: a consonant followed by the glide "y" becomes a palatalized consonant. (In this work, palatalization is rendered by the superscript "j" as in [C^j]. This is shown in the following five examples.

Phoneme	Grapheme	Oku example	Gloss
n^j	ny	nyâm	'animal'
d^j	dy	dyɔ̀k	'bile'
f^j	fy	fyàk	'cutlass'
b^j	by	byà	'avocado'
s^j	sy	ɛysyôm	'sigh'

1.7.1.3. Consonant cluster

Oku allows consonant clusters which have a nasal (m, n, ŋ) as the first element of such a cluster as shown by the following examples.

Phoneme	Oku examples	Gloss
/m + b/	mban	'nail'
/m + bv/	mbvə̂ŋ	'flies'
/n + t/	nton	'pot'
/n + d/	ndàà	'house'
/n + k/	ŋkàà	'basket'
/n + g/	ŋgám	'scorpion'
/ŋ + w/	ŋwààlɛ̂	'book'

One can say that the language seems to allow a violation of its constraint of 'no consonant cluster' when nasals are involved. This is due to the fact that the nasals are morphologically crucial since they are class (prefixes) markers and need to be accommodated. Another reason is that the nasals are capable of bearing tones and therefore representing a separate syllable. The cluster therefore could then be justified as not occurring in the same syllable. The following is a chart of consonant phonemes.

Chart of Consonant Phonemes

		Bilabials	Labio-Dentals	Alveolars	Palatals	Velars
Stops	VL			t		k
	VD	b		d		g
Fricatives	VL		f	s		
	VD		v	z		ɣ (gh)
Affricates	VL				tʃ-ch	
	VD				dʒ-j	
Nasals		m		n		ŋ
Laterals				l		
Glides					y	w

Figure 5

In this chart, VL stands for "voiceless" and VD for "voiced"

1.7.3. **Tones**

The Oku language makes use of three level tones and one contour tone. These tones are (high) H, mid, (low) L and (high -low) HL. The four tones identified in Oku are presented below.

1. High tone ´

jéŋ 'hungry'

Kóŋ 'hill'

wán 'child'

2. Low tone `

ngúk 'year'

nchúm 'drum'

ndáf 'thread'

3. Mid tone ¯

bɛ 'friend'

njoŋ 'moon'

ntsək 'night'

4. Falling tone ˆ

ghêl 'people'

kebâk 'umbrella'

It should however be noted that the mid tone is unmarked in this work.

1.8. Syllable and morpheme structure of nouns.

Oku nouns have a basic syllable of a nucleus V and an

optional C element which can either be at the onset or coda position. Thus the form (C)V(C) and the most common syllable structure pattern in Oku is CVC; other patterns are CV, VC, V, NCV (where N stands for the nasal).

Syllable pattern	Example	Gloss	Noun pattern
V	ɛ.kûn	beans	V.CVC
VC	əb	she/he	VC
CVC	tɛ́m	chalk	CVC
CV.V	ntí.ɛ̀	land	CVV
CV.CV	bù.sé	cat	CV.CV
CV.CVC	bí.lɛ̀ŋ	groundnut	CV.CVC

Most of the Oku nouns have the closed structures as opposed to the open structure. This can be seen from these examples:

ke-bvə̂l 'dust'
ghón 'children'
fɛ́m 'chalk'

The above structures are all of the closed type. Since there are very few open types, one can say that Oku has a closed syllable structure. We reach this conclusion because there are few open syllabled nouns in Oku. The few examples are:

bɛ 'friend'
moo 'water'

baa 'father'

ɛyshíɛ̀ 'eye'

Most nominal prefixes which are morphemes have the CV, VC structure such as classes 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13 and 19. There are V structures in classes 2 and 6, while class 9 has the N- structure. This will be seen in the table containing the nominal and the concordial morphemes at the end of the section treating the concord system.

1.8.1. AFFIXES

The following syllable types are seen in noun class affixes: V, VC, CV, and N.

V-

Class 2	ɛ-	[ɛ-lúúmen]	'men'
Class 6	ɛ-	[ɛ-kún]	'beans'

VC-

Class 1	əb-	[əb-lúúmen]	'man'
Class 3	əb-	[əb-chúò]	'mouth'
Class 4	ɛy-	[ɛy-chúò]	'mouths'
Class 8	əb-	[əb-kòs]	'slaves'
Class 6a	əm-	[əm-nán]	'birds'

CV-

Class 7	ke-	[ke-kɔ̀s]	'slave'
Class 13	te-	[te-lə́y]	'knees'
Class 19	fe-	[fe-nə́n]	'bird'
Class 10	se-	[sún-se]	'friends'

N-

Class 9	N-	[n-daà	'house'

CHAPTER TWO: NOUN CLASS SYSTEM

2.0. Introduction.

This section deals with the core of the work. It will present and describe the noun class system of Oku.

A noun class in Oku can be defined as a group of words that distinguish themselves in the language by common affixes; sometimes a tone on the prefix makes all the difference.

Malcolm Guthrie (1967/71:12) gives a striking description of Bantu noun class. According to him, "...the occurrence of class concord by prefix is a feature so essential to the Bantu family that it becomes impossible to accept as fully Bantu any language from which this feature is missing." He defines 'class' in Bantu as "one of the distinct patterns of prefix agreement in the language in question" Guthrie (1967/71:15). The actual prefix of the nominal is being used as a reference form for the whole pattern of agreement. Also, the number of classes in a language is thus determined by the number of distinct patterns of agreement. On this basis, the number of classes may vary from ten to about twenty depending on the language concerned.

2.2. Oku Noun Classes.

Oku has 13 gender distinct noun classes. The major singular classes include: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 19 while the major plural classes are 2, 4, 6, 6a, 8, 10, and 13.

Noun prefixes, more often than not, divide nouns into singular and plural pairs. These pairs make up what we call double class genders. However, there are certain classes (of liquids or masses for example) that semantically do not have plurals. Nonetheless, there is a limited set of singular class genders which occur only in the singular or plural in the language and which are never paired to their opposite number. This gender classification will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

2.1.2. Criteria for determining Oku noun classes

(Morphological criteria)

Distinctions on noun classes are made on the following:

- the form of the noun prefix
- singular/plural pairing
- nouns and their concordial elements
- semantic content (to a lesser extent)

The corresponding prefix and concord system used in this work is the one postulated by Hyman (1980:251) for Proto-Ring Grassfields Bantu (henceforth Proto-RGB) languages. In this

chapter, focus will be directed on the morphological criteria as stated above since chapter 4 will take care of the semantic criteria and gender system of Oku. Using those criteria and with reference to Proto-Ring prefixes, the following classes have been established: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6a, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 19.

2.2 Noun Prefixes

In this section the identified noun prefixes of Oku will be discussed sytematically. This discussion will include indentifying various noun prefixes and relating them to those of Proto-Ring as reconstructed by Hyman (1980). The thirteen different classes identified are:

2.2.1 Class 1

There are two prefixes manifested in this class: [Ø-] and [əb-]. The corresponding Proto-Ring Grassfields Bantu (Proto-RGB) prefix is ù-. It is a singular class whose plural is formed in class 2. The following are examples of class 1 nouns:

Those with a Ø- prefix morphemes:

a) Ø-wán 'child'
   Ø-wél 'person'
   Ø-wánghom 'daughter'

We could not have something like

u-án

u-él

u-ànghom

This is because in Oku, no two sequences of vowels occur in the initial position of words. Also considering the fact that u- in Oku is not a prefix we could not have the above combination.

Examples with əb- prefix morphemes are:

b)	əb-lúúmen	'man'
	əb-chóŋ	'thief'
	əb-víì	'woman /wife'

Looking at the Proto-Ring Grassfields Bantu prefix for this class and the prefixes attested in Oku, it is suggested that the phonological form of this class prefix is not identical with the Proto-RGB form.

2.2.2 Class 2

The Oku prefix for class 2 manifests two different prefix markers. These are ø- and ɛ-. The corresponding form in Proto-RGB is ba-. This is the plural class for nouns in

class 1.

Examples for ø- prefix nouns:

a) ø-ghón 'children'
ø-ghêl 'people'

Examples with ɛ- prefix nouns:

b) ɛ-lúúmen 'men'
ɛ-chóŋ 'thieves'

At first glance this class looks just like class 1 in terms of the nominal prefix ø-. The difference lies in the fact that class 2 is a plural class as seen from the above examples. This class prefix has no resemblance with the Proto-RGB prefix as its singular class. While the Proto-RGB prefix has a CV-prefix structure, the Oku prefix has but a ø- and V-structure

Nouns in this class are very limited as compared to other classes, for example class 7 and 10.

2.2.3. Class 3

This is a singular class having its Oku prefix as əb- while

the Proto-RGB prefix is ú-. The prefix for this class looks just like that of class 1(b) in terms of the nominal prefix. Thus, it will be necessary to first postulate reasons why they are considered different classes. The first difference is that the Bantu noun class double genders 1/2 contains personal nouns and this is evident in Oku while class 3 and 4 nouns contain parts of the body and objects. The second difference is that nouns of these two classes 1 and 3 take their plural from different classes, 2 and 4 respectively. Thus the semantic form and plural formation make it possible to postulate a difference between class 1(b) and class 3 even though they have the same prefixes.

Examples are as follows:

əb-chúò	'mouth'
əb-fín	'leg'
əb-kôy	'leg'
əb-lám	'language'

Looking at the Proto-RGB prefix for this class, one can conclude that there is no resemblance since the Oku prefix has the VC-structure while the Proto-RGB prefix has the V-structure; while the Proto-RGB prefix is a back, high vowel, the Oku prefix is a centre, mid vowel. This makes for their difference.

2.2.4. Class 4

In Oku, the class 4 prefix is ɛy- and the corresponding Proto-RGB is i-. This class is normally the plural for class 3. The nominal prefix for this class is identical to that of class 5. Thus class 4 and 5 are formally identical since they have the same prefix. This is not true because class 4 is a plural class while class 5 is a singular class.

Examples:

ɛy-chûò	'mouths'
ɛy-fín	'legs'
ɛy-kôy	'arms'
ɛy-lám	'languages'

Looking at the Proto-Ring Grassfields Bantu prefix and the Oku prefix one can say that there is a bit of resemblance between the two. The prefixes all have front vowels but th difference is that the Proto-RGB prefix has a high front vowel while that of Oku has a front low vowel. Also the fact that the structure of the Oku prefix is VC- while tha of the Proto-RGB prefix is V-. The palatal consonant "y" t at is attached to the Oku prefix is important because in Oku most nouns take this prefix form ɛy- except in class 6 whi h has the plural ɛ- and class 2(b) nouns which are all plura classes. The tones are all mid for both the prefixes.

2.2.5. Class 5

The prefix for this class is represented as ɛy- while the corresponding prefix in Proto-RGB prefix is ǵ-. The prefix for this class is identical to that of class 4. The difference lies in the fact that class 5 is a singular class and forms its plural in class 6 and 13 while class 4 is a plural class and makes its singular in class 3. The similarity cannot be emphasized here since both classes make their singular and plurals in different classes.

Examples: (glosses)

a)			b)		
	ɛy-tíy	'store'		ɛy-bíy	'kolanut'
	ɛy-kûn	'bean'		ɛy-chîn	'heel'
	ɛy-ghúm	'egg'		ɛy-ǵúú	'leave'
	ɛy-lím	'yam'		ɛy-díl	'chin'
	ɛy-tûk	'potato'		ɛy-fèlinjòn	'rainbow'
	ɛy-shúŋ	'elephant grass stalk'		ɛy-ghíy	'tadpole'
	ɛy-shóŋ	'tooth'		ɛy-ghél	'name'
	ɛy-shíè	'eye'		ɛy-ghán	'vein'
	ɛy-shán	'corn'		ɛy-bêy	'liver'
				ɛy-gvén	'corpse'

The prefix for class 5 has the structure VC- while that of

th Proto-RGB prefix is V-. The explanation given in class 4 is applied in this class since the prefixes are the same with those of class four Oku prefixes and proto-RGB prefixes.

2.2.6 Class 6

The prefix for this class is ɛ- while the Proto-RGB prefix is á-. The resemblance here is that both prefixes have the V- structure. Also the fact that both are low vowels accounts for their similarity. But the difference comes from the fact that ɛ- is a front, low vowel while a- is a central low vowel. Note that the vowel ɛ- should not be confused with an initial vowel, also called augment, as is found in some narrow Bantu languages like Kinande (Mutaka 1994). This ɛ- vowel is a prefix and it contrasts with ɛy- which is the class 5 prefix.

Examples:

ɛ-tíy	'stones'
ɛ-kûn	'beans'
ɛ-ghúm	'eggs'
ɛ-lím	'yams'
ɛ-tûk	'potatoes'
ɛ-sûŋ	'elephants grass stalks'
ɛ-sóŋ	'teeth'

ɛ-shíɛ̀ 'eyes'

ɛ-sáŋ 'corn' (pl)

Class 6 is formally identical to class 2. The fact that both are plural classes makes them identical. The difference here comes from the fact that the two classes make their singular forms from two different classes 1 and 5. Also coupled with the fact that class 5 nouns are non-personal while class 1 nouns are personal makes for the difference.

In class 5 the prefix marker has the structure VC- while in class 6 the structure is V-. This therefore means that in class 6 the palatal consonant is deleted before the following consonant in the plural form.

ɛy-sháŋ	'corn'	ɛ-sáŋ	'corn' (pl)
ɛy-shûŋ	'elephant grass stalk'	ɛ-súŋ	'elephant grass stalk'
ɛy-shóŋ	'tooth'	ɛ-sóŋ	'teeth'

From these examples it seems clear that sh (i.e. [ʃ] alternates with s before [a,o,u]; however, there is one word in which this alternation does not hold.

ɛy-shíɛ̀	'eye'	ɛ-shíɛ̀	'eyes'

This can be explained by the fact that [s] becomes palatalized through the influence of the preceding palatal glide "y" of ɛy; in other words "s" assimilates the palatal feature of the preceding palatal glide "y".
This is captured informally by the following rule:

R.3. s ---> sh / y --

This means that the alveolar fricative [s] becomes the palatal consonant /sh/ (i.e.[ʃ]) after "y".

2.2.7 Class 6a

The sub-class has the VC-prefix structure and the plural class for class 19. The prefix for this class is əm- while the corresponding Proto-RGB prefix is mə-. The Oku prefix in this class is directly the opposite of the Proto-RGB prefix. The Oku prefix is made up of the same vowel and consonant that is found in Proto-RGB prefix but for the fact that the structure is different: VC-structure instead of CV-structure as the Proto-RGB prefix. All the prefixes have a nasal sound but the difference stems from the fact that, while the Oku prefix has a mid central vowel before the nasal, the Proto-RGB prefix has a mid central vowel after the nasal.

Examples:

èm-gvél	'oil'
èm-dúŋ	'blood'
èm-dûk	'wine'
èm-kfêŋ	'flour
èm-kfês	'pimples'
èm-sês	'lice'
èm-tsêk	'weavels'
èm-kâk	'wood'
èm-làl	'doves'

2.2.8 Class 7

This class is rich in terms of nouns, in the Oku language. This class has as its prefix ke- while the corresponding Proto-RGB prefix is ki-. The Oku prefix is similar phonologically to the Proto form but for the fact that the Oku variant has a mid front vowel while the Proto form has a high front vowel. Both prefixes have a CV- structure. There is also similarity in the tonal form of the Proto form and its Oku counterpart. Some of the vowels take a low tone in both cases. This class contains a number of body parts as will be seen below:

Examples:

kè-ndòŋ 'neck'

ke-túu 'head'

ke-gíɛ̀k 'jaw'

ke-túúle 'ear'

kè-kaŋle 'chest'

There are other nouns which are not body parts but they fall under this class.

ke-bám 'bag'

ke-bák 'umbrella'

ke-bíʲ 'thigh'

ke-bɛ́ʲ 'compound'

2.2.9. Class 8

The prefix for this class is àb- while that of Proto-RGB is bí-. The proto-RGB equivalent of class 8 is morphophonemically similar to that of Oku in that they both possess a voiced bilabial plosive (b-) but they differ in that the structures of the prefixes is not the same. For the Oku prefix we have VC- but for the Proto form we have CV-. There is some interchange in the position of the sounds. Also they differ in that they have different vowels. The Proto-RGB prefix has a [-low, -back] vowel whereas the Oku prefix has a

[+central], [-Front] and [+mid] vowel. In Proto-RGB, the prefix vowel bears a high tone while in Oku the prefix vowel bears a low tone.

The prefix of this class is formally identical to that of classes 1 and 3 but the difference stems from the fact that class 8 is a plural class. Labialization takes place in class 8 where the bilabial stop b- is labialized in certain environments.

Examples:

[əb-bʷ am]	/əb-bam/
[əb-bʷ ak]	/əb-bak/
[əb-bʷ iʲ]	/əb-biy/
[əb-bʷ ɛʲ]	/əb-bɛy/

From the above examples it is attested that the singular class prefix ke- which, due to its CV-syllable, enables one to see clearly that the stem of the noun begins with [k]. In the plural form, the prefix is əb-, and when it is affixed to a stem which begins with [b], the latter is labialized; [əbbʷ]. In Oku there is no sequence of [b] sounds occurring together. In the above examples, the morphemes are separated by a hyphen.

There are nouns which belong to the same gender 7/8, but their stems begin with a consonant other than b. In this case labialization does not take place.

Examples

Singular	Plural	Gloss
[kekâŋ]	[əbkâŋ]	'dish(es)'
[kètàm]	[əbtàm]	'elephant(s)'
[kelán]	[əblán]	'cocoyam(s)'
[kèdàŋ]	[əbdàŋ]	'bench(es)'

Looking at the above examples it is clear that the stem initial consonants in the plural forms are not labialized. This goes further to explain the above suggestion that, when a sequence of two bilabial stops occur, the second /b/ is labialized. In a majority of cases [b^w] is followed by [a]. Another way in which we can describe this alternation is that, the stem-initial /b/ becomes [-cons] and assimilates to the labial point of articulation of the /b/ in the noun prefix. This is informally captured by the following rule:

R.4. b --> b^w / b-

This means that "b" becomes labialized when it precedes another "b".

What seems to be the most adequate conclusion is that with these words labialization does not occur. The first reason

is that these words have a Ø-prefix form. The fact that əb- is the prefix form for words having their stem-initial consonants beginning with [b] makes the second /b/ to be labialized. But in the above examples we have only one [b-]. One may likely conclude that it is due to the preceding nasal.

2.2.10. Class 9

The prefix for class 9 is Ñ-, Ø- while that of the Proto-RGB is Ñ-, Ø-. There is much phonetic, tonal and morphological similarity between the proto-form and the Oku variant. Hence within the class there exist two different phonologically unrelated alternants, hence the reason for subclassification within the class.

Ø-prefix	Examples:
Ø-búò	'dog'
Ø-bvây	'goat'
Ø-nà	'cow'
Ø-yúò	'snake'
Ø-nyàm	'animal'

Nouns of the subclass /Ø-/ all have a root-initial high tone and the nouns are mostly animals. The nouns which begin with /ny/ also fall in this subclass. The initial

consonants here include /b/, /n/, /y/ and /ny/

N-prefix Examples:

ǹ-dòŋ 'horn'

ǹ-daà 'house'

ǹ-jàm 'axe'

ǹ-jòŋ 'thorn'

ǹ-bòŋ 'feather hat'

ǹ-tòn 'pot'

This subclass has a homorganic nasal prefix with a low tone. The initial consonant of all the above examples are /d/, /j/,/b/,/t/ and /s/

This class is greatly represented in terms of nouns in the Oku language. At first glance one may be tempted to say the sequence mb, nd, nt, ns, nj are composed of one unit. It holds quite true that most of the above sequences are separate phonemes. Also they occur in initial positions only in this class and class 10. It is granted that the nasal sounds cannot be separated from the oral ones, or it might result in a strange sound that is artificial to the language. Thus the prefix for these groups of sequences is Ø- as the initial of the stem.

To take the above stand will be assuming a morphology that

is not adequate to describe the Oku noun. One may consider it this way. The morpheme /N-/, a non-syllabic nasal, is postulated as the basic allomorph of this class. It is homorganic when found in front of voiced segments. The above is based on the fact that [d-], [b-], [j-] can be found in initial position of stems. This is true as the sounds do not exist without being prenasalized in the language. Therefore, the language has [b], [d], [j] at an initial stem position rendering /N-/ as a prefix of this class. It should be noted that though these nouns are separated, the nasal is non-syllabic and is pronounced as homorganic with the stem consonant. Thus it will be better to choose this analysis than the previous because it makes a significant generalization about the facts of the language. One should also take note of the fact that it is only at word initial that [nd-] and the other homorganic nasals are separated. In word medial position they are regarded as one segment.

R.5. $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{cons} \\ +\text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow [\alpha \text{ place}] \; \_\_\_ \; \begin{bmatrix} +\text{cons} \\ -\text{cor} \end{bmatrix}$
C

This rule says that a nasal consonant takes the alpha point of articulation of the following consonant which has the feature [-coronal].

Examples

Nbòŋ --> [mbòŋ] 'feather hat'

Ngél --> [ŋgél] 'elbow'

FeNdʒîs --> [fendʒîs] 'star'

Nsàŋ --> [nsàŋ] 'rib'

Njàm --> [njàm] 'axe'

2.2.11. Class 10

Instead of a prefix as seen in the other classes, class 10 is distinct as it makes use of the suffix. This class stands out to be the only class that makes use of a suffix. The affix for this class is -se and the corresponding Proto-RGB affix is -sí. There is no tonal similarity between the Oku reflex and the proto-RGB form. The two are also similar in their structure, notably, CV- and they both have front vowels. The difference comes from the height (aperture) of the vowels: while the Proto-RGB vowel is high, that of Oku is mid-high.

The follwing examples will show the use of suffixes to make plurals.

búó-se 'dogs'

bvə́y-se 'goats'

ná-se 'cows'

yúó-se 'snakes'

nyám-se 'animals'

ndòŋ-sè	'horns'
ndaà-sè	'houses'
njàm-sé	'axes'
njòŋ-sè	'months'
ntòn-sè	'pots'

In Oku, if a class 9 noun does not have a nasal prefix, a low tone will become a high tone in the plural followed by the class 10 suffix bearing a mid tone. On the other hand if a low tone class 9 noun has a nasal prefix, no tone change is observed when -se is suffixed.

Examples:

Singular	Plural	Gloss
búò	búó-se	'dog(s)'
yúò	yúó-se	'snake(s)'
ndòŋ	ndòŋ-sè	'horn(s)'
ndaà	ndaà-sè	'house(s)'

The structure of the affix of class 10 nouns has changed automatically and is not identical to that of class 9 nouns. It is therefore easy to distinguish class 9 nouns from class 10 nouns since the affixes are not the same. In class 10 a different allomorph is chosen--[-se]--as seen from the above

examples.

2.2.12 Class 13

This is a plural class even if it differs from the usual even to the odd number. This class has as its prefix marker te- while the corresponding Proto-RGB prefix is tə́-. There is a tonal difference between the Proto form and its Oku reflex. While the Proto form bears a high tone, the Oku prefix bears a mid tone. This is a plural class for some class 5(b) nouns.

Examples

te-bíy	'kolanuts'
te-chîn	'heels'
te-fúú	'leaves'
te-díl	'chins'
te-fèlíŋjoŋ	'rainbows'
te-ghíy	'tadpoles'
te-ghêl	'names'
te-bɛ̂y	'livers'
te-gvə̀n	'corpses'

2.2.13 Class 19

The prefix morpheme for class 19 is fe-. The corresponding Proto form is fə́-. The only difference with these prefixes is that the vowel for the Proto form is a front vowel while that of Oku is a central vowel. Also the tonal system has some differences. The Proto vowel bears a high tone. As for the structure there is a similarity since both of the prefixes have a CV-structure. This is the singular class for class 6a nouns.

fe-kfə̂s	'pimple'
fe-nsɛ̂s	'lice'
fe-ntsə̂k	'weavel'
fe-kâk	'tree'

It could be argued that the prefix for class 19 is fen- instead of fe-. But this does not hold true, because nouns from those same classes, but which do not begin with a nasal-plus-consonant, have only the CV-prefix, rather than CVN- as seen in the above examples.

Below is a recapitulative table (2.1) of the noun class prefixes with the following columns:

Column I: Comprises the noun class numbers. These include classes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6a, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 19.

Column II: This column represents the Proto-Ring Grassfields Bantu (Proto-RGB) prefixes proposed by Hyman (1980) for the various classes. Notice that they are tonal and morphological differences between Proto-RGB and Oku prefixes, as exemplified in table 1.
These differences are explained under noun prefixes

Column III: This column is made up of the various Oku noun prefixes, corresponding to the various class numbers presented in column I

Column IV: In this column, presentation of some examples in Oku nouns for each class is undertaken. For classes with more than one prefix, examples are provided.

Column V: This column comprises the glossed Oku examples.

TABLE 1:Noun Class Affixes Oku and Proto-RGB forms

Class	Proto-RGB	Oku	Oku Examples	Gloss
1	ù-	Ø, əb-	Ø-wán	'child'
			əb-lúúmen	'man'
2	bá-	Ø, ɛ-	Ø-ghón	'children'
			ɛ-lúúmen	'men'
3	ú-	əb-	əb-fín	'leg'
4	í-	ɛy-	ɛy-fín	'legs'
5	í	ɛy-	ɛy-tûk	'potato'
6	á-	ɛ-	ɛ-tûk	'potatoes'
6a	mà-	əm-	əm-kâk	'wood'
7	kí-	ke-	ke-tíɛ́	'chair'
8	bí-	əb-	əb-tíɛ́	'chairs'
9	Ñ-, Ø-	Ø-, N-	Ø-sún	'friend'
			N-daà	'house'
10	-sí	-se	sún-se	'friends'
13	tá-	te-	te-bíy	'colanuts'
19	fá-	fe-	fe-nán	'bird'

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Considering the morphological classification of Oku nouns, the following issues are outstanding.

First, there is a remarkable morphological similarity amongst the class 2 and 6 nouns bearing the prefix ɛ-. As a result of the morphological similarity, it becomes almost indistinguishable initially; but when considered individually, class 2 forms its singular from class 1 and bears a high tone on its concord morpheme, while class 6 nouns form their singular in class 5. Class 2 and 6 are formally identical in that they have the same concord marker gh- just as the prefix ɛ-. Classes 4 and 5 have the same nominal prefix but for the fact that class 4 is a plural class while class 5 is a singular class. In addition, the fact that they have different concord markers accounts for the difference. Classes 1, 2 and 9 have a Ø- prefix even though they do not belong to the same class, and also the fact that they make their plural/singular nouns in different classes.

Secondly, in Oku, the rest of the classes have no similarity with each other. Class 13 stands as the only plural class bearing an odd number.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCORD SYSTEM

3.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the noun classes and the noun prefixes were discussed. In this chapter, the distribution of some concordial morphemes as summarised in Table 3 will be discussed. Virtually, every lexical morpheme--noun, adjective, numeral, demonstrative, etc.--associated with a given noun has an affix of agreement with that noun. If the form of the concordial affix is related to the class of the noun concerned, it therefore holds that there exists as many concordial prefixes as there are classes. As such, the number of nominal classes that exist in a language will reflect the same number of concordial affixes that exist. The concord system is important in that it is one of the criteria used to establish the individual noun classes as contrastive i.e. the occurrence of the noun with a specific set of concordial elements.

3.1. Concord system.

The concordial system in Oku to be discussed will include: the nominal affix (NP), the possessive pronoun affix (POSS), the demonstrative affix (DEM), the adjectival or qualifier affix (AP), the determiner affix (ART), and the associative affix (ASSO).

3.2.1. NUMERALS (NP).

Cardinal numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 are observed for most classes with a CV- concord prefix, whose roots are presented as follows:

1: mòò

2: báà

3: táá

4: kèè

5: tan

Class 1: /Ø-, əb-/

Ø-wán	əb-mòk	'one child'
child	one	
ə-b-víì	əb-mòk	'one woman'
woman	one	

Class 3 /əb-/

əb-fín	əb-mòk	'one leg'
leg	one	
əb-lɛ́ŋ	əb-mòk	'one bamboo'
bamboo	one	

Class 5 /ɛy-/

ɛy-shóŋ ɛy-mòk 'one tooth'

tooth one

ɛy-ghúm ɛy-mòk 'one egg'

egg one

Class 7 /ke-/

ke-bâm ke-mòk 'one bag'

bag one

ke-bâk ke-mòk 'one umbrella'

umbrella one

Class 9 /Ø-/

búò ɛy-mòk 'one dog'

dog one

bvày ɛy-mòk 'one goat'

goat one

Class 19 /fe-/

fe-kâk fe-mòk 'one firewood'

firewood one

fe-nán fe-mòk 'one bird'

bird one

Looking at the nouns combined together with the numeral 1, one can say that the concordial prefix is the same with the class prefix except for the fact that the Ø-prefix in class 1 has become əb- which justifies the fact that those Ø-prefix words actually belong to class 1 nouns.

After thus looking at the singular classes dealing with the numeral 1, we will now address the plural classes in relation to the numeral 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Class 2 /Ø-, ɛ-/

The concordial prefix in this case is the same with the class prefix except for the fact that the Ø-prefix in class 2 has a concordial prefix ɛ-, as was the case in class one. Therefore the nouns belong to class 2 as will be seen from the following examples.

ghêl	ɛ-báá	'two people'
people	two	
ghón	ɛ-tâl	'three children'
children	three	
ɛ-lúúmen	ɛ-kɛ̀ɛ̀k	'four men'
men	four	
ɛ-chóŋ	ɛ-tan	'five thieves'
thieves	five	

Class 4 /ɛy-/

ɛy-fín	ɛy-bàà	'two legs'
legs	two	
ɛy-kôy	ɛy-tâl	'three arms'
arms	three	
ɛy-lɛ́ŋ	ɛy-kɛ̀ɛ̀k	'four bamboos'
bamboos	four	
ɛy-chúò	ɛy-tan	'five mouths'
mouths	five	

Class 6 /ɛ-/

ɛ-sóŋ	ɛ-bàà	'two teeth'
teeth	two	
ɛ-shíɛ̀	ɛ-tâl	'three eyes'
eyes	three	
ɛ-lím	ɛ-kɛ̀ɛ̀k	'four yams'
yams	four	
ɛ-tíy	ɛ-tan	'five stones'
stones	five	

Class 6a /əm-/

àm-yìn	àm-búà	'two gods'
gods	two	

àm-nán àm-tâl 'three birds'

birds three

əm-sɛ̂s àm-kɛ̀ɛ̀k 'four lice'

lice four

əm-ghâm àm-tan 'five mats'

mats five

Class 8 /əb-/

əb-bwâm əb-búà 'two bags'

bags two

əb-bwâk əb-tâl 'three umbrellas'

umbrella three

àb-ndòŋ əb-kɛ̀ɛ̀k 'four necks'

necks four

əb-túú əb-tan 'five heads'

heads five

Class 10 /se-/

búó-se se-bàà 'two dogs'

dogs two

bvəy-se se-tâl 'three goats'

goats three

sun-se se-kɛ̀ɛ̀k 'four friends'

friends four

ndaa-se se-tan 'five houses'

houses five

Class 13 /te-/

te-lèy te-bàà 'two knees'

knees two

te-bíy te-tâl 'three kolanuts'

kolanuts three

te-tân te-kɛ̀ɛ̀k 'four hills, mountains'

hills four

te-bís te-tan 'five traps'

traps five

The following are the numeral prefixes according to their various classes.

Class 1:	əb-	Class 7:	ke-
class 2:	ɛ-	Class 8:	əb-
Class 3:	əb-	Class 9:	ɛy-, y-
Class 4:	ɛy-	Class 10:	se-
Class 5:	ɛy-	Class 13:	te-
Class 6:	ɛ-	Class 19:	fe-
Class 6a:	əm-		

As seen from the above illustrations, the various numeral stems are outlined above while the numeral prefix for "one" has the following concord elements with the singular noun

classes.

Class	Concord element
1	əb-
3	əb-
5	ɛy-
7	ke-
9	ɛy-
19	fe-

It is very obvious that the number "1" is singular. It will therefore concord with the singular classes of this language. The singular classes are: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 19 as seen above. They are six classes. The class of the concord is determined by the noun concerned. Below are examples of nouns from these classes used with the numeral "1".

Example	Gloss
Class 1 Ø-wán əb-mòk	'one child'
Class 3 əb-fín əb-mòk	'one leg'
Class 5 ɛy-tûk ɛy-mòk	'one potato'
Class 7 ke-tíɛ̀ ke-mòk	'one chair'
Class 9 Ø-sún ɛy-mòk	'one friend'
Class 19 fe-nán fe-mòk	'one bird'

We have come to the end of the singular classes dealing with

the numeral "1". Now we are going to look at the plural classes in relation to the numeral 2, 3, 4, 5. The plural noun classes have the following concord morphemes:

Class	Concord element
2	ɛ-
4	ɛy-
6	ɛ-
6a	əm-
8	əb-
10	se-
13	te-

Examples of plural nouns include:

Class	Example	Gloss
2	Ø-ghón ɛ-bàà	'two children'
4	ɛy-fín ɛy-tâl	'three legs'
6	ɛ-tûk ɛ-kɛ̀ɛ̀k	'four potatoes'
6a	əm-nán əm-tan	'five birds'
8	əb-tíɛ̀ əb-búà	'two chairs'
10	sún-se se-tâl	'three friends'
13	te-lày te-kɛ̀ɛ̀k	'four knees'

3.1.1.1 How Many

Since this is some sort of qualification to show number, it will be appropriate to treat it under numeral. It should also be noted that it is used only with the plural class.

Class 2	ghêl ɛ-sêk		'how many people?'
	people how many		
	ɛ-lúúmen	ɛ-sêk	'how many men?'
	men	how many	
Class 4	ɛy-kôy	ɛy-sêk	'how many arms?'
	arms	how many	
	ɛy-lɛ́ŋ	ɛy-sêk	'how many bamboos?'
	bamboos	how many	
Class 6	ɛ-sóŋ	ɛ-sêk	'how many teeth?'
	teeth	how many	
	ɛ-ghúm	ɛ-sêk	'how many eggs?'
	eggs	how many	
Class 6a	əm-sɛ̂s	əm-sêk	'how many lice?'
	lice	how many	
	àm-fyàk	əm-sêk	'how many knives?'
	knives	how many	
Class 8	əb-tíɛ̀	əb-sêk	'how many chairs?'
	chairs	how many	

	əb-bwâm	əb-sêk	'how many bags?'
	bags	how many	
Class 10	ndáá-se	se-sêk	'how many houses?'
	houses	how many	
	búó-se	se-sêk	'how many dogs?'
	dogs	how many	
Class 13	te-vêl	te-sêk	'how many feathers?'
	feathers	how many	
	te-kéŋ	te-sêk	'how many pipes?'
	pipes	how many	

The following numeral prefixes have been discovered to stand for "how many" in the language. These include:

Class 2	ɛ-
Class 4	ɛy-
Class 6	ɛ-
Class 6a	əm-
Class 8	əb-
Class 10	se-
Class 13	te-

3.1.2 POSSESSIVE PRONOUN (POSS)

The affixes of the possessive pronouns are usually determined by the nouns associated with them. The following possessives will be treated:

my	our
your (sg)	your (pl)
his/her	their

Class 1 wán wom 'my child'
child my
wán vié 'your child'
child your (sg)
wán wen 'his child'
child his/her
wán wes 'our child'
child our
wán wen 'your child'
child your (plural)
wán ghèn 'their child'
child their

Class 2 ə-lúúmen ghom 'my men'
men my
ghêl ə-ghom 'my people'
people my

ghêl ə-ghíè 'your people'

people your

ghêl ə-wen 'his people'

people his

ghêl ə-ghɛs 'our people'

people our

ghêl ə-ghɛn 'your people'

people your

ghêl ə-ghèn 'their people'

Class 3 ɛy-shíè yom 'my eye'

eye my

ɛy-shíè yíè 'your eye'

eye your

ɛy-shíè wen 'his eye'

eye his

ɛy-shíè yɛs 'our eye'

eye our

ɛy-shíè yɛn 'your eye'

eye your

ɛy-shíè ghèn 'their eye'

eye their

Class 4 ɛ-shíè ghom 'my eyes'

eyes my

ɛ-shíè ghíè 'your eyes'

eyes your

ɛ-shíɛ̀ wen 'his eyes'

eyes his

ɛ-shíɛ̀ ghɛs 'our eyes'

eyes our

ɛ-shíɛ̀ ghɛn 'your eyes'

eyes your (pl)

ɛ-shíɛ̀ ghèn 'their eyes'

eyes their

Class 5 ɛy-ghúm ə-yom 'my egg'

egg my

ɛy-ghúm ə-yíɛ̀ 'your egg'

egg your (sg)

ɛy-ghúm ə-wen 'his egg'

egg his

ɛy-ghúm ə-yɛs 'our egg'

egg our

ɛy-ghúm ə-yɛn 'your egg'

egg your (pl)

ɛy-ghúm ə-ghèn 'their egg'

egg their

Class 6 ɛ-ghúm ə-ghom 'my eggs'

eggs my

ɛ-ghúm ə-ghíɛ̀ 'your eggs'

eggs your (sg)

ɛ-ghúm ə-wen 'his eggs'

eggs his

ɛ-ghúm ə-ghɛs 'our eggs'

eggs our

ɛ-ghúm ə-ghɛn 'your eggs'

eggs your (pl)

ɛ-ghúm ə-ghèn 'their eggs'

eggs their

Class 6a àm-fyàk mə-mom 'my knives'

knives my

àm-fyàk mə-míɛ̀ 'your knives'

knives your (sg)

àm-fyàk mə-wɛn 'his knives'

knives his

àm-fyàk mə-mɛs 'our knives'

knives our

àm-fyàk mə-mɛn 'your knives'

knives your (pl)

àm-fyàk mə-ghèn 'their knives'

knives their

Class 7 ke-tíɛ̀ kom 'my chair'

chair my

ke-tíɛ̀ kíɛ̀ 'your chair'

chair your (sg)

ke-tíɛ̀ wen 'his chair'

chair his

	ke-tíɛ̀	kɛs	'our chair'
	chair	our	
	ke-tíɛ̀	kɛn	'your chair'
	chair	your (pl)	
	ke-tíɛ̀	ghèn	'their chair'
	chair	their	
Class 8	əb-tíɛ̀	wom	'my chairs'
	chairs	my	
	əb-tíɛ̀	víɛ̀	'your chairs'
	chairs	your	
	əb-tíɛ̀	wen	'his chairs'
	chairs	his	
	əb-tíɛ̀	wɛs	'our chairs'
	chairs	our	
	əb-tíɛ̀	wɛn	'your chairs'
	chairs	your (pl)	
	əb-tíɛ̀	ghèn	'their chairs'
	chairs	their	
Class 9	n-daà	yom	'my house'
	house	my	
	n-daà	yíɛ̀	'your house'
	house	your (sg)	
	n-daà	wen	'his house'
	house	his	
	n-daà	yɛs	'our house'

	house	our	
	n-daà	yɛn	'your house'
	house	your (pl)	
	n-daà	ghèn	'their house'
	house	their	
Class 10	n-daà-se	som	'my houses'
	houses	my	
	n-daà-se	shíɛ̀	'your houses'
	houses	your (sg)	
	n-daà-se	wen	'his houses'
	houses	his	
	n-daà-se	sɛs	'our houses'
	houses	our	
	n-daà-se	sɛn	'your houses'
	houses	your (pl)	
	n-daà-se	ghèn	'their houses'
	houses	their	
Class 13	te-bíy	tom	'my kolanuts'
	kolanuts	my	
	te-bíy	tíɛ̀	'your kolanuts'
	kolanuts	your (sg)	
	te-bíy	wen	'his kolanuts'
	kolanuts	his	
	te-bíy	tɛs	'our kolanuts'
	kolanuts	our	

te-bíy tɛn 'your kolanuts'

kolanuts your (pl)

te-bíy ghèn 'their kolanuts'

kolanuts their

Class 19 fe-nán ə-fom 'my bird'

bird my

fe-nán ə-fíɛ̀ 'your bird'

bird your

fe-nán ə-wen 'his bird'

bird his

fe-nán ə-fɛs 'our bird'

bird our

fe-nán ə-fɛn 'your bird'

bird your (pl)

fe-nán ə-ghèn 'their bird'

bird their

It should however be noted that the associative markers (AM) appear between the noun and the possessive. Because of the open system of the nouns, the associative marker "ə" does not come out distinctively except in cases where the noun ends in a nasal as shown in the following examples.

búò ə yom 'my dog'

dog AM my

fe-nən ə fom 'my bird'
bird AM my

The possessive prefixes in Oku vary in form with the nominal class they follow. From the above illustration, it can be noticed that most of the possessive adjectives can be represented in Oku in various forms.

The above illustrations show the different concord elements of the first, second and third persons singular and plural of the possessive pronouns.

It can be observed from the examples that the third person singular and plural adjectives in Oku are not affected by the nominal class system since they show no variation. They are systematically exceptions to the concord consonant. "His/her" remains "wen" irrespective of the noun class it follows. In the same way, "their" also remains "ghen".

The following are the concord elements of the possessives.

Class	Concord element
1	w- (v-)

2	gh-
3	w- (v)
4	y-
5	y-
6	gh-
6a	m-
7	k-
8	w- (v-)
9	y-
10	s-
13	t-
19	f-

The semi-vowel /w/ is realized as [v] when followed by a high front vowel. The noun classes provide more evidence of the w/v alternation preceding [i] as examplified in classes 1, 3, and 8 of the possessives. In noun class 3 for example, the concord consonant is /w/, but when the following vowel is [i], /w/ is realized as [v]. This is shown by the following examples.

əb	fín	ə	wom		
leg		AM	my		
'my leg'					
əb	fín	ə	wɛn		
leg		AM	your (pl.)		
'your (pl.) leg'					

əbfín	ə	víɛ̀
leg	AM	your (sg.)

your (sg´) leg'

The alternation between "w" and "v" can be accounted for by the following rule:

R.6. -cons --> +strid / --- + syll
-syll -back -back
+back +tense

This rule says: the glide "w" becomes "v" when it precedes the vowel "i".

3.1.3 Demonstratives

Oku distinguishes three demonstrative pronouns: 'this/these' [near speaker], 'that, those' [near hearer] and 'that/those' [further away from speaker and hearer]. These three demonstratives are abbreviated [n.s] = near speaker, [n.n] near hearer and [far]. These demonstratives consist of the concord consonant followed by /-in/ for 'this, these' and by /-ii/ for 'that and those' and /-ídii/ for that further away from the speaker and hearer.

Class 1	wán	vìn	'this child'
	child	this	
	əb-víì	vìn	'this woman'
	woman	this	

	wán	víí	'that child'
	child	that	
	əb-ví	vídíí	'that woman'
	woman	that	(further away from the speaker)
Class 2	ghón	ghìn	'these children'
	children	these	
	ɛ-lúúmen	ghìn	'these men'
	men	these	
	ghón	ghíí	'those children'
	children	those	
	ɛ-lúúmen	ghíí	'those men'
Class 3	əb-kôy	vìn	'this arm'
	arm	this	
	əb-lɛ́ŋ	vìn	'this bamboo'
	bamboo	this	
	əb-kôy	víí	'that arm'
	arm	that	
	əb-lɛŋ	vídíí	'that bamboo'
	bamboo	that	
Class 4	ɛy-kôy	yìn	'these arms'
	arms	these	
	ɛy-lɛŋ	yìn	'these bamboos'
	bamboos	these	
	ɛy-kôy	yíí	'those arms'

	arms	those	
	ɛy-lɛŋ	yíí	'those bamboos'
	bamboos	those	
Class 5	ɛy-tíy	yìn	'this stone'
	stone	this	
	ɛy-ghum	yìn	'this egg'
	egg	this	
	ɛy-ghum	yíí	'that egg'
	egg	that	
	ɛy-tíy	yídíí	'that stone'
	stone	that	
Class 6	ɛ-tíy	ghìn	'these stones'
	stones	these	
	ɛ-ghúm	ghìn	'these eggs'
	eggs	these	
	ɛ-tíy	ghíí	'those stones'
	stones	those	
	ɛ-ghúm	ghíí	'those eggs'
	eggs	those	
Class 6a	em-nán	mìn	'these birds'
	birds	these	
	əm-fyàk	mìn	'these knives'
	knives	these	
	əm-nén	míí	'those birds'

	birds	those	
	əm-fyàk	míí	'those knives'
	knives	those	
Class 7	ke-bâm	kìn	'this bag'
	bag	this	
	ke-tíɛ̀	kìn	'this chair'
	chair	this	
	ke-bân	kíí	'that bag'
	bag	that	
	ke-tíɛ̀	kídíí	'that chair'
	chair	that	
Class 8	əb-bwâm	vìn	'these bags'
	bags	these	
	əb-tíɛ̀	vìn	'these chairs'
	chairs	these	
	əb-bwâm	víí	'those bags'
	bags	those	
	əb-tíɛ̀	víí	'those chairs'
	chairs	those	
Class 9	búò	yìn	'this dog'
	dog	this	
	bvə́y	yìn	'this goat'
	goat	this	
	búò	yíí	'that dog'

	dog	that	
	bvə́y	yídíí	'that goat'
	goat	that	
Class 10	búó-se	shìn	'these dogs'
	dogs	these	
	bvə́y-se	shìn	'these goats'
	goats	these	
	búó-se	shíí	'these dogs'
	dogs	those	
	bvə́y-se	shíí	'those goats'
	goats	those	
Class 13	te-bíy	tìn	'these kolanuts'
	kolanuts	these	
	te-fúú	tìn	'these leaves'
	leaves	these	
	te-bíy	tíí	'those kolanuts'
	kolanuts	those	
	te-fúú	tíí	'those leaves'
	leaves	those	
Class 19	fe-nə́n	fìn	'this bird'
	bird	this	
	fe-fyàk	fìn	'this knife'
	knive	this	
	fe-nə́n	fíí	'that bird (near hearer)'

	bird	that	
	fe-nán	fídíí	'that bird'
	bird	that	

The locative forms fɛy 'here', fɛɛy 'there' (n.h); and fɛydi (there) [far] are related to the above demonstrative forms.

Prefixes

Class 1	v-	class 5	y-	class 8	v-	class 19	f-
Class 2	gh-	class 6	gh-	class 9	y-		
Class 3	v-	class 6a	m-	class 10	sh-		
Class 4	y-	class 7	k-	class 13	t-		

3.1.4 Determinatives

Determinatives here are to determine whether one noun is different from another in the light of 'other' and 'which' and not prefixes and classes. In Oku we discovered that the form 'which' and 'other' are greatly affected by class. This means that they do have a particular prefix marking a class.

Class 1	wán	əb-kɛ	'which child?'
	child	which	
	əb-lúúmen	əb-kɛ	'which man?'
	man	which	

Class 2	ghón	ɛ-kɛ	'which children?'
	children	which	
	ɛ-lúúmen	ɛ-kɛ	'which men?'
	men	which	
Class 3	əb-lɛ́ŋ	əb-kɛ	'which bamboo?'
	bamboo	which	
	əb-fín	əb-kɛ	'which leg?'
	leg	which	
Class 4	ɛy-tûk	ɛy-kɛ	'which potato?'
	potato	which	
	ɛy- ghúm	ɛy-kɛ	'which egg?'
	egg	which	
Class 6	ɛ-tûk	ɛ-kɛ	'which potatoes?'
	potatoes	which	
	ɛ-ghúm	ɛ-ke	'which eggs?'
	eggs	Which	
Class 6a	əm-nán	əm-kɛ	'which birds?'
	birds	which	
	əm-fyàk	əm-kɛ	'which knives?'
	knives	which	
Class 7	ke-bâm	ke-kɛ	'which bag?'

	bag	which	
	ke-tíɛ̀	ke-kɛ	'which chair?'
	chair	which	
Class 8	əb-wâm	əb-kɛ	'which bags?'
	bags	which	
	əb-tíɛ̀	əb-kɛ	'which chairs?'
	chairs	which	
Class 9	bvə̂y	ɛy-kɛ	'which goat?'
	goat	which	
	nyàm	ɛy-kɛ	'which animal?'
	animal	which	
Class 10	bvə́y-se	se-kɛ	'which goats?'
	goats	which	
	nyám-se	~~sɐ~~-kɛ	'which animals?'
	animals	which	
Class 13	te-bíy	te-kɛ	'which kolanuts?'
	kolanuts	which	
	te-lêm	te-kɛ	'which farms?'
	farms	which	
Class 19	fe-nán	fe-kɛ	'which bird?'
	bird	which	
	fe-kâk	fe-kɛ	'which tree?'

tree which

'Other'

Class 1	wán	əb-lèè	'another child'
	child	another	
	əb-víì	əb-lèè	'another woman'
	woman	another	
Class 2	ghón	ɛ-léé	'other children'
	children	other	
	əb-kíì	ɛ-léé	'other women'
	women	other	
Class 3	əb-fín	əb-léé	'another leg'
	leg	another	
	əb-lɛ́ŋ	əb-léé	'another bamboo'
	bamboo	another	
Class 4	ɛy-fín	ɛy-léé	'other legs'
	legs	other	
	ɛy-lɛ́ŋ	ɛy-léé	'other bamboos'
	bamboos	other	
Class 5	ɛy-tíy	ɛy-léé	'another stone'
	stone	another	

	ɛy-ghúm	ɛy-léé	'another egg'
	egg	another	
Class 6	ɛ-tíy	ɛ-léé	'other stones'
	stones	other	
	ɛ-ghúm	ɛ-léé	'other eggs'
	eggs	other	
Class 6a	əm-nán	əm-léé	'other birds'
	birds	other	
	əm-kâk	əm-léé	'other trees'
	trees	other	
Class 7	ke-bâm	ke-léé	'another bag'
	bag	another	
	ke-bâk	ke-léé	'another umbrella'
	umbrella	another	
Class 8	əb-bwâm	əb-léé	'other bags'
	bags	other	
	əb-bwâk	əb-léé	'other umbrellas'
	umbrellas	other	
Class 9	sún	ɛy-lèè	'another friend'
	friend	another	
	bvə̂y	ɛy-léé	'another goat'
	goat	another	

Class 10	sûm-se	se-léé	'other friends'
	friends	other	
	bvêy-se	se-léé	'other goats'
	goats	other	
Class 13	te-bíy	te-léé	'other kolanuts'
	kolanuts	other	
	te-fúú	te-léé	'other leaves'
	leaves	other	
Class 19	fe-nán	fe-léé	'another bird'
	bird	another	
	fe-kâk	fe-léé	'another tree'
	tree	another	

From the above examples it is noticed that two forms are used, 'another', and 'other'. It should therefore be noted that both mean the same thing. While "another" goes with singular nouns, "other" goes with plural nouns. The prefixes of these determinants are as follows:

Class 1	əb-	class 5	ɛy-	class 8	əb-	class 19	fe-
Class 2	ɛ-	class 6	ɛ-	class 9	ɛy-		
Class 3	əb-	class 6a	əm-	class 10	se-		
Class 4	ɛy-	class 7	ke-	class 13	te-		

3.1.5 Associatives

Associatives occur between two sets of nouns to indicate the relationship (of possession or membership) which exists between them (N1 N2). That is a noun in association with another. What will be treated here is an equivalent of the English apostrophy ('s). In Oku its form is the same for all the classes except class 6a and class 10. Let us illustrate this point.

Class 1	wán	ə	əb-víî	'the woman's child'
	child	AM	woman	
	əb-víî	ə	əb-lúúmen	'the man's wife'
	woman		man	

Class 2	ghôn	ə	əb-víî	'the woman's children'
	children	AM	woman	
	əb-kíî	ə	əb-lúúmen	'the man's wives'
	wives	AM	man	

Class 3	əb-fín	ə	əb-víî	'the woman's leg'
	leg	AM	woman	
	əb-kôy	ə	əb-víî	'the woman's arm'
	arm	AM	woman	

Class 4	ɛy-fín	ə	əb-víî	'the woman's legs'
	legs	AM	woman	

ɛy-kôy ə əb-víì 'the woman's arms'
arms AM woman

Class 5 ɛy-shóŋ ə wán 'the child's tooth'
tooth AM child
ɛy-sháŋ ə wán 'the child's corn'
corn AM child

Class 6 ɛ-sóŋ ə wán 'the child's teeth'
teeth AM child
ɛ-sáŋ ə wán 'the child's corn'
corn AM child

Class 6a əm-kâk mə wán 'the child's trees'
trees AM child
əm-nén mə wán 'the child's birds'
birds AM child

Class 7 ke-dàŋ ə wán 'the child's bench'
bench AM child
ke-bâk ə wán 'the child's umbrella'
umbrella AM child

Class 8 əb-dàŋ ə wán 'the child's benches'
benches AM child
əb-bwâk ə wán 'the child's umbrellas'
umbrellas AM child

Class 9 bvêy ə wán 'the child's goat'

goat AM child

nyàm ə wán 'the child's animal'

animal AM child

Class 10 bvéy-se wán 'the child's goats'

goats child

nyám-se wán 'the child's animals'

animals child

Class 13 te-bíy ə wán 'the child's kolanuts'

kolanuts AM child

te-léy ə wán 'the child's knees'

knees AM child

Class 19 fe-kâk ə wán 'the child's tree'

tree AM child

fe-nən ə wán 'the child's bird'

bird AM child

As shown in these illustrations, classes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 19 have the same associative prefix ə- whereas class 6a is distinct because it is the only class having the associative marker mə- while class 10 has a se-prefix marker. In speech, the prefix ə- is not gotten as compared to class 6a where the prefix is gotten when someone is speaking.

Therefore, in Oku we discovered only three associative markers in the language.

When there is a contiguous occurrence of two vowels across word boundary, vowel deletion takes place. In such cases, the vowel drops off. When the words are in isolation, no deletion takes place. This is illustrated below:

wán ə əb-víì 'the woman's child'
child AM woman
əm-nən mə wan 'the child's birds'
birds AM child

In actual pronunciation there is no associative marker because the word is pronounced as: wán əb-víì and therefore the ə drops in this case. But in the second example, the associative marker is perceived when speaking.

3.1.6. ADJECTIVES

The adjectival constructions allow the modifier to follow the noun being modified. The adjectival prefix is a concordial prefix since it depends on the type of noun that it qualifies. In Oku there are few adjectives, that is adjectives in terms of the English or French language are few. In Oku an expression like "red feather" as far as word for word translation is concerned will come out as "feather that redding"

Since adjectives depend on nouns for their form and are organized in classes, they are also organized according to their various prefixes. The adjectives that we will be illustrating are: red "baŋ" and black "fin".

Class 1 wán əb-baŋən 'red child'
child red
wél əb-baŋən 'red person
person red
wán əb-fínən 'black child'
child black
əb-víì əb-fínən 'black woman'
woman black

Class 2 ghón ɛ-baŋəne 'red children'
children red

	ɛy-tûk	ɛy-baŋəne	'red potato'
	potato	red	
	ɛy-shán	ɛy-fínəne	'black corn'
	corn	black	
	ɛy-tíy	ɛy-fínəne	'black stone'
	stone	black	
Class 6	ɛ-tíy	ɛ-baŋəne	'red stones'
	stones	red	
	ɛ-tûk	ɛ-baŋəne	'red potatoes'
	potatoes	red	
	ɛ-sáŋ	ɛ-fínəne	'black corn'
	corn	black	
	ɛ-tíy	ɛ-fínəne	'black stones'
	stones	black	
Cl. 6a	əm-ntsâk	əm-baŋən	'red weavels'
	weavels	red	
	əm-nán	əm-baŋən	'red birds'
	birds	red	
	əm-nsês	əm-fínən	'black lice'
	lice	black	
	əm-ntsâk	əm-fínən	'black weavels'
	weavels	black	
Class 7	ke-bâm	ke-baŋəne	'red bag'
	bag	red	

	ke-bâk	ke-baŋəne	'red umbrella'
	umbrella	red	
	ke-bâk	ke-fínəne	'black umbrella'
	umbrella	black	
	ke-bâm	ke-fínəne	'black bag'
	bag	black	
Class 8	əb-bwâm	əb-baŋəne	'red bags'
	bags	red	
	əb-bwâk	əb-baŋəne	'red umbrellas'
	umbrellas	red	
	əb-bwâk	əb-fínəne	'black umbrellas'
	umbrellas	black	
	əb-bwâm	əb-fínəne	'black bags'
	bags	black	
Class 9	bvây	ɛy-baŋən	'red goat'
	goat	red	
	nyàm	ɛy-baŋən	'red animal'
	animal	red	
	bvêy	ɛy-fínən	'black goat'
	goat	black	
	nyàm	ɛy-fínən	'black animal'
	animal	black	
Cl. 10	bvéy-se	se-baŋəne	'red goats'
	goats	red	

	nyám-se	se-baŋəne	'red animals'
	animals	red	
	bvéy-se	se-fínəne	'black goats'
	goats	black	
	nyám-se	se-fínəne	'black animals'
	animals	black	
Cl. 13	te-bíy	te-baŋəne	'red kolanut trees
	stones	red	
	te-fúú	te-baŋəne	'red leaves'
	leaves	red	
	te-bíy	te-fínəne	'black kolanut trees
	stones	black	
	te-fúú	te-fínəne	'black leaves'
	leaves	black	
Cl. 19	fe-sús	fe-baŋəne	'red pepper'
	pepper	red	
	fe-nán	fe-baŋəne	'red bird'
	bird	red	
	fe-ntsêk	fe-fínəne	'black weavel'
	weavel	black	
	fe-nán	fe-fínəne	'black bird'
	bird	black	

The table below represents the adjectival prefixes. They are as follows:

Class	1	əb-
	2	ɛ-
	3	əb-
	4	ɛy-
	5	ɛy-
	6	ɛ-
	6a	əm-
	7	ke-
	8	əb-
	9	ɛy-
	10	se-
	13	te-
	19	fe-

The following is a recapitulative table for the concordial prefixes. The different columns in this table are as follows:

Column i: Class

Column ii: Nominal prefixes

Column iii: Numeral prefixes

Column iv: Possessive prefixes

Column v: Demonstrative prefixes

Column vi: Determinative prefixes

Column vii: Associative prefixes

Column viii: Adjectival prefixes

TABLE 2:
Table of concordial affixes

CL	Noun Affix	Numerals	Possessives (POSS)	Demonstratives (DEM)	Determinatives (DET)	Associatives (ASSO)	Adjectives (AP)
1	ø, əb-	əb-	w-, (v-)	v-	əb-	ə-	əb-
2	ø-, ɛ-	ɛ-	gh-	gh-	ɛ-	ə-	ɛ-
3	əb-	əb-	w-	v-	əb-	ə-	əb-
4	ɛy-	ɛy-	y-	y-	ɛy-	ə-	ɛy-
5	ɛy-	ɛy-	y-	y-	ɛy-	ə-	ɛy-
6	ɛ-	ɛ-	gh-	gh-	ɛ-	ə-	ɛ-
6a	əm-	əm-	m-	m-	əm-	mə-	əm-
7	ke-	ke-	k-	k-	ke-	ə-	ke-
8	əb-	əb-	w- (v-)	v-	əb-	ə-	əb-
9	ø-, N-	ɛy-	y-	y-	ɛy-	ə-	ɛy-
10	-se	se-	-s	sh-	se-	se-	se-
13	te-	te-	t-	t-	te-	ə-	te-
19	fe-	fe-	f-	f-	fe-	ə-	fe-

3.2. Analysis of concord system: General Discussion

Looking at the concord system, the numeral, possessive, demonstrative, determinatives, associatives and concord adjective prefixes are all post nominal as will be seen

rom the following examples.

umeral	ke-bâm	ke-mok	'one bag'
	bag	one	
ossessive	Ø-wán	Ø-wom	'my child'
	child	my	
emonstrative	bvêy	yin	'this goat'
	goat	this	
eterminative	Ø-wán	əb-kɛ́	'which child'
	child	which	
ssociative	ghón	ə əb-víì	'the woman's children'
	children	AM woman	
djective	ná-se	fínən	'black cows'
	cow	black	
	bvə́y-se	baŋən	'red goats
	goats	red	

ost of the concordial forms agree with the nominal class of he noun that is used. The most constant of the classes are: a, 7, 13, and class 19. A lot of irregularities are oticed in the prefixes of class 1 ranging from w-, (v-) POSS), v- (DEM), and ə- (the ASSO). In some cases as in the case of class 10, the concordial prefix dies out in speech, leaving a construction with no prefix. This is illustrated in the following examples:

bvə́y-se som 'my goats'

goats	my	
ná-se	sêk	'how many cows?'
cows	how many	

This deletion of the prefix in class 10 might be due to the fact that the noun already has a suffix and if a prefix is added to the concord morpheme during speech, we will then have something which is not acceptable in the spoken language.

bvây-se	se-som
goats	my

Therefore, a prefix is deleted before a suffix
cf.# bvây-se# # se-som# is realized as # bvây-se som #.

It is easy to distinguish class one nouns by the nature of their semantic content. This is the only class that has human beings, as its semantic content, otherwise, the concord system could not have been able to establish the fact that a particular noun belongs to class one.

Class 1, 3, and 8 are formally indentical as far as concord prefixes are concerned; likewise classes 4, 5, and 9 and classes 2 and 6. The differences stem from the fact that each class makes its plural or singular from a different class. Class 2 and 6 have a V- structure as the noun class prefix. The concord prefixes have tended to change with the possessive and demonstrative pronouns. This

is examplified below:

ɛ-lúúmen	gh-ìn	'these men'
men	these	
ɛ-lúúmen	gh-ɔ́m	'my men'
men	my	

As far as the determinatives, adjectives and numerals are concerned, the concord prefix is identical to the noun class prefix.

Class concord is not as straightforward in class 9 as it is in the other classes. The concord marker of classes with a CV-structure is usually the same as the initial consonant of the prefix.

Examples:

Class 8 [ketúú kom] 'my head'
Class 13 [telîm tom] 'my farms'
Class 19 [fenən fom] 'my bird'

However, in class 9 the concord consonant is not a nasal but [y]:

[ndaà yom] 'my house'
[bvêy yom] 'my goat'

Class 10 follows the more typical pattern with [s] as the concord consonant.

[ndaá-se som] 'my houses'

[ŋwáàle-se som] 'my books'

One might rightly accept that the above nouns have a nasal functioning as a prefix; however, there are some of the nouns belonging to other classes which have stems beginning with a homorganic nasal-consonant sequence, but which clearly have non-nasal prefixes.

Examples:

Class 7-sg	[ke-ntʃís]	/ke-Ntʃís/	'criket'
Class 8-pl	[əm-ntʃís]	/əm-Ntʃís/	'crickets'
Class 19-sg	[fe-ndúŋ]	/fe-Ndúŋ/	'blood'
Class 6a-pl	[əm-ndúŋ]	/əm-Ndúŋ/	'blood'

One can argue that the above prefixes include the nasal, i.e., that the class 7 prefix is ken- rather than ke- and the class 19 prefix is fen- rather than fe-. This does not hold true because nouns from these same classes and which do not begin with a nasal-plus-consonant, have only the CV-prefix, rather than the CVN-

Examples:

[ke-láŋ]	not	[ken-láŋ]	'cocoyam'
[ke-tíɛ̀]	not	[ken-tíɛ̀]	'chair'
[fe-kâk]	not	[fen-kâk]	'tree'
[fe-chíà]	not	[fen-chíà]	'squirrel'

Hyman (1980) has suggested that nouns such as fe-N-sɛs "louse" and the above examples have "double prefixes" and such nouns which are clearly in a minority, may have belonged to classes 9 and 10, but for some reason acquired new prefixes without dropping the old one (Hyman 1980: 277). A similar situation is presumably responsible for the derivation of class 9 nouns such as small "house"

1. [ndaà]	/N-daà/	'house'	class 9
2. [fe-ndaà	/fe-N-daà/	'small house'	class19

[ndaà] belongs to class 9 as seen from example 1. To derive "small house", the diminutive prefix fe- is added to [ndaà] and the new word belongs to class 19, even though it retains the prefix for class 9.

The palatalization of s is evident in the noun class system. In class 10 the possessive concord consonant is s-

[ndaàse som]	ndaàse sɛn

houses my house your (pl)

'my houses' 'your (pl) houses'

However, in the second person singular possessive pronoun, the concord marker is followed by [-iɛ]. In this case [s] is realized as [ʃ]:

ndaàse ʃíɛ̀

houses your (sg)

your (sg) houses

s alternates with ʃ before a high front vowel [i];

R.7. s--> ʃ/ $\begin{bmatrix} -\text{back} \\ -\text{low} \end{bmatrix}$ _ V why no brackets ?

This type of situation occurs also in class 1 and 8 nouns where w is realized as v before a high front vowel [i].

Examples

Class 1 wán wom

child my

my child

wán víɛ̀

child your (sg)

your (sg) child

Class 8 əb-tíɛ̀ vɪ́ɛ̀

chairs your

your (sg) chairs

As a result we will not lay much emphasis on the associative marker.

As far as class 4, 5 and 6a nouns are concerned, the concord markers for the Possessive and Demonstrative are y- and m-. The structure of the noun prefix is VC-. This means that the vowel has been dropped and only the consonant is retained as the concord marker.

Class 4

NP ɛy-bíy 'kolanut'

kolanut

POSS ɛy-bíy yom 'my kolanut'

kolanut my

ɛy-bíy yìn 'this kolanut'

kolanut this

Class 5 ɛy-ghúm

egg

ɛy-ghúm yìn 'this egg'

egg this

ɛy-ghúm yíí 'that egg'

	egg	that
Class 6	əm-nán	mìn
	birds	these
	əm-nán	mí í
	birds	those

3.3 GENERAL DISCUSSION

Having a close look at the Proto-Ring Grassfield concord system and the Oku system, one can come to the conclusion that they have the same concord affixes except for classes 2 and 6. Below is a chart illustrating the Proto concord and one of Oku concord affixes.

Table of concord affixes.

TABLE 3: CONCORD AFFIXES

Class	Proto-RGB	Oku (Poss)
1	w`	w
2	b´	gh´
3	w	w
4	y´	y
5	y´	y
6	j´	gh
6a	m`	m
7	k´	k
8	b´	w
9	y`	y
10	s (y)´	s
13	t- (y)´	t
19	f´	f

Looking at the above table, the Proto form has three concord types that repeat itself in 2 different classes out of the 13 classes which have equivalence in Oku. The concord elements are /w/, seen in class 1 and 3, /y/ seen in class 4, and 5 and /b/ seen in class 2 and 8. The daughter reflex form has the same number of concord types that repeat themselves in 8 classes out of the 13 classes in the

language. These are:

Class	concord
1,3,8	w-
2,6	gh-
4,5	y-

The Proto-RGB concord form has the same number of concords that repeat themselves in different classes. The only difference stems from the fact that Oku has seven different classes that repeat themselves while the proto form has six. The only classes that have a different concord consonant that differs from that of the Oku form are class 2 and 8. Therefore, both the Oku concord system and the proto form exhibits some level of class merging. This is an evidence of simplification that is manifested in the two forms.

This simplification is manifested across the different concord elements within the Oku language. For example, in the following concordial types, the similarities and differences observed are:

CLASS	COMMENTS
1,3,8	are identical in all the concordial classes

(numerals, Poss, Dem, DET and AD)

2,6	are also identical in all the concordial classes
4,5,9	are identical in all the concordial classes.
6a,7,10,13,19	are the classes that have a limited degree of similarity with any other concord type.

As seen above, most of the Oku concord elements are identical. These classes do not have concord morphemes that vary within the class. Thus the less similar classes have different concordial elements.

CHAPTER FOUR: GENDERS AND THEIR SEMANTIC CONTENT

4.0. Introduction

The term "noun class" refers to one of the aforementioned 13 forms in which a singular or a plural noun can appear. The term " noun gender" refers to the singular/plural pairings found in the language. This singular/plural pairing of nouns is brought out by their prefixes. When this is the case we talk of double class genders. There are certain nouns for which enumeration is irrelevant. Liquids and mass nouns, which are members of one or single class gender as opposed to the double class gender, are such abstract nouns that cannot be counted. These nouns cannot be considered as making a class on their own, it is very likely that they may be grouped with nouns that make up a double class gender such as in class 6a in Oku.

Guthrie (1948:11-12) explains what gender means with regards to the principal gender criteria for Bantu languages. The features are listed as follows:

a) the sign of gender is a prefix, by means of which words may be assorted into a number of classes varying roughly from ten to twenty

b) there is a regular association of pairs of genders. In addition to the two-class genders, there are also one-class genders, where the prefix is sometimes similar to one of the

singular prefixes occurring in a two-class gender, and sometimes similar to one of the plural prefixes

c) there is no correlation of the genders with sex references or with any other clearly defined idea.

It should be remarked that this is not always clear-cut, as the notion of gender grouping apart from being analysed through morphological identity can also be considered via semantic criteria. This concept, however, will not be explored thoroughly in this work.

4.1. Gender and Semantic Content

In Bantu linguistics the following semantic classes have been discerned in Proto-Bantu. However, there are some typical, but by no means completely consistent, semantic correlation with these classes in Oku. As indicated in Welmers (1973: 166) and adopted in this work the following genders have these semantic properties:

1/2 Include most personal (human) nouns and sometimes a few other animal nouns, but rarely inanimates.

3/4 Nouns related to plants plus a variety of inanimates and miscellaneous.

5/6 Miscellaneous, or augmentatives

6a Liquid class

7/8 Miscellaneous with diminutive significance.

9/10 Most animal names, a variety of inanimates and frequently a few personal nouns.

13 Frequently diminutives.

19 Diminutives; when used as a singular, it takes its plural from one of the common plural classes.

After analysing the different criteria for noun classification, the more reliable criteria for determining genders are the systems of affixes and concord elements. As a result of these, the following Oku genders have been identified:

1/2, 3/4, 5/6, 19/6a, 7/8, 9/10, 5/13. These are the 6 paired major (double) genders and gender 1/13 is the only minor (double) gender. As far as single genders are concerned, the language has five of them which are: 1, 3 or 8, 4 or 5, 6a, 7, and 19 (1, 3 or 8, 4 or 5 because they both share identical prefixes and concord morphemes. Note that this makes it difficult to distinguish one from the other except through their context use and pairing that one can identify the singular class 1,3 and 5 and the plural class 4 and 8). In the following sections, the double-class and single-class genders will be discussed respectively

4.2 Double-class gender (major)

Oku has seven *major class* genders based on the findings of this study, most of them corresponding to Proto-Ring

genders. Below is a table illustrating the pairing of these genders. On the left side of the table we have the singular classes and on the right side we have the plural classes. The gender pairs are connected by bold lines indicating regular pairings while the broken (dotted) lines connect irregular genders. Irregular in the sense that they are not the main pairs, hence not similar to the double genders postulated by Welmers (1973: 166) for the Bantu Languages. The seven major class genders are as follows:

1/2

3/4

5/6

6a/19

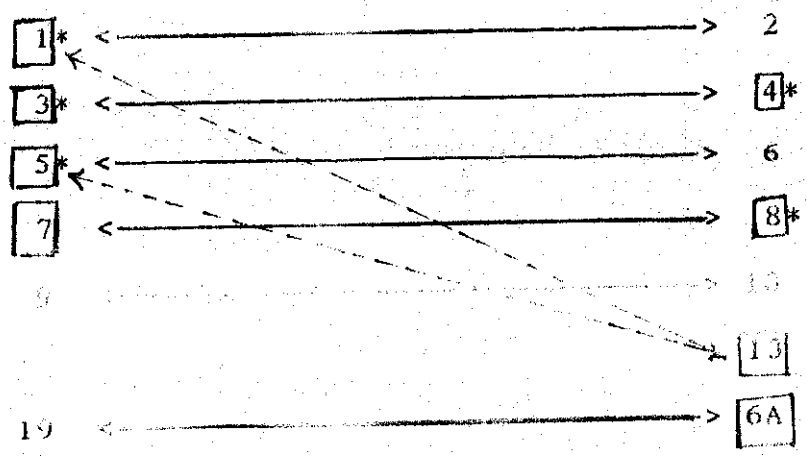
7/8

9/10

minor class gender

1/3

TABLE: 4.2 DOUBLE CLASS GENDERS



The figures in boxes indicate the single class genders but those with the asterisk (1,3 and 8,4 and 5) share identical prefixes.

4.2.1. Gender 1/2 [Ø-, Ø-/ əb-, ɛ-]

This gender designates personal nouns (names). There are very limited nouns in this class.

Ø-wán	Ø-ghón	'child(ren)'
Ø-wél	Ø-ghêl	'person(s)'
əb-lúúmen	ɛ-lúúmen	man men
əb-víì	əb-kíy	woman /wife
		women /wives

4.2.2 3/4 [əb-, ɛy-]

Gender contains some body parts and natural phenomena

-Body parts

əb-fín	ɛy-fín	'leg(s)'
əb-kôy	ɛy-kôy	'arm(s)'
əb-chúò	ɛy-chúò	'mouth(s)
əb-wún	ɛy-wún	'body (ies)'

Natural Phenomena

əb-fíàn	ɛy-fíàn	'valleys'
əb-tâŋ	ɛy-tâŋ	'valleys' " hills"

4.2.3 Gender 5/6 [ɛy-, ɛ-]

This gender is made up of nouns of various origins but the main content is parts of the body. Below are examples.

ɛy-shóŋ	ɛ-sóŋ	'tooth (teeth)'
ɛy-ghên	ɛ-ghên	'breast (s)'
ɛy-shíɛ̀	ɛ-shíɛ̀	'eye (s)'
ɛy-gháŋ	ɛ-gháŋ	'vein(s)'
ɛy-ghôm	ɛ-ghôm	'shoulder (s)'

Plant life

ɛy-shán	ɛ-sáŋ	'corn'
ɛy-bɔ́k	ɛ-bɔ́k	'pumpkin'
ɛy-tûk	ɛ-tûk	'potato(es)'
ɛy-kûn	ɛ-kûn	'beans (s)'

Miscellaneous

ɛy-tíy	ɛ-tíy	'stone(s)'
ɛy-shúŋ	ɛ-súŋ	'elephant grass stalk(s)'

4.2.4 19/6a fe-/əm-

Nouns found in this gender are:

Animals, birds, insects

fe-búk	əm-búk	'chimpanzee(s)'
fe-nàànák	èm-nàànák	'chameleon(s)'
fe-nsɛ̂s	əm-nsɛ̂s	'louse (lice)'
fe-ntsə̂k	əm-ntsə̂k	'weavel(s)'
fe-ngwâŋ	əm-ngwâŋ	'jigger(s)'
fe-chíà	əm-chíà	'squirrel(s)'
fe-mbvə̀ŋ	em-bvə́ŋ	'fly(ies)'
fe-mbáá	em-mbúá	'black stinging ant(s)'
fè-chùy	əm-chúy	'deer '
fe-ghaaghaa	əm-ghaaghaa	'swallow(s)'

Plant related objects

fe-tám	əm-tám	'fruit(s)'
fè-ndɛ̀ŋ	əm-ndɛ̀ŋ	'berry(ies)'
fe-sús	əm-sús	'pepper(s)'
fe-nyâk	əm-nyâk	'garden egg(s)'

Household objects

fe-ghâm	əm-ghâm	'mat(s)'
fe-fyàk	əm-fyàk	'knife ,knives(s)'
fe-kúúnên	əm-kúúnên	'stool(s)'

4.2.5 Gender 7/8 [ke-, əb-]

This gender appears to be the largest of all genders containing a wide variety of nouns. The most dominant are body parts. The gender has the following:

Body parts and related items

ke-léémè	əb-léémè	'tongue(s)'
ke-túù	əb-túú	'head(s)'
ke-túùlé	əb-túúlé	'ear(s)'
kè-ndòŋ	əb-ndòŋ	'neck(s)'
ke-bîy	əb-bîy	'thigh'
kè-ŋkàŋèlè	àb-ŋkàŋèlè	'chest(s)'
ke-lɛ́ɛ́mé	əb-lɛ́ɛ́mé	'wound(s)'
kè-nfèf	àb-nfèf	'blind(s)'
ke-gícɛ̀k	əb-gícɛ̀k	'cheek(s)'
ke-àblɛ̀n	àb-buàlɛ̀n	'testicle(s)'
ke-ghêf	əb-ghêf	'beard'

Household objects

ke-yês	əb-yês	'broom(s)'
ke-bâk	əb-bwâk	'umbrella(s)'
ke-búŋtèn	əb-búŋtèn	'pillow(s)'
ke-kâŋ	əb-kâŋ	'dish(es)'
ke-ghén	əb-ghén	'calabash dish(es)'
kè-ŋgwɛ̀l	àb-ŋgwɛ̀l	'match(es)'
kè-ntàs	àb-ntàs	'spoons(s)'
kè-ntsek	àb-ntsek	'mortar(s)'
ke-tíɛ́	əb-tíɛ̀	'chair(s)'
kè-ŋkîy	əb-ŋkîy	'mirror(s)'
ke-bâm	əb-bwâm	'bag(s)'

ke-tátáŋ	əb-tátáŋ	'table(s)'
ke-káakén	əb-káakén	'lamp(s)'

Plant related items.

ke-gíí	əb-gíí	'grass(es)'
ke-yàŋ	əb-yàŋ	'raffia leave(s)'
ke-yáŋsèn	əb-yáŋsèn	'stalk(s)'
ke-téélə̀	əb-téélə̀	'stem(s)'
kè-mbìy	àb-mbìy	'itchy grass'
ke-bún	əb-bún	'ridge, garden bed'

Natural phenomena

kè-njìmjîm	əb-njìmjîm	'shadow(s)'
ke-tûm	əb-tûm	'country'
ke-yús	əb-yús	'spirit'
kè-nsɛn	àb-nsɛn	'landslide(s)'

Animals, birds and insects

ke-tâk	əb-tâk	'snail'
kè-ŋgúmgúm	àb-ŋgúmgúm	'chicken hawk'
kè-ndəsèn	àb-ndəsèn	'caterpillar'
kè-nchâm	àb-nchâm	'frogs'
kè-nchès	àb-nchès	'crickets'

ke-kém	əb-kém	'crab(s)'
kè-ŋgèn	èb-ŋgèn	'owl(s)'
ke-tàm	èb-tàm	'elephant(s)'
kè-ŋkámélûs	èb-ŋkámélûs	'spider(s)'
kè-nlàl	èb-nlàl	'dove(s)'
kè-ŋgóŋèlé	èb-ŋgóŋèlé	'ant(s)'
kè-ntàn	èb-ntàn	'grasshopper'

Miscellaneous

ke-tâm	əb-tâm	'trap(s)'
kè-ŋgɛy	èb-ŋgɛy	'gate(s)'
ke-kûy	əb-kûy	'belt(s)'

4.2.6. Gender 9 (0-, N-) and 10 (0-, -se)

This gender typically includes most animal names, but also a variety of inanimates and a few personal nouns.

Animal names

0-nà	ná-sè	'cow(s)'
0-nyâm	nyám-se	'animal(s)'
ŋ-kfèényàm	n-kfèé nyám-sè	'pig(s)'
0-yúòle	yúóle-sé	'bee(s)'
0-yúò	yúó-se	'snake(s)'

Ø-bvây	bvây-se	'goat(s)'
Ø-búò	búò-se	'dog(s)'

A variety of inanimates

ntɛ̀k	ntɛ̀k-sé	'village(s)'
mbàk	mbàk-sè	'cloud(s)'
ncùm	nchùm-sé	'drum(s)'
nchàk	nchak-sé	'prison(s)'
ndàf	ndàf-sé	'thread(s)'
ndaà	ndaá-sè	'house(s)'
ndòŋ	ndoŋ-sè	'horn(s)'
njoŋ	njoŋ-sé	'month(s)'
nsak	nsák-sè	'court case(s)'
ntum	ntum-sè	'message(s)'
ntòn	ntòn-sè	'pot(s), bucket(s)'

Personal nouns

nsàŋ	nsàŋ-sè	'rib(s)'
nfèktè	nfèktè-sè	'pastor(s)'
nâŋ	nâŋ-se	'hair(s)'

4.2.7. Gender 5/13 [ɛy-, te-]

This gender contains a few body parts.

ɛy-kêk	te-kêk	'face(s)'
ɛy-díl	te-díl	'chin(s)'
ɛy-chîn	te-chîn	'heel(s)'
ɛy-káfəlé	te-káfəlé	'armpit(s)'
ɛy-lây	te-lây	'knee(s)'
ɛy-tém	te-tém	'heart(s)'
ɛy-tíŋ	te-tóŋ	'navel(s)'
ɛy-yûy	te-yûy	'nose(s)'
ɛy-bɛ̂y	te-bɛ̂y	'liver(s)'

Natural phenomena: for example:

ɛy-fèlínjoŋ	te-fèlínjoŋ	'rainbow(s)'

Housefold phenomena

ɛy-kfəl	te-kfəl	'latrine(s)'
ɛy-kɛ̂m	te-kɛ̂m	'blade(s)'
ɛy-kéŋ	te-kéŋ	'pipe(s)'

Miscellaneous

ɛy-jêm	te-jém	'prayer(s)'
ɛy-kàà	te-kàá	'debt(s)'
ɛy-kâk	te-kâk	'promise(s)'
ɛy-kfəə̀	te-kfəə́	'clan(s), family (ies)'

ɛy-ghél	te-ghél	'descendant(s), name(s)'
ɛy-fúú	te-fúú	'leave(s)'
ɛy-ghíy	te-ghíy	'tadpole(s)'
ɛ̀y-ghɔ́ghɔk	tè-ghɔ́ghɔ́k	'earthworm(s)'
ɛy-gvə́n	te-gvə́n	'corpse(s)'
ɛy-bíy	te-bíy	'kolanut(s)'
ɛy-béé	te-béé	'pit(s)'
ɛy-ghóŋ	te-ghóŋ	'spear(s)'
ɛy-lèm	te-lèm	'farm(s)'
ɛy-və̂l	te-və̂l	'feather(s)'
ɛy-yâf	te-yâf	'illness(es)'

4.3. Minor gender

4.3.1. Class 1/13 [əb-, te-]

This gender is made up of only the two following nouns:

əb-fôn	te-fôn	'chief(s)'
əb-kôy	te-kôy	'unmarried person(s)'

4.4. SINGLE CLASS GENDERS

In Oku very few nouns fall under single class gender. Consequently very few classes are regarded as single class genders. There are 6 single class genders in Oku. The following are the analyses of these classes and their semantic content. The single class genders are:

Gender 1,2 and 8
Gender 4 and 5
Gender 6a
Gender 7
Gender 19

4.4.1. Gender 1, 2 or 8 [-əb]

əb-káà	'money'

əb-fyɛ̂f 'wind'

əb-gíí 'weeds'

əb-ghááká 'wealth, greatness'

əb-chɛ́btè 'weeding'

əb-vɛ́s 'fire'

əb-bwàblɛ̀n 'testicles'

The above nouns are considered to fall under 3 types of single genders because they both have identical prefixes and concord elements, hence, it is difficult to distinguish them except by their context of application.

4.4.2. Gender 4 or 5 [ɛy-]

Nouns of this gender are mostly abstract and a few elongated items and one liquid noun.

Abstract nouns

ɛy-bôl 'tiredness'

ɛy-fân 'fear'

ɛy-jɛ̂l 'movement'

ɛy-béémê 'belief'

ɛy-jâk 'craziness'

ɛy-sân 'laziness'

ɛy-ŋgvəḿlê 'honor, humility, respect'

ɛy-sámsê 'trustworthiness'

ɛy-sáŋlê 'happiness'

ɛy-sên 'sadness, sorrow'

ɛy-yúònên 'obedience'

ɛy-yàŋsè 'lightness'

ɛy-tɔ̂f 'intelligence'

ɛy-lɛ̂ysèn 'forgiveness'

ɛy-kâk 'promise'

ɛy-[illegible] '[illegible]'

ɛy-[illegible] 'b[illegible]'

ɛy-jêm 'p[illegible]'

ɛy-chɛ̂k 'l[illegible]nter'

ɛy-dɪ̂y 'c[illegible]'

Elongated items

ɛy-ghúú 'rain'

ɛy-kɛ̂l 'penis'

Liquid noun

ɛy-líɛ̀ 'saliva / spitum

4.4.3. Gender 6a [əm-]

This is basically a liquid class. It contains nouns like:

əm-dúŋ	'blood'
əm-gvél	'oil'
àm-dûk	'wine'
àm-jíɛ̀nàn	'urine'
əm-shíɛ̀	'tears'

4.4.4. Gender 7 [ke-]

This gender contains abstract nouns and a few concrete nouns. Examples are:

Abstract nouns

ke-ŋwùùmén	'shame'
ke-ŋwɛ́y	'selfishness'
ke-díak	'strength'
ke-kwɛ́ntén	'satisfaction'
ke-fɛ́ɛ́	'newness'

Concrete nouns

ke-sɛ́sɛ́y	'sand'
ke-bvél	'dust'

4.4.5. Gender 19 [fe-]

It is a singular gender, consisting of grainy solids. For example:

fe-ŋwáŋ 'salt'

4.5. General Discussion

The semantic criteria for noun classification are not clear-cut. This is due to the fact that some of the items which one would expect to fall within a particular class gender based on their meaning/qualities do not. This can be seen through these unpredictable, semantic-wise distributions.

-Body parts are found in genders 3/4, 5/6 and 7/8

-Parts of animal are located in gender 19/6a, 7/8

- A noun like "broom" ke-yês/əb-yês and əb-lén/ɛy-lén are found in genders 7/8 and 3/4, 4 or 5 although according to their semantic property, one would expect them to fall in gender 9 (a single-class gender) which contains elongated nouns.

-Abstract and concrete nouns are indiscriminately found in the same single-class gender (7)

-"Saliva" which is ɛy-líɛ̀ in Oku is a liquid of gender 4 or 5 which should have been in class 6a (a liquid class) by virtue of their semantic content or property.

Due to the semantic clustering of nouns, the gender system distinguished semantic-wise tends to be relatively unstable, thus rendering no absolute correlation between gender and meaning.

The semantic restructuring of nouns explains why there is a morphological restructuring of the language although the criterion of restructuring seems to be obscured with time.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.0 General Summary

This study has been an attempt to describe the noun class system of Oku.

In this piece of work we noticed interesting facts. For its phonology, the language has twenty consonants--simple and complex--and seven vowels that can all be legnthened. There are two central vowels, two back vowels and three front vowels.

The tone for the noun affixes are either mid or low. Tone change in stems is also noticed. The most frequent one is the following:

-In class 9/10 it is noticed that nouns may or may not have a nasal prefix. Most animals do not have the prefix, and nouns which do not have a nasal prefix are subject to tonal alternations in the plural which nouns with a nasal prefix do not undergo.

Examples:

Ø-yúò	yúó-se	'snake(s)'
Ø-búò	búó-se	'animal(s)'
Ø-bvêy	bvéy-se	'goat(s)'
Ø-nà	ná-sè	'cow(s)'
Ø-nyâm	nyám-sè	'animal(s)

From the above examples it should be noted that when a suffix is added to a class 10 noun which does not have a nasal prefix, a low or falling tone in the singular form becomes a high tone in the plural. One other observation is that the last two nouns bear a low tone whereas the other nouns bear a mid tone on the suffix. This might be partly explained by the fact that the nouns bearing a low tone on the suffix all begin with a nasal whereas the other nouns may begin with any consonant.

-In fluent speech the native speakers elide a vowel in a VV sequence. That is, in cases where one of the vowels is a prefix, there is some sort of assimilation that occurs. The word final vowel assimilates the V prefix.

Examples:

búò ə kɛ	--> búò kɛ	'which dog?'
yúò ə kɛ	--> yúò kɛ	'which snake?'

The tonal system for the concordial affixes is more

complicated. Generally, the concordial affixes bear mid tones in most of the classes except in classes 6a/7 and 19 where low tones are borne by some concordial affixes. Tone change is not common due to collocation. This is because of the fact that there is always an intervening affix which helps to distinguish the two words.

Example:

Noun-Adjectival collocation

wél - 'person'
ɛy-fìn - 'blackness'
wél əb-finən 'black person'

Noun-Numeral collocation

wán - 'child'
mòò - 'one'
wán əb-mók 'one child'

The study has revealed the following as the paired class genders: 1/2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10, 19/13, 3/5 and one minor (double) class gender 1/13. There are five single class genders: 1, 2 or 8, 4 or 5 or 6a, 7 and 19.

Finally, in agreement with other Bantu languages, noun

classes in Oku are defined not only by their nominal prefixes (e.g. classes 1, 2 and 8 have əb- and 4 and 5 have ɛy- as a nominal prefix), but also by concord affixes, context of application and by distribution in the system (i.e. pairing) with respect to the other noun classes.

In a nutshell, the phonological changes in the development of the daughter reflex (Oku) from the Proto-Ring Grassfields Bantu form are less extensive in the concord affixes than in the nominal prefixes.

5.1. Suggestions for Further Research.

This work can serve as a spur to future researchers on the Oku language. The work far from being exhaustive has touched only a small part of the language (noun classes). We therefore feel that the work will serve as a spring board for future researchers in the language.

Even though the work never dealt indepth as far as tones are concerned we had to mark the tones in order to see if there are any tonal alternations in the language. This can therefore form a base from which a researcher on tones may expand. Little has also been touched on the syntax of Oku. A researcher working on the Oku syntax will know that an adjective, a determinative or a possessive and demonstrative

pronouns come after the noun. As such, this will set the basis for his research in the syntax of the language as well as semantics.

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