

PLANT PARTONOMY AND INDIVIDUATION STRATEGIES IN BABANKI

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LLACAN – CNRS Paris

World Congress of African Linguistics (WOCAL 11)

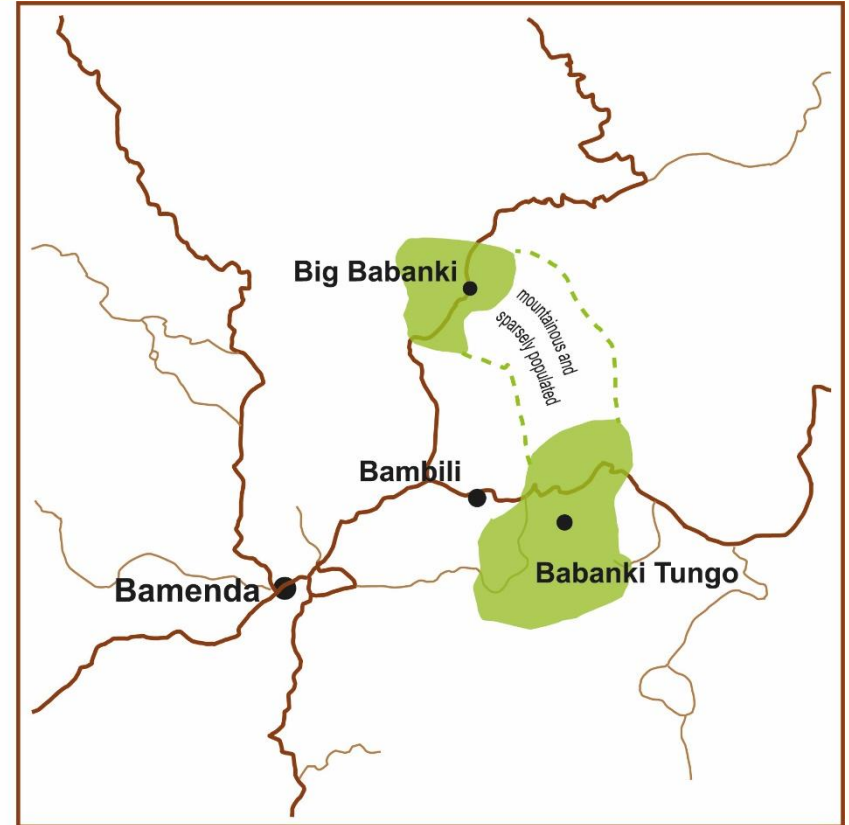
University of Nairobi, Kenya, August 5 – 9, 2024

The Babanki language

Central Ring (Grassfields Bantu)

Northwest Cameroon

39,000 speakers (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig (2024))



- 1. Introduction
- 2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant partonomy
 - Context
 - Description/specification by means of associative constructions
 - Body-part nouns in associative constructions
 - Measure or container phrases in associative constructions
- 3. Individuation and counting
- 4. Conclusion

Introduction

- Some Babanki nominal botanical items refer both to a plant or its part(s), raising questions about the meaning or range of meanings of such items:

(1) *àsáη* ‘maize plant, cob, maize grain’

àηgòm ‘banana plant, banana bunch, banana fruit’

kàlàη ‘cocoyam plant, cocoyam tuber’

- **Aim:** identify the individuation strategies in Babanki plant partonomy
 - Context
 - Description/specification by means of associative constructions
 - Body-part nouns in associative constructions
 - Measure or container phrases in associative constructions

Introduction

- Individuation: the propensity for an entity to be construed as an independent individual (Grimm 2018: 528).
- **Semantic association of a lexical item to a specific plant, or its part(s)**
- Countability: morphosyntactic distinctions made in languages related to grammatical number, such as singular, plural, collective, etc., and the grammatical categories formed upon these distinctions, e.g. the class of nouns with a singular/plural contrast (Grimm 2018: 528).
- NPs can be countable (count) vs. noncountable (mass) vs. collective
- **Strategies to facilitate the counting of plants or their parts**

2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant paronymy

Several Babanki lexical items refer both to a plant or its part(s):

- (2)
- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>àsán</i> | ‘maize plant, cob, maize grain’ |
| <i>àṅgòm</i> | ‘banana plant, banana bunch, banana fruit’ |
| <i>kàlàṅ</i> | ‘cocoyam plant, cocoyam tuber’ |
| <i>àndòṅ á lyímá</i> | ‘sweet potato plant, sweet potato tuber’ |
| <i>kàzú?</i> | ‘yam sp. plant, yam tuber’ |
| <i>kànwì?tà</i> | ‘blackberry plant, blackberry fruit’ |
| <i>fàsés</i> | ‘pepper plant, pepper fruit’ |
| <i>àkwén</i> | ‘beans plant, beans grain’ |
| <i>tàwás</i> | ‘peas plant, peas grain’ |
| <i>gálìk</i> | ‘garlic plant, garlic clove’ |
| <i>àbú?</i> | ‘pumpkin plant, squash’ |
| <i>àṅgwòlò?</i> | ‘okra plant, okra fingers’ |
| <i>áṅòs</i> | ‘onion plant, onion bulbs’ |

2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant paronymy

(a) Context:

- Context can specify the referent:

(3) a. *lùwàyn yì dyè á⁺sú āsáŋ* ‘The woman went to weed the maize (plants).’

b. *lùwàyn yì dyè ápfè àsáŋ* ‘The woman went to cook the maize (fruit).’

(4) a. *kán* *ásáŋ* ‘fry corn (grain, *cob, *plant).’

b. *shwàná* *ásáŋ* ‘husk corn (cob, *grain, *plant).’

c. *sú* *ásáŋ* ‘weed corn (plant, *grain *cob).’

2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant paronymy

(b) Description/specification: Associative constructions (N1 AM N2)

- Description or specification strategy by means of associative constructions (N1 AM N2) that specify the plant or its part:

(5) *byâ* ‘avocado, avocado tree, avocado leaf, avocado stone, avocado stick, avocado root, avocado branch, avocado trunk’

a. *fàkò? fá byâ*

fə-kò? fá byâ

19-tree 19.AM 1.avocado

‘avocado tree’

b. *àfú á byâ*

ə-fú á byâ

5-leaf 5.AM 1.avocado

‘avocado leaf’

c. *kàtyí ká byâ*

kətyí ká byâ

7-stick 7.AM 1.avocado

‘avocado stick’

d. *fàndzán? fá byâ*

fə-ndzán? fá byâ

19-stone 19.AM 1.avocado

‘avocado stone’

2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant paronymy

(b) Description/specification: Associative constructions (N1 AM N2)

- Description or specification strategy by means of associative constructions (N1 AM N2) that specify the plant or part:

(5) *byâ* ‘avocado, avocado tree, avocado leaf, avocado stone, avocado stick, avocado root, avocado branch, avocado trunk’

e. *àghánj é byâ*

à-ghánj é byâ

5-root 5.AM 1.avocado

‘avocado root’

f. *àntám é byâ*

à-ntám é byâ

5-branch 5.AM 1.avocado

‘avocado branch’

2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant paronymy

(c) Body-part nouns (BN): Associative constructions (BN AM N)

- Use of body-part nouns in associative constructions (BN AM N) to specify the plant or its part:

(6) *àsánŋ* ‘maize plant, cob, maize grain’

àshí àsánŋ

è-shí é è-sánŋ

5-eye 5.AM 5-maize

‘maize grain’

(7) *àŋgòm* ‘banana plant, banana bunch, banana fruit’

kàchú ká ŋgòm

kè-chú ká è-ŋgòm

7-head 7.AM 1.banana

‘banana bunch’

(8) *fàkò?* ‘tree’

kànā? ká fákò?

kà-nà? ká fà-kò?

7-bottom 7.AM 19-tree

‘tree trunk’

(9) *àmbàsə* ‘njamanjama plant, njamanjama leaves’

kàvú ká mbàsə

kè-vú ká èmbàsə

7-hand 7.AM 1.njamanjama

‘njamanjama heap’

Dependency reversal (Van de Velde 2013 for Bantu, Angitso & Kießling 2021 for Ugare, Tiv, Mekangoum & Kießling 2022 for Yəmba)

2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant partonomy

- Use of body-part nouns in associative constructions (BN AM N) for specification **outside the domain of plant partonomy**:

(10) *àch̄́ ázhú*

è-chù ó è-zhú
5-mouth 5.AM 5-time
'sun'

(11) *kàchú ká ηgàη*

kè-chú ká è-ηgàη
7-head 7.AM 5-house
'roof'

2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant partonomy

(d) Measure or container phrases (MN/CN): Associative constructions (MN/CN AM N)

- Use of measure or container phrases in associative constructions (MN/CN AM N) to specify the plant or its part:

(12) *àsán* ‘maize plant, cob, maize grain’

kàkán kásán

kè-kán kó à-sán

7-dish 7.AM 6-maize

‘tin of maize’

(13) *àmbàsə* ‘njamanjama plant, njamanjama leaves’

kàmbò ká mbàsə

kè-mbò ká èmbàsə

7-bag 7.AM 1.njamanjama

‘bag of njamanjama’

(14) *àηkò?* ‘wood’

gà àηkò?

gà à àη-kò?

9.pile 9.AM 6a-wood

‘pile of firewood’

(15) *àmbàsə* ‘njamanjama plant, njamanjama leaves’

àbí? é mbàsə

è-**bí?** é èmbàsə

5-bunch 5.AM 1.njamanjama

‘njamanjama bunch’

Dependency reversal (Van de Velde 2013 for Bantu, Angitso & Kießling 2021 for Ugare, Tiv, Mekangoum & Kießling 2022 for Yemba)

2. Individuation strategies in Babanki plant partonomy

- Use of measure or container phrases in associative constructions (MN/CN AM N) for specification **outside the domain of plant partonomy**:

(16) *dá ð m̀̀nlyu?*

dá *ð* *m̀̀n-lyu?*

1.gourd 5.AM 6a-wine
'gourd of palmwine'

(17) *̀̀n̄yn á n̄am' s̄*

̀̀n̄yn *á* *n̄am-s̄*

5-group 5.AM animal-10
'herd of cattle'

2. Individuation in Bantoid

Western Grassfields, e.g., Ring languages such as Babanki
Associative constructions

Eastern Grassfields and Tivoid:

Numeral Classifiers: Sortal and mensural; Restricted numeral classifier system
(incipient) alongside a reduced noun class system of the Bantoid type.

Tivoid: Ugare (Angitso & Kießling 2021)

Eastern Grassfields Bantu: Ngəmba (Mekangoum & Kießling 2022)

3. Individuation and counting

(i) Description/specification: Associative constructions (N1 AM N2 NUM)

(18) a. *àntám é byê àmù?*

à-ntám é byê à-mù?

5-branch 5.AM 1.avocado 5-one

‘one avocado branch’

b. *tàntám tá byê tàbò*

tà-ntám tá byê tà-bò

13-branch 13.AM 1.avocado 13-two

‘two avocado branches’

(19) a. *kàtyí ká byê kàmù?*

kà-tyí ká byê kà-mù?

7-stick 7.AM 1.avocado 7-one

‘one avocado stick’

b. *àtyí byê àkà?*

à-tyí é byê à-kà?

8-branch 8.AM 1.avocado 8-four

‘four avocado branches’

3. Individuation and counting

(ii) Body-part nouns (BN): Associative constructions (BN AM N NUM)

(20) a. *kàchú ká ηgòm kàmù?*

*k*è-chú ká è-ηgòm *k*è-mù?

7-head 7.AM 5-banana 7-one

‘one banana bunch’

b. *àchú á ηgòm àbò*

è-chú á è-ηgòm è-bò

8-head 8.AM 5-banana 8-two

‘two banana bunches’

(21) a. *kànā? ká fákò? kàmù?*

*k*è-nà? ká fè-kò? *k*è-mù?

7-bottom 7.AM 19-tree 7-one

‘one tree trunk’

b. *ànā? á ηkò? àtàyn*

è-nà? á èη-kò? è-tàyn

8-bottom 8.AM 6a-tree 8-five

‘five tree trunks’

3. Individuation and counting

(ii) Body-part nouns (BN): Associative constructions (BN AM N NUM)

(22) a. *kàvú ká mbàsè kàmù?*

kà-vú ká èmbàsè kà-mù?

7-hand 7.AM 1.njamanjama 7-one

‘njamanjama heap’

b. *àvú é mbàsè àbò*

à-vú é èmbàsè à-bò

6-hand 6.AM 1.njamanjama 6-two

‘two heaps of njamanjama’

(23) a. *àshí ásáṅ àmù?*

à-shí é à-sáṅ à-mù?

5-eye 5.AM 5-maize 5-one

‘one grain of maize’

b. *tàshí tásáṅ tàkà?*

tà-shí tó à-sáṅ tà-kà?

13-eye 13.AM 6-maize 13-four

‘four grains of maize’

**àshí ásáṅ àkà?*

3. Individuation and counting

Class 13 plural specialization?

(24) a. *àghánj é fákò? à-mù?*

à-ghánj é fè-kò? à-mù?

5-root 5.AM 19-tree 5-one

'one root of a tree'

b. *àghánj é fákò? à-bò*

à-ghánj é fè-kò? à-bò

6-root 5.AM 19-tree 6-two

'two roots of a tree'

c. *tàghánj tá fákò? tà-bò*

tà-ghánj tá fè-kò? tà-bò

13-root 13.AM 6-tree 13-two

'two roots of a tree'

3. Individuation and counting

(iii) Measure or container phrases (MN/CN): Associative constructions (MN/CN AM N NUM)

(25) a. *kàkán kásán kàmù?*

kè-kán ká à-sán kè-mù?

7-dish 7.AM 6-maize 7-one

‘one tin of maize’

b. *àkán ásán àbò*

è-kán é à-sán è-bò

8-dish 8.AM 6-maize 8-two

‘two tins of maize’

(26) a. *àbí? é mbàsè àmù?*

è-bí? é èmbàsè è-mù?

5-bunch 5.AM 1.njamanjama 5-one

‘one bunch of njamanjama’

b. *tàbí? tá mbàsè tàbò*

tè-bí? tá èmbàsè tè-bò

13-bunch 13.AM 1.njamanjama 13-two

‘two bunches of njamanjama’

3. Individuation and counting: Countable, noncountable, and collective nouns

- Various languages display different grammatical number systems and countability
 - Turkana, a Nilo-Saharan language of Kenya:
collective/unit, countable/noncountable (Grimm 2018: 534-536)
 - Maltese: collective/singulative, countable/noncountable (Grimm 2018: 536-537)
 - Welsh: singular/plural, collective/unit, and noncountable (Grimm 2018: 530-533).

3. Individuation and counting: Countable, noncountable, and collective nouns

□ Countable nouns

(27) a. *kàkáy kàmù?*

kà-káy kà-mù?

7-dish 7-one

‘one dish’

b. *àkáy àbò*

è-káy è-bò

8-dish 8-two

‘two dishes’

(28) a. *nyìḡ mū?*

nyìḡ mù?

9.hair 9.one

‘one hair’

b. *nyíḡ sàbò*

nyìḡ-sá sà-bò

hair-10 10-two

‘two hairs’

Also: *kàbùm/àbùm* ‘mucus’, *àwɣɣí/tàwɣɣí* ‘rain(s)’, *àmbòḡ/àmbòḡsá* ‘cloud(s)’

3. Individuation and counting: Countable, non countable, and collective nouns

□ Noncountable nouns (singular only)

(29) a. *əlyù* 'honey' b. **təlyù* c. **əlyù* d. **əlyù əmù?*

e. *kədīŋ ká lyù*

kè-dìŋ ká è-lyù

7-lot 7.AM 5-honey

'a lot of honey'

f. *kəkáj ká lyù kəmù?*

kè-káj ká è-lyù **kè-mù?**

7-dish 7.AM 5-honey **7-one**

'one tin of honey'

Also: *kàsésé* 'sand', *kəBú* 'ashes', *byĩ* 'camwood', *əBú* 'catarrh', *chwìchwì* 'sunlight', *kəbwìn* 'witchcraft', *kəbyì?* 'dust'

3. Individuation and counting: Countable, non countable, and collective nouns

□ Noncountable nouns (plural only)

(30) a. *àḡkàsá* ‘rashes’ b. **àḡkà* d. **àḡkà mù?*

e. *kàdīḡ ká ḡkàsá*

kè-dìḡ ká *àḡkà-sá*

7-lot 7.AM rash-10

‘a lot of rashes’

f. *àshí áḡkàs àmù?*

è-shí á *àḡkà-sá* **è-mù?**

5-eye 5.AM rash-10 **5-one**

‘one rash’

Also: *àwójá* ‘hailstones’, *mànté* ‘spittle’, *àkwén* ‘beans’, *àbè* ‘liver’, *mú[†]ú* ‘water’, *mànshí?* ‘oil’

3. Individuation and counting: Countable, non countable, and collective nouns

□ Collective nouns (singular only)

(31) a. *àlyí* ‘soldier ants’

b. **tàlyí*

c. **àlyí*

d. **àlyí àmù?*

e. *ànōyn á[↓]lyí*

à-nòyn *á* *à-lyí*

5-group 5.AM 5-soldier ant

‘colony of soldier ants’

f. *ànōyn á[↓]lyí àmù?*

à-nòyn *á* *à-lyí* **à-mù?**

5-group 5.AM 5-soldier ant **5-one**

‘one colony of soldier ants’

3. Individuation and counting: Countable, non countable, and collective nouns

□ Collective nouns (plural only)

(31) a. *tàsàs* ‘comb(s), one comb’

b. **àsàs*

c. **àsàs àmù?*

d. **tàsàs tàmù?*

e. *kədīŋ ká tàsàs*

kè-dìŋ ká tà-sàs

7-lot 7.AM 13-comb

‘a lot of combs’

f. *tàsàs tàbò*

tà-sàs tà-bò

13-comb 13-two

‘two combs’

Also: *yáyáb[↓] sá* ‘chaff, rubbish’, *ànjísá* ‘clothes, dresses’ (but *ànjí sàmù?* ‘one dress’), *gwú[↓] sá* ‘shoes’ (but *gwú sàmù?* ‘one pair of shoes’; *gwùgwù mū?*, *gwù à kàwù mū?* ‘one shoe’)

Conclusion

1. Semantic vagueness of some Babanki nominal botanical items which can refer both to a plant and its part(s)
2. Individuation strategies:
 - Context
 - Description/specification by means of associative constructions
 - Body-part nouns in associative constructions
 - Measure or container phrases in associative constructions

Conclusion

3. Necessity for individuation motivating a transition from classifiers to numeral classifiers in Bantoid:
Western Grassfields Bantu = Associative constructions
Eastern Grassfields and Tivoid = Incipient numeral classifiers
4. Noncountable and collective nouns may be singular or plural and require measure or container phrases to be counted.

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Kòzù káḡ ká!

Thank you!