Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation

Kenswey Nsey (Bamessing): A Phonological Sketch

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Village of Bamessing

The village of Bamessing is located on the ring road, east of Bamenda in the North-West Province of the Republic of Cameroon. It is one of four villages making up the Ndop Central Sub-Division. Bordering Bamessing are the villages of Babanki on the west side, Bamali and Balikumbat to the south, Babungo to the north, and finally Bamunka to the east.

1.2 The People of Bamessing

The people of Bamessing, along with members of several other villages in the Ndop plain, belong to the Tikari tribe. This tribe is said to have come from an area in the West Province known as Ndobo, as early as the 12th century. Accounts on the details of the migration into the plain vary slightly depending on which village is being consulted. The legend from the people of Bamessing is that the reason the Tikari people divided into separate villages was that a chieftancy dispute broke out between ten brothers who eventually settled ten different villages in the Ndop plain. The names of the brothers were: Fanji, Nsei, Munkar, Ngolan, Bessi, Baba, Bungo, Munkum, Mali, and Mbalang. They founded the villages of Bafanji, Bamessing, Bamunka, Bangolan, Babessi, Baba, Babungo, Bamunkumbit, Bamali, and Bambalang respectively (Melengfe, 1991).

1.3 The Language of Bamessing

The language of Bamessing, or Kenswey Nsey (as it is called by the speakers of the language) (ISO 639-3 code [ndb], Gordon, 2005) is spoken as a first language by an estimated 12,500 people. This number is only an estimate as population growth has most definitely occurred in recent years. The classification of Kenswey Nsey, according to the Ethnologue (Gordon, 2005), is as follows:

> Niger-Congo > Atlantic-Congo > Volta-Congo > Benue-Congo > Bantoid > Southern > Wide Grassfields > Narrow Grassfields > Ring > South > > KENSWEI NSEI.

The Ethnologue lists the languages of Babungo, Wushi (spoken in Babessi), and Bamunka as close relatives to Kenswey Nsey. The closest of these is Babungo. The people of Bamessing recognize this, and when asked about the language of Babungo they say that it “rhymes” with that of Bamessing. People say that they can usually understand a large degree of Babungo, but can not

speak it at all. Thus the two languages, while very similar, are not considered to be mutually intelligible. A very thorough linguistic analysis of Babungo was completed by Willi Schaub from 1974 to 1984. Schaub also did some work on Kenswey Nsey, producing a sketch orthography in 1979. This orthography was used to produce a book of Bamessing folk stories entitled "Ŋwa'nə məbo' nsey" in 1982. Kenswey Nsey was not given sufficient phonological analysis to produce a completed orthography statement, leading to SIL's decision to revisit the analysis before producing a new revised alphabet. Other than Schaub's work, only one other brief study has been carried out on Kenswey Nsey. It was completed in 2000 as a Masters thesis at the University of Yaoundé I, and includes a phonological sketch (Akeriweh, 2000).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the sound inventory of Kenswey Nsey and to lay the groundwork for a revised orthography that the people of Bamessing will be able to use to translate and produce literature.

1.4 Methods and Acknowledgments

This study has been completed during the months from October, 2007 to March, 2008. Any reference to data is based on the 1700-word list collected and transcribed by Joakim Søder (SIL) between June and December of 2007. While writing this paper, the author has also verified Søder's list through consultation primarily with the following people living in Bamessing:

Biambeh Joseph

Youngwe Yafeh Philip

Nekia Joseph

Melenfe Boniface

Bibi Joseph

The author also wishes to acknowledge Dr. Robert Hedinger, who has given his guidance and advice on the transcription and linguistic analysis of the data.

2. The Syllable

2.1 Syllable Structure

The basic syllable structure of Kenswey Nsey has a single consonant (C) in the onset position, followed by a single vowel (V) as the nucleus. This basic open-syllable pattern is the most common form of syllable in the language. On this base form, several modifications have been observed.

CV

Because of prenasalisation, the onset is preceded by an optional nasal (N) with the same point of articulation (*see 3.3.2*). Certain consonants can also be labialised (w) when in this onset position (*see 3.3.3*).

(N)C(w)V

Semi-vowels (S) can be found before certain vowels when dealing with the four vowel glides (*see 3.2.4*).

(N)C(w)(S)V

Certain Kenswey Nsey syllables are also found to have a consonant in the coda position. The coda of the syllable is optional, and can only be filled by /ʔ/, /ŋ/, /j/, or /w/.

(N)C(w)(S)V(C)

The syllable structure of Kenswey Nsey therefore allows for these syllable structures:

CV	-	/bé/	-	“cola nut”
CSV	-	/tʃɨà/	-	“pass”
NCV	-	/mbé/	-	“world”
NCSV	-	/ntʃɨə̀/	-	“catfish”
CwV	-	/bwɔ̀/	-	“(be) tired”
CwSV	-	/kwíè/	-	“barter, exchange”

NCwV	-	/ntwà/	-	“shoot (new plant)”
NCwSV	-	/ŋkwìè/	-	“left (direction)”
CVC	-	/tàŋ/	-	“begin”
CSVC	-	/bɬàʔ/	-	“trap (a mosquito)”
NCVC	-	/ndʒéʔ/	-	“outside”
NCSVC	-	/ndɬə̂ʔ/	-	“poison (on arrow)”
CwVC	-	/dʒwàʔ/	-	“cut open”
NCwVC	-	/ŋgwɔ̀ʔ/	-	“talking drum”

There is an interesting occurrence of syllables with only a short vowel as the nucleus, and no onset or coda. This type of syllable is strictly limited as to where it can occur. It only occurs word-finally, and can only follow a syllable in which there is a nucleus of the same vowel, and a glottal stop as the coda (CVʔV). This is certainly an exception to the overall syllable pattern of Kenswey Nsey.

Examples:

/láʔá/	-	“choke”
/bèʔɛ̀/	-	“sell”
/sìʔì/	-	“lower (tr.)”

It is interesting to note that the instances of this structure in the data are all verbs. They may be caused by the remnants of a former suffix on the verbs that has now lost its purpose. Further research in the historical development of the South Ring languages is needed in order to come to a definitive explanation for these occurrences.

3. Sound Inventory

3.1 Consonant Inventory

The following chart presents the contrastive consonants found in Kenswey Nsey:

	Labial	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	b	t d		k g	ʔ
Nasal	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
Fricative	f v	s z		ɣ	h
Affricate			tʃ dʒ		
Approximant			j	w	
Lateral Approximant		l			

3.1.1 Plosives

Kenswey Nsey has six plosives. They are the voiced bilabial /b/, the voiceless alveolar /t/ and its voiced counterpart /d/, the voiceless velar /k/ and its voiced counterpart /g/, and the voiceless glottal /ʔ/. Except for the glottal stop, all of the plosives can be found syllable-initially and can be prenasalalised or labialised *(see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3)*. The glottal stop can only be found syllable-finally.

Examples:

/b/	-	/bá/	-	“carry (child) on back”
	-	/kíbí/	-	“dust (n)”
/d/	-	/dì/	-	“(be) heavy”
	-	/ndwé/	-	“article of clothing”
/g/	-	/gègèʔ/	-	“chin”
	-	/ŋgɔ́ʔ/	-	“year”
/t/	-	/tàŋ/	-	“begin”
	-	/ɲìté/	-	“prepare (food to cook)”
/k/	-	/kə̀tèŋ/	-	“calabash”
	-	/ŋkǎʔ/	-	“wood”

/ʔ/	-	/bíʔ/	-	“fold (v)”
	-	/fìʔì/	-	“tell, recount (story)”

3.1.2 Nasals

Kenswey Nsey has four different nasals in its consonant inventory, all of which are voiced. They are the bilabial /m/, the alveolar /n/, the palatal /ɲ/, and the velar /ŋ/. All four nasals can be found syllable-initially. The velar nasal is the only one that can be found word-finally.

Examples:

/m/	-	/mɨ̂/	-	“finish, complete”
	-	/tùməgɔ̀ŋ/	-	“pelican”
/n/	-	/nɔ́/	-	“potato”
	-	/lənɛ̀/	-	“(be) loose, slack”
/ɲ/	-	/ɲèkàŋ/	-	“monkey”
	-	/mèɲɔ̀ʔ/	-	“pain (n)”
/ŋ/	-	/bɨ́ŋù/	-	“body”
	-	/ŋùŋ/	-	“breast”
	-	/bìŋ/	-	“accept, receive”

3.1.3 Fricatives

Kenswey Nsey has six fricatives. They are the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/ and its voiced counterpart /v/, the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ and its voiced counterpart /z/, and the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/. All fricatives are found syllable-initially. /f/ and /s/ can be prenasalised, while /s/ and /z/ can be labialised (*see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3).* /h/ is most often found syllable-finally. Only one instance of /v/ has been found and is given below.

Examples:

/f/	-	/fɛ̀/	-	“heart”
	-	/tàŋkɔ̀ʔfɔ̀/	-	“morning”
/v/	-	/vɔ̀/	-	“keep/save”
/s/	-	/sɛ̂/	-	“slice”
	-	/fɔ́sɨ̀ŋ/	-	“truth”
/z/	-	/zɛ̂/	-	“eat”

	-	/zɔ̂/	-	“(be) lazy”
/ɣ/	-	/ɣáʔ/	-	“(be) rich”
	-	/bèɣəʔ/	-	“hundred”
/h/	-	/hùŋ/	-	“here”
	-	/hɛ̀/	-	“there”

The phoneme /ɣ/ was found to be realised phonetically as [ɯ] before back vowels.

/ɣ/	[ɯ] / _V[+back]	i.e. -	[ɯùŋ]	-	/ɣùŋ/	- “ten”
			[ɯɔ̂]	-	/ɣɔ̂/	- “spear (n)”
	[ɣ]/elsewhere		[ɣáʔ]	-	/ɣáʔ/	- “(be) rich”

Kenswey Nsey speakers have been found to use the voiced postalveolar fricative [ʒ]. Whenever this fricative has appeared, it has been found to be in free variation with the palatal approximant [j]. Because of this, it is being treated as an allophone of /j/. (*see 3.1.5*)

With speakers of Kenswey Nsey, friction will occasionally be heard at the end of vowels in word-final syllables. It should not be mistaken as an occurrence of the phoneme /h/. This word-final friction is *only* observed utterance-finally (prepause), and even in that environment it is optional. It can be said that Kenswey Nsey is in the process of losing the prepause friction, however it is worth noting some observations in regards to the distribution of this occurrence.

Any instance of a prepause open-syllable can be pronounced with friction after the vowel. Because of this, it can be found after any of the ten vowels. The /i̱/ acts different from the other nine vowels in that it never loses the friction in the prepause environment. Yet, *within* an utterance, it will always lose the friction, just as the other vowels do. Consider the following examples:

[dʒi̱^{h}]	-	/dʒi̱/	-	“hungry”
[mo]/[mo^{h}]	-	/mo/	-	“water”
[ma dʒi̱^{h}]	-	/ma dʒi̱/	-	“I am hungry”
[ma dʒi̱ mo]	-	/ma dʒi̱ mo/	-	“I am thirsty”
[ma dʒi̱ mo^{h}]	-	/ma dʒi̱ mo/	-	“I am thirsty”

3.1.4 Affricates

Bamessing has only two affricates. They are the voiceless postalveolar /tʃ/ and its voiced counterpart /dʒ/. Both affricates are found syllable initially and can be prenasalised or labialised *(see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3).*

Examples:

/tʃ/	-	/tʃé/	-	"dwell, inhabit"
	-	/kətʃɔ̀ŋ/	-	"chimpanzee"
/dʒ/	-	/dʒè/	-	"come"
	-	/ndʒǎŋ/	-	"axe"

3.1.5 Approximants

There are two voiced approximants in Bamessing. They are the palatal /j/ and the labiovelar /w/. They can appear in both the onset and the coda positions. The labiovelar approximant appears in conjunction with certain other consonants in cases of labialisation (*see 3.3.3*).

Examples:

/j/	-	/jélè/	-	"settle"
	-	/kwèj/	-	"arm"
/w/	-	/wí/	-	"fire"
	-	/tɔ̀w/	-	"throat"

The voiced postalveolar fricative [ʒ] is in free variation with the palatal approximant [j]. For this reason, [ʒ] is treated as an allophone of the phoneme /j/. The following examples illustrate this relationship.

[ʒ]/[j]	-	[ʒìté] / [jìté]	-	/jìté/	-	"remember"
	-	[ʒìʔì] /[jìʔì]	-	/jìʔì/	-	"persuade"

3.1.6 Lateral Approximant

Kenswey Nsey has one lateral approximant /l/ which can only be found syllable initially. It can also be labilaised *(see 3.3.3)*.

Examples:

/l/	-	/l̪ʔ/	-	“refuse (v)”
	-	/jèlè/	-	“strain (food)”

3.2 Vowel Inventory

There are ten phonemically contrastive vowels in Kenswey Nsey. These vowels serve as the syllable nuclei. The following chart presents the contrastive vowels found in Kenswey Nsey:

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i	ɨ	u
Close-mid	e		o
Open-mid	ɛ	ə	ɔ
Open	æ	a	

3.2.1 Front Vowels

Kenswey Nsey has four contrastive front vowels. They are the close front /i/, the close-mid front /e/, the open-mid front /ɛ/, and the open front /æ/.

Examples:

/i/	-	/bì/	-	“ask, request”
/e/	-	/bé/	-	“cola nut”
/ɛ/	-	/bɛ̀/	-	“pick up”
/æ/	-	/bǽ/	-	“ripe”

The phoneme /e/ was found to be realised phonetically as [ɪ] in short, open syllables.

/e/	[ɪ] / C_.	i.e. -	[bí]	-	/bé/	-	“cola nut”
			[zî]	-	/zê/	-	“eat”
	[e] / elsewhere		[méʔ]	-	/méʔ/	-	“throw”

3.2.2 Central Vowels

Kenswey Nsey has three contrastive central vowels. They are the raised close central /ɨ̞/, the mid central /ə/, and the open central /a/.

Examples:	/ɨ̞/	-	/lɨ̀ŋ/	-	“hoe” (v)
	/ə/	-	/lə̀ŋ/	-	“hide” (tr)
	/a/	-	/là̰ŋ/	-	“marry”

The phoneme /ɨ̞/ was found to be realized phonetically as [ɨ] before the nasal /ŋ/, and [ɨ̞] elsewhere.

/ɨ/	[ɨ] / _ŋ	i.e. -	[lɨ̀ŋ]	-	/lɨ̀ŋ/	-	“hoe” (v)
			[ntʃɨ̀ŋ]	-	/ntʃɨ̀ŋ/	-	“all”
	[ɨ̞] / elsewhere		[fɨ̞́x]	-	/fɨ́/	-	“(be) blind”

The phoneme /ə/ was found to be realized phonetically as [ɵ] in prepause cases where friction is present (*see 3.1.3*).

/ə/	[ɵ] / _^{h}	i.e. -	[kə̀^{h}]	-	/kə̀/	-	“need” (v)
			[fə̀^{h}]	-	/fə̀/	-	“jaw”
	[ə] / elsewhere		[jə̀tə̀]	-	/jə̀tə̀/	-	“listen”

The phoneme /a/ was found to be realized phonetically as [ɒ] before [w].

/a/	[ɒ] / _w	i.e. -	[tɒ̀w]	-	/tàw/	-	“blow (horn)”
			[tátɒ́wù]	-	/tátáwù/	-	“green mamba”
	[a] / elsewhere		[màʔ]	-	/màʔ/	-	“drop” (tr)

3.2.3 Back Vowels

Kenswey Nsey has three contrastive back vowels. They are the close back /u/, the close-mid back /o/, and the open-mid back /ɔ/.

Examples:	/u/	-	/búŋ/	-	“abdomen”
	/o/	-	/bò/	-	“dog”
	/ɔ/	-	/mbɔ̀/	-	“ox”

The phoneme /o/ was found to be realized phonetically as [ʊ] in prepause cases where friction is present (*see 3.1.3*).

/o/	[ʊ] / _^{h}	[bú^{h}]	-	/bó/	- “well”
		[mú^{h}]	-	/mó/	- “water”
	[o] / elsewhere	[bò]	-	/bò/	- “dog”

Based on the above distributions, the following chart presents the allophonic relationships among the vowels found in Kenswey Nsey:

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i	ɨ̱ ɨ	u
Close-mid	ɪ e	ɵ	ʊ o
Open-mid	ɛ	ə	ɔ
Open	æ	a	ɒ

3.2.4 Vowel-Glides

There are instances in Kenswey Nsey which use the sounds [i] and [ɨ̯] as semi-vowels (S). That is, their sound quality falls between a vowel and a consonant. The front semi-vowel [i] is of similar quality to the approximant /j/, and the central semi-vowel [ɨ̯] is of similar quality to the approximant /ɯ̯/. These two semi-vowels appear as a sort of bridge to the vowel in the syllable. The combination of the semi-vowel with the following vowel creates a vowel-glide. ([S] + [V] = /SV/)

There are also instances in which it might seem possible to interpret a *back* semi-vowel [u]. These cases are interpreted as labialisation (*see 3.3.3*), rather than as a vowel-glide /uV/. The reason for excluding the interpretation of /uV/ as a vowel-glide is that the true semi-vowels have a very particular relationship with their following vowels. The [u] lacks this relationship. In every instance of the front semi-vowel, it is followed by a front vowel. In the same fashion, every instance of the central semi-vowel is followed by a central vowel. Consider the following words:

/ie/	-	/kətʃíè/	-	“mud”
	-	/ŋgíè/	-	“antelope”
/iæ/	-	/nsíæ̀/	-	“comb”
	-	/ndʒíǽ/	-	“balafon”
/ɨ̯ə/	-	/bɨ̯ə́ʔ/	-	“belch (v)”
	-	/ndɨ̯ə́ʔ/	-	“poison (on an arrow)”
/ɨ̯a/	-	/bɨ̯ầʔ/	-	“trap (a mosquito)”
	-	/jɨ̯á/	-	“young”

The [u] appears in front of a range of vowels, rather than just the back vowels. Also, no pairs of words have been found to contrast labialisation and a back vowel glide in the same environment. Because of this it is treated always as labialisation of the preceding consonant.

3.3 Segmental Modifications

3.3.1 Vowel Lengthening

While it seems as though Kenswey Nsey speakers use lengthened vowels often in their speech, it is doubtful that this length is truly the contrastive element in the words. True minimal pairs (with only length as their contrast) have not been found. The length is always paired with a change of tonal vowel quality. A short vowel with either high or low tone is in contrast with a longer vowel that has contour tone, either rising or falling:

[ɲì]	-	/ɲì/	-	“animal”
[ɲîː]	-	/ɲî/	-	“animals”
[kətɔ́]	-	/kətɔ́/	-	“head”
[kətɔ̌ː]	-	/kətɔ̌/	-	“ear”

It is difficult to hear if the change from the low tone of “animal” to the contour tone in the plural form is the sole cause of the length of the vowel, as it is necessary to lengthen a vowel at least slightly to create the contour tone.

All instances of length in the data collected in this study can be attributed to the presence of contour tones. Unless further studies produce better evidence for it, length should not be considered to be contrastive in Kenswey Nsey.

3.3.2 Prenasalisation

Non-syllabic prenasalisation occurs syllable-initially before the following consonants: /b, f, t, tʃ, d, dʒ, s, k, g/. In each case, a homorganic nasal is placed before the consonant. The nasal takes on the place of articulation of the following consonant. The distribution of the nasals is as follows:

/b/	-	/mb/	-	/mbé/	“world”
/f/*	-	/mf/	-	/mfɛ́/	“prophecy(n)”
/t/	-	/nt/	-	/ntɔ̌/	“six”
/tʃ/	-	/ntʃ/	-	/ntʃé/	“mother”
/d/	-	/nd/	-	/ndɔ́/	“cup”
/dʒ/	-	/ndʒ/	-	/ndʒéʔ/	“outside”

/s/	-	/ns/	-	/nsǽ/	“tail”
/k/	-	/ŋk/	-	/ŋkúɲàŋ/	“pig”
/g/	-	/ŋg/	-	/ŋgɔ́ʔ/	“mouse”

* At the phonetic level, the labiodental fricative [f] is preceded by a labiodental nasal [ɱ]. This nasal is realized as an allophone of the phoneme /m/.

3.3.3 Labialisation

The following consonant phonemes can be labialised in Kenswey Nsey: /b, t, d, tʃ, dʒ, k, g, n, ɲ, ŋ, s, l, j/. Labialisation only occurs syllable-initially, and can occur with prenasalised consonants.

Examples:

/b/	-	/bɔ/	-	“us (two people)”
	-	/bwɔ/	-	“(be) tired”
/t/	-	/tà/	-	“paddle”
	-	/twà/	-	“burst”
/d/	-	/kəndàŋ/	-	“cricket”
	-	/kəndwà/	-	“the act of going”
/tʃ/	-	/tʃɔ/	-	“mouth”
	-	/tʃwɔ/	-	“(be) sharp”
/dʒ/	-	/dʒàʔ/	-	“no”
	-	/dʒwàʔ/	-	“cut open”
/k/	-	/kɛ̀ʔ/	-	“only, just”
	-	/kwɛ̀ʔ/	-	“limp”
/g/	-	/gɔ/	-	“(be) guilty”
	-	/gwɔ/	-	“war”
/ɲ/	-	/ɲì/	-	“animal”
	-	/ɲwɛ̀/	-	“God”
/ŋ/	-	/ŋàʔà/	-	“open (tr)”
	-	/ŋwá/	-	“self”
/s/	-	/sæ̀/	-	“count”

	-	/swæ̀/	-	“(be) deep”
/z/	-	/zê/	-	“eat”
	-	/zwè/	-	“wife”
/l/	-	/láʔ/	-	“say”
	-	/lwá/	-	“leave (place)”
/j/	-	/jà/	-	“untie”
	-	/jwà/	-	“snake”

The reason for interpreting the above examples as labialisation, rather than as a vowel-glide combination /uV/, is that there is no consistency among the vowels with which the semi-vowel [u] would occur. *(see 3.2.4)*

4. Tone

Kenswey Nsey has a complex system of both lexical and grammatical tone. Due to time restrictions, this study has not been able to shed light in this area sufficiently for any sort of in depth analysis. More research is needed in order to truly complete an in depth tone analysis. Nonetheless, there are some observations worth noting in regards to tone.

The data of this study shows the presence of both level and contour tones. There are two level tones: high tone (H), which is marked with the grave accent (`), and low tone (L), which is marked with the acute accent (´).

Examples:

/kùŋ/	-L-	“bean”	/kúŋ/	-H-	“enter”
/fə̀/	-L-	“jaw”	/fə́/	-H-	“discover by magic”
/bɛ̀/	-L-	“pick up”	/bɛ́/	-H-	“lose”
/bè/	-L-	“goat”	/bé/	-H-	“cola nut”

More research may reveal there to be a third level tone that is mid (M). In this study, no minimal pairs were found to confirm this, however it may become apparent when looking closer at multi-syllabic and sentence tone patterns.

There are two contour tones that were observed in the data. The first is the falling tone (HL), which is marked with the circumflex (ˆ), and rising tone (LH), which is marked with the

wedge (ˇ).

Examples:

/fû/	-HL-	“white”	/fŭ/	-LH-	“take out”
/bâ/	-HL-	“we (incl.)”	/bă/	-LH-	“we (excl.)”
/bê/	-HL-	“goats”	/bĕ/	-LH-	“you (pl)”

There is evidence of lexical tone differences when comparing /bé/, meaning “cola nut”, to /bè/, which means “goat”. The two words are a minimal pair with only tone as their difference, yet their meaning is completely different lexically. There is evidence of grammatical tone differences when including /bê/, which means “goats”. Considering that the added length is due to the contour tone (*see 3.3.1*), we can treat /bè/ and /bê/ as a minimal pair. The grammatical change of number is then attributed to the change in tone.

5. Conclusions and Remarks on Previous Linguistic Work

This study has proven to be insightful in that it has unveiled many aspects of Kenswey Nsey that had not previously been discovered in the work of Schaub or the work of Akeriweh. A much more definite picture of the sound inventory can now be understood.

Schaub's vowel phoneme chart included 11 vowels (Schaub, 1977), which upon further study of the allophones can now be reduced to 10 (no longer recognizing a phoneme between /i̱/ and /ə/). Schaub also reports that Kenswey Nsey's vowel length is contrastive. It may be the case that he had not examined the tone, assuming similarities to Babungo which uses both length *and* contour tones contrastively (Schaub, 1985). Either way, he does not mention the correlation between contour tones and length in Kenswey Nsey that has been concluded by this study.

Akeriweh's Masters thesis contained a thorough examination of the phonemes in Kenswey Nsey, although some issues arose when comparing his findings to the data collected in this study. For example, Akeriweh lists [ʔ] and [h] as allophones of the same phoneme, claiming complimentary distribution between them. He states that [h] never appears word-finally (Akeriweh, 2000). This analysis is incompatible with the data collected in the current 1700-word list, if prepause friction of vowels were to be considered evidence of some sort of previous /h/. Another example that has brought the validity of Akeriweh's data into question is his analysis of labialisation. In his discussion on the topic, he includes /f/ as a phoneme that can be labialised

(Akeriweh, 2000). His data allows this finding, but the research done recently does not support the inclusion of /fw/ as a possible consonant cluster. Consider the following comparison of data:

Akeriweh (2000)		Current Study		
[məfwə]	-	[fɨ̰ə]	-	"to blow"
[kəfwɔ́]	-	[kəfɔ́]	-	"medicine"

Akeriweh does not include vowel glides in his interpretation of the data. Instead, he attributes what we interpret as [iV] to palatalisation (Akeriweh, 2000). This is problematic in that he has not considered the specific pattern of vowels following his palatalisation. Also, he does not mention any instances of what the current study interprets as [ɨV], as can be seen in the above example "to blow".

The current phonology sketch, along-side the work of Schaub and Akeriweh will prove to be extremely helpful in the production of the Kenswey Nsey alphabet. Future research into the tonology of this family of languages found in the Ndop plain will provide even more insight into Kenswey Nsey, which will lead to an even better understanding of the overall phonology.

6. References

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