

Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation

AKOOSE ORTHOGRAPHY GUIDE

by

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Abbreviations

2pl	second person plural
2sg	second person singular
3pl	third person plural
3sg	third person singular
c10	class 10 agreement
CAUS	Causative
FUT	Future tense
IMP	Imperative mood
LOC	Locative
NEG	Negation
PAST	Past tense
PERF	Perfect aspect
sp.	species
RP	Reporting particle
Q	Question marker

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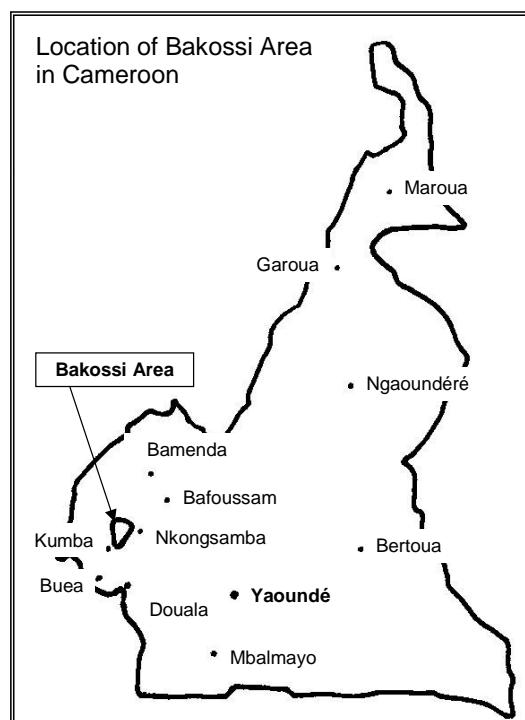
1 Introduction

This document presents the orthography of Akoose as it is currently in use. Akoose is a Bantu language¹ spoken by over 100,000 people in the Kupe-Mwanenguba Division, Southwest Province, and in the adjacent Mungo Division, Littoral Region, Republic of Cameroon. Akoose has several dialects displaying considerable differences.

The orthography presented here has its beginning in the mid 1970's with a phonological analysis (Hedinger and Hedinger 1977). Several documents have been produced over the years using the orthography described. The present document reflects the currently used conventions which have been arrived at over time. No doubt there will continue to be discussions on various details, and possibly more modifications.

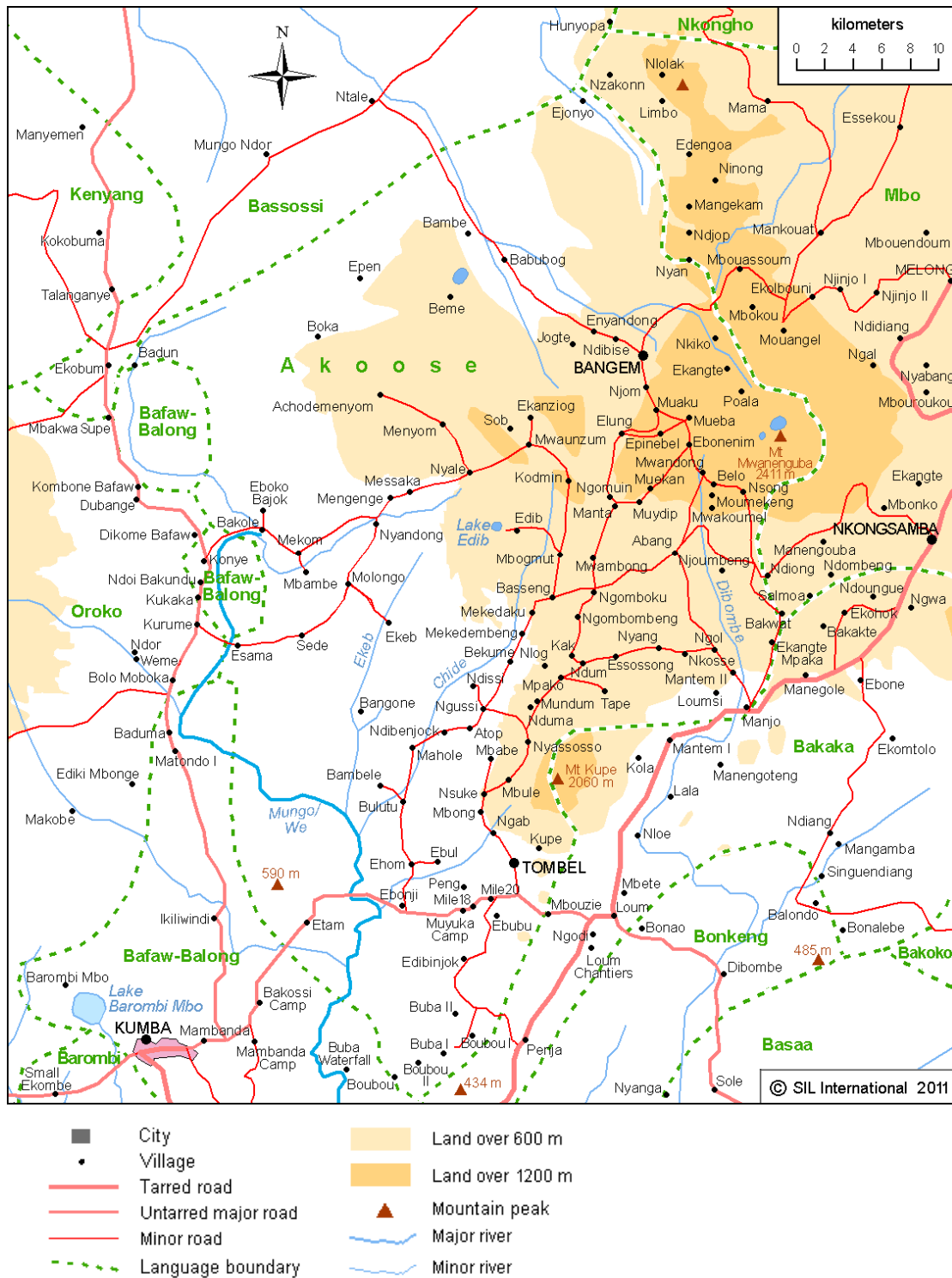
The choice of symbols follows the recommendations given in the *General Alphabet of Cameroon Languages* (Tadadjeu and Sadembouo 1984).

The map on the following page shows major physical features such as rivers, mountains, roads, villages and towns. It also shows the languages spoken by neighbours.



¹ The Ethnologue (Lewis 2009) lists it with the following classification: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Narrow Bantu, Northwest, A, Lundu-Balong (A.10), Ngoe and gives it ISO 639-3 language code [bss]. The ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983:351-364) classifies it as Niger-Kordofan, Niger-Congo, Bénoué-Congo, bantoïde, bantou, équatorial, côtier, Oroko-Ngoe.

Map of the area where Akoose is spoken



(Map based on Ejedepang-Koge (1986) as well as on information from other maps including *Carte du Cameroun/Map of Cameroon 1:200 000* (sheet: Mamfe 1973, Buea-Douala 1975). Language boundary information is drawn from the Ethnologue map for south-western Cameroon (Lewis 2009). Designed by Colin Davis.)

2 Alphabet

The Akoose segmental alphabet is made up of 21 consonants and eight vowels. They are represented below in upper and lower case (except for the glottal stop (ʔ) which has no upper case form):

A a, B b, C c, D d, E e, Ɛ ɛ, Ɔ ɔ, F f, G g, H h, I i, J j, K k, ʔ, L l, M m, N n, Ŋ ŋ, O o, Ɔ ɔ, P p, R r, S s, T t, U u, V v, W w, Y y, Z z.

2.1 Consonants

The consonant phonemes, their allophones and graphemes are presented in the table below. Their use in various positions in the word is also shown.

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/p/	[p] ¹	P p	pípín <i>cockroach</i>	epe <i>arrival</i>	—
/b/	[b]	B b	bín <i>day</i>	abib <i>blister</i>	—
	[b ^h]		—	káb <i>antelope</i>	
	[b̥]		—	é'be <i>two</i>	—
/t/	[t]	T t	túmbé <i>family</i>	atín <i>butt</i>	—
/d/	[d] ²	D d	dín <i>name</i>	edíb <i>river</i>	—
	[d ^h]		—	míd <i>eyes</i>	
	[r]		—	apádé <i>he plucked</i>	—
/tʃ/	[tʃ] ³	Ch ch	chəl <i>boil</i>	bechîb <i>thieves</i>	—
	[dʒ]		—	nchîb <i>thief</i>	—
/k/	[k]	K k	kúb <i>fowl</i>	akag <i>promise</i>	—
	[ʔ] ⁴	'	—	e'sél <i>duiker</i>	nɔné' <i>look!</i>
/g/	[g]	G g	—	âhəge <i>measure for</i>	—
	[g ^h]		—	—	nyag <i>cow</i>
/s/	[s]	S s	sélé <i>cricket</i>	nsíí <i>sand</i>	—
/h/	[h]	H h	hén <i>here</i>	ehón <i>hoe</i>	—
/mb/	[mb]	Mb mb ⁵	mɓaŋ <i>tattoo mark</i>	túmbé <i>family</i>	—

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/nd/	[nd]	Nd nd	ndáb <i>house</i>	kondé <i>armchair</i>	—
/nz/	[nz]	Nz nz	nzab <i>soup/sauce</i>	kunze <i>free/right</i>	—
/ŋg/	[ŋg]	Ng ng	ngii <i>lion</i>	—	—
		ŋg ŋg	—	nsiŋge ⁶ <i>thread/rope</i>	—
/m/	[m]	M m	mii <i>intestine</i>	emaŋ <i>iroko tree</i>	hǒm <i>place</i>
/n/	[n]	N n	ne <i>and</i>	anɔŋ <i>bed</i>	bǎn <i>children</i>
/ɲ/	[ɲ] ⁷	Ny ny	nyam <i>animal</i>	enyen <i>sun</i>	—
	[ŋ]	ŋ ŋ	—	—	láŋ <i>read!</i>
/l/	[l]	L l	lan <i>ladder</i>	meláá <i>stones</i>	mǒl <i>oil</i>
/j/	[j]	Y y	yǎl <i>body</i>	ayen <i>palm wine</i>	—
/w/	[w]	W w	waáb <i>friend</i>	awoŋ <i>joint</i>	—

¹ The “b” is normally pronounced as [b], but after the glottal stop it is pronounced as [ɓ] as well as after syllabic nasals before non-high vowels.

² Stem-initially “d” is pronounced as [d]. Stem-medially it is often pronounced as [r].

³ Depending on the speaker or dialect “ch” may be pronounced as [tʃ] or as [dʒ].

⁴ The glottal stop is in complementary distribution with [k] but historically is derived from other stops and is kept as a separate orthographic unit.

⁵ In some dialects there is an “h” (aspiration) after the “b” in nouns of classes 9 and 10: **mbhód** *goat*. See also Hedinger (1985).

⁶ To represent the same sound initially with **ng** and medially with **ŋg** seems arbitrary. However, there is a tension between simplifying the system by using a simple **n** before **g** at the beginning of words and “**ŋ**” before “**g**” in the middle of words. The latter has the effect of preserving the word image of verb roots which end in “**ŋ**”.

⁷ Note that the two sounds “**ŋ**” and “**ny**” are in complementary distribution but are kept distinct in the writing system.

2.1.1 Nasal-consonant clusters

Akoose has two types of nasal-consonant combinations. There are prenasalized consonants as well as syllabic nasal-consonant sequences. It is not always easy to distinguish between the two. In the present orthography the distinction between the syllabic “**mb**” (in classes 1, 3 and 4) and non-syllabic “**mb**” (in classes 9 and 10) is not marked. These two types are shown in the next two sections.

2.1.1.1 Prenasalized consonants

In the consonant section above the four prenasalized consonants “**mb**”, “**nd**”, “**nz**” and “**ng**” were presented. They occur mainly at the beginning of noun roots, but also in the middle of words. Verb roots do not begin with prenasalized consonants.

2.1.1.2 Syllabic nasals

Syllabic nasals come at the beginning of words as class prefixes in nouns and as person prefixes in verbs. They can come before most consonants.

Consonant cluster	Allophonic	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/Np/	[mp]	Mp mp	mpál <i>hunting</i>	—	—
/Nb/	[mb] ¹	Mb mb	mbaŋ <i>alm kernel</i>	—	—
/Nt/	[nt]	Nt nt	ntúnde <i>swelling</i>	—	—
/Nd/	[nd]	Nd nd	ndelee <i>important</i>	—	—
/Nk/	[ŋk]	Nk nk	nken <i>visitor</i>	—	—
/Ntʃ/	[ntʃ]~ [ndʒ] ²	Nch nch	ncháŋ <i>handle</i>	—	—
/Ns/	[ns]	Ns ns	nsid <i>vein</i>	—	—
/Nh/	[ŋh]	Nh nh	nhéd <i>twin</i>	—	—
/Nm/	[mm]	Mm mm	mmwě <i>dew</i>	—	—
/Nn/	[nn]	Nn nn	nnam <i>blessing</i>	—	—
/Nɲ/	[ɲɲ]	Nny nny	nnyɔŋ <i>kernel oil</i>	—	—
/Nl/	[nl]	Nl nl	nlébtéd <i>message</i>	—	—
/Nj/	[ɲy]	Ny ny	n'yélé ³ <i>spring</i>	—	—
/Nw/	[ŋw]	Nw nw	nwáŋen <i>resemblance</i>	—	—

¹ Some people suggest that an apostrophe should be inserted to distinguish minimal pairs such as **m'baŋ** *palm kernel* and **mbaŋ** *tattoo marks*.

² Some dialects pronounce this with a voiced alveopalatal affricate.

³ In a few cases an apostrophe is inserted between the “n” and the “y” to separate the prefix from the stem to show that the word root begins with the “y” to avoid confusing it with the consonant “ny”.

2.1.2 Palatalized consonants

Many words have something like an “i” or “y” between a consonant and a vowel. This is called palatalization. It is written with “y”. The following consonants may be followed by this “y”, as in the following table:

Consonant cluster	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/pj/	[pj]	Py py	pyɔɔd <i>blessing</i>	e'pyeeted <i>calmness</i>	—
/bj/	[bj]	By by	byɔɔd <i>slowly</i>	âbyém <i>to flower</i>	—
/tj/	[tj]	Ty ty	tyɔɔg <i>spoon</i>	etyæg <i>suffering</i>	—
/dj/	[dj]	Dy dy	dyad <i>village</i>	adyé <i>crop of fowl</i>	—
/tʃj/	[tʃj]	Chy chy	chyaá <i>leaf</i>	âchyáa <i>give birth</i>	—
/kj/	[kj]	Ky ky	—	nkyée <i>plant sp.</i>	—
/sj/	[sj]	Sy sy	syón <i>genet</i>	esyàngé <i>stare</i>	—
/hj/	[hj]	Hy hy	hyě <i>pangolin</i>	ehyóon <i>broom</i>	—
/mj/	[mj]	My my	myad <i>villages</i>	—	—
/lj/	[lj]	Ly ly	lyɔke <i>display</i>	e'lyɔgen <i>drum stick</i>	—
/Nbj/	[mbj]	Mby mby	mbyee <i>eagle</i>	—	—
/Ndj/	[ndj]	Ndy ndy	nyééd <i>food</i>	—	—
/Nzj/	[nzj]	Nzy nzy	nzyɔg <i>elephant</i>	—	—

2.1.3 Labialized consonants

Many words have something like a “u” or “w” between a consonant and a vowel. This is called labialization. It is written with “w”. The following consonants may be followed by “w”, as in the following table:

Consonant cluster	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/pw/	[pw]	Pw pw	pwɔg <i>hole</i>	âpwɛd <i>select</i>	—
/bw/	[bw]	Bw bw	bwɛl <i>tree</i>	âbwɛl <i>fetch water</i>	—
/tw/	[tw]	Tw tw	twě <i>repay!</i>	âtwɛm <i>tighten</i>	—
/tʃw/	[tʃw]	Chw chw	chwâl <i>life plant</i>	echwâl <i>tree sp.</i>	—
/kw/	[kw]	Kw kw	kwóg <i>touraco</i>	ekwɛ <i>bag</i>	—
/sw/	[sw]	Sw sw	swéd <i>sigh!</i>	éswe <i>wrestling</i>	—
/hw/	[hw]	Hw hw	hwáb <i>quickly!</i>	âhwɛɛn <i>return with</i>	—
/lw/	[lw]	Lw lw	—	e'lwagɛl <i>dracaena tree</i>	—
/mw/	[mw]	Mw mw	mwăn <i>child</i>	âmwáj <i>suck</i>	—
/Nbw/	[mbw]	Mbw Mbw	mbwé <i>dog</i>	—	—
/Ngw/	[ŋgw]	Ngw ngw	ngwaa <i>francolin</i>	—	—

2.1.4 Consonant orthography rules

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

1. The only consonants that can be word-final are “b”, “d”, “g”, “ʔ” (glottal stop), “m”, “n”, “ŋ” and “l”.
2. Between a consonant and a vowel write “y” and “w” not “i” and “u”.
3. At the beginning of words write “m” before “b”, “p” and “n”. Before all other consonants write “n” including before “g”, “k”, “h” and “w”. In the middle of words write “ŋ” before “g”.
4. Put an apostrophe between “n” and “y” where the “y” is the first stem consonant like in words like **an'yɔgé** *he learned*; **n'yélé** *spring*; **n'yəgtéd** *ripeness*.

There are a number of contexts where it is not immediately obvious why one symbol rather than another should be used. Here some of the more important ones are given.

Word final stops are neutralized as to voicing. For this reason people sometimes use “p” instead of “b”, “t” instead of “d” and “k” instead of “g”. As the voiced series “b”, “d” and “g”, are clearly the underlying ones they are the ones to be used.

eseb *dry season* **mod** *person* **abog** *nine*

Consistent word image

In order to preserve the shape of verb roots the **ŋ** at the end of a verb root is kept as such.

aláŋgé *he read* (instead of **alángé** [from **láj** + **e** > infinitive: **áláá**])

2.2 Vowels

There are eight vowels in Akoose. They can be short or long. In the first table are shown the short vowels, followed by the long vowels.

2.2.1 Short vowels

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/i/	[i]	I i	—	ekid <i>shell</i>	epi <i>arrow</i>
/e/	[e]	E e	edim <i>oval fruit</i>	pém <i>carry!</i>	túmbé <i>family</i>
/ɛ/	[ɛ]	ɛ ɛ	—	pɛd <i>side</i>	pě <i>hoof</i>
/ə/	[ə]	ə ə	—	təl <i>chest</i>	bó <i>they/them</i>
/a/	[a]	A a	alín <i>stem</i>	lan <i>ladder</i>	—
	[ɑ] ¹		—	láj <i>read!</i>	—
/u/	[u]	U u	—	kun <i>secret</i>	sú <i>day</i>
/o/	[ə] ¹	O o	—	hǒm <i>place</i>	pó <i>mouse</i>
	[o]		—	toŋ <i>room</i>	—
/ɔ/	[ɔ]	ɔ ɔ	—	kɔd <i>squirrel</i>	—

¹ Among the short vowels the two **a**-sounds and the two **o**-sounds are in complementary distribution and therefore do not have to be distinguished in the orthography. However, there is a problem in the long vowels where the two pairs of sounds distinguish between distinct words. Up to now they have not been distinguished and it seems this doesn't cause any problem to readers.

2.2.2 Long vowels

Long vowels are written as a sequence of two vowels.

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/ii/	[i:]	Ii ii	—	âliid <i>make angry</i>	díí <i>palm tree</i>
/ee/	[e:]	Ee ee	—	nleed <i>middle</i>	mbeé <i>pot</i>
/ɛɛ/	[ɛ:]	Ɛɛ ɛɛ	—	âbéen <i>to be with</i>	tée <i>my father</i>
/əə/	[ə:]	Əə əə	—	âdóə <i>to roll up</i>	ləə <i>thing</i>
/aa/	[a:]	Aa aa	—	mwaád <i>wife</i>	láá <i>chew!</i>
/ɑɑ/	[ɑ:]		—	âbáad [ɑ:] <i>to frighten</i>	láá [ɑ:] <i>tell!</i>
/uu/	[u:]	Uu uu	—	etrúúkaŋ <i>lamp</i>	súu <i>fish</i>
/oo/	[o:]	Oo oo	—	âsoon <i>to purge</i>	bóó <i>look after</i>
/œœ/	[œ:]		—	âsood [œ:] <i>to pour</i>	bóó [œ:] <i>break</i>
/ɔɔ/	[ɔ:]	Ɔɔ ɔɔ	—	Akóóṣṣē <i>Bakossi language</i>	lɔɔ <i>laughter</i>

2.2.3 Vowel orthography rules

Various rules concerning which vowels can occur in which positions are important to learn. Here is a partial list of vowel orthography rules:

The **u** and **i** like sounds occurring between a consonant and a vowel are written as **w** and **y** respectively (see also 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 above):

dyɔn *market* (instead of **diɔn**)

bwel *tree* (instead of **buɛl**)

One exception to the above rule is when a vowel is added at the end of a word. In this case the root vowel is retained:

âlúu *to beat (metal)* becomes **alúe'** *he is beating* (rather than **alwê'**)
âlíí *to till (make ridges)* becomes **alíè'** *she is tilling* (rather than **alyê'**)

3 Tone

Akoose has two level tones, high and low as well as downstepped high. It also has high-low and low-high contour tones plus a high-downstepped-high contour. Tones are marked as follows with low being unmarked:

Tone	Phonetic	Grapheme (Diacritic)	Examples	Examples	Frequency
High	[á]	á áá	píd <i>thirst</i>	páá <i>cutlass</i>	many nouns and verbs
Low	[à]	a aa	pid <i>calabash</i>	abaa <i>liver</i>	many nouns and verbs
Downstepped-High	[ʼá]	ā āā	ésübāg <i>fufu</i>	ǎlāā <i>he will tell</i>	rare, but important for some negatives
Low-High	[ǎ]	ǎ áá	dǔ <i>fire place</i>	akií <i>in-lawship</i>	some nouns
High-Low	[â]	â áá	dû <i>teat</i>	abíi <i>breast</i>	all imperative low tone verbs
High-Downstepped-High	[â]	- áā	—	séēpēm <i>we will carry</i>	in some verb constructions

3.1 Lexical tone contrasts marked by diacritics

Akoose has many minimal pairs of nouns distinguished only by tone.

edíb	[èdíb]	<i>river</i>	etóm	[ètóm]	<i>support for plantain</i>
edib	[èdìb]	<i>lake</i>	etòm	[ètòm]	<i>plantain</i>
chǎn	[tǎn]	<i>yesterday, tomorrow</i>	se	[sè]	<i>intensifier</i>
chán	[tán]	<i>how</i>	sé	[sé]	<i>we</i>
bɔ́b	[bɔ́b]	<i>long ago</i>	kɔ̀d	[kòd]	<i>squirrel</i>
bɔ̀b	[bòb]	<i>now</i>	kôd	[kôd]	<i>age</i>

Verb roots have either a high or a low tone. There are many such pairs with the tone being the only distinction.

âkwéd	[ákwēd]	<i>to add a little</i>	âkób	[ákōb]	<i>to catch</i>
âkwed	[ákwèd]	<i>to strike a match</i>	âkob	[ákōb]	<i>to take</i>

3.2 Grammatical meanings marked by diacritics

Tone in Akoose also indicates grammatical distinctions. Nouns for class 9/10 are identical in the singular and the plural. However, the distinction between singular and plural is made by the tone on the agreement prefix of the verb as in the example below.

nguu edélé	[ngù: èdélé]	<i>the pig is heavy</i>
nguu édélé	[ngù: édélé]	<i>the pigs are heavy</i>

Similarly in associative noun phrases:

ndáb e ndyééd [ndáb è ndyé:d] *eating house (lit. house of food)*
ndáb é ndyééd [ndáb é ndyé:d] *eating houses (lit. houses of food)*

The Present progressive and the Perfect are often only distinguished by tone.

mpéme [mpémè] *I am carrying*
mpémé [mpémé] *I carried*

In the following the first pair shows a low tone verb, the second a high tone verb.

ahəə [àhə:] *he is changing*
ahəó [àhə́:] *he changed*

ahəə [àhə̀:] *he is asking (for the price)*
ahəó [àhə́:] *he asked (for the price)*

There are two forms of the infinitive. At the beginning of a clause it is marked with a falling tone:

âsyəŋ [âsyə́ŋ] *to befriend* **âkín** [âkín] *to compress*
âsyəŋ [âsyə̀ŋ] *to abuse* **âkin** [âkìn] *to refuse food*

It is marked as low tone (by the absence of a tone mark) in the middle of a clause:

asyəŋ [âsyə́ŋ] *to befriend* **akín** [àkín] *to compress*
asyəŋ [âsyə̀ŋ] *to abuse* **akin** [àkìn] *to refuse food*

3.2.1 Possessive, demonstrative and relative pronouns

Some common words such as relative pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and possessive pronouns are identical except for tone.

Class	1	2, 8, 14, 19	3, 4, 6	5, 13	7, 10	9
Relative	awě	ábe	ńme	áde	éche	echě
Demonstrative	ane	ábê	ńmê	ádê	échê	eche
Possessive	awe	ábē	ńmē	ádē	échē	eche

In some dialects the possessives in the last line above are pronounced with an *i*.

Possessive	awi	ábī	ńmī	ádī	échī	echi
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3.2.2 Vowel doubling of prefixes to indicate negation

Negation in Akoose is indicated in the verb by a prefix that has merged with other prefixes, so it is difficult to see what actually marks negation. It is therefore proposed to double the vowel of the person prefix to indicate that the verb carries a negative meaning without the written vowels being pronounced as long.

dewógé [dèwógé] *we washed*
deewógéé [dèwógéč:] *we didn't wash*

dewóge [dèwógè] *we are washing*
deewógéé [dèwógé:] *we are not washing*

3.3 Tone changes in context

In some contexts the inherent tones of nouns change to other tones.

Nouns will be written consistently with the tone as it is in the citation form. For example, **dǐd** eye in a phrase may change to **díd** or **díd**. Instead of changing the tone

according to context it is written in the same way consistently as **dīd**. This form will be written in the dictionary.

In an associative noun phrase where two nouns are linked with an associative marker the tone of the second noun often changes.

edim é dīí changes to **edim é dīí** in pronunciation.

The rule can be stated as follows. In speech the first low tone of the second noun becomes high if the preceding and following tones are high. However, this change is not reflected in writing in order to preserve a constant word image.

4 Word division

Words are written in full, separated by spaces. Below are listed some examples. Others are listed in the dictionary.

Noun class prefixes are written as part of the noun, not separated, as shown below:

Class	Noun	Gloss
1	nchīb	<i>thief</i>
2	bechīb	<i>thieves</i>
3	nkute	<i>sack</i>
4	nkute	<i>sacks</i>
5	asáá	<i>plum</i>
6	mesáá	<i>plums</i>
7	epun	<i>day</i>
8	e'pun	<i>days</i>
9	ndáb	<i>house</i>
10	ndáb	<i>houses</i>

Subject markers of verbs, which look like pronouns in English are really verbal prefixes and are written attached to the verb.

adyâg *he is eating*
bênláŋ *they read (past tense)*

The past tense marker **n-** preceding the verb stem is also attached to the verb. The same is the case for the negative marker **nkê**:

bênláŋ *they read (past tense)*
enkêmpémmé *she didn't carry*

The verbal marker **kide-** is written as one word with the verb:

nkidénkě *I have gone previously* (also: **nkénkě** or **nkidékě**)

The clitic **-'ε**, which can mean *also* or *and* is attached to the end of a word and is written in different ways, depending on the preceding sound. For example, **-'ε** is pronounced **-mε** after **m**, **-tε** after **d**, etc. and **-'ε** after vowels. **-'ε** should be written as **m** after **m**, **n** after **n**, **p** after **b**, **t** after **d** and **k** after **g**, as in the following examples.

apém-mε *he carry also* (rather than **apém-'ε**)
atéd-tε *he take also* (rather than **atéd-'ε**)

It is best to see this in a sentence as follows:

Amaá'aá b́ aléled, apém-me mmē ntéd, ákǎg-ke.
He finished greeting them, he carried the load and went.

After the velar nasal ŋ and after vowels the glottal stop is written as such.

Détel, délâŋ-'é. *Let's write, let's also read.*
nyêbí-'é *you also know*

The full form of **bad + bé** *people they...* will be written separately:

Bad béhyédé wén. rather than as **Baá hyédé wén.** *People came here.*

The preferred form of the focus marker is in its full form:

abum dóo ... *it is the stomach that ...*

However, when it occurs in its reduced form it may be hyphenated to the preceding word:

abum-éé ... *it is the stomach that...*

Some words have a reduced form. Each may be used.

áde or **ê** *as, when, since, because*

Akáné á ahín-te, áde ngo énanéé mó.

Akáné á ahín-te, ê ngo énanéé mó.

He fled into the bush, because the leopard was chasing him.

4.1.1 The question marker

The question marker is hyphenated to the last word of a sentence followed by the question mark.

Adé ndáb-é?
Is he in the house?

Aáken mǎwō mod ampépée á ndáb-te-yé?
He asked whether he had another person in the house.

4.1.2 Reduplicated nouns

Some nouns are reduplicated (doubled) to give them the opposite meaning.

modmod *nobody* (compare with: **mod** *somebody, a person*)
chǒmchom *nothing* (compare with: **chom** *something*)

4.1.3 Associative noun phrases

The different parts of the associative noun phrase (consisting of noun + associative marker + noun) are written in full.

ason á nzyɔg [asoónzyòg] *tusk (tooth) of elephant*
mbum e ngun [mbûmngùn] *grain of corn*
mbum é ngun [mbǔmngùn] *grains of corn*

4.1.4 Compound nouns

Compound nouns consisting of two nouns forming one semantic unit may be written together as one word.

píinyě (pl. **píinyě**) *viper* (lit.: *viper of snake*)

4.1.5 The locative marker

The locative marker is written separately from the noun to which it is prefixed:

á ndáb *at the house*

á mendíb *in the water*

á abad *on the cloth*

á e'dyæg *in the hiding place* (pronounces as **á'dyæg**)

á edib-tê *in the lake* (pronounced as **édibtê**)

The tone of the noun will be written as when spoken alone:

á dīd *in the eye* (pronounced as **ádīd** with a downstepped tone)

4.1.6 Locative adverbs

The locative adverbs following nouns in a locative phrase are written with a hyphen:

á ndáb-te *inside the house*

á nnəŋ-mīn *on top of the roof*

But when occurring on their own, apart from a noun they are written as a separate word:

áte *inside*

ámīn *on top of*

The two locative adverbs **áwed** and **áte** are written together separated by hyphen:

áwēd-te *there inside* (instead of **áwed áte** or **áweéte**)

4.1.7 Locative nouns

The locative nouns which have a function similar to a preposition are written as one word:

ámbəŋ *down, below*

ánkəg *at the side of*

átintê *in the middle of*

4.1.8 The vocative marker

The vocative marker used primarily with names is attached to the name with a hyphen:

á-Mechâm *Mechame*

a-Méchan *Mechane*

Note that without the vocative marker, names have a final vowel which is written with the name as one word:

Mecháme *Mechame*

Méchanɛ *Mechane*

4.1.9 Particles

The question particle **ken** that always occurs with the speech particle (**meé/meé**, **weé/weé**, **aá**, **bán**, **móō**) to introduce questions is written together with the speech particle:

aáken ... *he (asked) ...*
bánken ... *they (asked) ...*

The particle **pen** *only* when occurring with the emphatic pronoun is written together with it:

mwěmpen *he alone, only*
běnpēn *they only*

A pronoun plus **ámpē** may be written separately from or together with the pronoun:

mó ámpē *he too*
me ámpē *I also*

měmpē *he too*
měmpē *I also*

Nouns followed by **té**, **téé** are joined with a hyphen:

mod-té or **mod-téé** *every person*

5 Elision

In spoken language adjacent vowels are often dropped. Generally the full words are written in order to facilitate word recognition.

e'ped é'niin	<i>four chapters</i>	(pronounced e'pědniin)
sú ébe	<i>two days</i>	(pronounced súúbe)
ason á nzyɔg	<i>tusk (tooth) of elephant</i>	(pronounced asoónzyɔg)
mbum e ngun	<i>grain of corn</i>	(pronounced mbúmngun)
mbum é ngun	<i>grains of corn</i>	(pronounced mbúmngun)

5.1 Contractions

Some nouns are contracted significantly in pronunciation.

baá Israel	<i>people of Israel</i>	from bad bé Israel
baámbáá	<i>big people</i>	from bad bémbáá
moosyáál	<i>every person</i>	from mod asyáál

6 Dialect issues

Akoose has many dialects and therefore differences in pronunciation. It is not possible to mention them in this paper.

7 Punctuation and capitalization

The punctuation marks and the rules that govern the Akoose language are basically the same as those for English. The punctuation marks used for Akoose are therefore as follows:

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

7.1 Full stop

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

Bwɛl bɛ é'wóó e'chuu á yǎl.
tree this it.has honey LOC body
That tree has honey on inside it.

7.2 Question mark

The question mark (?) indicates the end of an interrogative sentence. In addition some questions have a suffix at the end of the sentence to indicate a question.

Ekidényēn ahéd dé etəm-ɛ?
2sg.PAST.see twin of plantains-Q
Have you ever seen twin plantains?

7.3 Exclamation mark

The exclamation mark is written at the end of a command, or it is placed following exclamatory words or phrases. It functions to express interjections, surprises, excitement and forceful comments as well as simple commands.

Bídéd bǎn á ndáb-te!
go.out.CAUS.IMP children LOC house-in
Send the children outside!

7.4 Comma

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

Nzé weébáme, né bényīn wɛ.
if 2sg.NEG.dodge then 2pl.FUT.see you
If you don't dodge they will see you.

7.5 Colon

The colon is used to introduce a list.

Béncháá bǎn bé baachóm bébe: Málɔne ne Kílɔne.
They.bore children of male two Mahlon and Kilion
They had two sons: Mahlon and Chilion.

7.6 Semicolon

The semicolon is rarely used.

7.7 Quotation marks

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

Ngomé aláṅgé mó aá, “Ngonynome äkunnén we mwämpin í póndé.”
Ngome 3sg.tell.PERF him RP leopard 3sg.FUT.turn.against you small of time
Ngome said to him, “Leopard will turn against you in a short time.”

Quotations within other quotes are enclosed in single quotation marks and then in double quotation mark. This can be schematized as follows.

“... .. ‘... .. “... .. ” ...’ ...”

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

7.8 Capitalization

Capital letters are used at the beginning of sentences, for proper nouns, and after a colon.

First word in a sentence:

Ngom ésólé á medyäg.
porcupines c10.enter.PERF LOC hiding.places
The porcupines went into their hiding places.

Proper nouns (names of people, places, etc.):

Kóge, Nzélé, Tómbél
Koge, Nzelle, Tombel

After a colon:

See example in 7.7above.

8 Sample text

The following text is from the folk tale “Viper and the eggs”, taken from *Freindship stories in Akoose* (Hedinger et al. 1977a). It is written with the alphabetic symbols and orthographic conventions described above.

Píinyǎ ne mekii mé kúb

Epun ehóg píinyǎ ehǐdté ásē ne nzaa e ngíne. Héē áhóbéé aá, mekii méə médyágáá échén etún é póndé ésyāēl, aá mákag má adyé ámpē chii.

Aboótédé-’ε yǎl adul. Aá mǎmpǎ áhed, atáné nguu. Héē nguu éhóbéé nén aá, “A-mwéē, kúb elángé me nén aá, echíbe má mekii hén póndé ésyāēl. Héē ábánné me hén ânɔn. Chéə níhedeé we alúmed áte nén meé, étime we ámbíd nzé weéhēdē kwééd.”

Píinyǎ edulé áte chóóŋŋ, ne nzaa echē edé má á abum. Anyéne-’ε mekii hée, boŋ bán mǎəsíté áhed. Héē píinyǎ élângeé nguu nén aá, nzé eésyənge hē bɔɔb, aá né mǎəwúú má. Héé ábóótédé ahúu, nguu chǎ-’ε enɔne píinyǎ. Píinyǎ bán ché étómed nló nén, nguu édyāā-’ε má abɔl ámín ne pǎ.

Héē píinyǎ éwúúténé mekii mé kúb. Ane-εé béhóbéé bán, nzé mod adəó chǔm, eélēlē aləg áhed.

Viper and the eggs

One day, the viper woke up very hungry. He remembered the eggs which he always used to eat. When he reached them, he found the pig there. Then the pig said, “Friend viper, the hen told me that you steal her eggs here all the time. So she put me here to watch. I advise you to go back if you do not want to die.”

The viper thought for a while. He felt hungry, he saw the eggs there but had been warned not to go any nearer. Then the viper told the pig that if he didn’t leave there right then, he would kill him. He began to move nearer but the pig was watching the viper. Before the viper had stretched forward its head, the pig smashed his neck with his hoof.

So the viper died after much struggling. They say that he liked eggs so much that he finally died because of them.

9 Further revisions of the orthography

This orthography has been in use for many years. It has undergone various revisions over time. No doubt, as more people begin to read and write further issues will come up that should be considered in a discussion for further revisions.

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