This article concerns the Kenswei Nsei language, spoken in the village of Bamessing, in the Ndop Sub-Division of the Ngo-Ketunjia Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. ISO 639-3 language code: ndb
The Kenswei Nsei Noun Phrase

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I would also like to thank Cameron Hamm, Christine DeVisser and Jenny Wright for the mentoring and encouragement they gave during this project.

Finally, I wish to thank Stephen Anderson for consulting and guiding me through the final stages of this research.
Presentation of examples and conventions used

Each example in this paper consists of four lines as follows:

Line 1: Kenswei Nsei orthography (DeVries, 2008b), with phonetic tone added
Line 2: Morpheme-by-morpheme breakdown
Line 3: Morpheme-by-morpheme gloss
Line 4: Free translation

Tone is marked on all the syllables of the morpheme-by-morpheme breakdown. Tone has not been previously analyzed any further than the rudimentary study done by Aaron DeVries (DeVries, 2008b:12-13) and is not a part of the current orthography. The tone marked in this paper represents surface level pitch and should be considered tentative until further tone research can be conducted. The tone markings and description used in this paper are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone mark in examples</th>
<th>Abbreviation in text</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>LH</td>
<td>Rising: low-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>HL</td>
<td>Falling: high-low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↓`</td>
<td>↓H</td>
<td>Downstepped high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level pitch on long vowels or diphthongs (written with a repetitive vowel or two separate vowels) are marked only on the first vowel when they are part of the same morpheme. For example: mbàa ‘meat’

If there is a contour pitch on the long vowel or diphthong, the pitch is written on each vowel. For example: kìè ‘money’

At times a high pitch can sound lower than expected. This can occur when it is preceded by a low tone. This creates an automatic downstepped high pitch. For example: mè ↓yèy ‘I see’

The morpheme-by-morpheme breakdown line is used alone in all the tables.
Abbreviations

Abbreviations in the text and in tables:

1SG + 2SG  dual
ADJ  adjective
AM  associative marker
ANAPH  anaphoric
DEM  demonstrative
DEM1  demonstrative (near speaker)
DEM2  demonstrative (near hearer)
DEM3  demonstrative (far from both speaker and hearer)
EXCL  exclusive
H  high tone
HN  head noun
INCL  inclusive
L  low tone
M  mid tone (downstepped high tone)
N-  low tone nasal prefix
N1  1\textsuperscript{st} noun in associative noun phrase
N2  2\textsuperscript{nd} noun in associative noun phrase
N-ADJ  nominal adjective
PRO  pronoun
REL  relative
REL CL  relative clause
RIST  restrictive
SUBJ  subject
Q  question
QUANT  quantifier
Abbreviations in glosses:

| 1pl | 1st person plural               | DL | dual   |
| 1sg | 1st person singular             | excl | exclusive |
| 2pl | 2nd person plural               | incl | inclusive |
| 2sg | 2nd person singular             | N-ADJ | nominal adjective |
| 3pl | 3rd person plural               | NEG | negative |
| 3sg | 3rd person singular             | pl | plural |
| ADJ | adjective                       | PST | past tense |
| AM  | associative marker              | OBJ | object |
| ANAPH | anaphoric demonstrative              | Poss | possessive |
| c7  | noun class 7, etc.              | REL | relative marker |
| CT  | concord tone                    | RIST | restrictive |
| DEM1| demonstrative (near speaker)    | sg  | singular  |
| DEM2| demonstrative (near hearer)     | Q   | question |
| DEM3| demonstrative (far from both)   | QUANT | quantifier |
|     |                                 | V   | vowel |
1 Introduction

This research paper was conducted in order to study and analyze the noun class system and how it relates to the noun phrase in Kenswei Nsei.

1.1 The people of Bamessing

The people of Bamessing live along the beginning of the Ring road at the base of the Sabga Mountain. Most of its people make their living by farming maize, cocoyam, beans, rice, huckleberry, tomato and/or raising fowls, pigs, goats and sheep. Others, such as carpenters, builders, mechanics and merchants of small shops maintain businesses, especially along the Ring road where buses pass each day traveling through to Banso, Ndu and other villages. Bamessing is also known for its craftwork, and have an established business called PressPot within their village that sells its handcrafts of woven bags, baskets and clay pots in different regions of Cameroon.

1.2 Language Classification

The village of Bamessing is located on the Ring road east of Bamenda in the North West Province of Cameroon. Bamessing land is adjacent to Babanki on the west side, Bamali and Bamukumbit to the south, Babungo to the north and Bamunka to the east.

The language of the approximately 25,000 people living in the village of Bamessing is Kenswei Nsei. The Ethnologue (Lewis, 2013: internet edition) lists the following classification for the Kenswei Nsei language (with Bamessing being one of the alternate names):

In the map below, Bamessing is just left of center.

1.3 Previous Linguistic Work

Previous studies have been carried out on the Kenswei Nsei language (some under the alternative spelling Kenswey Nsey or its previous name of Bamessing). Willi Schaub wrote a preliminary orthography in 1978 and then two short story books using this orthography in 1982. Akeriweh published a phonological analysis and a proposed orthography in 2000 that differed significantly from Schaub’s research. To sort out the difference between the findings of these first two researchers, yet more research was done in 2008 by Aaron DeVries who published a phonological sketch and, based on that sketch, he then published a revised orthography statement similar to that of Willi
Schaub’s research. This 2008 orthography statement is what was now used for this research.

Other Ring languages that have had some level of linguistic research done are:

- South Ring: Bamunka, Babessi, Babungo
- East Ring: Lamnso’
- Center Ring: Babanki, Kom, Bum, Oku, Mmen
- West Ring: Aghem, Isu and Weh

The purpose of this paper is to examine the noun class system and its function in the noun phrase of the Kenswei Nsei language. The noun class research is based on approximately one hundred and twenty-six nouns elicited in the context of various noun phrases: singular, singular + possessive, singular + demonstrative, plural, plural + possessive and plural + demonstrative, etc. Additional data was then gathered from elicited sentences from Mrs. FENG Jannet, Mr. MUNTONG Vennatus and Mr. Bibi Joseph Mbelang. All segmentals in the examples of this paper are written using the current orthography (DeVries, 2008b) and all tone is written phonetically using IPA diacritics.
2 The Noun

2.1 Morphological Structure of the Noun

The basic noun is made up of a noun class affix and a noun stem.

In the following examples, the noun takes a prefix.

*kɔtɔŋ* ‘elephant’ is made up of the morphemes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kɔ-} & \quad + \quad \text{tɔŋ} \\
\text{c7} & \quad + \quad \text{noun root}
\end{align*}
\]

*wɔ* ‘spear’ is made up of the morphemes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ø} & \quad + \quad \text{wɔ} \\
\text{c5} & \quad + \quad \text{noun root}
\end{align*}
\]

*fɔnywɛ* ‘knife’ is made up of the morphemes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fɔ-} & \quad + \quad \text{nywɛ} \\
\text{c19} & \quad + \quad \text{noun root}
\end{align*}
\]

The noun stem can also take a suffix. In Kenswei Nsei this can only occur in noun class 10 nouns. This unique class can have a prefix, suffix, both a prefix and a suffix or neither, according to specific lexical roots, as in the following examples. (Section 2.2.2 will discuss the class 10 affixes in further detail.)

Example of c10 prefix, *tɔnyfĩ* ‘animals’ is made up of the morphemes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tɔ-} & \quad + \quad \text{nyfĩ} \\
\text{c10} & \quad + \quad \text{noun root}
\end{align*}
\]

Example of c10 suffix, *ngusɔ* ‘chickens’ is made up of the morphemes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ngu} & \quad + \quad \text{-sɔ} \\
\text{noun root} & \quad + \quad \text{c10}
\end{align*}
\]
Example of c10 prefix and suffix, tɔnywɛsá ‘cutlasses’ is made up of the morphemes:

\[
\text{tɔ-} + \text{nywɛ} + -sá \\
c10 + \text{noun root} + \text{c10}
\]

Example of c10 with Ø affix, ngéy ‘houses’ is made up of the morphemes:

\[
\text{Ø} + \text{ngéy} + \text{Ø} \\
c10 + \text{noun root} + \text{c10}
\]

2.2 Noun classes

The Kenswei Nsei noun classes have been identified on the basis of their concord elements (tone and consonant, found with both possessive and demonstrative modifiers respectively) which agree with the noun class of the head noun. The concord tone was found on the possessives. However, the possessive modifier lacks consonantal concord on classes 1, 3 and 5, 9. The demonstrative modifier on the other hand has a complete set of consonantal concord, but no concord tone to distinguish the classes. Therefore, the noun had to be elicited with both sets of modifiers in order to clearly determine the entire concord system.

The present Kenswei Nsei noun class system is similar to other Western Grassfield systems except, unlike other authors, this author decided to leave out class 8. There is no structural difference between class 2 and class 8 in Kenswei Nsei, so the only distinction would be historical. Historical class 2 contains primarily names of human beings and class 8 contains primarily artifacts and defective humans (Mutaka, 2005:p375). In Babungo, class 8 was kept for this reason of separating the genders (Schaub, 1985:172) and in Bamunka there still remains a structural difference (Ingle, 2013:19). For Kenswei Nsei however, it seems unnecessary to keep both class 2 and class 8 when a more concise noun class system can be used without any difficulty.

Therefore, ten noun classes have been identified: six singular and four plural. The classes are marked by various affixes that represent each class. Six classes have a noun prefix, one class has a noun suffix, two classes have no marker on the noun, and three classes have the option of no marker on the noun.
Table 1 below lists and identifies the noun class affixes and the corresponding concord consonant and concord tone for each class:

Table 1. Kenswei Nsei noun affixes and concords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>Affix</th>
<th>Concord Consonant</th>
<th>Concord Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ň-, Ø- ^1</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>bà-</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ø-</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ø-</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>mð-</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>kð- ^2</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ň-, Ø- ^1</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>-sð, tð-, Ø- ^3</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>tð-</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>fð-</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^1 The underlying low tone nasal prefixes were proposed for classes 1 and 9 (Hyman, 1980a:248). This author has kept the same underlying forms even though unable to yet explain how they interact with underlying root forms to produce surface word forms. These nasal prefixes in classes 1 and 9 are different than the prenasalized consonants that occur in other classes, as touched upon by DeVries (2008a:15-16).

^2 There appears to be some kind of historical change in process. Two separate nouns act very differently than from the norm. kindwè ‘fly’ does not have the expected kð-, but instead has ki-. Even when speech is slowed down, the ki- remains and kð- is unacceptable. However, this noun does what we predict in the plural and changes the CC, yet i- remains, bi-ndwè ‘flies’. The other noun mentioned is kinsè ‘sugarcane’. It also does not allow kð- even in slow speech. This noun however, does not replace the ki- with bi-, but instead keeps it as the root noun and adds the plural bð-, making bðkïnsè ‘sugarcanes’.

^3 Class 10 has four different affix possibilities resulting from both a prefix and a suffix being optional: tð-, -sð, Ø- or tð- -sð. These four affixes are shown in their order of frequency (highest to lowest).

Historically, Proto-Ring concord tones on noun classes 1, 9 and 6a were low tone and the rest were high. During earlier research conducted by Larry Hyman, he concluded in
his table of “Consonant concords of Selected Ring Languages” (tone included) that class 6a does not have any concord tone in Kenswei Nsei (Hyman 1980a:249). Though there are no examples in that article research to demonstrate this, the present author has likewise been unable to prove convincingly whether there is indeed a concord tone or not. See section 3.2.3 for further comments.

The noun class concords are especially similar to those of Babungo and Babessi which are other South Ring languages. See Table 2 below for a complete summary of all four South Ring languages.

**Table 2. Noun class concords of four South Ring languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>Kenswei Nsei</th>
<th>Babungo</th>
<th>Babessi</th>
<th>Bamunka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>w `</td>
<td>w `</td>
<td>η, w</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>b `</td>
<td>v `</td>
<td>η, w</td>
<td>b`</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>w `</td>
<td>w `</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>y `</td>
<td>j `</td>
<td>j, y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>y `</td>
<td>y `</td>
<td>j, y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>y `</td>
<td>y `</td>
<td>j, y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>m `</td>
<td>m `</td>
<td>m `</td>
<td>m `</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>k `</td>
<td>k `</td>
<td>k `</td>
<td>k `</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>v `</td>
<td></td>
<td>b`</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>y `</td>
<td>y `</td>
<td>j, y</td>
<td>y `</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>s `</td>
<td>s `</td>
<td>s `</td>
<td>h `</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>t `</td>
<td>t `</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>t `</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>f `</td>
<td>f `</td>
<td>f `</td>
<td>h `</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 As explained further above and later in section 3.2.3, class 6a may have a high tone in Kenswei Nsei, but our data does not show convincing proof.

Notice in Table 2 above that Kenswei Nsei and Bamunka do not have class 6. This is uncommon for Ring languages. In fact, there is only one other Ring language (out of
those that have been studied) without this noun class. In Babungo class 6, the counterpart of the singular class 5, is commonly known to contain nouns that included paired body parts or objects in a group (Schaub, 1985:177). In Kenswei Nsei these same nouns are found in class 13, so the logical assumption is that class 6 has merged into class 13 in Kenswei Nsei.

Table 3. Kenswei Nsei historical class 6 merged into class 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Kenswei Nsei</th>
<th>Babungo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c5</td>
<td>c13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>sé</td>
<td>tásé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breast</td>
<td>ṣwā</td>
<td>tāwā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tooth</td>
<td>sō</td>
<td>tásī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egg</td>
<td>wāŋ</td>
<td>tāwāŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crab</td>
<td>kūŋ</td>
<td>tākūŋ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.1 Singular Noun Classes

Class 1 – Prefix: Ń- or Ø-, Concord: w`

Class 1 contains mostly human nouns as well as some non-human nouns. According to Hyman (Hyman, 1980a:248), class 1 (and class 9) can have the prefix Ń-. See examples below:

nywē ‘god’
nywē wā ‘that god’
àkō ‘father’
àkō wā ‘that father’

Class 3 – Prefix: Ø-, Concord: w`

Class 3 includes foods and human nouns, as well as others:

1 As with many Grassfield Bantu languages, frequently pronounced nouns often have archaic prefixes. The à- is likely an archaic noun class marker for the root kō ‘father’.

17
Class 5 – Prefix: Ø-, Concord: y´

Class 5 includes body parts, animals, and material and abstract nouns:

- *kɔ̀ ‘face’*  
  *kɔ̀ yì ‘that face’*
- *wó ‘spear’*  
  *wó yì ‘that spear’*
- *kwò ‘death’*  
  *kwò yì ‘that death’*
- *bé ‘goat’*  
  *bé yì ‘that goat’*

Class 7 – Prefixes: kà-, Concord: k´

Class 7 includes body parts, animals, plants and material nouns:

- *kòtò ‘ear’*  
  *kòtò kì ‘that ear’*
- *kàngò ‘leaf’*  
  *kàngò kì ‘that leaf’*
- *kànga ‘trap’*  
  *kànga kì ‘that trap’*

Class 9 – Prefix: Ø- and Ñ-, Concord: y`

Class 9 includes animal, non-count, human, object, plant and abstract nouns. (See class 1 regarding nasal prefixes, further above):

- *ntɔ̀ ‘message’*  
  *ntɔ̀ yì ‘that message’*
- *ngù ‘chicken’*  
  *ngù yì ‘that chicken’*
- *nywè ‘machete’*  
  *nywè yì ‘that machete’*
- *ntéŋ ‘branch’*  
  *ntéŋ yì ‘that branch’*
Class 19 – Prefix: f-, Concord: f’

This class is often referred to as the diminutive class due to the amount of its nouns referring to smaller things. Also, in some languages you can call something ‘small’ by changing some, many or all nouns into class 19 (from their basic class). See section 3.2.4 for further explanation of the class 19 function in Kenswei Nsei. Class 19 includes the majority of inanimate object nouns as well as some animal nouns:

fəghən ‘mat’  fəghən fί ‘that mat’

fəłən ‘net’  fəłən fί ‘that net’

fənyúŋ ‘bird’  fənyúŋ fί ‘that bird’

2.2.2 Plural Noun Classes

Class 2 – Prefixes: b-, Concord: b’

Class 2 can have the most singular noun classes that find class 2 as their plural: 1, 3, 7 and 9.

bətόo ‘ears’  bətόo bί ‘those ears’

bənyiıkəŋ ‘monkeys’  bənyiıkəŋ bί ‘those monkeys’

bəndό ‘thieves’  bəndό bί ‘those thieves’

Class 6a – Prefixes: m-, Concord: m

Class 19 is the only singular noun class that can find class 6a as its plural.

mənųŋ ‘birds’  mənųŋ mί ‘those birds’

mələŋ ‘nets’  mələŋ mί ‘those nets’

məghən ‘mats’  məghən mί ‘those mats’

Class 10 – Affixes: -sá, t-, tё- -sá, and/or Ø, Concord: s’

There are two singular noun classes that find class 10 as their plural: 5 and 9.
Class 10 is the one noun class in Kenswei Nsei that can have a suffix. As mentioned earlier, nouns in this class can also have a prefix, suffix, prefix and suffix or Ø affixes. As noted by Hamm (p.c.), Kenswei Nsei is only the second Ring language that has been found to have a Ø affix for a plural class; Babungo has Ø in class 6 (Schaub, 1980:172). However, the Ø affix in Kenswei Nsei is not the majority affix for class 10 while the Ø affix in Babungo is the only possibility for class 6 so the Babungo case is still the most unusual.

The following examples are of nouns with the suffix -só, which is possibly derived from the demonstrative si (Hyman, 1980b:184). Note that two out of three of these have dropped the suffix -só before the demonstrative. This other occurrence is optional and will be further explained further on in this section. See the following:

- njóśá ‘thorns’
- ngúśó ‘chickens’
- ntéŋšó ‘branches’

Example of nouns with Ø affix:

- ngéy ‘houses’
- ywó ‘bees’

Some of the class 10 nouns have taken on some of the qualities of class 13. Some have the option of dropping the suffix -só, and taking on the class 13 prefix tô-. In the present study, this author found two nouns that follow this optional change. Additional data would likely show additional examples of this phenomenon, as shown below:

- nywéśá or tônywéśá ‘machetes’
- tôngú or ngúśó ‘chickens’

See the following:

njóśá ‘thorns’  njóśó si ‘those thorns’
ngúśó ‘chickens’  ngú si ‘those chickens’
ntéŋšó ‘branches’  ntéŋ si ‘those branches’
ngéy ‘houses’  ngéy si ‘those houses’
ywó ‘bees’  ywó si ‘those bees’
nywéśá or tônywéśá ‘machetes’  nywéśó si or tônywé si ‘those machetes’
tôngú or ngúśó ‘chickens’  tôngú si or ngúśó si ‘those chickens’
Though the noun can change in form, the meaning does not. These optional forms are likely the result of a historical change that is still ongoing. See the following examples of the affixes –só, tô- and tô- -só:

\[
\begin{align*}
tônyô ‘animals’ & \quad nyû sî ‘those animals’ \\
tôfê ‘hearts’ & \quad tôfêsô sî ‘those hearts’
\end{align*}
\]

The prefix -sô does not always remain on the noun when modified by a demonstrative. However, the meaning of the noun remains the same whether the suffix is present or not. See the examples below:

\[
\begin{align*}
nywêsô ‘machetes’ & \quad nywê-sô sî or tônywê sî ‘those machetes’ \\
njôwsô ‘thorns’ & \quad njôw-sô sî or njôw sî ‘those thorns’ \\
ntênjôs ‘branches’ & \quad ntênj-sô sî or ntênj sî ‘those branches’
\end{align*}
\]

**Class 13 – Prefixes: tô- Concord: tô**

Class 13 has the second largest number of singular noun classes that find class 13 as their plural: 3, 5 and 9. Of these, gender 5/13 contains the largest number of nouns out of all the genders, as seen in Table 5 further below.

\[
\begin{align*}
tôwêy ‘markets’ & \quad tôwêy tô ‘those markets’ \\
tôsê ‘eyes’ & \quad tôsê tô ‘those eyes’ \\
tôbê ‘goats’ & \quad tôbê tô ‘those goats’
\end{align*}
\]

---

2 An interesting fact to note is that Lamnso’, an East Ring language not mutually intelligible to Kenswei Nsei, has lost class 13 prefix, tô-, and has replaced it with class 10 suffix, -sî (Hyman, 1980a:250) thus merging the classes. Hyman has also stated that si- of class 10 may be a reflex of earlier ti- within some Western Grassfield Bantu Ring languages (Hyman, 1980b:182). A question could then be asked whether Kenswei Nsei took on, s-, earlier on to make a distinction between the two classes and is now reverting back, or perhaps it is still in the process of accepting the s-. These are questions for further research.
A different kind of variation to class 10 continues in class 13. When using the class 13 demonstrative (near the hearer), the speaker can either say ‘tsi’ or ‘ti’. Both are acceptable and neither changes the meaning. More research would need to be conducted to determine whether these alternate forms are the result of a historical change taking place or simply dialect or even idiolect alternates. See the following examples:

- təbũŋ ‘bellies’
- təbũŋ tsi (or ti) ‘those bellies’
- təkwéẽŋ ‘mountains’
- təkwéẽŋ tsi (or ti) ‘those mountains’
- təŋgőc ‘termites’
- təŋgőc tsi (or ti) ‘those termites’

In between these two classes, there is one noun found in class 13 that has a class 10 suffix along with the class 13 prefix. At this point it seems unlikely that class 13 is disappearing quickly into class 10, if that is indeed the direction it is moving. Further research, and possibly time, will be needed to make more accurate conclusions. See the following:

- təŋjâŋsá ‘axes’
- təŋjâŋ tsi (or ti) ‘those axes’

### 2.3 Gender

In Kenswei Nsei there are nine double class genders (combining one singular and one plural noun class), as shown in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though there is a wide range of noun class genders, some of these are considerably larger than others. See Table 5 below for use distribution of the 126 nouns falling into double genders (the total number will be less due to the nouns that belong to single genders).

**Table 5. Noun class distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender</th>
<th># of occurrence</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/6a</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 1/2:

nywè wā ‘that god’

bònywè bî ‘those gods’

àkó wā ‘that father’

bòàkó bî ‘those fathers’

Class 3/2:

bò’ wā ‘that slave’

bòbò’ bî ‘those slaves’

mbàa wā ‘that meat’

bòmbàa bî ‘those meats’
Class 3/13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dual Form</th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wéy wo ‘that market’</td>
<td>tòwéy ti ‘those markets’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kìe wo ‘that money’</td>
<td>tòkìe ti ‘those monies’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 5/10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dual Form</th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jìŋ jí ‘that back’ (of body)</td>
<td>tòjìŋsá sì ‘those backs’ (of body)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ywá yí ‘that snake’</td>
<td>tòywásá sì ‘those snakes’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 5/13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dual Form</th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wá yí ‘that spear’</td>
<td>tòwá ti ‘those spears’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wá yí ‘that hand’</td>
<td>tòwá ti ‘those hands’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 7/2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dual Form</th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kòtàn kì ‘that elephant’</td>
<td>bòtàn bì ‘those elephants’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kòtè kì ‘that tree’</td>
<td>bòtè bì ‘those trees’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 9/2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dual Form</th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ndàbà’ yí ‘that tobacco’</td>
<td>bòndàbà’ bí ‘those tobaccos’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 9/10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dual Form</th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ngú yí ‘that chicken’</td>
<td>ngú sì ‘those chicken’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nywè yí ‘that machete’</td>
<td>tònywésá sì ‘those machete’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 19/6a:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dual Form</th>
<th>Singular Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fànúŋ fì ‘that bird’</td>
<td>mònúŋ mì ‘those birds’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fànnywè fì ‘that knife’</td>
<td>mònnywè mì ‘those knives’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are also five singular class genders: 5, 6a, 7, 10 and 19. Gender 6a being the most frequent.

Class 5:

\[\text{kúŋ yi} \text{ ‘that bean’}\]

Class 6a:

\[\text{mó mì} \text{ ‘that water’}\]

\[\text{mòló mì} \text{ ‘that wine’}\]

Class 7:

\[\text{kíbí kí} \text{ ‘that dust’}\]

Class 10:

\[\text{ndwée si} \text{ ‘that cloth’ ndwee}\]

Class 19:

\[\text{fàngwíæ fi} \text{ ‘that salt’}\]

2.4 Agreement

The modifiers which agree with the noun class of the head noun are demonstratives, possessives, long numerals, non-human anaphoric subject third person pronouns and restricted relative clause pronouns, as exemplified on the following page:
Table 6. The concord system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>CT</th>
<th>ANAPH</th>
<th>RIST REL</th>
<th>Near hearer</th>
<th>3SG</th>
<th>LONG QUANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>w-ð</td>
<td>w-ð</td>
<td>w-ð</td>
<td>ʻnúi</td>
<td>ó-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>b-ð</td>
<td>b-ð</td>
<td>b-ð</td>
<td>nú-bó</td>
<td>búŋ bó-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>w-ð</td>
<td>w-ð</td>
<td>w-ð</td>
<td>nú</td>
<td>ó-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>y-í</td>
<td>y-í</td>
<td>y-í</td>
<td>nú</td>
<td>yí-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>m-ð</td>
<td>m-ð</td>
<td>m-ð</td>
<td>nú-mó</td>
<td>múŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>k-ð</td>
<td>k-ð</td>
<td>k-ð</td>
<td>nú-kó</td>
<td>kúŋ kó-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>y-í</td>
<td>y-é</td>
<td>y-í</td>
<td>ʻnúí</td>
<td>yí-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>t-ð</td>
<td>s-ð</td>
<td>s-ð</td>
<td>nú-só</td>
<td>túŋ tó-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>t-ð</td>
<td>t-ð</td>
<td>t-ð</td>
<td>nú-tó</td>
<td>túŋ tó-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>f-ð</td>
<td>f-ð</td>
<td>f-ð</td>
<td>nú-fó</td>
<td>fúŋ fó-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 The Noun Phrase

A noun phrase consists of a noun or pronoun plus any modifiers. The noun can occupy any position (subject, object, etc.) in a clause. The main noun of the noun phrase is called the head noun. A fuller example of a noun phrase is the following:

mèy yéy bé yũ bëèŋ wà wó lì
mè yéy bé y-ð bè bëèŋ wà³ wà lì
1sg to.see c5.goat C5-RIST REL to.steal c5.hand 2sg PST
‘I saw that goat which was stolen from you.’

---

³ The use of wà ‘hand’ in the sentence is also common in Babungo (Schaub, 1985:209) and other Grassfields languages. It emphasizes the fact that the thing stolen was owned by you.
3.1 Structure of the noun phrase

The basic order of the simple (non-associative) noun phrase is as seen in the formula below:

\[(N-ADJ) \quad NOUN \quad (ADJ) \quad (POSS) \quad (QUANT) \quad \{ (DEM) \quad (REL \ CL) \quad (ANAPH) \} \]

The above formula says that a simple noun phrase consists of an optional nominal adjective, an obligatory noun, an optional adjective, an optional possessive, an optional quantifier, an optional demonstrative or anaphoric marker and an optional relative clause.

Some examples of noun phrases that prove this ordering are shown below:

(1) kòkùŋ be nìaká
NOUN (ADJ) (POSS)
*kò-kùŋ  be  nìa-ká*
c7-bed  red  1sg.poss-c7
‘my bed is red.’

(2) bé nìa há
NOUN (POSS) (ANAPH)
bé  nìa  há
c5.goat  c5.1sg.poss  ANAPH
‘my goat’ (that we already talked about)

The basic order of the noun phrase is different from other South Ring languages in various ways, including that the position of the quantifier and demonstrative are reversed. Instead of the expected order of (DEM) before (QUANT), the (QUANT) must come before (DEM) in Kenwei Nsei. See the following example:
Another exception to other South Ring languages is the nominal adjective modifier can come before the head noun.

Another possible commonality in South Ring languages is that all modifiers come after the head noun, except for emphatic modifiers. Though it was attempted to find this in Kenswei Nsei, no conclusive evidence was found. However, it is strongly believed by this author that with more time these emphatic modifiers can be discovered.

### 3.2 Noun Phrase Modifiers

In this section, the noun modifiers will be described including their position and function in the noun phrase and their possible use of the noun class concord system.

#### 3.2.1 Demonstratives

Demonstratives are used to make reference to an object or person visible at the time of speaking. As usual in Grassfields Bantu languages, there are three levels of distance: proximate (near speaker), distant (near hearer) and distant that is far from both speaker and hearer. These distances are glossed using DEM1, DEM2 and DEM3 respectively. While this is usual for Grassfields Bantu, it is unusual for South Ring languages which normally have only two: proximate and distant. All demonstratives in Kenswei Nsei agree with the head noun in consonant concord only.
Table 7. Demonstratives in Kenswei Nsei

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>Consonant Concord</th>
<th>DEM1 Near speaker ‘this/these’</th>
<th>DEM2 Near hearer ‘that/those’</th>
<th>DEM3 Far from both ‘that/those’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$w^3$</td>
<td>$w$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$w$-周期</td>
<td>$w$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>$b$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$b$-</td>
<td>$b$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$w^3$</td>
<td>$w$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$w$-周期</td>
<td>$w$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$y$</td>
<td>$y$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$y$-</td>
<td>$y$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>$m$</td>
<td>$m$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$m$-</td>
<td>$m$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$k$</td>
<td>$k$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$k$-</td>
<td>$k$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>$y$</td>
<td>$y$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$y$-</td>
<td>$y$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>$s$</td>
<td>$s$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$s$-</td>
<td>$s$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>$t$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$t$-</td>
<td>$t$-周期</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>$f$-ää$\bar{a}$</td>
<td>$f$-</td>
<td>$f$-周期</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 It is hypothesized that the proximate demonstrative has H tone, and that a floating L tone comes before that either downsteps the H tone to M or is assimilated into a previous L tone if the head noun has a lengthened vowel or semivowel that the floating tone is able to attach to.

2 Classes 1 and 3 have replaced the expected –i with -ə, all other South Ring classes maintain –i in this demonstrative.

3 The w- is there in slow speech, but in regular speech it drops out. The vowel quality can optionally change to -ɔɔ when the w- drops out.

The following are examples of the three levels of demonstratives.

Near Speaker; in this example, you see that in regular speech the w- of 硃硃 has disappeared leaving 硃硃:

\[(5) \quad 硃硃 \]

硃硃 硃硃

C3.person  c3.DEM1

‘this person’
The distant demonstrative, referring to something that is far from both speaker and hearer, is formed by adding the suffix, \(-f\), to the end of the first distant demonstrative (near the hearer).

Far from both speaker and hearer:

(9) ngèy yif\(\ddot{o}\)
    ngèy       y-if\(\ddot{o}\)
    c5.house   c5-DEM3
    ‘that house’

(10) tòbé tíf\(\ddot{o}\)
     tò-bé       t-if\(\ddot{o}\)
     c13-goat    c13-DEM3
     ‘those goats’
3.2.2 The Anaphoric Adjective

As in other Grassfields languages, the anaphoric adjective in Kenswei Nsei, há, is invariable and not affected in any way by noun class concord. However, the same adjective in other South Ring languages is variable according to the noun class of the head noun. See Kenswei Nsei anaphoric adjective examples below:

(11) feofânj há
    feofânj há
    c19-fruit  ANAPH
    ‘that fruit’ (already mentioned)

(12) monywè j há
    monywè j há
    c6a-knife  ANAPH
    ‘those knives’ (already mentioned)

(13)  wí j há
    wí j há
    c3.fire  ANAPH
    ‘that fire’ (already mentioned)

3.2.3 Possessives

The possessive modifies the head noun to express ownership over it or a relationship to it. It also follows the head noun. See the examples below:

(14)  fèlâñ nîafó
    fèlâñ nîafó
    c19-net  1sg.poss-c19
    ‘my net’ (ownership)
Table 8. Possessive Noun Class Concords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Class</th>
<th>My 1.sg</th>
<th>Your 2.sg</th>
<th>His/Her 3.sg</th>
<th>Our 1.sg + 2.sg(^1)</th>
<th>Our 1.pl.excl</th>
<th>Our 1.pl.incl</th>
<th>Your 2.pl</th>
<th>Their 3.pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>'nía</td>
<td>'nūi</td>
<td>'nūi</td>
<td>'w-śō</td>
<td>'w-āa</td>
<td>'w-āāη</td>
<td>'w-ēēy</td>
<td>'w-ēēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>nía-bó</td>
<td>nū-bó</td>
<td>nū-bó</td>
<td>yōśō</td>
<td>yāa</td>
<td>yāāη</td>
<td>yēēy</td>
<td>yōēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>nía</td>
<td>nūi</td>
<td>nūi</td>
<td>w-śō</td>
<td>w-āa</td>
<td>w-āāη</td>
<td>w-ēēy</td>
<td>w-ēēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>nía</td>
<td>nūi</td>
<td>nūi</td>
<td>y-śō</td>
<td>y-āa</td>
<td>y-āāη</td>
<td>y-ēēy</td>
<td>y-ēēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>nía-mó</td>
<td>nū-mó</td>
<td>nū-mó</td>
<td>yōśō</td>
<td>yāa</td>
<td>yāāη</td>
<td>yēēy</td>
<td>yōēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>nía-kó</td>
<td>nū-kó</td>
<td>nū-kó</td>
<td>yōśō</td>
<td>yāa</td>
<td>yāāη</td>
<td>yēēy</td>
<td>yōēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>'nía</td>
<td>'nūi</td>
<td>'nūi</td>
<td>'y-śō</td>
<td>'y-āa</td>
<td>'y-āāη</td>
<td>'y-ēēy</td>
<td>'y-ēēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>nía-só</td>
<td>nū-só</td>
<td>nū-só</td>
<td>yōśō</td>
<td>yāa</td>
<td>yāāη</td>
<td>yēēy</td>
<td>yōēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>nía-tó</td>
<td>nū-tó</td>
<td>nū-tó</td>
<td>yōśō</td>
<td>yāa</td>
<td>yāāη</td>
<td>yēēy</td>
<td>yōēη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>nía-fó</td>
<td>nū-fó</td>
<td>nū-fó</td>
<td>yōśō</td>
<td>yāa</td>
<td>yāāη</td>
<td>yēēy</td>
<td>yōēη</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)This possessive is also known as “dual”.

Singular possessives agree with the noun class of the head noun, but unlike the noun, the possessive agreement affix always takes the suffix position (all but class 10 which has suffixes in both elements), as below:

(16) **nyéy fələŋ nía-fō**
    
    *nyéy*  fə-ləŋ  *nía-fō*
    
    to.look  c19-net  1sg.poss-c19
    
    ‘look at my net’
The agreement however is not complete throughout the whole system, in that classes 1, 3, 5 and 9 do not carry concord consonants when with singular possessives. However, as already mentioned in section 2.2, the concord tone is always found on the possessive modifier. The floating L tone concord for classes 1 and 9 can be trapped between a noun with H tone and the H tone on the following possessive, producing a downstepped H at the beginning of the possessive. Thus tone concord alone distinguishes classes 1 and 3 possessives, as well as 5 and 9 in the singulars. See the tone contrast below for classes 3 and 5 (H tone) as against 1 and 9 (L tone).

Classes 1 and 3:

(18) nyéy wéy nía
nyéy       wéy       nía
to.look     c3.market   c3.1sg.poss
‘look at my market’

(19) nyéy yèkó ↓nía
nyéy       yèkó       L      nía
to.look     c1.woman     CT    c1.1sg.poss
‘look at my woman’

Classes 5 and 9:

(20) nyéy ywā yáŋ
nyéy       ywā       yáŋ

to.look     c5.snake     1pl.poss.incl
‘look at our snake’
Historical Proto-Ring class 6a had a L concord tone (Hyman, 1980a:251). Following the same procedure as the above examples however, does not trap a floating L concord tone, so we conclude that class 6a no longer has L tone concord in Kenswei Nsei:

(21)  nyéy nwyé ↓yáâŋ
       nyéy   nwyé  L  ↓yáâŋ
       to.look  c9.cutlass  CT  1pl.poss.incl
       ‘look at our cutlass’

(22)  nyéy mɔnyúŋ yáâŋ
       nyéy   mɔ-nyúŋ  yáâŋ
       to.look  c6a-bird  1pl.poss.incl
       ‘look at our bird’

Ideally, we should then be able to trap the potential H tone concord of the remaining classes where we expect to have H tone, including class 6a now that we have proven there is no longer a floating L tone. The difficulty with this procedure is that all the possessive modifiers start with H surface tone. Therefore, no tone variation can be heard as the posited (floating concord) H is always absorbed into the H of the following possessive root. We are left able to prove that we have a floating L tone before all class 1 and 9 possessives but cannot prove whether we have a floating H tone before the other possessives or no floating tone at all. However, it is posited that, in following other South Ring languages as well as wider Grassfields Bantu languages, H tone can be found on the remaining classes once further research is complete. The one possible exception to this is perhaps class 6a which Hyman has already noted has no tone at all (Hyman 1980a:249).

There are a few distinctions between singular and plural possessives. First, the concord consonant disappears in favor of the prefix n- for all singular possessives, the concord for those classes without a semivowel CC becoming a suffix. See the following examples in order of plural then singular possessive:
(23)  nyéy fəlàŋ yáa
    nyéy  fə-làŋ  yáa
to.look  c19.net  1pl.poss.excl
‘look at our net’

(24)  nyéy fəlàŋ níafo
    nyéy  fə-làŋ  níà-fó
to.look  c19-net  1sg.poss-c19
‘look at my net’

Second, the dual and plural possessive concords have become neutralized to y- for all classes except for class 1 and 3, as below:

(25)  nyéy àkó wɔɔ
    nyéy  àk-ɔ  L  w-ɔɔŋ
to.look  c1-father  c1.CT  c1-3pl.poss
‘Look at their father.’

(26)  nyéy tənjàŋ yáŋŋàŋ
    nyéy  tə-njàŋ  yáŋŋàŋ
to.look  c13-axe  c13-3pl.poss
‘Look at their axes.’

3.2.4 Attributive adjectives

There are a limited number of attributive adjectives that can occur immediately after the noun. None of them take any concord agreement. The following list is not exhaustive:

    yàè  ‘small’    dió  ‘tall’
    bëè  ‘red’    fì  ‘new’

4 See footnote on page 18.
Examples:

(27) ngú bæ

ngú       bæ

‘red chicken’

(28) kòtán fi

kò-táñ    fi

‘new trap’

One interesting feature regarding these kinds of adjectives is that three different words can be used for ‘big’ to describe different aspects; tàn when referring to someone’s age; ghá when referring to ‘a big or important man’ or size when talking about large non-human nouns; house, tree or elephant; or finally wù, which refers to the size of living things, inanimate objects and some animals. There is also no noun class agreement on any of these three adjectives:

Referring to age or importance:

(29) yèlóŋ tàn

yè-lóŋ     tàn

c1.person-c1.man  big

‘The big/important man.’

Referring to wealth or size (usually taller or larger nouns):

(30) yèlóŋ ghá’

yè-lóŋ     ghá’

c1.person-c1.man  big

‘The big/important/tall man.’
Referring to size (or commenting on something/someone that is fat):

(31)  yèlọ̀ŋ wù’
    yè-lọ̀ŋ          wù’
    c1.person-c1.man  big
    ‘The big/fat man.’

3.2.5 Nominal Adjectives

So far we have only found two nouns which appear to have an unusual adjectivizer suffix combined with unusual placement before the head noun: wànjì ‘small’ and nchébà ‘big’ (from ‘child’ and ‘mother’ respectively), which we have glossed as adjectivizer suffixes (ADJ). Most unusual is that there is no agreement between the noun class of the root and the apparent noun class of the adjectivizer suffix, as below:

Examples of wànjì:

(32)  wànjì mbè
    wànj-fì          mbè
    c3.child-c19.ADJ  c5.walking stick
    ‘small stick’

(33)  wànjì wèy
    wànj-fì          wèy
    c3.child-c19.ADJ  c3.market
    ‘small market’

Examples of nchébà:

(34)  nchébà ywà
    nché-bà          ywà
    c1.mother-c2.ADJ  c5.snake
    ‘big snake’
The noun wάŋ ‘child’ can also be used in this way in the plural form (búŋj), only the adjectivizer suffix of the singular form -fɔ disappears. We choose to treat this as having a -Ø adjectivizer suffix because of the position and function of the words (e.i. the noun is before the head noun and in this place it means ‘small’ instead of ‘child’), as below:

(36)  búŋ bɔtɔ
    búŋ-Ø bɔ-tɔ
    c2.child-ADJ c2-head
    ‘small heads’

(37)  búŋ mɔnywɛ
    búŋ-Ø mɔ-nywɛ
c2.child-ADJ c6a-knife
    ‘small knives’

Even further removed from our first set of examples is what appears to be a normal associative noun phrase with the modifier after the head noun, but the meaning has already changed from ‘mother’ to ‘large quantity’. In this case, because the noun has not (yet?) moved in front of the head noun, we posit that no adjectivizer suffix is present, not even a -Ø suffix. See following examples:

(38)  mbàa nché
    mbàa nché
c3.meat c1.mother
    ‘plenty of meat’
What appears to be happening is a gradual historical shift from a normal associative noun phrase to a noun phrase where the following modifying noun changes the its semantics, then to that modifying noun being fronted before the head noun, to finally the fronted noun getting a full adjectivizer suffix (i.e. the historical change to a full nominal adjective being complete).

### 3.2.6 Quantifiers

In Kenswei Nsei, there are cardinal numerals (one through ten) and indefinite quantifiers. In the data available, the quantifiers always come after the head noun. The position of the quantifier does not change whether the head noun is the object or the subject of a clause. In the basic (short) form of the numeral, there is no agreement with the noun class of the head noun. However, there does seem to be some sort of agreement on numeral one in class 1. Whether this is to mark the noun class or to mark animate or something else will need to be determined with further research.

**Table 9. Numerals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Numeral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘one’</td>
<td>mò’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘two’</td>
<td>biá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘three’</td>
<td>tíè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘four’</td>
<td>kwò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘five’</td>
<td>tàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘six’</td>
<td>ntɔ́ɔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘seven’</td>
<td>mɔ̀-fɔŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘eight’</td>
<td>fɔŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘nine’</td>
<td>mɔ̀-ndù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘ten’</td>
<td>wùm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(40) mè yéy tòbè biá
mè (sé)-yéy tò-bé biá
1sg (PST)-to.see c13-goat two
‘I saw two goats.’

(41) tòbè mòfon kùŋ ŋkìà
kùŋ ŋkìa
c13-goat one-eight to.enter bush.country
‘Seven goats entered the bush.’

There is also one optional, expanded form of the numeral that can have concord agreement on numerals one through ten, as seen in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6-mò³</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
<td>b-ìŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6-mò³</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>y-ìm³</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
<td>m-ìŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>kìŋ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>y-ìm³</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
<td>t-ìŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>f-ìŋ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Long Numerals
The numeral and alternative numeral tables are separated because of the slight difference in meanings (with the expanded, fuller form used in contexts where one is already talking about a group of objects).

(42)  тəкə’ биа
   тə-кə’ биá
   c13-lamp    two
   ‘two lamps’

(43)  тəкə’ тиң тəбиá
   тə-кə’ т-ый тə-биá
   c13-lamp    c13-of    c13-two
   ‘two of the lamps’

As you can see in Table 9 above, classes 1 and 3, 5 and 9, as well as 10 and 13 have become neutralized, mainly because tone concord is not active here, only consonant concord. The most distinct change between these three sets is the last set, which still has the concord prefix and class 10 has taken on the concord of class 13.

Neutralization of class 1 and 3:

(44)  мə́ьё́й акə́ омə́’
   мə́ ьё́ ə-кə́ ə  mə́’
   1sg to.see c1-father c1.of c1.one
   ‘I see one of the fathers’

(45)  мə́ьё́й бə́ омə́’
   мə́ ьё́ бə’ ə  mə́’
   1sg to.see c3.slave  c3.of  c3.one
   ‘I see one of the slaves’

5 See page 18.
Neutralization of class 5 and 9:

(46) mè yéy wó yímɔ́
    mè    yéy    wó    yí    mɔ́
1sg    to.see    c5.spear    c5.of    c5.one
‘I see one of the spears’

(47) mè yéy ngù yímɔ́
    mè    yéy    ngù    yí    mɔ́
1sg    to.see    c9.chicken    c9.of    c9.one
‘I see one of the chickens’

For further explanation of class 10 and class 13 assimilation see section 2.2.2.

Neutralization of class 10 and 13:

(48) mè yéy tàngù tùn tɔ́tìè
    mè    yéy    tà-ngù    t-ùn    tà-tìè
1sg    to.see    c10.chicken    c10.of    c10-three
‘I see three of the chickens’

(49) mè yéy tàbè tùn tɔ́tìè
    mè    yéy    tà-bè    t-ùn    tà-tìè
1sg    to.see    c13.goat    c13.of    c13-three
‘I see three of the goats’

Class 6a can only have múŋ; the concord marker mɔ́-, for some reason, is eliminated.

(50) mɔ́núŋ míŋ biá kuŋ kuæ
    mɔ́-núŋ    míŋ    Ø-biá    kúŋ    ηkiá
    c6a-bird    c6a-of    c6a-two    enter    bush
‘two of the birds entered the bush’

In Kenswei Nsei, there are also indefinite quantifiers such as: cháŋ ‘some’, nɔnte ‘much’ or ‘many’ and chiæ ‘many.’ These do not have noun concord (in contrast to Babungo where indefinite quantifiers ‘some’, ‘many’ and ‘all’ do have agreement markers).
Grassfield languages often have compound nouns (or associative noun phrases) that make extensive use of certain generic nouns. Kenswei Nsei is no exception, though it is not yet clear which are compound nouns and which are associative noun phrases. Those that appear to be compound nouns are formed by having two or more roots. Similar to Aghem (Hyman, 1979:20-21), the noun yè ‘person’ from class 1 is used to create multiple compound nouns that describe the type of person.

(51)  wɔ yùŋ tɔŋjàŋ chàŋŋ
 wɔ yùŋ tɔŋjàŋ chàŋŋ
3sg. to.buy c13-axe some
‘He bought some axes’

3.2.7 Compound Nouns

(52)  yèlɔŋ
 yè-lɔŋ
 c1.person-c1.man
 ‘man’ or ‘male friend’

(53)  yèkɔ
 yè-kɔ
 c1.person-c1.woman
 ‘woman’

(54)  yèlɔŋlɔŋ
 yè-lɔŋ-llɔŋ
 c1.person-c1.man-marriage
 ‘husband’

Alternatively, one could treat the yè- above as an unusual prefix instead of a root. This alternate interpretation would be supported by examining the parallel plural forms where the yè- disappears in the presence of the normal class 2 prefix, as below:
Another fact that would support the alternative that ye- is treated as a prefix here, is that the majority of apparent compound nouns add the correct plural suffix without deleting the first root, as below:

(55)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wítúŋ} & \quad \text{t̂wítúŋ} \\
\text{wí-túŋ} & \quad \text{t̂-wí-túŋ} \\
c3.\text{fire-shoot} & \quad c13-\text{fire-shoot} \\
\text{’gun’} & \quad \text{’guns’}
\end{align*}
\]

3.2.8 Relative Pronouns

In Kenswei Nsei, there is one general, invariant relative pronoun (i.e. it has no consonant or tone concord), bè, that can mean ‘who’ or ‘which’. This general relative pronoun occurs in both non-restrictive and restrictive relative clauses.

The following sentence has an example of a non-restrictive relative clause:

(56)

\[
\begin{align*}
wò \ sà \ gò \ yúŋ \ kàkúŋ. \ Gò \ kà-kúŋ \ bè \ nòwábèy \\
\text{3sp PST to.go to.buy c7-bed to.go c7-bed REL NEG} \\
\text{’He went to buy a bed. There were none for sale.’}
\end{align*}
\]

When the general relative pronoun is used in a restrictive relative clause, the general relative pronoun must be modified by the addition of a restrictive pronoun preceding the relative pronoun, (RIST, also used with restrictive questions in section 3.2.9 below):
(57) mè yéy kàkúŋ kà bè bèŋ wà wà ́ lí

1sg to.see c7-bed c7-RIST REL to.steal hand you PST

‘I have seen that (particular) bed which was stolen from you.’

The restrictive pronoun has concord consonant agreement with the head noun of each noun class, as shown in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>class</th>
<th>RIST PRONOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>w-á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>b-á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>w-á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>y-á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>m-á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>k-á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>y-é</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>s-á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>t-á</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>f-á</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.9 Interrogative Markers

In South Ring, the placement of the interrogative ‘question marker’ (Q) is different depending on the language. In Babungo, the general question markers as well as the interrogative pronouns markers come at the end of the sentence or after the head noun (Schaub, 1985:7-20). In Bamunka, the question word can follow or precede the head

\[\text{In normal speech it is difficult to hear } wà wà ‘hand you’ separate because of how similar they sound. However, in slow speech they are distinguishable.\]
noun (Ingle, 2013:36). In Kenswei Nsei, a question sentence is introduced by the
general question marker nà. This marker comes before the head noun:

(58) nà ná chò
    nà    ná    chò
    Q(who) to.be there
    ‘Who is there?’

The question can be further specified when asking which of a group is the correct one,
as in the following example:

(59) nà yèlòŋ ní wó wèykùŋ wà
    nà    yè-lòŋ    nû    w-ð    wéy-kùŋ    wà
    Q    c1.person-c1.man 2sg.poss c1.RIST PST-hit 2sg
    ‘Which of your friends hit you?’

Note: In question sentences, the same restrictive marker is used to mark restrictive
meaning in question sentences as it functions in indicative ones.

(60) nà nywë yó wè yéy
    nà    nywë    y-ð    wà    yéy
    Q    c9.machete c9-RIST 2sg to.see
    What machete did you see?

The restrictive marker can even be used with just the question marker to ask which of
the items being discussed is the correct one. Though the restrictive marker looks almost
like the anaphoric pronoun, the difference is to be seen in classes 5 and 9 (see table
below):

(61) nà yó
    nà    y-ð
    Q    c5.RIST
    (Pick up that chicken…) Which one?
(62)  nà kó
nà k-ó
Q c7.RIST
(Make that bed…) Which one?

Table 12. Selective Interrogative pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>RIST pronoun</th>
<th>ANAPH Subj Pro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>w-ó</td>
<td>w-ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>b-ó</td>
<td>b-ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>w-ó</td>
<td>w-ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>y-ó</td>
<td>y-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>m-ó</td>
<td>m-ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>k-ó</td>
<td>k-ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>y-ó</td>
<td>y-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>s-ó</td>
<td>t-ó</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>t-ó</td>
<td>t-ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>f-ó</td>
<td>f-ó</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 The Associative Noun Phrase

There does not seem to be much in common between associative noun phrases in South Ring languages. Half of Babungo associative markers (AM) have full syllables that occur in the normal place between N1 and N2 (Schaub, 1985:186). Bamunka has full syllables for the majority of the AM, but it is placed after the second noun (Ingle, 2013:79). Kenswei Nsei does not have a syllabic AM for any of the noun classes (like most of the Eastern Grassfield languages south of it (Anderson, 1983:28)). This complete absence of full syllables for Kenswei Nsei AM makes figuring out the presence or absence of any tonal AM much more difficult. This is made even more difficult by the fact that South Ring languages sometimes show no AM at all (not even tonal) where Eastern Grassfields languages would always show a H or L tonal AM. The final
result of all these complications is that the exact nature of the underlying AM and the
tonal perturbations that result in Kenswei Nsei is very difficult and needs further study.

3.4 Pronouns

The same pronoun can take the subject, object or indirect object position in sentence.
One of the smallest sentences consists of just an anaphoric subject pronoun followed by
a negative, as below:

(63) wá nɔwābèy
 w-á  nɔwābèy
 c3.3sg  NEG
(I want to buy meat.) ‘There is none.’

3.4.1 Subject Pronouns

The subject pronouns in Kenswei Nsei are similar to those in Babungo (Schuab, 1985:193). Both only have noun class agreement with the head noun in the non-human
form of third person plural, shown in the second chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st (incl)</td>
<td>báá</td>
<td>báaŋ¹ bá²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st (excl)</td>
<td>mà</td>
<td>báa bá²</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>wà</td>
<td>bè</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>wɔ³</td>
<td>bɔ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ It should be noted that báaŋ ‘we’ is similar to báaŋ ‘these’ is class 2, but should not be mistaken for it. See Table 7, and note 1 following the table for further explanation of proximal underlying tone.
These have been noted by DeVries during his phonology research (DeVries, 2008a:18).

Notice pitch differences between the human third person pronoun singular (L) and the non-human third person singulars for classes 1 and 3 (H), as seen in the table below.

The following are examples of the basic subject pronoun:

(64) wɔ̀ sò̀gò̀ yùŋ fà̀làŋ
     wɔ̀ sá-gò̀ yùŋ fà-làŋ
     3pl PST-to.go to.buy c19-net
     ‘He went to buy a net.’

(65) mè yéy bòndó biá
     mè (sé)-yéy bò-ndó biá
     1sg (PST)-to.see c2-thief two
     ‘I saw two thieves.’

Inclusive and exclusive first person plural are distinguished by the –ŋ at the end of the inclusive ‘we’:

(66) bààŋ sézé bè
     bààŋ  sé-zé  bè
     we(incl) PST-eat goat
     ‘We (including you) ate goat.’

(67) bàà sézé bè
     bàà  sé-zé  bè
     we(excl) PST-eat goat
     ‘We (without you) ate goat.’

Once a specific noun has been mentioned, it is then possible for the speaker to replace that noun further on in the conversation with the non-human third person pronoun, ‘it’, its various forms shown in the following chart:
Table 14. Non-human Subject Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun class</th>
<th>Kenswei Nsei</th>
<th>Babungo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>w-á</td>
<td>ηwó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>b-á</td>
<td>mbó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>w-á</td>
<td>ηwó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>nyá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>y-í</td>
<td>nyá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ηgá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>m-á</td>
<td>mbó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>k-á</td>
<td>ηká</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>mbó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>y-í</td>
<td>myó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>t-á</td>
<td>nsó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>t-á</td>
<td>ntá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ηká</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>f-á</td>
<td>mfó</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pronoun must be in agreement with the noun class of the noun already mentioned. The form of each pronoun is similar to its noun class prefix, except for the high tone found on it in every class:

(68) wó nàwàbèy
    w-á      nàwàbèy
c3-3sg    NEG
(I want to buy meat...) ‘There is none.’

7 Or Anaphoric Subject Pronouns
(69) ká nèwàbèy
  k-á       nèwàbèy
  c7-3sg    NEG
  (I want to buy an elephant...) ‘There is none.’

There is also no distinction between third person non-human singular and plural:

(70) má nèwàbèy
  m-á       nèwàbèy
  c6a.3pl   NEG
  (I want to buy nets...) ‘There are none.’

(71) bá nèwàbèy
  b-á       nèwàbèy
  c2-3pl    NEG
  (I want to buy beds...) ‘There are none.’

4 Conclusion

Though this language is similar in many ways to the South Ring language of Babungo (which has been so well documented), there are at least three areas where it looks more like a generic Grassfields Bantu language instead of a South Ring language. The first difference is the number of demonstrative levels in Kenswei Nsei: three, as would be expected for a Grassfields language: proximate (near speaker), distant (near hearer), and distant that is far from both speaker and hearer, as against only two in other South Ring languages. The second difference to South Ring is the invariability of the anaphoric demonstrative. It is not affected in any way by the noun class of the head noun, once again like many other Grassfields languages. And third, the associative phrase does not have any syllabic markers for any of the noun classes.
5 Issues for further research

This paper presents an initial analysis of the noun phrase in Kenswei Nsei. While many aspects of the noun phrase are discussed in this paper, there is still more to be researched. Additional issues such as reduplication, direct and indirect pronouns, emphatic modifiers, as well as the associative phrase (as mentioned in detail earlier in this paper) all need further research.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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