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# Nchane Orthography Guide

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## Abbreviations

1s	first person singular
2s	second person singular
1p	first person plural
2p	second person plural
3p	third person plural
AM	associative marker
COP	copula
LOC	locative
n	noun
PAST	past
pl	plural
POT	potential
PROG	progressive
QM	question marker
v	verb
σ	syllable
∅	zero affix

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## 1 Introduction

This paper proposes an orthography for Nchane, an Eastern Beboid Language spoken by about 22,000 people in the Misaje Subdivision, Donga-Mantung Division, North-West Province, Republic of Cameroon. Dieu and Renaud (1983) in the *Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM)* list the language as: Ncane [873]. The *Ethnologue* (Gordon 2005) lists the following language names as variations: Ncane, Nchanti, Ntshanti, Cane. The ISO 639-3 code is [ncr]. The language area comprises five principle villages: Nkanchi, Chunghe, Nfume, Kibbo and Bem, each of which have their own fon. It is reported that Kibbo and Bem have slight dialectal variations from the other villages.

A phonology sketch of Nchane was done by Russell Richards (1991) mainly from a wordlist collection. Jean-Marie Hombert (1980) studied the noun classes of the Beboid languages, of which Nchane was included. Other linguistic work has apparently been done by KIMBI Nathan; however, the authors have not seen any of his linguistic research, only a proposed alphabet and primer, neither of which has been formally accepted by the community. Outside of this research, the authors are not aware of any other linguistic research that has been performed in Nchane.

This particular document was prepared with the assistance of several language informants, notably Shey Tamfu Ephriam from Nfume and Emmanuel Chambang from Bem.

The data utilised in this document comes from a 1700 wordlist collected by Richard Boutwell in 2007. The wordlist provides all example words, while example sentences come from data collected between 2005 to 2008.

## 2 Alphabet

The Nchane segmental alphabet is made up of 18 consonants and 7 vowels. They are represented below in upper and lower cases:

A a, B b, Ch ch, D d, E e, ɛ ɛ, F f, G g, I i, J j, K k, L l, M m, N n, Ny ny, ŋ ŋ,  
O o, ɔ ɔ, S s, Sh sh, T t, U u, W w, V v, Y y.

## 2.1 Consonants

The consonant phonemes, their allophones and graphemes are presented in the table below. The chart also shows their occurrence in various positions in the word.

Phoneme	Allophones	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/b/	[b]	<b>B b</b>	<b>bede</b> <i>to cry</i>	<b>bubi</b> <i>bundle</i>	—
/t/	[t <sup>h</sup> ]	<b>T t</b>	<b>ta</b> <i>to kick</i>	<b>kite</b> <i>wood</i>	—
/d/	[d]	<b>D d</b>	<b>da</b> <i>testicle</i>	<b>bude</b> <i>bridge</i>	—
	[d]~[ɾ] <sup>1</sup>		—	<b>fedε</b> <i>to winnow</i>	—
/k/	[k <sup>h</sup> ]	<b>K k</b>	<b>ki</b> <i>to love</i>	<b>bike</b> <i>pockets</i>	—
/g/	[g]	<b>G g</b>	<b>ga</b> <i>to divide</i>	<b>chuge</b> <i>to bathe</i>	—
/tʃ/	[tʃ]	<b>Ch ch</b>	<b>chɔ</b> <i>to hollow out (log)</i>	<b>bachii</b> <i>fathers</i>	—
/dʒ/	[dʒ]	<b>J j</b>	<b>jí</b> <i>hoes</i>	<b>kijine</b> <i>mat</i>	—
/f/	[f]	<b>F f</b>	<b>fi</b> <i>to help</i>	<b>fufe</b> <i>to satisfy</i>	—
/s/	[s]	<b>S s</b>	<b>sa</b> <i>to judge</i>	<b>mase</b> <i>to admire</i>	—
/ʃ/	[ʃ]	<b>Sh sh</b>	<b>shi</b> <i>chicken</i>	<b>kɔshe</b> <i>knot</i>	—
/v/	[v] <sup>2</sup>	<b>V v</b>	—	<b>kibvune</b> <i>dust</i>	—
/m/	[m]	<b>M m</b>	<b>mase</b> <i>to admire</i>	<b>bami</b> <i>persons</i>	—
/n/	[n]	<b>N n</b>	<b>na</b> <i>cow</i>	<b>kunama</b> <i>scorpion</i>	—

Phoneme	Allophones	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/ɲ/	[ɲ]	<b>Ny ny</b>	<b>nya</b> <i>to give</i>	<b>banye</b> <i>to pack</i>	—
/ŋ/	[ŋ]	<b>Ŋ ŋ</b>	<b>ŋane</b> <i>to crawl</i>	<b>nyaŋe</b> <i>to feed (animals)</i>	<b>faŋ</b> <i>to deny</i>
	[ŋ̃] <sup>3</sup>		—	—	<b>yaŋ</b> <i>to suck</i>
/l/	[l]	<b>L l</b>	<b>lu</b> <i>to abstain</i>	<b>bvule</b> <i>lion</i>	—
/w/	[w]	<b>W w</b>	<b>wɛŋe</b> <i>to tickle</i>	<b>chiwɔ</b> <i>villages</i>	—
/j/	[j]~[ʒ] <sup>4</sup>	<b>Y y</b>	<b>yɛ</b> <i>to see</i>	<b>baye</b> <i>to pluck (chicken)</i>	—

### 2.1.1 Prenasalised Consonants<sup>5</sup>

One kind of consonant cluster found in Nchane consists of a non-nasal consonant preceded by a nasal consonant. With the exception of the consonant **l**, both consonants of the cluster are produced at the same place of articulation.<sup>6</sup> Most consonants may be preceded by such homorganic nasal consonants (symbolised by “N” below), as shown in the following chart.

Consonant Cluster	Allophones	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/Nb/	[mb]	<b>Mb mb</b>	<b>mbele</b> <i>bracelet</i>	<b>fimbi</b> <i>cola nut</i>	—
/Nt/	[nt]	<b>Nt nt</b>	<b>nton</b> <i>cutting grass</i>	<b>anteŋe</b> <i>inside</i>	—
/Nd/	[nd]	<b>Nd nd</b>	<b>nduŋ</b> <i>hawk</i>	<b>kindɔŋ</b> <i>neck</i>	—
/Nk/	[ŋk]	<b>Ŋk ŋk</b>	<b>ŋka</b> <i>salt</i>	<b>kiŋku</b> <i>flood (n)</i>	—
/Ng/	[ŋg]	<b>Ŋg ŋg</b>	<b>ŋgu</b> <i>fire</i>	<b>kiŋgaŋ</b> <i>island</i>	—

Consonant Cluster	Allophones	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/Ntʃ/	[ntʃ]	<b>Nch nch</b>	<b>nchiŋ</b> <i>heel</i>	<b>kinche</b> <i>inhabitant, resident</i>	—
/Ndʒ/	[ndʒ]	<b>Nj nj</b>	<b>njese</b> <i>blessing</i>	<b>munjege</b> <i>smoke</i>	—
/Nf/	[ɲf]~[mf] ~[nf] <sup>7</sup>	<b>Nf nf</b>	<b>nfu</b> <i>ladle</i>	<b>kinfaŋ</b> <i>molar tooth</i>	—
/Ns/	[ns]	<b>Ns ns</b>	<b>nsaŋ</b> <i>friend</i>	<b>jɔnsɛ</b> <i>man (male)</i>	—
/Nʃ/	[nʃ]	<b>Nsh nsh</b>	<b>nshaŋ</b> <i>ground, land</i>	<b>finsho</b> <i>mud wasp</i>	—
/Nl/	[ɲl]	<b>ŋl ɲl</b>	<b>ɲlo</b> <i>poison (n)</i>	<b>kiŋla</b> <i>kingfisher</i>	—

### 2.1.2 Palatalised Consonants

Another type of consonant cluster is where the second consonant is the palatal glide [j], which is written in Nchane as **i** when preceded by a consonant and followed by a vowel. There is a relatively small number of words containing palatalized consonants, as seen in the following three instances.

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/bj/	[bj]	<b>Bi bi</b>	<b>bia</b> <i>regime (of bananas)</i>	<b>fimbiɛŋ</b> <i>bow (hunting)</i>	---
/fj/	[fj]	<b>Fi fi</b>	<b>fiɛ</b> <i>mouse</i>	---	---
/mj/	[mj]	<b>Mi mi</b>	<b>mio</b> <i>to squeeze</i>	---	---

### 2.1.3 Labialised Consonants

A third consonant cluster is where the second consonant is the labiovelar glide [w], which is always written in Nchane as **w**. The glide follows the majority of the consonants, as seen in the table below.

Phoneme	Allophones	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/bw/	[bw]	<b>Bw bw</b>	<b>bwa</b> <i>mother</i>	---	---
/dw/	[dw]	<b>Dw dw</b>	<b>dwe</b> <i>beak, bill</i>	---	---
/kw/	[kw]	<b>Kw kw</b>	<b>kwi</b> <i>moon</i>	<b>kikwe</b> <i>head</i>	---
/gw/	[gw]	<b>Gw gw</b>	<b>gwe</b> <i>to fall</i>	<b>kigwede</b> <i>crest (of bird)</i>	---
/tʃw/	[tʃw]	<b>Chw chw</b>	<b>chwe</b> <i>witch (female)</i>	---	---
/dʒw/	[dʒw]	<b>Jw jw</b>	<b>jwele</b> <i>edge</i>	<b>kijwi</b> <i>boundary (of field)</i>	---
/fw/	[fw]	<b>Fw fw</b>	<b>fwe</b> <i>to be pregnant</i>	<b>safwe</b> <i>to lead</i>	---
/ʃw/	[ʃw]	<b>Shw shw</b>	<b>shwe</b> <i>to husk (corn)</i>	---	---
/mw/	[mw]	<b>Mw mw</b>	<b>mwa</b> <i>child</i>	---	---
/ŋw/	[ŋw]	<b>Ŋw ŋw</b>	<b>ŋwaŋ</b> <i>granary</i>	<b>ŋwaŋwa</b> <i>sugar cane</i>	---

#### 2.1.4 Labio-dental Offglides

Nchane exhibits a small number of consonants followed by a labio-dental offglide.<sup>8</sup> This modification occurs only with the consonants **b**, **k**, and **g**. When these consonants are labialised before the vowel **u**, the labialisation is realised as a **v**, in the case of the consonants **b** and **g**, and as an **f**, in the case of the consonant **k**. Note that the consonant **v** only occurs in the context of the labio-dental offglide and therefore does not represent a full phoneme in the language. The chart below shows the occurrence of the labio-dental offglides in various positions in the word.

Phoneme	Allophones	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/bw/	[bv]	<b>Bv bv</b>	<b>bvu</b> <i>dog</i>	<b>kibvune</b> <i>dust</i>	—
/kw/	[kf]	<b>Kf kf</b>	<b>kfuse</b> <i>cotton</i>	<b>kikfune</b> <i>rat</i>	—
/gw/	[gv]	<b>Gv gv</b>	<b>gvuna</b> <i>to respect</i>	<b>kingvu</b> <i>duck</i>	—

### 2.1.5 Consonant Orthography Rules

Various rules regarding which consonants can occur in which positions or which can occur before and after other consonants are important to learn. Here is a partial list of consonant orthography rules:

1. Never write **h** without a **c** or **s** in front of it, except in the case of certain borrowed words.
2. The only consonant that can be word-final is **ŋ**.
3. If you hear a nasal before **b**, always write **m**.
4. If you hear a nasal before **t**, **d** and **f**, always write **n**.
5. If you hear a nasal before **k** or **g** always write **ŋ**. The only exception is in writing the village name of **Nkanchi** due to the historical precedent established.
6. Never write a **v** without a **b** or **g** in front of it.

## 2.2 Vowels

The Nchane language has seven vowel phonemes, presented with their allophones and proposed graphemes in the table below. The chart also shows their occurrence in various positions in the word.

Phoneme	Allophones	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/i/	[i]	<b>I i</b>	<b>ikodo</b> <i>to be sharp</i>	<b>kite</b> <i>tree</i>	<b>bubi</b> <i>bundle</i>
/u/	[u]	<b>U u</b>	<b>utemo</b> <i>to be hard</i>	<b>butu</b> <i>honey</i>	<b>ju</b> <i>sun</i>
/e/	[ɪ]	<b>E e</b>	---	<b>lege</b> <i>to run away from</i>	---
	[ɪ] ~ [i] <sup>9</sup>		---	---	<b>je</b> <i>hide (an animal)</i>

Phoneme	Allophones	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/o/	[o]	<b>O o</b>	---	<b>kogo</b> <i>to (be) fat</i>	<b>jo</b> <i>water</i>
/ɛ/	[ɛ] <sup>10</sup>	<b>ɛ ɛ</b>	---	<b>leme</b> <i>to farm</i>	<b>je</b> <i>word</i>
	[ə]		---	<b>kweŋ</b> <i>firewood</i>	<b>mbone</b> <i>sweet potato</i>
/ɔ/	[ɔ]	<b>ɔ ɔ</b>	---	<b>gɔne</b> <i>to look for</i>	<b>kikɔ</b> <i>to trap (animal)</i>
/a/	[a]	<b>A a</b>	<b>abeŋ</b> <i>today</i>	<b>kane</b> <i>to tie</i>	<b>ja</b> <i>to stand</i>

### 2.2.1 Nasalised Vowels

Nasalised vowels are contrastive with oral vowels in Nchane in a few instances and all occur word finally. In writing Nchane, the nasal **ŋ** should be added at the end of the word to signify that the preceding vowel is nasalised.<sup>3</sup>

Phonemic	Phonetic	Orthographic	Gloss
/ʃi/	[ʃi]	<b>shi</b>	<i>to (be) seated</i>
/ʃĩ/	[ʃĩ]	<b>shiŋ</b>	<i>to (be) silent</i>
/fɛ/	[fɛ]	<b>fɛ</b>	<i>to prepare (food to cook)</i>
/fɛ̃/	[fɛ̃]	<b>fɛŋ</b>	<i>to (be) blind</i>
/ja/	[ja] ~ [ʒa]	<b>ya</b>	<i>to conquer, defeat</i>
/jã/	[jã] ~ [ʒã]	<b>yaŋ</b>	<i>to suck</i>
/gu/	[gu]	<b>gu</b>	<i>to buy</i>
/gũ/	[gũ]	<b>guŋ</b>	<i>to play (child)</i>
/ju/	[ju] ~ [ʒu]	<b>yu</b>	<i>to kill, murder</i>
/jũ/	[jũ] ~ [ʒũ]	<b>yuŋ</b>	<i>thatch</i>
/ko/	[k <sup>h</sup> o]	<b>ko</b>	<i>to catch (object in air)</i>
/kõ/	[k <sup>h</sup> õ]	<b>koŋ</b>	<i>to touch, feel (active)</i>
/tɔ/	[t <sup>h</sup> ɔ]	<b>tɔ</b>	<i>to have sexual intercourse</i>
/tɔ̃/	[t <sup>h</sup> ɔ̃]	<b>tɔŋ</b>	<i>to blow (horn)</i>

### 2.2.2 Vowel Length

Nchane has both short and long vowels. The long vowels are written as a sequence of two vowels. Long vowels are only observed in five of the seven vowels. Examples of these vowels and the contrasting short vowels are given below.

<b>fii</b>	<i>breath</i>	<b>fi</b>	<i>kidney</i>
<b>fɛɛ</b>	<i>to blow nose</i>	<b>fɛ</b>	<i>to prepare (food to cook)</i>
<b>wɔɔ</b>	<i>village</i>	<b>wɔ</b>	<i>you (2s)</i>
<b>sooge</b>	<i>soldier</i>	<b>soŋo</b>	<i>oil palm</i>
<b>kinchaa</b>	<i>marsh</i>	<b>kinsa</b>	<i>comb (n)</i>

### 2.2.3 Vowel Orthography Rules

The various rules regarding which vowels can occur in which positions is important to learn. Here is a partial list of vowel orthography rules:

1. If two different vowels occur together, the first one must be **i** (see palatalised consonants in section 2.1.2).
2. If a vowel is long, the same vowel should be written twice.

## 3 Tone

### 3.1 Historical Perspective

There is much discussion regarding the best way to write orthographic tone. In writing tone in Cameroonian national languages, there has been a historical tendency toward either surface tone marking or deep tone marking. Over the years, linguists have begun to recognise the importance of a balance between these two approaches (see for example, Lux & Lux 1996).

Among the Beboid languages, Noonni began writing tone markings on every syllable (with mid-tone represented as unmarked). In recent years, Noonni orthographic tone has undergone extensive research to determine the best way to represent tone such that people can read and write most easily (Lux & Lux 1996; Andrus & Lux 2006). The goal in revising the Noonni tone orthography was “to reduce the number of diacritic marks on a printed page to the largest extent possible, while still adequately representing [the tone’s] functions in the language. What resulted was a system in which the former tone diacritics [ ` , ´ , ^ , ˇ ] no

longer carry the sense of spoken tone, but instead perform grammatical and lexical disambiguating functions” (Andrus & Lux 2006:18). The revised Noonni tone orthography underwent field testing and is now being utilised by the Noonni Literacy Committee.

In further refining the Nchane tone orthography guide, the authors propose to research and implement a system similar to that found in Noonni. The authors suggest using minimal marking of tone in the early stages of orthography implementation and continuing on-going research in conjunction with the Nchane Language Committee to determine the best tone orthography for the Nchane language. The remainder of this section presents a discussion of basic phonological tone in Nchane as well as certain diacritics used in marking distinctions in grammatical meaning.

### 3.2 Basic Nchane Tone

Seven tone melodies have been identified in Nchane. There are three level tones: high (H), mid (M) and low (L); and four contour tones: high-mid (HM), mid-low (ML), mid-high (MH) and low-mid (LM).

		Tone	Notation	Phonetic Representation
<b>Level</b>		High	H	ˈ
		Mid	M	-
		Low	L	ˋ
<b>Contour</b>	Falling	High-Mid	HM	ˆ
		Mid-Low	ML	˘
	Rising	Mid-High	MH	ˊ
		Low-Mid	LM	ˊ

Out of a corpus of 1215 words, approximately 250 belong to minimal tone pairs. All tones are well represented in the minimal pairs with the exception of rising tones, which are comparatively rare. Some examples are given in the chart below.

<b>Tone</b>	<b>Phonetic</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
H	[dʒí]	<i>paths, roads</i>
M	[dʒī]	<i>to eat</i>
L	[dʒì]	<i>path, road</i>
HM	[gwó]	<i>bamboo</i>
ML	[sā]	<i>mask</i>
MH	[tʃwě]	<i>witch</i>
LM	[áíjě]	<i>no</i>

### 3.3 Lexical Tone Contrasts

Tone in Nchane is contrastive and performs a lexical function by differentiating between two or more words that are otherwise identical. At this point, no proposal is being offered for representing lexical tone orthographically. The following tone minimal pairings illustrate the presence of lexical tone:

<b>Phonetic</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
[bāŋ]	<i>shine</i>
[bàŋ]	<i>fold (v)</i>
[dʒí]	<i>harvest, collect (honey from hive)</i>
[dʒī]	<i>curse (v)</i>
[dʒì]	<i>hoe (n)</i>
[dʒ̄ì]	<i>name</i>

### 3.4 Grammatical Tone Contrasts

Nchane tone also performs grammatical functions. This section describes only one of these functions, singular versus plural forms of gender 9/10 nouns, and also offers a proposal for representing it orthographically.

There are eight genders in Nchane. The singular-plural distinction for gender 9/10 is based only on tone. Class 9 is the singular form of the noun and Class 10 is the plural. The distinction between the two classes is a relatively higher tone for Class 10.<sup>11</sup> Examples of different phonetic tone for gender 9/10 nouns in Nchane are shown below.

Tone for 9 vs. Tone for 10	Class 9 (singular)	Class 10 (plural)	Gloss
Low – High	[ʃì]	[ʃí]	<i>chicken</i>
Mid – High	[bì]	[bí]	<i>goat</i>
Falling HM – High	[mbí]	[mbí]	<i>grasshopper</i>
Falling ML – High	[dʒò]	[dʒó]	<i>tear</i>
Low – Mid	[dʒì]	[dʒí]	<i>hoe</i>
Low – Falling ML	[dʒè]	[dʒê]	<i>voice</i>

In writing orthographic tone for these classes, the researchers propose to only mark Class 10 with a high tone and allow Class 9 to remain unmarked, as is done in Noon. In polysyllabic words, the high tone is marked only on the first syllable of class 10 words. Here are some examples written orthographically:

<u>Class 9</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Class 10</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
shi	<i>chicken</i>	shí	<i>chickens</i>
bi	<i>goat</i>	bí	<i>goats</i>
mbi	<i>grasshopper</i>	mbí	<i>grasshoppers</i>
jo	<i>tear</i>	jó	<i>tears</i>
ji	<i>hoe</i>	jí	<i>hoes</i>
je	<i>voice</i>	jé	<i>voices</i>
chane	<i>headpan</i>	cháne	<i>headpans</i>
choma	<i>locust</i>	chóma	<i>locusts</i>

#### 4 Word Division

This section addresses noun class prefixation as it pertains to word division. Nchane word division will be examined further at some later point in time. It will be especially important to develop appropriate criteria for distinguishing compound nouns from associative noun phrases.

In writing nouns, all noun class prefixes will be written as part of the nouns as shown below. (Note that gender 9/10 is discussed in section 3.4.1 above.)

Class	Singular Marking	Example	Gloss	Class	Plural Marking	Example	Gloss
1	∅-	<b>na</b>	<i>cow</i>	2	ba-	<b>bana</b>	<i>cows</i>
3	Cw	<b>gwo</b>	<i>bamboo</i>	4	C	<b>go</b>	<i>bamboos</i>
5	∅-	<b>ju</b>	<i>day</i>	6	a-	<b>aju</b>	<i>days</i>
7	ki-	<b>kigi</b>	<i>tooth</i>	8	bi-	<b>bigi</b>	<i>teeth</i>
9	σ	<b>ji</b>	<i>hoe</i>	10	ó	<b>jí</b>	<i>hoes</i>
14	bu-	<b>bude</b>	<i>bridge</i>	25	maN-	<b>mande</b>	<i>bridges</i>
19	fi-	<b>finyi</b>	<i>bird</i>	26	mu-	<b>munyi</b>	<i>birds</i>
3/5	∅-	<b>sa</b>	<i>mask</i>	27	chi-	<b>chisa</b>	<i>masks</i>

## 5 Punctuation and Capitalisation

The punctuation marks and rules that govern the Nchane language are similar to those for English. The punctuation marks used for Nchane are as follows:

1. Full stop (.)
2. Question mark (?)
3. Exclamation point (!)
4. Comma (,)
5. Colon (:)
6. Quotation marks (“...” and ‘...’)

### 5.1 Full Stop

The full stop (.) in Nchane marks the end of a declarative sentence.

**Bəŋ jənyi chule.**

babies walk-PROG fine

*‘The babies are walking fine.’*

**John gule nyáŋ fə kidaŋ le.**

John buy-PROG meat(pl) LOC slab LOC

*‘John is buying meat at the slab.’*

## 5.2 Question Mark

The question mark (?) indicates the end of an interrogative sentence.

**Chi jəŋ le fanɛ?**  
father your COP QM(where)  
*'Where is your father?'*

**Kfu le nɛ?**  
family COP QM(how)  
*'How is your family?'*

Note that yes-no questions differ from their declarative counterparts only by the presence of a falling tone on the final syllable. Although there is no question marker (QM) in these sentences, the presence of the question mark is sufficient to inform the reader regarding proper pronunciation.

**A ji belekaŋ?**  
2s eat papaya  
*'Are you eating papaya?'*

**A ji belekaŋ.**  
2s eat papaya  
*'You are eating papaya.'*

## 5.3 Exclamation Mark

The exclamation mark (!) is written at the end of a command or following exclamatory words and phrases. It functions to express forceful comments and commands, interjections, surprise, and excitement.

**Legɛ!**  
run  
*'Run!'*

**Tɔ chege!**  
come quickly  
*'Come quickly!'*

**Gene ɪ!**  
go-PROG ??  
*'Go!'*

#### 5.4 Comma

Commas are used to separate clauses or parallel words within a clause, as below:

**Taŋ me ge chi le byeŋ, me ge mbi lanye wusi.**  
when 1s POT drag ?? fish 1s POT 1s-PAST happy very  
*'When I caught a fish, I was very happy.'*

**Jo ji, nyo, ŋka be fintaŋ.**  
take hoe cutlass basket and seed  
*'Take the hoe, the cutlass, the basket and the seeds.'*

#### 5.5 Colon

Colons are used to separate a clause which refers to a concept in general terms from a clause or phrase which makes the concept more specific. It represents a pause in speech that could be replaced by the words “that is “ or “as follows” in English.

**Bi ki banchi besa ba ŋgwa: Muŋ chi to be kifɔ.**  
1p know laws our AM meeting person all come with cap  
*'We know the laws of our meeting: Everybody should come with a cap.'*

## 5.6 Quotation Marks

Quotation marks (“...” or ‘...’) occur at the beginning and end of direct speech, as below:

**Muŋ wu nyeyɛ dule, “Bɔŋ chi bɛ dwɛ.”**  
person who teach say 2p stop with noise  
*‘The teacher said, “You all be quiet.”’*

Note: In English and Nchane, other punctuation marks always precede closing quotation marks when they occur next to each other.

## 5.7 Capitalisation

Capital letters are used at the beginning of sentences (see sections 5.1 to 5.6 above), following a colon (see section 5.5 above), the beginning of direct speech in quotation marks (see section 5.6 above), and for proper nouns (illustrated below).

**ŋgɔŋ bɛ Chɛ lɛ bɔŋ bɔ amɑŋ.**  
ŋgɔŋ and Chɛ COP children 3p twins  
*‘ŋgɔŋ and Chɛ are twins.’*

## 6 Need for Further Testing of the Orthography

The suitability of several proposals in this orthography guide needs to be assessed further. In particular, an alternative to what is set out in this paper for writing prenasalisation would be to use **m** before **b** and **f**, with all other consonants preceded by **n**. While this choice would reduce the number of nasal graphemes utilised in writing prenasalised consonants, it would further increase the utilisation of non-homorganic NC clusters in the orthography. The choice of **y** instead of **i** for palatalisation would render a more uniform system, matching the choice of **w** for labialisation. Finally, the use of **v** could be eliminated if the underlying form of /gw/ and /bw/ were utilised for representation.

Any new orthography needs people to use it for a time before potential problems reveal themselves. It is our hope that this proposal will be a significant first step in allowing people to start reading and writing the Nchane language.

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> The [d] and [ɾ] are in free variation word medially between identical vowels, [d] elsewhere.
- <sup>2</sup> The consonant **v** is a special case which is addressed in Section 2.1.4.
- <sup>3</sup> The choice of [ŋ] at the end of a word for signifying a nasalised vowel stems from speakers' intuition and work that has been done in the surrounding languages. There is no contrast between words ending in nasalized vowels and words ending in [ŋ]. Also [ŋ] is the only consonant that appears in the word-final position.
- <sup>4</sup> The [j] and [ɟ] are in free variation in all environments, although there appears to be some preference as to when it is [j] and when it is [ɟ]. The speakers themselves tend to perceive the phoneme as /j/.
- <sup>5</sup> Word initially, the nasal of prenasalised consonants is syllabic (tone-bearing) but not contrastive, whereas word medially the tone shifts to the preceding vowel of the homorganic NC sequence.
- <sup>6</sup> The velar nasal /ŋ/ seems to be the underlying form of the nasal found in Nchane. The authors theorise that the liquid consonant /l/ represents a weaker consonant thus precluding nasal assimilation.
- <sup>7</sup> The [ŋ], [m] and [n] occur in free variation before [f].
- <sup>8</sup> This labio-dental offglide is also seen in Noonii, but occurs with a greater variety of consonants (Andrus & Lux 2006). The offglide varieties may be considered as allophones of the labialised consonants /bw/, /kw/ and /gw/ where before the back high vowel, [u], the [w] becomes a [v] or an [f] depending on the voicing of the preceding consonant.
- <sup>9</sup> The vowels [ɪ] and [i] are in free variation. The high central vowel only occurs word finally.
- <sup>10</sup> Most often [ɛ] becomes [ə] before or after a velar consonant; however, it is noted that [ɛ] occurs word final after a velar and exceptions are evident. It is suspected that these phones are to some extent in free variation and/or there are speaker variations.
- <sup>11</sup> This general distinction of relative difference in tone has also been observed by Hombert (1980:91). He states that "tone differences are found on the stem with relatively lower tones associated with the singular form [Class 9]."