

# Towards early Bantu by reconstructing a fragment across Benue-Congo: 1st-person singular \*mI

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## 1 Previous reconstructions of 1st-person singular markers

+ early reconstructions with restriction to Narrow (Savannah) Bantu languages with focus on forms with initial alveolar nasal

> fuller picture in later reconstructions makes forms with bilabial nasal more salient

Author	Subject	Object	Possessive	Independent ("substitutive")
Meinhof (1948)	*ni-	*-ni-	*-a-ni	*ni
Meeussen (1967)	*n- (98)	*-n- (109)	*-á-ní (107)	*j̥-n-e (105)
Stappers (1986) <sup>1</sup>	-	-	*-a-mi (36-9)	*a-mi(-e) (24-7)
Kamba M. (2003)	-	-	*-a-ngu/nga (196-8)	*a-a-m̥i-e (135-9)

**Table 1: Proto-Bantu reconstructions of 1st-person singular markers**

+ data base extension towards Bantoid and other Benue-Congo by Babaev (2008, 2010)

(Proto-) language	Subject	Object	Possessive	Independent/ emphatic
Ukaan	<i>d̥, ja, -ji</i>		<i>-ji</i>	<i>joo</i>
Akpes				<i>òjù</i>
Oko	<i>ì-, mè-</i>	<i>mame, -mu</i>	<i>m-</i>	<i>àmé</i>
Idomoid		*mi		* $\check{V}$ mi
Nupoid		*mi		* $\check{V}$ mi
Igboid	*mI			*amI
Yoruboid	*mI			*amI
Edoid	*mi, *i-	*me		*meme
Central Niger	*me			*ame
Cross River	*N-, *mi	*m(i)	*àmì	*(\grave{a})mì, *minV
Bantu	*ji-		*-(\grave{a})me	*(\grave{i})me
Bantoid	*ji-	*(\grave{a})me		
<b>Benue-Congo</b>	*N-	<b>*mI</b>		

**Table 2: 1st-person singular proto-forms across Benue-Congo (Babaev 2010: 35, 38)**

<sup>1</sup> Stappers considers the possibility that eastern Bantu developed different forms, namely \*j̥-ni-e as the independent pronoun and, less certain, \*-a-ne as the possessive pronoun.

+ important step forward in widening the data base but several problems:

(1) Form of proto-forms

Statistically, the number of \***ni**-forms throughout the [Bantu] family is extremely high in the subject markers, lower in the object, even lower in the possessive markers, and quite rare in the independent stressed pronouns. The share of \***me** grows respectively. Since this distribution can be shown not only for the whole stock [? = Niger-Congo or Benue-Congo or Bantu], but for most Bantu groups as well, we are most certainly dealing here with a P[roto]B[antu] morphological distribution rather than an innovation. (Babaev 2008: 143)

Why is \***ni**- reconstructed for Bantoid if Babaev (2008: 153-4) fails to record such forms in non-Bantu Bantoid?

Why is \***N**- reconstructed for Benue-Congo if such forms are quite rare? - cf. Table 2

> **Individual proto-forms are insufficiently supported by sub-group forms**

(2) Systemic organization

We may suggest that there were only two series of person markers in Proto-B[enue-]C[ongo]: the subject prefixed series and the non-subject independent series:

	subject	non-subject
1sg.	*N-	*mI
2sg.	*o- / *u-	*wV
1pl.	*tu- / *ti-	*(bV)ce
2pl.	*mV- ?	*(bV)nV

Babaev (2010: 38)

> **The dichotomy between two types of forms, viz. bound subject vs. another free pronoun, is insufficiently supported across Benue-Congo sub-groups (cf. Table 2).**

(3) Proto-languages

- genealogical composition of Niger-Congo externally and internally unclear on all levels - open questions relate to:

- Benue-Congo vs. other Niger-Congo
- Bantoid vs. other Benue-Congo
- Bantu vs. other Bantoid (cf. Mbam, Manenguba (A15) etc.)

> **The status of respective proto-forms is questionable.**

+ majority groups (Bantu, Bantoid, ...) taken as the historical default although they might display innovative features (cf. Greenberg's opposite approach to Bantu within Niger-Congo)

> such a bias tends to swallow up the considerable diversity within each group, which is historically significant for ultimate reconstructions



## 2 An alternative reconstruction of \*mI

- + distribution summary of \*mI across test languages in Table 3: reflexes in bold
- recognizes typical morphosyntactic contexts of pronouns in Bantu (and Benue-Congo)
- shaded cells associate contexts which share at least one allomorph
- > Babaev's (2008, 2010) dichotomy of subject vs. other is not a salient pattern
- intentional underrepresentation of eastern Bantu which is genealogically less diverse and historically younger - focus on non-Bantu Benue-Congo and northwestern Bantu
- > reconstruction should not necessarily go by most frequent form

### 2.1 Independent and emphatic forms

- + generally based on \*mI
- + independent pronoun often with prefix but not conclusive as proto-form
- > prefix form rather itself an earlier emphatic form: Igbo m(ụ/ì) vs. àmî
- + in case of clear distinction, emphatic function correlates with more complex form
- > frequent result of fusion of independent pronoun with phonetically reinforcing and/or pragmatically emphasizing element
- > recurrently derived from a clausal pronominal expression of pronoun + identificational marker (cf. Dammann 1971, Himmelmann 1997): cf. *mě̃n* 1S.EMPH in Konzime (A84) with *mě̃n* 'it is me' in Basaá (A43) (Hyman 2003: 266)
- + complex innovative independent form can encroach on other contexts: Babole (C101)
- + \*mI replaced by other forms: emphatic - Kana; independent - eastern Bantu

### 2.2 Possessor

- + generally based on \*mI
  - + possessor pronoun postposed
  - > rare word order change to preposed possessor pronoun: Oko, Kana (here original order retained in "conservative" genitive constructions of irregular body parts)
- (1) Kana (Cross River)
- |         |                |                |        |   |        |
|---------|----------------|----------------|--------|---|--------|
| sí      | <b>mē</b>      | ná             | kà     | ńdāā                                      | kà     |
| face    | <b>1S.POSS</b> | <b>1S.POSS</b> | mother | <b>1S.EMPH.POSS</b>                       | mother |
| my face |                | my mother      |        | my own mother (Ikoro 1996: 128, 127, 125) |        |
- + recurrent loss of final vowel, but partly independent: Northwest vs. Xhosa (S41)
  - + development towards bound possessor suffix
    - on the noun itself
    - on a genitive linker, promising proto-Bantoid form with frequent \*a
  - > phonetic reinforcement through "phonogenesis" (cf. Hopper 1994): e.g., eastern Bantu -ngu <? \*-N-ku (cf. 2S -ko <? \*-ku-o/ɔ, 3S -k(w)e <? \*-ku-e/ε)
  - + \*mI replaced by other affixes: \*-ne/i in some eastern Bantu like Lega (D25)

## 2.3 Object

- + widely based on \*mI
- + across the family, variable position with respect to verb (see Beaudoin-Lietz et al. 2004)
- > recurrently correlates with:

- different information status (Güldemann 2007)
- possibly phonetic strength: Nen, Herero

(a) postverbal forms (in default focus position) salient and phonetically stronger; can be replaced by emphatic pronouns: Kana, Konzime

(b) preverbal forms pragmatically less salient and often phonetically weaker; in Bantu incorporated into “macro-stem” (see Meeussen (1967: §7.2-3), Polak (1986: §6, 9))

(2) Idoma (Idomoid)

a. ó klá-**m̂**  
3S cover-**1S**

b. ó l-**ùm̂** klá  
3S OBJ-**1S** cover  
he covered me (Abraham 1951: 28, 29)

(3) Kana (Cross River)

a. légbò é-kúé **mē**  
PN DEF.FUT-call **1S.OBJ**  
Legbo will call me (Ikoro 1996: 123)

b. légbò wēè **mē = kūē**  
PN PST **1S = call**  
Legbo called me (Ikoro 1996: 123)

c. légbò wēè kúé **ndā**  
PN PST call **1S.EMPH**  
Legbo called ME (Ikoro 1996: 123)

(4) Herero (R31)

a. Jóna mé<sup>1</sup> ndjí vanga  
1.PN PRS:1 **1S** like

b. Jóna má<sup>1</sup> vanga **ámí**  
1.PN PRS:1 like **1S**

John likes me (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 170)

> variation causes overall less regular affixation and erosion than subject forms (see §2.4)

> allomorphy can still be considerable, though: Izere

+ elaboration by role-sensitive morphology: Nen

(5) Nen (Mbam = A44)

índìè **mìàṅó** mìḍf  
give **1S.OBL** hoe

Give me the hoe (Mous 2003: 304)

+ \*mI replaced by other markers, especially as prefix, which correlates with increased entrenchment of verbal cross-reference marking

> recurrent analogy with subject prefix: eastern Bantu: Nguni (S40), Swahili (G42d)

> possible alternation between *-me-* and *-N-*: apparently free variation

(6) Mbuun (B84b)

a. a-mpúlúús ba-á-mé/N-leŋ mme  
2-police 2-PRS-1S-search 1S  
The police(men) search me.

b. mme a-mpúlúús ba-á-mé/N-leŋ  
1S 2-police 2-PRS-1S-search  
I am wanted/searched by the police OR As for me, the police searches me.

## 2.4 Subject

### The diversity of verbal prefix forms

+ main question in Babaev's (2008) approach concerns the relation between two different subject forms, viz. \*ni- vs. \*mI(-)

> however, more than half a dozen form types:

(7) Babole (C101)

a. nì-ás-í  
1S-steal-REC.PST  
I stole (Leitch 2003: 405)

b. n-á-'sálá  
1S-PST-work  
I worked (Leitch 2003: 406)

c. ín-là-è  
1S-lay.out-SUBJ  
I should lay out (Leitch 2003: 410)

(8) Herero (R31)

a. mb-á hóngo [mbá < \*mbi-á]  
1S-PST teach  
I have taught (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 187)

b. mé<sup>1</sup> hóngo [mé < \*má-í]  
PRS:1S teach  
I am teaching (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 184)

c. ámí hí ǒmítiri  
1S NEG:1S teacher  
I am not a teacher (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 205)

> different forms classified here into two major groups:

(1) forms involving an initial nasal consonant:

- a. alveolar ni-/palatal ni-: **general reconstruction** but restricted to eastern Bantu
- b. bilabial m(I)-
- c. N- with following segment other than a front vowel: ndi-, ngi-, nga-, ngu-, na-, etc.
- d. homorganic N-: m- ~ n- ~ ɲ- ~ ŋ-

(2) forms involving a front vowel but lacking a(n initial) nasal consonant

- a. ĩ/in-
- b. i-
- c. Ci-: si-, ʃi-, tsi-, ki-, kɛ-, etc.

**Are these different forms related to each other and, if yes, how can they be accounted for historically (possible interference through language contact etc. aside)?**

- (1)d. can be derived from both (1)a. and (1)b. through vowel loss
- (2)b. and (2)a. might be related through loss (???or emergence) of nasal gesture
- (1)a. and (2)a. might be related by rearrangement of phonetic gestures
- (1)c. as strengthened forms of (1)a./d. incorporating such frequent postinitial as \*di, \*ki, \*ku, \*ka, ?\*a, etc. (“phonogenesis”, see Güldemann 2003: 191)
- (2)c. as strengthened forms of (2)b. incorporating a frequent preinitial (“phonogenesis”, see Güldemann 1996)
- (2)c. and (2)b. might be related to (1)a. and (1)b. through nasal loss, !!!attested for (1)b. in the form of phonological conditioning: Oko - mè/à-V vs. ì/è-C; Izere - V-mi vs. C-i  
**\*n(i)-, \*m(I)-, and \*i(n) are the best candidates for early proto-forms.**

> several hypotheses:

### **Hypothesis 1: \*n(i)- as exclusive reconstruction; later \*m(I)- from \*mI**

... the Bantu subject series of pronouns was nearly lost in other Bantoid languages (more progressive from the morphological standpoint), replaced by the independent pronouns which acquired the function of the verb subject. The Bantu subject set might have been a chronologically earlier layer of personal markers than the non-subject set which gradually replaced the former in most Bantoid languages. Some of them who preserved prefixation together with the independent subject marking (like Mundani) still have traces of the old ‘subject’ series. (Babaev 2008: 160)

... we assume that **me** is a separate subject pronoun not related genetically to \*n(i)-. (Babaev 2008: 143)

There are some other (most probably innovative) roots used for the 1st person singular pronouns in Bantu. Of them, let’s mention two:

i-/ yi- [see type (2)b. above] was recently suggested by Yvonne Bastin to have a P[roto]B[antu] origin. Still, we think that it is rather a drop of the initial \*ɲ- > \*y- > zero, quite a common phonetic shift noted outside Bantu too.

**ki-/ kɛ-** for subject markers (zones P, S) ... and **si-/ ʃi-/ tsi-** for subject markers are portmanteau forms [see type (2)c. above], in the latter case with the negative marker (Lamba M54 **n-** positive vs. **nsi-** negative). (Babaev 2008: 144)

- \*ɲi- (or a similar non-bilabial form of (1)a.) is not obviously the best reconstruction, compared to other forms. It could well be a more local innovation, parallel to other pronominal verb prefixes that appear to be exclusive to Bantu like 2nd-person plural subject \*mu- and 2nd-person singular object \*ku- and have a similar distribution across the family (cf. data in Babaev (2008), who, however, does not come to the same historical conclusion)

- explanations for emergence of other forms not fully convincing:

Where does the loss of initial nasal occur and how “common” is it?

Nasal loss does not single out \*ɲi- as opposed to \*mI(-) (cf. Mieke 1991).

What exactly happened to the nasal gesture in most “portmanteau forms”?

- exclusion of \*mI(-) as a reconstructable subject form is not argued for

## Hypothesis 2: \*mI as exclusive reconstruction; later \*n(i)- from \*N- from \*mI(-)

+ \*mI is well attested as a subject marker outside Bantu and even within it

> such a reconstruction would plausibly make \*mI a multi-purpose pronoun (cf. Table 2)

+ clear evidence in Bantu and beyond for mI-forms fusing with the verb AND their further development to non-bilabial subject prefixes

> some non-bilabial forms ARE related to \*mI, pace Babaev (2008: 143)

Language	Subgroup	Independent pronoun	Subject proclitic/prefix
Idoma	Idomoid	*mi >	homorganic N =
Igbo	Igboid	m(ɸ/i) >	m =
Izere	Platoid	mì >	mì(-)
Nen	A44, Mbam	mɛ̃ >	mɛ̃(-)
Akɔɔse	A15, Manenguba	mè >	mè- #_V/syllabic NC and Ñ- elsewhere
Kpā?	A53	mλ >	m- #_V and ñ- #_C
Bila	D32	*mI >	mi- initially and -m- #V_C
Herero	R31	*mì ?>	mbì- (parallel to -ndjé and -ndjì-)

**Table 4: Plausible change from independent \*mI to bound subject markers**

> \*mI can be the source for other bound subject markers (see above)

> \*mI can account for cases of non-bilabial forms lacking a front vowel outside Bantu, as e.g. in other Bantoid and Cross River (cf. Table 2)

> \*mI(-) might even be the predecessor of non-bilabial \*Ni-forms in Bantu in that the initial consonant was reshaped analogically targeting the presumably more frequent allomorphs of (1)d. involving non-bilabial nasals



### Hypothesis 3: \*mI besides \*ĩ/in-

+ does justice to the salient status of \*mI

+ recognition of \*ĩ/in- at the same time:

- provides a potentially easier scenario for the emergence of \*ɲ/ni-,

- has possible reflexes outside Bantu (and outside subject context): Oko, Edoid, Izere

(9) Oko (undetermined)

a. m̀è-e-bue

1S-PROG-sleep

I am sleeping (Atoyebi 2010: 115)

b. ì-sú-yá

1S-marry-3S.OBJ

I married him (Atoyebi 2010: 114)

### 2.5 Bound 1st-person singular markers from a general perspective

+ form of grammaticalizing cross-reference pronoun affected by:

(1) loss of phonetic substance

(2) fusion with and phonological assimilation to another predicate element (two processes in principle independent):

- following or preceding verb

- following or preceding gram

> different segmental and/or tonal form

> different morphological status as clitic or affix

**But which particular pronouns are affected and why?**

### Fusion bias regarding pronoun category

+ 1st-person singular has a particularly special status in line with the more general phenomenon of nominal hierarchies whereby certain pronominal categories tend to fuse with heavier hosts, particularly the verb, earlier and more strongly than others, first of all related to their tendency to be topical unstressed pronouns (cf., e.g., Givón 1976):

... pronominal paradigms do not necessarily become morphologically bound all at once. They may be grammaticalized in predictable stages. Person markers may appear before number markers. Among persons, **first and second person pronouns often become bound before third**. Indefinite third person pronouns may become bound before definite pronouns, and **subjects** or ergatives **before objects** or absolutes. Number may be distinguished initially for first person, then for second, and only later for third, if at all. (Mithun 1991: 102, emphasis mine)

> mitigates against a full and symmetrical system of bound pronouns

> nominal hierarchies also amply attested in Bantu and beyond (cf. already Schadeberg (1978) for an extensive discussion) - involves regularly 1st-person singular:

# verbal object prefix in Nyanga (D43): **1S**, 2S, 1P, 2P, 3H.S, REFL (Kadima 1965)

# verbal subject prefix in Igbo: **1S**, 2S, 3S, IP

(10) **m** = cì anụ  
**1S** = carry.many meat

I am (was) carrying bits of meat (Green and Igwe 1963: 75)

Person-number	Preverbal subject pronoun	Preverbal subject clitic
1st singular	m(ụ/ì)	<b>m</b> =
2nd singular	gì	<b>i/ì</b> =
3rd singular	ya	<b>o/ọ</b> =
Impersonal	-	<b>e/a</b> =

**Table 5: Igbo subject pronouns affected by verb fusion (Green and Igwe 1963: 32)**

# verbal object proclitic in Makaa (A83): **1S**, 2S, 3H.S

(11) °nyè à [shígé mè díg] [...] = macro-stem  
**1** PST NEG 1S.OBJsee

He didn't see me. (after Heath 2003: 345)

Person-number-gender	Preverbal subject pronoun	Postverbal object pronoun	Preverbal object "marker"
1st singular	mè	mè	<b>mè</b>
2nd singular	wò	wò	<b>wò</b>
3rd singular human = class 1	nyè, à	nyè	è

**Table 6: Makaa object pronouns affected by macro-stem incorporation (Heath 2003: 342, 345)**

# postverbal subject pronoun in Igbo: **1S**, 3P

(12) a-zù-rù **m** anụ [ma anụ]  
 ?-buy-PFV **1S.SBJ** meat

I bought meat (Green and Igwe 1963: 32)

# verbal subject prefix in Mödö (Bongo-Bagirmi): **1S**, 1P (Persson and P. 1991: 10)

# verbal object enclitic in Engenni: **1S**, 2S (Thomas 1978: 170-2)

(13)a. ò kpei dhe = **me** nì  
 3S wash finish = **1S** COMPLETIVE  
 he has thoroughly washed me (Thomas 1978: 170)

b. ò kpei dhe nì eì  
 3S wash finish COMPLETIVE 3S  
 he has thoroughly washed him (Thomas 1978: 170)

# double verbal object prefix in Rimi (F32): **1S** (Woolford 2000: 113-5)

**Reconstruction of 1st-person singular subject prefix does not imply reconstruction of a full person paradigm**

## Fusion bias regarding grammatical context

+ grammatical contexts differ with respect to their information status and hence the tendency to which a pronoun fuses with a host in this context

Statistically, the number of \***ni**-forms throughout the [Bantu] family is extremely high in the subject markers, lower in the object, even lower in the possessive markers, and quite rare in the independent stressed pronouns. The share of \***me** grows respectively. Since this distribution can be shown not only for the whole stock [?= Niger-Congo or Benue-Congo or Bantu], but for most Bantu groups as well, we are most certainly dealing here with a P[roto]B[antu] morphological distribution rather than an innovation. (Babaev 2008: 143)

> in so far as the \***ni**-/**me** opposition is basically one of bound vs. independent marker the observed cline can be interpreted inversely in terms of a hierarchy of likely pronoun fusion that is steered by the same factors of topichood and de-accentuation:

**subject > object > possessor > independent/emphatic**  
**preverbal > postverbal**

+ fusion bias to subject need, however, not be universal across Benue-Congo: Izere (Platoid)

(13)a. **mì** tà tseŋ

**1S** FUT go

I shall go (Lukas and Willms 1961: 17)

b. **mǐ** tseŋ

**1S:PST** go

I went (Lukas and Willms 1961: 17)

c. **mìn** tseŋ

**1S:PERF** go

I have gone (Lukas and Willms 1961: 18)

(14)a. àdá-**mi**

father-**1S.POSSR**

my father (Lukas and Willms 1961: 21)

b. igɔn-i

child-**1S.POSSR**

my child (Lukas and Willms 1961: 21)

(15)a. à t-í tak

**3S** OBJ-**1S** tell

he told me (Lukas and Willms 1961: 19)

b. àdá n-í nək àgádò kurúm-an

father OBJ-**1S** give portion riches-2S.POSSR

Father, give me the portions of your riches ... (Lukas and Willms 1961: 38)

**The preverbal 1st-person singular subject pronoun, and less so object pronoun, is the most advanced item across Bantu and beyond regarding fusion with the verb (stem).**

+ the development of “compact predicates” with pronominal cross-reference can be rapid:

Pronominal affixes [are pervasive in North America, but they are neither universal nor unique. Furthermore, they] can develop over a relatively short period of time. It thus appears that the presence of pronominal affixes is not a reliable indicator of deeper genetic relationship either. (Mithun 1992: 100)

> considerable variation even between closely related dialects of one and the same language is attested regarding:

- degree of phonological fusion (cf. Breen (1981) for variable pronoun-verb coalescence in Mari (Pama-Nyungan))
- constituent order (cf. Blackings and Fabb (2003) for variable object position in Ma'di (Central Sudanic))

**Independent development of bound 1st-person singular prefixes cannot be excluded.**

**Similar forms across Benue-Congo are not conclusive evidence for inheritance.**

### 3 Conclusions

+ \*mI can be reconstructed for early Benue-Congo and Bantu as an independent pronoun used in ALL major syntactic contexts, including that of encoding subjects, because:

(1) independent \*mI is attested in all these contexts across the different family levels of Benue-Congo

(2) of good evidence for such an old pronoun beyond Benue-Congo (cf., e.g., Mische (2004) for Gur, Pozdniakov and Segerer (2004) for different Atlantic groups)

(3) this can account for the cross-family versatility of \*mI-reflexes in one and the same function regarding position, notably as subject and object before and after the verb

(4) this can account for the cross-family versatility of \*mI-reflexes in one and the same function regarding morphological collocation

(5) this is in line with a geographical cline within the colonized Bantu area:

- assumed conservative stage besides other diverse patterns close to northwestern homeland
- the more strongly entrenched bound pronominal cross-reference becomes the more the markers differ in form from reconstructed \*mI, which in turn becomes rarer across different languages and across different grammatical contexts

+ still open question: did the multifunctional independent pronoun \*mI coexist with a bound marker \*ī/in- that had emerged earlier?

+ however, necessary caution for identifying a synchronic 1st-person singular mI-form with the proposed reconstruction: coincidental or contact-induced similarities cannot be excluded, because 1st-person singular mI-forms are attested in unrelated language families (e.g., Ju aka “Northern Khoisan” in southern Africa) and geographically close families (e.g., Central Sudanic in central Africa and a Bantu neighbor)

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## Data sheet: 1st-person singular \*mI across Benue-Congo

### Oko (Undetermined)

- (1) àmẹ àyẹ à-nẹ-yà  
 1S TF 3S-give-3S.OBJ  
 I (was the one who) gave it to him (Atoyebi 2010: 111)
- (2) mẹ-épán  
 1S-head  
 my head (Atoyebi 2010: 119)
- (3)a. mẹ-e-bue  
 1S-PROG-sleep  
 I am sleeping (Atoyebi 2010: 115)
- b. ì-sú-yá  
 1S-marry-3S.OBJ  
 I married him (Atoyebi 2010: 114)
- (4) è-sú-mú  
 3S-marry-1S.OBJ  
 S/he married me (Atoyebi 2010: 117)

### Idoma (Idomoid)<sup>2</sup>

- (5) àmì nè  
 1S ID  
 it is I (Abraham 1951: 24)
- (6) éné-m̄  
 mother-1S  
 my mother (Abraham 1951: 24)
- (7) ñ tá  
 1S refuse  
 I refused (Abraham 1951: 17)
- (8) m̄ piokwu  
 1S find:corpse  
 I found a corpse (Abraham 1951: 27)
- (9) m̄m pó ká-m pó  
 1S:SUBJ hear COMP-1S:SUBJ hear  
 let me hear! so that I hear (Abraham 1951: 48)

<sup>2</sup> I have changed the idiosyncratic tone marking of the source to standard conventions: ́ = High, ̂ = Mid, ̀ = Low.



- (10) ó klá-̀m or ó l-̀̀m klá  
 3S cover-1S 3S OBJ-1S cover  
 he covered me (Abraham 1951: 28, 29)

### Engenni (Edoid)

- (11) m̀̀ ǹ̀ gbei onu m̀̀  
 1S EMPH should:kill mother 1S  
 I instead should kill my mother (Thomas 1978: 122)
- (12) m̀̀ na m̀̀ nà gba êgberigba nà  
 1S REL 1S REL tell story DET  
 I who am telling the story (Thomas 1978: 122)
- (13) odo m̀̀  
 mortar 1S  
 my mortar (Thomas 1978: 116)
- (14)a. ò kpei dhe = me ǹ̀  
 3S wash finish = 1S COMPLETIVE  
 he has thoroughly washed me (Thomas 1978: 170)
- b. ò kpei dhe ǹ̀ è̀  
 3S wash finish COMPLETIVE 3S  
 he has thoroughly washed him (Thomas 1978: 170)

### Igbo (Igboid)

- (15) àm̀̀ m̀̀-rè ya  
 1S.EMPH do-PFV 3S.OBJ  
 [it was] I [who] did it (Green and Igwe 1963: 33)
- (16) àlà m̀̀  
 land 1S  
 my land (Green and Igwe 1963: 35)
- (17) mà ya mà m̀̀ or mà m̀̀ mà ya  
 both 3S and 1S both 1S and 3S  
 both he and I both me and him (Green and Igwe 1963: 36)
- (18) m̀̀ = c̀̀ aǹ̀  
 1S = carry.many meat  
 I am (was) carrying bits of meat (Green and Igwe 1963: 75)
- (19) m̀̀ à-z̀̀-ò-la yà [ma àzuòla]  
 1S ?-buy-?COMPLETIVE-PERF 3S.OBJ  
 I have bought it (Green and Igwe 1963: 32)

- (20)a. **m** zù-rù ya  
**1S** buy-PFV **3S.OBJ**  
 I bought it [marked clause contexts] (Green and Igwe 1963: 33)
- b. a-zù-rù **m** anụ [ma anụ]  
 ?-buy-PFV **1S.SBJ** meat  
 I bought meat (Green and Igwe 1963: 32)
- (21) ọ hù-rù **m**  
**3S** see-PFV **1S.OBJ**  
 he saw me (Green and Igwe 1963: 32)

Person-number	Preverbal subject pronoun	Preverbal subject clitic
1st singular	m(ụ/ì)	m =
2nd singular	gì	i/ì =
3rd singular	ya	o/ọ =
Impersonal	-	e/a =

**Igbo pronouns affected by fusion with verb (Green and Igwe 1963: 32)**

**Izere (Platoid)**

- (22) bì **mì**  
**COM 1S**  
 with me (Lukas and Willms 1961: 16)
- (23) àdà-**mi** igò-**i**  
 father-**1S** child-**1S**  
 my father my child (Lukas and Willms 1961: 21)
- (24) àgàbù gbúsùm  
 dog bark  
 the dog barks (Lukas and Willms 1961: 19)
- (25)a. **mì** tà tseŋ  
**1S** FUT go  
 I shall go (Lukas and Willms 1961: 17)
- b. **mĩ** tseŋ  
**1S:PST** go  
 I went (Lukas and Willms 1961: 17)
- c. **mìn** tseŋ  
**1S:PERF** go  
 I have gone (Lukas and Willms 1961: 18)

- (26)a. à t-í tak  
 3S OBJ-1S tell  
 he told me (Lukas and Willms 1961: 19)
- b. àdá n-í ǹ̀k àgádò kurúm-an  
 father OBJ-1S give portion riches-2S.POSSR  
 Father, give me the portions of your riches ... (Lukas and Willms 1961: 38)

### Kana (Cross River)

- (27) n̄dā wēè báé légbò  
 1S.EMPH PST wait PN  
 [it was] I [who] waited for Legbo (Ikoro 1996: 115)
- (28) m̀̀m ná āā kō-ā  
 1S TF 3S:PROG talk-REL  
 he is talking about ME (Ikoro 1996: 117)
- (29) sí mē ná kà ndāā kà  
 face 1S.POSS 1S.POSS mother 1S.EMPH.POSS mother  
 my face my mother my own mother (Ikoro 1996: 128, 127, 125)
- (30) òò lè m̀̀m or m̀̀m lè òò  
 2S COM 1S 1S COM 2S  
 you and I I and you (Ikoro 1996: 119)
- (31) m̀̀m nēè-nó  
 1S:COP person:ASS-war  
 I am a soldier (Ikoro 1996: 117)
- (32) m̀̀-wēè yáé kpá  
 1S-PST buy book  
 I bought a book (Ikoro 1996: 117)
- (33)a. légbò é-kúé mē  
 PN DEF.FUT-call 1S.OBJ  
 Legbo will call me (Ikoro 1996: 123)
- b. légbò wēè mē = kūē  
 PN PST 1S = call  
 Legbo called me (Ikoro 1996: 123)
- c. légbò wēè kúé n̄dā  
 PN PST call 1S.EMPH  
 Legbo called ME (Ikoro 1996: 123)

**Ejagham (Bantoid, Ekoid)**

- (34) à-rì mmè  
1-be 1S.EMPH  
it's me (Watters 1981: 317)
- (35) mmè nâ ñ-nàm-é' ì-búì  
1S.EMPH TF 1S:PFV-buy-BG 9-goat  
it was I who bought the goat (Watters 1981: 3)
- (36) ñ-nè à-yên êm  
1-person 1:PFV-see 1S.OBJ  
someone (...) saw me (Watters 1981: 323)

**Nen (Bantoid, Mbam = A44)**

- (37) w-à-mè mòn  
1-GEN-1S 1.child  
my child (Mous 2003: 301)
- (38)a. mè ná nífú sámbé ó bùàná nùmwè  
1S PST parcel put:H LOC bed under  
I have put the parcel under the bed (Mous 2003: 297)
- b. èbàkó ná émáà nèbáà lúmwè nétòtè  
lizard PST dog 5:medicine hit:H 5:one  
The lizard hit the dog by magic (Mous 2003: 305)
- (39) m'é-ndò ní á bóniàk  
1S-PROG eat TF yams  
What I eat is yams (Mous 2003: 304)
- (40) índiè miàṅó miḍf  
give 1S.OBL hoe  
Give me the hoe (Mous 2003: 304)

**Makaa (Bantoid, A83)**

- (41) j-á-m `-bòòg  
7-GEN-1S.POSSR 7-hoe  
MY hoe (Heath 2003: 340)
- (42) mè dí mè jáámb  
1S NEG.ID 1S cook  
It's not me who cooks. (Heath 2003: 347)
- (43)a. mè à [shígé è díg] [...] = macro-stem  
1S PST NEG 1.OBJ see  
I didn't see him. (Heath 2003: 345)

b. °nyè à [shígé mè díg]

He didn't see me.

Person-number-gender	Preverbal subject pronoun	Postverbal object pronoun	Preverbal object "marker"
1st singular	mè	mè	mè
2nd singular	wò	wò	wò
3rd singular human = class 1	nyè, à	nyè	è

**Makaa pronouns affected by macro-stem incorporation (Heath 2003: 342, 345)**

### Konzime (Bantoid, A84)

(44) m-běd w-â**m** myel-â**m**  
 3-house 3-1**S.POSSR** wife-1**S.POSSR**  
 my food my wife (Beavon 1986: 186, 183)

(45) **me** á si bee mwân  
 1**S** PST PFV see child  
 I saw a child (Beavon 1986: 180)

(46) go á si bee **me**  
 2**S** PST PFV see 1**S**  
 you saw me (Beavon 1986: 180)

- emphatic ("assertive") pronouns also occur as subject and object

(47) **mēm** boko, ɲ-iɛ de  
 1**S:EMPH** cut 1-**EMPH** eat  
 I [focus] cut (the tree to get the honey), (but) HE ate (it all up) (Beavon 1986: 180)

(48) (...) líkɔɔ ʼ-**mēm**  
 leave:P.SBJ ?-1**S:EMPH**  
 (other people ...) and left me (Beavon 1986: 175)

- possible co-occurrence of emphatic and simple pronoun as subject of *lí e*-construction in Nzime dialect (simple pronoun has to be 3rd-person in Bajwe'e dialect)

(49) **mēm** (**me**) lí e-gúá nó (...)  
 1**S:EMPH** 1**S** LOC NOM-know thus  
 [it is] I [who] know[s] that (and YOU know it too) (Beavon 1986: 180)

- simple pronoun can fuse with following tense-aspect marker and often co-occurs with subject noun, while in other contexts it doesn't; no information on fusion behavior of *me*

(50)a. m-ud waá ɲí tō  
 1-person 1:that 1:PERF go  
 that person has gone (Beavon 1986: 186)

b. m-ud waá ɲe lí e-tō  
 1-person 1:that 1 LOC NOM-go  
 that person is going (Beavon 1986: 186)

- c. ɲúú́ m-ɯd \*ɲe á si de  
 certain 1-person 1 PST PFV eat  
 a certain person ate (Beavon 1986: 185)

- oblique-prepositional pronoun series not described for speech-act participants
- etymological relation to *me* could be considered for 1st-person inclusive pronoun *mina*

### Akɔ̃se (Bantoid, Manenguba, A15)

- (51) (...) à-hèdè m̀ è à-nyén čăn  
 1-want:IPFV 1S ?-see tomorrow  
 (our brother) wants to see me tomorrow (Hedinger 1981: 279)

- (52)a. m̃-↓húd bó (...) [m̃ < m̀-â]  
 1S:FUT-remove:PFV 14OBJ  
 I will take it out (in the planting season) (Hedinger 1981: 279)

- b. ɲ-wóǵé  
 1S-wash:PERF  
 I have washed (Hedinger 1985: 21)

- possible cooccurrence of subject prefix and simple pronoun

- (53) mwê kúl-èé m̀ ɲ-pémé è  
 friend tortoise-TF 1S 1S:?-carry:PERF PQ  
 is it my friend the tortoise that I have carried? (Hedinger 1981: 286)

- simple pronoun possible after the verb (presumably restricted contexts)

- (54) ɲ-hèdè m̃ á-kàǵ  
 1S-want:IPFV 1S 1:HORT-go:IPFV  
 I want him to go (Hedinger 1985: 37)

### Kpā? (Bantoid, A53)

- (55) m-án w-è̃m  
 1-child 1-1S.POSSR [ $< *GEN-1S$ ]  
 my child (Guarisma 2003: 316)

- (56) ból ì-yóksíí m̀ ǵòdò  
 9.rain 9-spoil:PFV 1S 10.shoe  
 The rain ruined my shoes [lit.: ruined me the shoes] (Guarisma 2003: 329)

- phonetic assimilation of subject prefix to verb: m̀- > mV ~ ñC (Guarisma 2003: 319)

- (57)a. màá-làá ɲás [ʔmàá  
 1S:PRO<sup>[sic]</sup>-buy:PFV 9:sesame 1S:PROX.PST]  
 I bought sesame (Guarisma 2003: 328)

- b. ɲ-yùú  
 1S-come:PFV  
 I came (Guarisma 2003: 321)

**Bila (Bantoid, D32)**

- (58) kió ó-mi  
 brother.in.law IA.GEN-1S.POSSR  
 my brother-in-law (Kutsch-Lojenga 2003: 465)
- (59) mi-mó-pìlí bute lí ma-mə  
 1S-INF-know cow AL.GEN A.S.POSSM-1S.POSSR  
 I know my cow (Kutsch-Lojenga 2003: 473)
- (60) kíím-pìkí [kíím < \*ka-mi]  
 NEG:1S-come:PERF  
 I have not come (Kutsch-Lojenga 2003: 470, 467)

**Herero (Bantoid, R31)**

- (61) ów-ámí  
 ID-1S  
 it is me (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 113)
- (62) omu-tí wá-ndjé  
 3-tree 3:GEN-1S.POSS  
 my tree (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 134)
- (63) ámí h-í ómítiri  
 1S NEG-1S teacher  
 I am not a teacher (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 205)
- (64)a. mb-á hóngo [mbá < \*mbì-á]  
 1S-PSTteach  
 I have taught (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 187)
- b. mé<sup>l</sup> hóngo [mé < \*má-í]  
 PRS:1S teach  
 I am teaching (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 184)
- (65)a. Jóna mé<sup>l</sup> ndjí vanga  
 1.PN PRS:1 1S like  
 John likes me
- b. Jóna má<sup>l</sup> vanga ámí  
 1.PN PRS:1 like 1S  
 John likes me (Möhlig and Kavari 2008: 170)

**Babole (Bantoid, C101)**

- (66) by-èkà í<sup>l</sup>by-à àmé  
 8-food 8-GEN 1S  
 my food (Leitch 2003: 419)

(67)a. **nì-ás-í**

**1S-steal-REC.PST**

I stole (Leitch 2003: 405)

b. **n-á-'sálá**

**1S-PST-work**

I worked (Leitch 2003: 406)

c. **ín-là-è**

**1S-lay.out-SUBJ**

I should lay out (Leitch 2003: 410)

- no object prefixes except for reflexive

(68) **bá-'á-'bímb-í**

**2-REFL-hit-PFV**

they hit themselves (Leitch 2003: 415)

> instead postverbal object pronoun **àmé** (Leitch 2003: 404)

> presumably multi-purpose independent pronoun **àmé**