The Bafanji Noun Phrase

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This article concerns the Bafanji language, spoken in Ngoketunjia Division, in the North West Region of Cameroon

ISO 639-3 language code: bfj
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANAP</td>
<td>Anaphoric demonstrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANIM</td>
<td>Animate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTR</td>
<td>Attributive marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLSF</td>
<td>Numeral classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>Definite determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>Demonstrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIST</td>
<td>Distal demonstrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDIST</td>
<td>Far distal demonstrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOC</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INANM</td>
<td>Inanimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>Indefinite quantifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROX</td>
<td>Proximal demonstrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>Past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL</td>
<td>Relativiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, etc.</td>
<td>Class 1, 2, 3, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Morpheme boundary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>Reduplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‡</td>
<td>Downstep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>′</td>
<td>High tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>′</td>
<td>Low tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>′</td>
<td>Rising tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>′</td>
<td>Falling tone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The People

The people of Bafanji live in Bafanji village in Balikumbat Sub-division, Ngoketunjia Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. The population is approximately 17,000 in 2008 (Lewis et al., 2013). A local historian, S. M. Tonshie quotes the 2005 national census showing 25,000 people in Bafanji village (Tonshie n.d.:8).

They are believed to have moved from a place called Ndobo in present-day Adamawa Region, and trace their movement through Bamun territory, and different parts of the Ndop plain before finally settling in their current location (Tonshie n.d.:21-22).

Tonshie explains that the name Fieh [fiʔè] means ‘case’ in the original language of the Ndobo people, but has undergone change at various times by different people so that the village is now officially called Bafanji (Tonshie n.d.:1-4).

1.2 The Language

The people of Bafanji speak Chufie’ or Chyɛfie’ (“language/talk of Fieh”) with no dialect variations. In this paper, the name Bafanji is used for the name of the language, since this is the most commonly known name, and the name given to the language in the Ethnologue (Lewis et al., 2013).

The Fieh people are found in the village of Bafanji, but there are also many people from the ethnic group scattered in the towns and cities of Cameroon, mostly in the South West Region. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 below for maps illustrating the location of Bafanji.

Bafanji is a Nun language within Eastern Grassfields (Mbam-Nkam). Its ISO 639-3 language code is bfj. The Ethnologue (Lewis et al., 2013) gives it as


The noun phrase in Bafanji presents some unique features which are explored in this paper. The first is that there are two agreement systems that operate. Nouns govern agreement in the noun phrase by enforcing agreement upon a variety of noun modifiers usually from one of these systems and in the case of the attributive marker, either system. The emerging system is a semantic-based one. This is discussed in 2.2.

The second interesting feature of Bafanji is that it has at least twenty numeral classifiers that are required to be able to count certain relatively small nouns that are of high countability. This is possibly the beginning of a new system of noun classification, but currently these classifiers are nouns that belong to double class genders, many of which have a transparent link to lexical (non-classifier) nouns or even verbs. These classifiers are discussed in 2.4.

1 All data is in the Bafanji orthography, but morpheme boundaries have been added where they clarify examples. Also, surface tone is included on the examples here where it has not yet received a standardized form in the orthography as yet. For more information on the orthography, see Hamm and Hamm 2007.
Figure 1. Location of Bafanji in wider context

Figure 2. Bafanji and neighbouring languages

(SIL 2013 – Colin Davis) Thin lines show language boundaries, larger names show language names, smaller names show village/city names, shaded areas indicate bodies of water.
2. THE NOUN CLASS SYSTEM

2.1 Noun Classes

Bafanji has a noun class system that has been reduced in many respects in comparison with other Eastern Grassfields languages which have conserved many of the inherited noun classes. Hyman proposes ten different noun classes for his reconstruction of Proto-Eastern Grassfields, six singular and four plural (Hyman 1980:182). Bafanji, on the other hand, has six classes, four singular and two plural. In addition to the fact that at some point in the past the number of classes has been reduced, the noun class system in Bafanji is currently changing from a purely formal system to a semantic based system. A treatment of the noun class system has been documented (Hamm 2011) as well as an article showing how the change came about and where change is currently taking place (Hamm 2012). The difference between the two classification systems is most salient in the agreement systems which are discussed in 2.2.

It is unclear by what process it has happened, but it is clear that there has been much upheaval within the noun class system in the past, resulting in nouns changing from one class to another. One possible source of change could be the deletion of the vowel in a CV noun class prefix where C was a nasal. There are several other areas within the morphophonology of Bafanji where a single nasal consonant morpheme changes its form from labial [m] to alveolar [n] or to velar [ŋ] by a phonological process of assimilation (see Hamm 2007 for more details). It could be that as the vowel was deleted for an unknown reason, that the nasal consonant then also underwent assimilation. This process happened for several noun class prefixes which were unique in the past, but now are not. The result is that there may have been several different CV prefixes where C was a nasal, but they are now conflated into the same form as they all undergo place assimilation.

Roughly 35% of all basic nouns in singular form in Bafanji start with a prenasalised consonant, 50% with non-prenasalised consonants, 5% with mi- and 6% with mu-5. This means that it is not advisable to use noun class prefixes as a criterion for classifying nouns as may be done in other branches of Grassfields (Ring, Momo). Rather, it is only by observing consistent agreement patterns across all of the agreeing noun modifiers that one can adequately classify nouns in the formal noun class system in Bafanji and many other languages. The following section will give examples of nouns classified by this formal system.

2.1.1 Examples of Count Nouns by Gender

Count nouns are classified by gender, which is made up of a singular and a plural class. Thus gender 1/2 is a noun whose singular is in class 1 and plural is in class 2. What follows are examples of nouns from the five attested genders in Bafanji.

(1) Gender 1/2

mú-ŋkìú’ mbó’-ŋkìú’ ‘rooster/cock’6
n-chì wù-chì ‘in-law’

---

2 One such example is the first person singular pronoun which could be described as a syllabic nasal consonant prefix (N-) which assimilates to the place of articulation of the stem consonant of the verb. Another example is the consecutive morpheme which is a non-syllabic nasal consonant prefix attached to the verb stem which indicates that the subject of a non-initial verb in a complex sentence is the same as the subject of the first verb of the sentence.

3 This is a widely attested phenomenon in many African languages.

4 The term basic here excludes compound nouns and loan words. The database includes 578 basic nouns.

5 There are no examples of nouns which begin with a vowel.

6 For more details on the different noun class prefixes that exist in the language, see Hamm 2011.
ηγονή  πु-ηγονή  ‘guest, stranger’
n-ζιη  ζιη  ‘relative (by blood)’
sόη  σόη  ‘friend’
m-ŋwé  ŋgyé  ‘woman’

(2)  Gender 1/6
mùn’  mì-mùn’  ‘deaf/mute person’
nchwōŋ  mì-nchwōŋ  ‘civet cat’
nua’  mì-nua’  ‘tradition/custom’
lålū’  mì-lålū’  ‘argument’

(3)  Gender 3/6
nchòò  mì-nchòò  ‘mouth’
ŋgé  mì-ŋgé  ‘gun’
ŋkùü  mì-ŋkùü  ‘rope, string’
ŋgwò  mì-ŋgwò  ‘area of ethnic group/village’
mbwì  mì-mbwì  ‘family’

(4)  Gender 7/6
ké  mì-ké  ‘arrow’
mbóò  mì-mbóò  ‘hole’
pùá’  mì-pùá’  ‘mushroom’
wigí  mì-wigí  ‘tulip tree’
pwò  m-bwò  ‘arm, hand’

(5)  Gender 9/6
ndúgò  mì-ndúgò  ‘horn, cup’
síu’  mì-síu’  ‘termite’
ŋkìü  mì-ŋkìü  ‘peace plant’
in’  mì-ni’  ‘spear grass’
ŋ-gânj  mì-gânj  ‘thief’

2.1.2 Examples of Non-Count Nouns by Gender
Nouns which are not countable have no singular/plural pairings, as they are seen as a mass, and not as discrete entities that can be counted. The following lists the mass nouns according to their agreement patterns found on noun modifiers.

(6)  Gender 1
fí  ‘njamanjama, vegetable’
fufà  ‘wind’
mú-nzùò  ‘groundnut’
nínnò  ‘honey’

(7)  Gender 3
ŋkì  ‘water’
nínnò  ‘honey bee’

(8)  Gender 6
mì-tyè  ‘saliva’
mì-chèi  ‘urine’
mì-chī  ‘blood’
mì-lèèŋ  ‘sap’
mì-lòù’  ‘palm wine’
(9)  Gender 7
kòú’  ‘cocoym, achu’
nzì  ‘egg’
fè  ‘meat’
ŋùtʊŋ  ‘plantain’
ŋkwéi  ‘wood’
(10)  Gender 9
ŋèŋŋə  ‘corn’
ntwò  ‘pap, mushy food’
nzùó  ‘Bambara groundnut’
séi  ‘profit’
ŋùìŋŋùi  ‘peace’

2.2 Agreement
There are two ways that different modifiers agree with the head noun: either in noun class, or in the semantic feature of the noun (animacy and number). All nouns in phrases with possessives enforce agreement according to the noun class of the head noun. Many nouns found with demonstratives are shifting from noun class agreement to semantic agreement. Nouns found with the attributive marker show that they can agree either according to the noun class or semantic agreement system. The associative marker found in associative noun phrases also agrees in noun class. Nouns found with all the remaining agreeing modifiers take semantic agreement. For more information on the details on the change from the original noun class agreement to the newer semantic agreement system, see Hamm 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOUN CLASS</th>
<th>NOUN</th>
<th>GLOSS</th>
<th>POSSESSIVE ‘MY’</th>
<th>ATTRIBUTIVE MARKER</th>
<th>ASSOCIATIVE MARKER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>n-chī</td>
<td>in-law</td>
<td>w-ĩ</td>
<td>w-è</td>
<td>` (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>wù-chī</td>
<td>in-laws</td>
<td>p-ĩgì</td>
<td>p-è</td>
<td>` (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ŋkùñ</td>
<td>rope</td>
<td>w-ĩ</td>
<td>w-è</td>
<td>` (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>mì-ŋkùñ</td>
<td>ropes</td>
<td>m-ĩŋi</td>
<td>m-è</td>
<td>` (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>pwò</td>
<td>hand</td>
<td>y-ĩ</td>
<td>y-è</td>
<td>` (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>sfẹ’</td>
<td>termite</td>
<td>y-ĩ</td>
<td>y-è</td>
<td>` (L)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

The attributive marker precedes several different kinds of attributes which modify a noun. See section 4.3 for more information on this morpheme.
2.3 Gender Pairing

As we have seen earlier, there are five genders in Bafanji. Included below are both the pairing of singular and plural (Figures 3 and 5) and the existence of single-class genders (Figures 4 and 6) for both the formal noun class system and the semantic based system. Dashed lines indicate genders with not many members. In the single-class genders, there are no linking lines.

![Figure 3. Double-Class Genders](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular Classes</th>
<th>Plural Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Double-Class Genders

![Figure 4. Single-Class Genders](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular Classes</th>
<th>Plural Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anim.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inanm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Single-Class Genders

2.4 Numeral Classifiers

A numeral classifier is a kind of noun which follows a numeral and is found in an associative noun phrase with a noun which is counted. The order of elements is always as seen in (11).

(11) NUMERAL – CLASSIFIER – NOUN

\[[\text{NOUN}_1 \ \text{AM} \ \text{NOUN}_2]\text{ANP}\]

Classifiers are different from the typical associative noun phrase in that the classifier is the modifier which precedes the head noun. With normal associative noun phrases the

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8 In addition to the velar nasal, there is a labialization effect for the concord on this word, coming from the \(w\) concord of singular animate.

9 I am indebted to Roland Kiessling’s paper on this subject (Kiessling 2009).

10 The relevant detail here about the associative noun phrase is that the associative marker (AM) is a floating tone whose effects are not simple. The details of the tone and its effects on surrounding nouns are discussed in section 5. Numerals are discussed in 4.2.6.
first noun is the head and the second noun is the modifier. See section 5 for more details.

(12) à kí ndèì tiè’ ndìì ndììú
he only need one CLSF(9) raffia(9)
‘He only needs one raffia pole.’

(13) à pû’ piè mi-téēn ngù̱ṉọ̱ŋ
it remain two 6-CLSF plantain(7)
‘There are two plantains remaining.’

(14) póu ‘ffì wù̱gù kwì mbìì ŋyè̱ŋ
they give us four CLSF fufu corn(7)
‘They gave us four bundles of fufu corn.’

Gil (2011) indicates two types of numeral classifiers, mensural and sortal. Mensural classifiers are common in many languages in that they are used with nouns of low countability to enable counting by some unit of measure (a drop of oil, a bottle of water, a grain of sand, etc.). Sortal classifiers are used with nouns of high countability.12 Gil explains that normally sortal numeral classifiers “divide the inventory of count nouns into semantic classes, each of which is associated with a different classifier.” (Gil 2011). Kiessling, on the other hand, has shown that in Grassfields and related languages, sortal classifiers do not apply to all nouns as they do in languages that are well known to have numeral classifiers such as Kana, a Cross River language in Nigeria (Kiessling 2009:23). In Bafanji the distinction between sortal and mensural classifiers is blurred, since what seem to be sortal classifiers can be used with nouns of both low and high countability (i.e. see the second classifier in Table 3 which can be used for avocados and water).

Fifteen of the twenty-two numeral classifiers shown in Table 3 allow counting of individual units of nouns which have a high degree of countability.13 It seems that sortal numeral classifiers have been underreported in Grassfields languages due to the noun class systems that dominate the noun phrase. Since it is difficult to differentiate between sortal and mensural classifiers, we include all classifiers here. We present those that seem the most likely to be sortal classifiers at the top of the table, and the less clear classifiers at the other end. There are likely others that exist in the language.

Table 3. Numeral Classifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSIFIER14</th>
<th>LEXICAL SOURCE</th>
<th>RANGE OF APPLICATION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE NOUNS IT IS USED WITH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ndìì / mì-ndìì 9/6</td>
<td>eye? eye=lfì (7/6)</td>
<td>small, non-round objects, seeds</td>
<td>corn, mosquito, jigger, cocoyam, groundnut, bean, louse, housefly, sand fly, worm, caterpillar, ringworm, ant, fish, termite, bedbug, brick, raffia bamboo stem, pepper, gravel, sand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 For some reason, the expected plural form of the classifier (mì-mbìì’) does not appear here.
12 In Bafanji, these are insects, seeds, fruits, fish, bricks, plants, etc.
13 Interestingly, many of the examples of nouns in Table 3 are mass nouns that have no natural singular/plural distinction, despite the fact that they have a characteristic shape with well-defined edges. More research would be needed to investigate whether it might be possible to have a singular/plural distinction but rather think of these nouns as unspecific and generic as Kiessling has noted for Denya (Kiessling 2009:26).
14 The gender for each classifier is given after its singular/plural forms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Lexical Source</th>
<th>Range of Application</th>
<th>Example Nouns It Is Used With</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>téen / mì-téen 7/6</td>
<td>pit, hole, den?</td>
<td>whole fruit or round objects, or a drop of a liquid</td>
<td>avocado, mango, plantain, banana, squash, raffia fruit, guava, orange, lemon, water, oil, wine, blood, rainwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>póu' / mì-póu' 7/6</td>
<td>beat? (v.)</td>
<td>bundle (that is tied with string)</td>
<td>egusi pudding, groundnut pudding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñkèén / mì-ñkèén 9/6</td>
<td>squeeze? (v.)</td>
<td>all fruit including stem from which it grows (‘regime’)</td>
<td>plantain, banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pyè / mì-pyè 7/6</td>
<td>deep?</td>
<td>group of fruits that form together - the part that gets cut off from fruit stem (‘hand’)</td>
<td>plantain, banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>túdo / mì-túdo 7/6</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>edible, made to be round</td>
<td>fried dough ball, fried groundnut ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chóú' / mì-chóú' 7/6</td>
<td>chop? (v.)</td>
<td>rounded cluster containing individual units</td>
<td>palm nut, beehive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ndùn / mì-ndùn 7/6</td>
<td>cloud?</td>
<td>pod with several smaller fruits inside</td>
<td>kola nut, ‘kasho’ fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chúá / mì-chúá 7/6</td>
<td>start? (v.)</td>
<td>stem/stalk with seeds</td>
<td>whole corn cob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñkùá' / mì-ñkùá' 7/6</td>
<td>grow, ascend (v.)</td>
<td>bare, rigid plant part</td>
<td>empty corn cob, corn stalk, midrib of plantain leaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chàá / mì-chàá 7/6</td>
<td>fig tree</td>
<td>whole plant</td>
<td>groundnut plant, bean plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mbùù' / mì-mbùù' 9/6</td>
<td>break (v.)</td>
<td>bundle (wrapped, not tied)</td>
<td>achu, fufu corn, meat, nasal mucus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kúú / mì-kúú 7/6</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>segmented piece</td>
<td>Indian bamboo, tree, papaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chè / mì-chè 7/6</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>worn out piece</td>
<td>clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chwì / mì-chwì 7/6</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>useless part</td>
<td>raffia bamboo, sugar cane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pè / mì-pè 7/6</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>a flat, thin piece cut from something</td>
<td>paper, plank, papaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chú / mì-chú' 7/6</td>
<td>pound?</td>
<td>clump, swarm</td>
<td>type of weed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chígí / mì-chígí 7/6</td>
<td>push (v.) cf. French pousse</td>
<td>blade</td>
<td>grass, wild plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñgàa / mì-ñgàa 7/6</td>
<td>gill</td>
<td>twig, small stem, ‘leg’</td>
<td>edible leaf, grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kú / mì-kú 7/6</td>
<td>make a pile, join (v.)</td>
<td>heap, pile</td>
<td>soil, waste plant matter (swept up in a compound)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kàñ / mì-kàñ 7/6</td>
<td>become thick (v.)</td>
<td>thick clump of coagulated liquid</td>
<td>mud, palm oil (when it is thickened)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kë' / mì-kë' 7/6</td>
<td>roofing grass</td>
<td>something that can be in a bundle</td>
<td>grass for thatch, bamboo, firewood, grass for roofing mat, raffia bamboo skin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some nouns can take different classifiers depending on which aspect of the noun is in focus. The words  nghiệp, (plantain) and ณิษฐี, (banana) can take three different classifiers.

(15) ตี’ ตีน ี่งู’งน ้
one  CLSF(7) plantain(7)
‘One (fruit of) plantain.’

(16) ตี’ ตีป ี่งู’งน
one  CLSF(7) plantain(7)
‘One (bunch of) plantains.’

(17) ตี’ ตีัก’’เอก ี่งู’งน
one  CLSF(9) plantain(7)
‘One (regime of) plantains.’

In addition to this, a function of one classifier, ณิษฐี is to express an insufficient or contra-expected number15. Kiessling states for Isu, a West Ring language, that “the noun ‘eye’ could be used to emphasize a disappointingly low number of items when the expectation was higher.” (Kiessling 2009:27). It seems to have the same function in Bafanji. An additional fact is that normally the noun ณิษฐี (person/people) does not require a classifier in counting contexts, but is added here to emphasize the disappointingly low number.

(18) นิ-กิ นิจุ่ ป้าิญ มิ-ณิษฐี ป-.safe.
I-only saw small 6-CLSF 2-person
‘I only saw a few people.’

(19) ตี’ ตีณิษฐี ป-ดีญ หัว ป.
one  CLSF(9) 1-person there NEG
‘There isn’t even one person there!’

3. The Structure of the Noun Phrase

The basic constituent structure of the noun phrase in Bafanji can be presented in the following schema:

(20)  [QUANT (ATTR) NOUN (ATTR) (POSS) (DEM) (DEF DET) (QUANT) (REL)]

A noun phrase consists of an obligatory noun which is the head, and a number of optional modifiers, the majority of which occur after the noun and two of which occur before the noun. It is normal to find two or three modifiers in one phrase but rarely more than that. Several modifiers can occur in positions before or after the noun, such as quantifiers and attributes. The specifics of these will be discussed in 4.2 and 4.3, respectively.

[QUANT ATTR NOUN ATTR DEM]

(21) ตี’ ป้าิญ มิ-ณิษฐี’ ฮ็ัง ป-ลี่
three small 6-stone black PL.INANM-FDIST
‘those three small black stones’

15 Tamanji (2009) describes this feature for Bafut, an Eastern Grassfields language of the Ngemba branch.
When a noun phrase with a possessive or demonstrative modifier is used in contrastive focus situations, the possessive or demonstrative precedes the head noun, sometimes with slight modification of form. This is discussed in 4.4 and 4.1.1, respectively.

\[
\text{[DEM(FOC) NOUN]}
\]

(22) \text{w-\/ niŋ}  \\
\text{SG.ANIM-PROX animal}  \\
‘this animal (not that one)’

There are no co-occurrence restrictions between modifiers, but there are no examples of a noun phrase that incorporates all of the modifiers.

4. NOUN MODIFIERS

The modifiers used in noun phrases in Bafanji are presented in the sub-sections that follow. The default position of most modifiers is after the noun, thus exceptions to this general pattern are noted in their respective sections.

4.1 Determiners

There are three kinds of determiners in Bafanji. Demonstratives distinguish three degrees of deixis: proximal (near speaker), distal (near hearer), and far-distal (far). The anaphoric determiner represents a fourth form, the one referred to, and finally, there is a definite determiner.

4.1.1 Demonstratives

Demonstratives specify the noun according to its proximity to the speaker or audience, and are also used in discourse to specify participant reference.

(23) \text{yóŋŋ y-ľ’}  \\
\text{thing(7) SG.INANM-PROX}  \\
‘this thing’

(24) \text{pàŋŋ wéí ŋ-ôŋ ľâ}  \\
\text{you.PL catch 1-man SG.ANIM.DIST}  \\
‘catch that man!’

(25) \text{nza’ ľê}  \\
\text{area(9) SG.INANM.FDIST}  \\
‘that (far) area’

The form of the demonstrative varies depending on the animacy and number of the noun it modifies, rather than the noun class (see Table 4) that is, they take semantic agreement.
Table 4. Demonstratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANIMATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROXIMAL</strong></td>
<td>w-í’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DISTAL</strong></td>
<td>lā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAR DISTAL</strong></td>
<td>lē</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demonstratives that normally do not appear with a class affix (the distal and far distal forms used with singular nouns) will have the full form of class affix and demonstrative root when it is nominalised (used in the place of a noun). These are identical to the forms of the contrastive/emphatic demonstratives in Table 5 below.

(26) Yi-lā né ŋgiè’

SG.INANM-DIST show that

‘This shows that…’

(27) Yi-lā kie’ kwi’màŋkò’ ndàŋ

SG.INANM-DIST as tortoise pass

‘This is how the tortoise passed…’

If there is a need to contrast one noun as different from another, the demonstrative can precede the noun, and all forms have a concord consonant, agreeing with the head noun in animacy and number.

(28) w-í’ ŋ-doŋ chyè

SG.ANIM-PROX 1-man talk

‘this man talked’

29) Á nziú w-í’ niŋ, á póu’-é

he see SG.ANIM-PROX animal(1) he beat-it

‘When he would see this animal, he would beat it.’

Table 5. Contrastive/Emphatic Demonstratives in Focus position (fronted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANIMATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEAR SPEAKER</strong></td>
<td>w-í’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEAR HEARER</strong></td>
<td>wù-lá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAR FROM HEARER</strong></td>
<td>wù-lé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2 Anaphoric Determiner

Within the context of several sentences, reference can be made to a noun which had already been mentioned. The anaphoric determiner chió, póu or móu specifies the noun referred to earlier. This is one determiner with different roots which takes semantic agreement. The exception is that the singular form has no animate/inanimate distinction.

(30) ñ-doŋ chió

1-person SG.ANAP

‘that person (talked about)’
4.1.3 Definite Determiner

Bafanji also has a determiner that specifies a noun from among several options of possible referents. Its function overlaps with the anaphoric determiner. The definite determiner can refer to a noun that has not yet been specified in a story (i.e. an animal not named yet in a folk story) or used anaphorically to a noun already mentioned, whereas the anaphoric determiner can only be used to refer to a noun that has already been introduced in a narrative. A study of participant reference would shed further light as to its status vis-à-vis other determiners. It takes semantic agreement, however the singular form does not agree in animacy.

(31) Ṇkũn̂ liú Fùọ̀ ̣n̄ chìú
     on stool(7) chief(1) SG.ANAP
     ‘on the stool of that chief (talked about) / on that stool of the chief (talked about)’

(32) yóọ́n̄ p-óú
     food(9) PL.ANAM-ANAP
     ‘that food (talked about)’

(33) mí-lá’ m-óú
     6-fights PL.INANM-ANAP
     ‘those fights (talked about)’

(34) níŋ á
     animal(1) SG.DEF
     ‘the animal’

(35) Mì-yóọ́n̄ m-ị́ m-á
     6-thing PL.INANM-PROX PL.INANM-DEF
     ‘these (particular) things’

(36) mbáá p-íŋ p-á
     also 2-person PL.ANIM-DEF
     ‘also the people...’

As a category that specifies reference to a participant in a text, it also can be added to a proper noun or as we see in the following example.

(37) Đan Hòmbègù-á pùgù-á póú ǹgiù
     Dan Hombege-SG.DEF we-and he go
     ‘The Dan Hombege that we went together (with) left.’

The speaker was seeking to assure the audience that they understand that the participant being referred to here (Dan Hombege) is the very same one as was referred to earlier in the story, and not a different participant.

The definite determiner also transforms certain time-related nouns so that they function as relative pronouns. In (38), ndì (time) is combined with the definite determiner to introduce a temporal relative clause.

---

16 We would expect mou here (inanimate), but pou (animate) is used instead. This may show a collapse of animacy agreement in the plural, as is already present in the singular (see Table 6 below).
(38) à swéi wí nyé, ndí-á mà m̀bí múmâŋk̀wí là he tell me it time-(9)-DEF.PST be teenager that “he told it to me when I was a teenager.”

The definite determiner can also combine with the locative interrogative fì to introduce a locative relative clause.

(39) ò lifè’ yà’ fì-á mà hòu lá you tell place(7) where-DEF.I there that ‘You revealed the place where I was.’

4.1.4 Interrogative Determiner

To ask a question requesting more specific determination of a noun phrase, the question word nyêŋ (which) is used. It agrees following the semantic system. When there is some material following the interrogative, an additional particle nò is used.

(40) Á n-yêŋ?

it SG.INANM-which ‘which one (is it)?’

(41) ñj-ówé ngó n-dì w-ì?

SG.ANIM-which ? 1-relative 1-my ‘Which of my relatives (is it)?’

Table 6. Interrogative, Definite and Anaphoric Determiners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANIMATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERROGATIVE DETERMINER</td>
<td>n-yêŋ / n-yêŋ nò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFINITE DETERMINER</td>
<td>dò¹⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANAPHORIC DETERMINER</td>
<td>ciòù</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Quantifiers

There are several quantifiers in Bafanji, some of which come before the noun and others that come after. Each quantifier will be treated separately. The first two below must occur before the noun. The others are either always after the noun, or can occur either before or after the noun.

4.2.1 Indefinite Quantifiers (a certain, some)

There are times when the speaker does not need to specify the noun and can leave it indefinite (usually the first time it is introduced in a narrative). The indefinite quantifier ciòù always precedes the noun, and thought it takes semantic agreement, only the plural forms agree in animacy with the head noun.

---

¹⁷ The tone in the table is what is given when the modifier is said in isolation. Obviously these tones interact with others to change into what is seen in the examples.

¹⁸ It is possible to have agreement in singular with animacy, but it is rarely heard. If there is agreement, the agreeing consonants are (w) for animate, and (y) for inanimate.
The indefinite quantifier can also be nominalised (used in the place of a noun); when doing so, it agrees in both animacy and number with its antecedent.

4.2.2 Small number (few, little)

There are two words in Bafanji that designate a small number or quantity of a noun. Páíŋ is used for countable nouns and mî́y’ is used for mass nouns. They always precede the noun and do not agree with the head noun.

4.2.3 Much, many

Large quantities of an item or mass are expressed using zĕ̀ŋ. When it occurs with a count noun, it precedes the head noun. Otherwise, it follows the noun. It does not agree with the head noun in any other way.

---

19 The plural forms can be either mî́ŋ-i-chṹ/pì-gṹ-i-chṹ or mì-chṹ/pì-chṹ.
(51) Zéëŋ  p-ịŋ  kwũ  
many  2-person  die
‘Many people died.’

If the countable noun is plural, zéëŋ must be reduplicated.
(52) À fúú  mí-súgọ  mí-nịŋ  zéëŋ~zéëŋ
he  remove  6-tooth  6-animal  many~many
‘he removed the teeth of many animals’

The example above is a count noun however it is an associative noun phrase
which requires the quantifier to follow it. When it occurs with a mass noun, it will not be
reduplicated:
(53) mí-lọ̀u’ zéëŋ  ndígé  chìú
6-wine  much  in.house  SG.ANAP
‘There is a lot of wine in that house’

However, when it follows mass nouns that are the object of a verb, it will be
reduplicated.
(54) à gé  mí-lọ̀u’ zéëŋ~zéëŋ
he  has  6-wine  much~much
‘He has a lot of wine.’

4.2.4 All, every
There is a lot of variation in the form of this expression. It is made up of two
elements, each part having an alternate form. The first part that precedes the noun is
ŋkọŋ/ŋká and the second part that follows the noun is nínéé/néè. Either form preceding
the noun can co-occur with either one after it. It does not agree with the head noun.
(55) nzíŋ  ŋká  yù’  nínéé
circle  all  place(7)  all
‘circling everywhere’
(56) ŋká  mi-nịŋ  néè
all  6-animal  all
‘all animals’
(57) ŋkọŋ  mi-yù’  nínéé
all  6-places  all
‘every place’
(58) ŋkọŋ  ŋkèí  ndí  ŋkèí  wúgú  chìú  nínéé
all  side(9)  outside  for  side(9)  us  SG.ANAP  all
‘All around us, on every side...’

It is also possible for only one of the elements to be present. It is not clear what
conditions the presence or absence of either element of the expression.

20 It is also possible to analyse this by saying that when the quantifier is at the end of a clause, it is reduplicated.
They only make all the food in the palace and kept it ready.

All the teeth he took from the other animals, …

Another agreeing quantifier is the interrogative quantifier, *yíŋkë* (how much/many). This word takes semantic agreement, but not in the singular form.

What does it cost?

How many of you are going to Mbouda?

Table 7. Indefinite and Interrogative Quantifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANIMATE</strong></td>
<td><strong>INANIMATE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDEFINITE QUANTIFIER</strong></td>
<td>chíu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/ pí-chíu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDEFINITE QUANTIFIER</strong></td>
<td>yì-chíu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(NOMINALISED)</td>
<td>/ pí-chíu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERROGATIVE QUANTIFIER</strong></td>
<td>yí-ŋkì</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are several ways of using numerals in Bafanji. When numerals are used as modifiers of a noun, they precede the noun and do not agree with the head noun:

One place

‘one place/together’

Four hundred bags

‘four hundred bags’

When numerals are nominalised (used in place of a noun), they take full semantic agreement with the head noun, thus distinguishing between nominalised animate forms and nominalised inanimate forms.

They got two (goals)
When counting numbers in order, the form for ‘one’ is different from the rest (see Table 8). In addition, the forms for ‘one’ and ‘two’ in counting and modifiers are different from the nominalised forms as can be seen also from Table 8.

Table 8. Numerals for counting, as modifiers, and as nominalised forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COUNTING</th>
<th>MODIFIER</th>
<th>NOMINALISED ANIMATE</th>
<th>NOMINALISED INANIMATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mò’</td>
<td>tí’e</td>
<td>wí-mù’</td>
<td>yí-mù’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>pié’</td>
<td>pié’</td>
<td>pígí-pàà</td>
<td>yí-pàà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>tí’</td>
<td>tí’</td>
<td>pígí-tí’</td>
<td>yí-tí’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>kwì’</td>
<td>kwì’</td>
<td>pígí-kwì</td>
<td>yí-kwì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>tā’in’</td>
<td>tā’in’</td>
<td>pígí-ntā’in’</td>
<td>yí-ntā’in’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ntóú’</td>
<td>ntóú’</td>
<td>pígí₄-ntóú’</td>
<td>yí₄-ntóú’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>kwètè’</td>
<td>kwètè’</td>
<td>pígí-kwètè’</td>
<td>yí-kwètè’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>fúōn’</td>
<td>fúōn’</td>
<td>pígí₁-fúōn’</td>
<td>yí₁-fúōn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>pū’</td>
<td>pū’</td>
<td>pígí-pū’</td>
<td>yí-pū’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>wùn’</td>
<td>wùn’</td>
<td>pígí-wùn’</td>
<td>yí-wùn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>nchwá yí-mù’</td>
<td>nchwé tí’e²²</td>
<td>nchwé tí’e’</td>
<td>tí’e nchwá / nchwé tí’e’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>pié nchwá</td>
<td>pié nchwá</td>
<td>pié nchwá</td>
<td>pié nchwá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>tí’ nchwá</td>
<td>tí’ nchwá</td>
<td>tí’ nchwá</td>
<td>tí’ nchwá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>pié wùn’</td>
<td>pié wùn’</td>
<td>pié wùn’</td>
<td>pié wùn’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>pié wùn’ ngi’ yí-mù’</td>
<td>pié wùn’ ngi’ tí’e’</td>
<td>pié wùn’ ngi’ wí-mù’</td>
<td>pié wùn’ ngi’ yí-mù’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>pié wùn’ ngi’ yí-pàà</td>
<td>pié wùn’ ngi’ pí’</td>
<td>pié wùn’ ngi’ pígí-pàà</td>
<td>pié wùn’ ngi’ yí-pàà</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Attributes

In Bafanji, like in other languages, an attribute is used to characterize a noun. All attributes follow the noun except ndáà (ideal), mìŋ/pàŋ (small size), mbìgì (especially good) which precede it. See the following examples of these attributes that precede the noun.

(67) Pàŋ-é pì ndáà sóŋ
    you-he be ideal friend(2)
    ‘You two are good friends.’

(68) mó mìŋ chú’ pì’e
    inside small CLSF(7) weed(7)
    ‘…inside a small clump of weed’

²² It is possible, but rare, that people will use the mìŋi- prefix for inanimate plural antecedents (instead of the yì- prefix shown above). The only form that is different than simply changing the prefix is the number two: mìŋimbaa where the voicing in the prefix nasals triggers voicing assimilation in the first stem consonant.

²¹ For all plurals, the noun is in the plural class except when the number eleven is used. Then the singular form is used apparently because the number one is at the end of the word eleven.
(69) pāiŋ mbóú-nwìŋ
small 2-knife
‘small knives’

(70) Nná pāiŋ mì-pú’ p-é 2\[23\]
leave PL.small 6-half 2-their
‘He left little bits.’

(71) mbígi mèŋ
good child
‘good (character) child’

The attributes that are derived from verbs all follow the noun. These could be colours, and other stative verbs.

(72) mì-wù pígi
6-oil red
‘red oil’

(73) nzwì fù
clothes(9) white
‘white clothes’

One derived attribute has an irregular pattern of agreement with the head noun. Púò ‘bad, evil’ can be applied to animate and inanimate nouns. Its agreement pattern is found in Table 9 below.

(74) Á tòŋ pí-pùì
it village(7) SG.INANM-bad
‘It is a bad village.’

(75) mìndígè mí-mbùì
6-house PL.INANM-bad
‘bad houses’

(76) n̄-dòŋ mì-mbùì
1-person SG.ANIM-bad
‘evil person’

(77) p-inj pí-pùì
2-person PL.ANIM-bad
‘evil people’

When an attribute derived from a verb modifies a plural noun, the attribute is reduplicated:

(78) P-inj sì~sì
2-person black~black
‘Africans’

23 The word pāiŋ (small) is derived from the noun ‘children’. The fact that this phrase has p as its concord consonant means that the word ‘small’ is still the head of the phrase, since possessives take noun class agreement (class 2 in this case).
There is an attributive marker which takes full semantic agreement that can be used to introduce an attribute. Alternatively, this marker can also agree in noun class with the head noun. In this case, the singular forms are differentiated by tone. See section 2.2 and Table 1 for more details.

Table 9. Attributive marker and ‘bad’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANIMATE</td>
<td>INANIMATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATTRIBUTIVE MARKER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>mí-mbúù</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Possessive Adjectives

The possessive adjectives modify the head noun by indicating a link between two nouns, a possessor and a possessee. The normal position of possessives is after the noun. It always agrees in noun class with the head noun and never takes semantic agreement.

| (84) | pà-mbaá p-úgú |
| (85) | mì-sogá m-óú |

All the forms of the possessives are shown below in Table 10. For an unknown reason, the first person singular possessives have a longer root ígi when in a phrase with a plural noun in comparison to those that are in phrases with singular nouns í.
Like the demonstratives which can precede the noun, when possessives occur before the noun, they carry a meaning of contrastive emphasis. Some of the possessives have a different form in the pre-nominal position. All forms of the possessives in focus position are given in Table 11.

(87) y-ì ndì
    9-my.FOC time(9)
    ‘my turn…’

(88) z-é nchòò fà’
    7-his.FOC duty(7)
    ‘his duty’

Possessives can also be nominalised (used in place of the noun). The nominalised forms are the same as the contrastive forms, and mean ‘mine’ or ‘my own’, etc. (with or without contrastive meaning).

(89) Mbìgì ntàìŋ z-é
    mosquito carry 7-his.own
    ‘Mosquito carried his own (container – class 7)’

There is a tonal locative that is prefixed to the noun which affects the form of the possessive adjective in those phrases. When possessives are used in conjunction with the tonal locative marker (a High tone prefix on the noun), the possessive forms are different for first singular and all plural possessives – the independent subject pronouns are used with these forms as possessives. Second and third person singular possessives in such tonal locative phrases have the same form as regular possessives (see Table 12).

---

**Table 10. Possessive Adjectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>SINGULAR NOUN</th>
<th>PLURAL NOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASS</td>
<td>1 (w, L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>w-ì</td>
<td>w-ì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>ì</td>
<td>ì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>è</td>
<td>è</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL&lt;sup&gt;24&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>w-ùgú</td>
<td>w-ùgú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>w-àŋ</td>
<td>w-àŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>g-òú</td>
<td>g-òú</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Table 11. Possessive Adjectives in focus (fronted) position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>SINGULAR NOUN</th>
<th>PLURAL NOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASS</td>
<td>1 (w, L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>w-ì</td>
<td>w-ì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>g-ò</td>
<td>g-ò</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>w-è</td>
<td>w-è</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>w-ùgú</td>
<td>w-ùgú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>w-àŋ</td>
<td>w-àŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>g-òú</td>
<td>g-òú</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<sup>24</sup> This is the exclusive version. While there are inclusive and a dual-like pronouns for first person plural, we choose to treat them as complex pronouns.
(90) kúá’ lá ŋkùŋ mâ
get up that on.back(9) my
‘Climb on my back!’

(91) tíí ndigé mâ
stand in.house(9) my
‘Put it in my house.’

(92) tíí pééŋ kààkáá twō póú
stand bag cocoa on.head(7) their
‘Put the bag of cocoa on their heads’

The preceding examples have shown the locative possessive adjectives. The following shows the same noun phrases without the tonal locative, to show the noun class information of these nouns in parentheses after the noun.

(93) locative possessive phrases possessive phrases
ŋkùŋ mâ ŋkùŋ y-ì
on.back(9) my back(9) 9-my
ndigé mâ ndigé y-ì
in.house(9) my house(9) 9-my
twō póú twō y-ì
on.head(7) their head(7) 7-my
ŋgwó póú ŋgwó g-óú
to.village(3) their village(3) 3-their

(no example from class 1)
(no example from class 2)

mí-twō póú mí-twō m-óú
on.6-head their 6-head 6-their

Table 12. Possessive Adjectives in Locative Phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>SINGULAR NOUN</th>
<th>PLURAL NOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLASS</td>
<td>1 (w, L)</td>
<td>3 (w, H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>mà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>ō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>é</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>pùgú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>pàíŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>póú</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Relativiser

Relative clauses are optionally introduced in Bafanji by means of a relativiser yá which is the last modifier in a noun phrase. It does not agree with the head noun. Some relative clauses are closed by the distal demonstrative lá. The data seem to suggest that lá is used to close subordinate clauses, but further research is needed to confirm this.
(94) mbîŋ é chíú, yâ kwîmânkò’ fûgà lá
money(9) his(9) SG.ANAP REL tortoise borrow SG.DIST
‘That money of his that Tortoise borrowed…’

(95) mó chú’ piê’, yâ y-ê sî–sî
inside CLSF weeds(7) REL SG.INANM-ATTR black–black
‘inside a thick clump of weeds where it is black’

(96) chyè á yâ à ṣwèi ącì
speech(7) SG.DEF REL it hold water
‘…the speech that was important…’

(97) pâîŋ yâ pâîŋ chwó lîgì pê’ nînéé lá
you.PL REL you.PL sit here like.this all SG.DIST
‘You all who sit here now…’

(98) p-îŋ p-á yâ póù mbí hóú lá
2-person PL.ANIM-DEF REL they be there SG.DIST
‘The people who were present…’

Very often, a definite article precedes the relative marker and can sometimes cause the relative marker to delete. Native speakers maintain that both (98) above and (99) below are grammatical for the same statement.

(99) p-îŋ p-á ø póù mbí hóú lá
2-person PL.ANIM-DEF they be there SG.DIST
‘The people who were present…’

In the case where the relative pronoun is not present in the relative clause, the definite article functions as the relative clause marker.

5. ASSOCIATIVE NOUN PHRASES

When a noun functions as a modifier of another noun, it is in an associative noun phrase. In Bafanji, the Associative Marker (AM) comes between the two nouns and is present only as a tone\(^{25}\) which combines with and sometimes changes the surrounding tones. The associative noun phrase has the following form:

\[(100) \text{Noun}_1 + \text{AM} + \text{Noun}_2\]
(head noun) (modifier)

The AM joins two nouns together so that the second noun modifies the first. The kinds of semantic relationships expressed in associative noun phrases are seen in section 5.5.

The form of the AM depends on the noun class of the head noun. In other words, it agrees in noun class with the head noun. When the head noun is in classes 1 or 9, the AM tone is Low; when it is in any other class, the AM tone is High.

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\(^{25}\) Bafanji has two phonemic levels of tone: High and Low. These are marked in examples as follows: ‘ (High tone) and ’ (Low tone). When these tones combine on one tone-bearing unit, they are realized falling tone (‘) or as rising tone (’). Where there is downstep, this is symbolized as ‘. \[22\]
Table 13. Associative Markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR CLASS</th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>PLURAL CLASS</th>
<th>AM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>`</td>
<td>(L)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>`</td>
<td>(H)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>`</td>
<td>(H)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Associative noun phrases have not been well studied, but preliminary results of analysis show that there are four ways in which the AM tone behaves depending on both the tone melody and class of Noun1: combining, merging, delinking while lowering the tone of Noun2, and deleting with no effect on Noun2. Each different behaviour of the AM will be discussed in turn. The pattern that occurs everywhere is that the AM tone spreads leftward on to Noun1 except when Noun2 has an overt class prefix (mɨ-), when it spreads rightward onto Noun2.

5.1 Tone Combining

Tone combining happens when the AM tone combines with the tone of Noun1 to create a contour tone, rising or falling. The AM tone combines only when Noun1 has a single (level) tone. That is, tone combining will never happen when Noun1 has a rising or falling contour tone (this will be discussed in its own section).

(101) fúu  `  fúu = fúu fúu
       co-wife(1) AM(1) co-wife(1)  ‘co-wife of co-wife’

(102) nchwò `  njkwè = nchwò njkwè
       war(7) AM(7) barren.person(3)  ‘war of barren person’

The AM tone can also combine with the first tone on Noun2 when it has a noun class prefix such as mi-.

(103) pũŋ `  mĩŋgwé = pũŋ mĩŋgwé
       belly(7) AM(7) woman(1)  ‘war of barren person’

5.2 Tone Merging

Tone merging is when the AM tone is the same as the last tone of Noun1, and the two identical tones merge together into one tone. Tone merging can happen with either level or contour tones on Noun1.

(104) sũũ `  pie = sũũ pie
       garden.egg(7) AM(7) family.helper(1)  ‘garden egg of family helper’

(105) pie `  fũu = pie fũu
       family.helper(1) AM(1) co-wife(1)  ‘family helper of co-wife’

(106) kũũ `  pie = kũũ pie
       piece(7) AM(7) family.helper(1)  ‘piece of family helper’

(107) sũũ `  fũu = sũũ fũu
       python(1) AM(1) co-wife(1)  ‘python of co-wife’

5.3 Tone Delinking with resulting downstep

When a High tone AM spreads to the left and meets a falling tone, it occasions a downstep on Noun2. The AM tone spreads leftward, and attaches to the last tone bearing
unit of Noun₁. The last (lexical) tone of Noun₁ is delinked and left floating, which creates a downstep in Noun₂. In (108), Noun₂ has a low tone which is not downstepped.

\[(108) \text{mbóó} \tilde{\text{ŋkwée}} = \text{mbóó ŋkwée} \quad (7 \, 3)^{26}\]

hole(7) AM(7) barren.person(3) ‘hole of barren person’

When Noun₂ is anything other than a Low tone, it is clear that the tones of Noun₂ are downstepped as compared to the tone melody of Noun₁ (the High tones in Noun₂ are not as high as High tones in Noun₁).

\[(109) \text{mbóó} \tilde{\text{nchí}} = \text{mbóó nchí} \quad (7 \, 35)^{27}\]

hole(7) AM(7) in-law(1) ‘hole of in-law’

\[(110) \text{mbóó} \tilde{\text{ndông}} = \text{mbóó ndông} \quad (7 \, 53)\]

hole(7) AM(7) husband(1) ‘hole of husband’

\[(111) \text{póó} \tilde{\text{fúu}} = \text{póó fúu} \quad (7 \, 5)\]

sky(7) AM(7) co-wife(1) ‘sky of co-wife’

5.4 Tone Deletion

The last behaviour of AM tone is tone deletion with no effect on Noun₂. The AM tone spreads left but does not delink the last tone of Noun₁ like it does above. Instead, the AM tone is deleted when it encounters a tone bearing unit with two tones already associated as we see in the following cases.

\[(112) \text{nchí} \tilde{\text{ndông}} = \text{nchí ndông} \quad (37 \, 73)\]

in-law(1) AM(1) husband(1) ‘hole of husband’

\[(113) \text{twí} \tilde{\text{fúu}} = \text{twí fúu} \quad (37 \, 7)\]

title-holder(1) AM(1) co-wife(1) ‘sky of co-wife’

It can be observed throughout the Associative Noun Phrase that the Low tone AM only has an effect on surrounding tones when the tone of Noun₁ is High (and not when it is Low-High).

5.5 Relationships in Associative Noun Phrases

There are a number of different semantic relationships expressed in Associative Noun Phrases. The relationships presented in Table 14 give examples that have been documented thus far.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
<th>ENGLISH GLOSS</th>
<th>FREE TRANSLATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>part-whole</td>
<td>mìsùgò mìngù</td>
<td>teeth of chicken</td>
<td>chicken’s teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>product-material</td>
<td>liù płąń</td>
<td>chair of plank</td>
<td>wooden chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quantification</td>
<td>pwó pênènè</td>
<td>hand of banana</td>
<td>cluster of bananas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>container-contents</td>
<td>nchí miwù</td>
<td>bottle of oil</td>
<td>oil bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object-purpose</td>
<td>kwó koú’</td>
<td>stick of achu</td>
<td>achu (pounding) stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kinship</td>
<td>má lón</td>
<td>mother of husband</td>
<td>mother-in-law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26 The tone notation is given in numbers here which reflects more discreet levels than is possible through diacritics. Lower numbers represent lower tones and higher numbers represent higher tones.

27 Tone in the associative noun phrase is complex. At present it seems that L tones are not significantly lowered by downstep, but H tones are perceptively lowered when downstepped. Further research is needed establish whether there is a difference between L tone and downstepped L. Example (104) does not show downstepped L, but there is one case in the data that could be downstepped L.
The following combinations of words form compound nouns which have been observed to date in Bafanji. At this time it is unclear whether to classify two nouns as an Associative Noun Phrase (ANP), or a compound noun. Considering the tone rules presented in section 5 above, some of the undetermined cases will be difficult to identify (due to tone merging or deletion). In any case, there are many examples of verbs, adjectives and prepositions combining with nouns to form new complex nouns. Tamanji (2009:45, 49) maintains that there are not very many compound nouns formed from Noun + Noun in Grassfields, but the vast majority of complex nouns consisting of two nouns are ANPs.

The last column in the examples below gives an assessment of whether the compounds of the form Noun + Noun are ANPs or compound nouns. This is done by checking if the surface tone on the suspected compound noun follows ANP tone rules. Where it is impossible to detect, these are labeled ‘unclear’.

(114) Noun + Noun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Literal meaning</th>
<th>ANP/Comp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mbiỳndígè</td>
<td>‘wall’</td>
<td>(skin + house)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sáándígè</td>
<td>‘wall’</td>
<td>(side + house)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nchòóndígè</td>
<td>‘door’</td>
<td>(mouth + house)</td>
<td>ANP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pwòtù</td>
<td>‘branch’</td>
<td>(arm + tree)</td>
<td>ANP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twòtù</td>
<td>‘upper part, high up’</td>
<td>(head + tree)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pùmìŋgìwé</td>
<td>‘womb’</td>
<td>(belly + woman)</td>
<td>ANP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tìgélè’</td>
<td>‘neighbour’</td>
<td>(father + compound)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>méŋkìwé</td>
<td>‘mother of twins’</td>
<td>(child + bush)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tìgènìwé</td>
<td>‘father of twins’</td>
<td>(father + god)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n̄kìmìŋ</td>
<td>‘tears’</td>
<td>(water + eyes)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>těéŋ’ŋíkì</td>
<td>‘well’</td>
<td>(pit + water)</td>
<td>ANP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n̄gòtù</td>
<td>‘bark (n.)’</td>
<td>(skin + tree)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kìé’tòó</td>
<td>‘earing’</td>
<td>(bundle + ear)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lìíttù</td>
<td>‘knot (in wood)’</td>
<td>(eye + tree)</td>
<td>ANP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lìímìwò</td>
<td>‘flame’</td>
<td>(tongue + fire)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n̄kwàtòwò</td>
<td>‘brain’</td>
<td>(bone marrow + head)</td>
<td>compound²⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kù’pìŋ</td>
<td>‘crowd’</td>
<td>(heap + people)</td>
<td>unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tògòndỳè</td>
<td>‘throat’</td>
<td>(navel + neck)</td>
<td>compound²⁹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²⁸ There is no precedent in ANP tone rules for HL lexical tone and H AM tone becoming L on the surface or Noun₂ going from HL to L, thus this seems to be an example of a compound noun.

²⁹ In addition to a change in tone from the expected output of ANP tone rules, there is a change in vowel of Noun₁ from u (tìgó - navel) to o (tògòndỳè - throat) in the compound. This makes it a candidate for a compound noun.
mèŋndyé ‘growth, swelling’ (child + neck) unclear
țiqëlôŋ ‘father-in-law’ (father + husband) unclear
nchôó pó’ù ‘entrance to Ngumba forest’ (mouth + residence) ANP
chûkô ‘footprint’ (spot + foot) unclear
chûnchôò ‘bite mark’ (spot + mouth) unclear
chûfûgû ‘scar’ (spot + wound) unclear
syéfà ‘farm’ (ground + work) unclear

(115) Adjective + Noun
mîŋpùsí ‘kitten’ (small + cat)
mîŋnà ‘calf’ (small + cow)

(116) Verb + Noun
Mbû’mbí ‘God’ (pfx31-create + world)
nzûndîgê ‘successor’ (pfx-eat + house)
mîpò’ù’tú ‘woodpecker’ (pfx-hit + tree)
pûûnûdê ‘anger’ (be.bad + neck)
lên’chû ‘proverb’ (connect + speech)
nsûgûtûn ‘driver’ (pfx-pull + iron)
nfêî’syê ‘fetish priest’ (pfx-judge + ground)
kwûnzû ‘rag’ (die + cloth)
lyénpwó ‘palm (of hand)’ (clean + hand)
zînô ‘knowledge’ (know + matter)
tôûsû ‘sickle’ (dig + ground)
péîmbôŋ ‘egg-eater snake’ (pick + egg32)
ŋkwûûkôû ‘gutter’ (pfx-return + rainwater)
swâsû ‘kingfisher’ (stab + fish)

(117) Noun + Verb
yôônzwû ‘food’ (thing + eat)
ndwëëpî ‘lastborn’ (end + give birth)
ndwëëchû ‘conclusion’ (end + speak)
nchôôfà ‘duty, obligation’ (mouth + work)
pwômê ‘right hand’ (hand + throw)
pwôkwê ‘left hand’ (hand + help33)

(118) Noun + Preposition
mênswû ‘firstborn’ (child + front)

---

30 This is a very productive compound formula for the young of many animals.
31 The prefix here and elsewhere in the Verb+Noun examples is a derivational prefix creating an agent noun from a verb. As such, they could be seen as potential Noun+Noun compounds. However the tonal process of the derivation has not been studied, so deciding whether a derived noun+noun follows ANP tone rules cannot be known without further research.
32 The current word in use for ‘egg’ is nz which seems different from many other related languages. Interestingly, the word for ‘egg’ used in this compound is cognate with many other Grassfields languages.
33 The current word in use for ‘help’ is kwêl. It is unclear why the form used in the compound is with a different vowel.
(119) Preposition + Noun
zyěndìgè  ‘floor’  (inside + house)

REFERENCES


Hamm, Cameron and Valerie Hamm. 2007. A phonological sketch of Bafanji (Chufie’). Yaoundé: SIL.


