

KEMEZUNG ORTHOGRAPHY GUIDE

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Abbreviations

1s	first person singular, “I, me”
2s	second person singular, “you”
3s	third person singular, “he, she, it”
1p	first person plural, “we, us”
3p	third person plural, “they, them”
AM	associative marker
AM ₁ , AM ₂	associative marker, initial and final parts when discontinuous
c1, c2, etc	noun class 1, 2, etc
CMPZR	complementizer, “that”
CONT	continuous aspect
IMP	imperative
INF	infinitive
NEG	negative
P1	immediate past tense
P2	unmarked past tense
P3	remote past tense
PRES	present tense
QM	question marker

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. ALPHABET	1
2.1 Consonants	1
2.1.1 Prenasalized Consonants.....	2
2.1.2 Palatalized Consonants	4
2.1.3 Labialized Consonants.....	4
2.1.4 Consonant Orthography Rules	5
2.2 Vowels.....	5
2.2.1 Vowel Length	6
2.2.2 Vowel Diphthongs	6
2.2.3 Vowel Orthography Rules	6
3. TONE.....	7
3.1 Lexical Tone Contrasts Marked by Diacritics	7
3.2 Kemezung verb forms.....	8
3.3 Grammatical Meanings Marked by Diacritics.....	9
4. WORD DIVISION.....	9
5. ELISION	10
6. PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALISATION	11
6.1 Full Stop	11
6.2 Question Mark	11
6.3 Exclamation Mark.....	11
6.4 Comma.....	12
6.5 Colon.....	12
6.6 Quotation Marks.....	12
6.7 Capitalisation	12
7. NEED FOR FURTHER TESTING OF THE ORTHOGRAPHY	12
References	13

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1. Introduction

This paper proposes an orthography for Kemezung, an Eastern Beboid language spoken by about 4500 people in Misaje subdivision, Donga-Mantung division, North-West province, Republic of Cameroon. The language area contains two principal villages, Dumbu and Kwei, each with its own Fon. It is reported that there are slight variations in pronunciation between the two villages. This document was prepared with the assistance of several language informants, notably the late NDZU Kwatu Peter and NDITAMA David Nchotu, residents of Dumbu, and KIFUNG Wabi William, also from Dumbu but residing in Yaoundé for some years. As far as the author knows, no previous linguistic research has been performed on this language.

2. Alphabet

The Kemezung segmental alphabet is made up of 22 consonants and 9 vowels. They are represented below in upper and lower cases:

A a, B b, C c, D d, Dz dz, E e, ɛ ɛ, Ə ə, F f, G g, Gb gb, H h, I i, I i, J j, K k, Kp kp, L l, M m, N n, I] ɲ, Ny ny, O o, ɔ ɔ, S s, Sh sh, T t, Ts ts, U u, W w, Y y.

2.1 Consonants

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

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/t/	[t]	T t	ta <i>c3.stone</i>	kitalə <i>c7.ladder</i>	—
/ts/	[ts]	Ts ts	tsǎ <i>c9.time</i>	kitsáwû <i>c7.hut</i>	—
	[tʃ] ¹	C c	ci <i>all</i>	kicilə <i>c7.small of back</i>	—
/tsj/			cǎ <i>c1.your father</i>	ficə <i>turn!</i>	—
/k/	[k]	K k	ka <i>c3.heap</i>	dəkó <i>c1.crocodile</i>	—
/kp/	[kp]	Kp kp	kpə <i>c3.money</i>	bikpa <i>c8.shoes</i>	—
/b/	[b]	B b	ba <i>c1.rattle</i>	kiba <i>c7.wound</i>	—
/d/	[d]	D d	dǎ <i>c1.cutlass</i>	kida <i>c7.broom</i>	—
/dz/	[dz]	Dz dz	dzà <i>c9.porcupine</i>	bidzè <i>c8.mud</i>	—
	[dʒ] ¹	J j	jì <i>c9.hoe</i>	kijílə <i>c7.diarrhoea</i>	—
/dzj/			jè <i>divide!</i>	kijêŋ <i>c7.bamboo skin</i>	—

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/g/	[g]	G g	gə <i>c10.termites</i>	kigâ <i>c7.mat</i>	—
/gb/	[gb]	Gb gb	gbâ <i>c3.ceiling</i>	kìgbòkó <i>c7.sole of foot</i>	—
/f/	[f]	F f	fô <i>c3.head</i>	kifafô <i>c7.palm needle</i>	—
/s/	[s]~ [r] ²	S s	samí <i>c1.friend</i>	bósó <i>c3.fire</i>	—
	[ʃ]	Sh sh	shí <i>c9.wound</i>	bushí <i>c14.face</i>	—
/sj/			sha <i>c9.ground</i>	bushə <i>c14.friendship</i>	—
/h/	[h]	H h	hàhó ⁴ <i>okay</i>	màhâ <i>there</i>	—
/m/	[m]	M m	menî <i>c1.his mother</i>	fidzəmɔ <i>c19.hare</i>	—
/n/	[n]	N n	nasi <i>c3.grinding stone</i>	buna <i>c14.fufu</i>	—
/ɲ/	[ɲ]	Ny ny	nyò <i>c1.god</i>	cànyò <i>speak!</i>	—
/ŋ/	[ŋ]	Ŋ ŋ	ŋintiwa <i>(he) is seeing</i>	diŋâ <i>c1.okra</i>	kâŋ <i>c4.palm of hand</i>
/l/	[l] ³	L l	lòkɔ <i>c1.cassava</i>	kilâ <i>c7.rainbow</i>	—
	[l]~ [d] ³		—	kìmfilî <i>c7.dance</i>	—
/w/	[w]	W w	wànà <i>c1.your child</i>	dzòwá <i>c9.mushroom</i>	—
/j/	[j]	Y y	yâ <i>c3.shame</i>	kìyeyî <i>c7.truth</i>	—

Notes:

¹ Postalveolar affricates [tʃ dʒ] occur before the vowel [i] as realisations of the phonemes /ts dz/; the alveolar affricates [ts dz] occur in other positions. The postalveolar affricates also occur before other vowels as the portmanteau realisations of the palatalized /tsʲ dzʲ/.

² The postalveolar fricative [ʃ] occurs before the vowel [i] as realisations of the phoneme /s/; in other positions, [s] or [r] are used interchangeably, although the former is preferred. The postalveolar fricative also occurs before other vowels as the portmanteau realisation of the palatalized /sʲ/.

³ In intervocalic positions before the vowel [i] which are root-medial, at least some speakers use [l] and [d] interchangeably.

⁴ The laryngeal fricative [h] is normally restricted to possessives, negatives and some adjectives of time and place, in all of which it occurs between two identical vowels. The word **hàhó** “okay” given here is the only instance known of it occurring word-initially.

2.1.1 Prenasalized Consonants

One kind of consonant cluster found in Kemezung consists of clusters where the first consonant is a nasal consonant that is pronounced at the same place of articulation as the following consonant. Most consonants, with the exception of “h”, may be preceded by such homorganic nasal consonants (symbolised “N” below), as in the following chart:

Consonant Cluster	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/Nb/	[mb]	Mb mb	mbî <i>c1.world</i>	dzòmbù <i>c9.antelope</i>	—
/Nkp/	[ɣmkp]	Mkp mkp	mkpàsì <i>c9.scabies</i>	kimkpásâ <i>c7.smelling rat</i>	—
/Ngb/	[ɣmgb]	Mgb mgb	mgbonso <i>c3.cricket</i>	kìlìngbà <i>c7.bat</i>	—
/Nf/	[ɱf] ¹	Mf mf	mfiŋ <i>c10.magic</i>	ntsɔmfu <i>c9.odour</i>	—
/Nt/	[nt]	Nt nt	ntà <i>c9.burden</i>	mbente <i>c6.thirst</i>	—
/Nd/	[nd]	Nd nd	ndàngà <i>c1.field</i>	yòndú <i>c9.grass</i>	—
/Ns/	[ns] ^{1,2}	Ns ns	nsò <i>c1.bowl</i>	kpansâ <i>c1.your wife</i>	—
	[ɲ] ^{1,2}	Nsh nsh	nshì <i>going down</i>	wunshî <i>c3.tail</i>	—
nshâ <i>c1.your friend</i>			mə̀nshámù <i>c6a.sand</i>	—	
/Nsj/					—
/Ndz/	[ndz] ²	Ndz ndz	ndzùlù <i>c1.corn</i>	bìndzu <i>c8.clothes</i>	—
	[ndʒ] ²	Nj nj	njì <i>c1.subchief</i>	bùnjìtá <i>c14.heaviness</i>	—
njáj <i>xylophone</i>			fìnjàkà <i>c19.small yam</i>	—	
/Ndzj/					—
/Nts/	[nts] ²	Nts nts	ntsálí <i>c9.flower</i>	bikwə̀ntsə <i>c8.reward</i>	—
	[ntʃ] ²	Nc nc	ncì <i>c1.law</i>	bùncìmbó <i>c14.thickness</i>	—
ncànyə̀ <i>talking</i>			fìncùŋ <i>c19.banana</i>	—	
/Ntsj/					—
/Nl/	[nl]	Nl nl	nle <i>fearing</i>	kìnlə̀ŋ <i>c7.joy</i>	—
/Nj/	[ɲj] ^{1,3}	Ny ny	nyàní <i>c1.lazy person</i>	kìnyìntà <i>c7.breath</i>	—
/Nk/	[ɲk]	Nk nk	nka <i>c9.salt</i>	fìnkumə̀ <i>c19.chameleon</i>	—
/Ng/	[ɲg]	Ng ng	ngóŋ <i>c6.water</i>	bùnga <i>c14.force</i>	—
/Nw/	[ɲw] ¹	Nw nw	nwə̀ <i>hearing</i>	kìnwàtì <i>c7.book</i>	—
/Nm/	[mm]	Mm mm	mmə̀ŋ <i>c6a.oil</i>	—	—
/Nn/	[nn]	Nn nn	nnu <i>c3.knee</i>	—	—
/Nɲ/	[ɲɲ]	Nny nny	nnyá <i>giving</i>	—	—
/Nŋ/	[ɲŋ]	ŋŋ ŋŋ	ŋŋə̀ <i>seeing</i>	—	—

Notes:

¹ Word-medially, prenasalised fricatives and non-lateral approximants are realised by nasalizing the preceding vowel.

² Postalveolar phones [ntʃ ndʒ nʃ] occur before the vowel [i] as realisations of /Nts Ndz Ns/; the alveolar phones [ts dz s] occur in other positions. The postalveolar phones also occur before other vowels as realizations of the palatalized /Ntsʲ Ndʒʲ Nsʲ/.

³ The sequence **ny** has, therefore, two possible interpretations: the palatal nasal of section 2.1 and the prenasalised palatal approximant described here. While contrast is rare in nouns, both do occur in verbs; for example, **nyá** “give!” and **nyá** “branching”. Nevertheless, we think that in practice, the grammatical context together with the number of initial **ns** will suffice to disambiguate the two possibilities as the following examples illustrate:

nnyá “giving” **nyá!** “give!” **nnyáwa** “I am giving” **yù nyáwa** “He is giving”
nyá “branching” **yá!** “branch!” **nyáwa** “I am branching” **yù yáwa** “He is branching”

2.1.2 Palatalized Consonants

Another kind of consonant cluster is where the second consonant is the palatal glide [j], which is usually written in Kemezung as **i**. The first consonant is normally restricted to plosives, fricatives and nasals of the labial and coronal series of consonants. However, a single instance of a palatalised labialvelar plosive occurs. Similar sequences after /k/ and /l/ also occur in word-medial position, but these are derived through suffixation. As presented above in sections 2.1 and 2.1.1, when the first consonant is /s/, /ts/ or /dz/, it fuses with the glide to form a portmanteau phone. Level tone is marked on both **i** and the following vowel with an identical diacritic; rising or falling tone is indicated by the appropriate sequence of high and low tone diacritics.

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/tj/	[tj]	Ti ti	tíò <i>c3.swelling</i>	kitíù <i>c7.ear</i>	—
/kj/	[kj]	Ki ki	—	findzukìè <i>c19.small cloth</i>	—
/bj/	[bj]	Bi bi	biansi <i>c3.large rock</i>	kikabiè <i>c7.lair</i>	—
/dj/	[dj]	Di di	diese <i>c9.hip</i>	fidìèñè <i>c19.food</i>	—
/kpj/	[kpj] ¹	Kpi kpi	—	—	—
/gbj/	[gbj] ¹	Gbi gbi	—	ngbiànsì <i>c9.star</i>	—
/fj/	[fj]	Fi fi	fiu <i>c3.chalk</i>	kifíè <i>c3.spoon</i>	—
/mj/	[mj]	Mi mi	mìù <i>c1.one</i>	kimíè <i>c7.neck</i>	—
/nj/	[nj] ²	Ni ni	nníà <i>c10.four</i>	mbaníà <i>forty</i>	—
/lj/	[lj]~ [dj]	Li li	—	milíèsi <i>dipping</i>	—

Notes:

¹ No examples of /kpj/ are attested in the data, but the presence of /Ngbj/ (given above) suggests that, in principle, both /gbj/ and /kpj/ could appear in Kemezung.

² This is a third option (all phonetically distinct) to the two “ny” options shown in note 3 of section 2.1.2 above.

2.1.3 Labialized Consonants

The last kind of consonant cluster is where the second consonant is the labiovelar glide [w], which is always written in Kemezung as **w**. This glide may only follow some consonants. In particular, it is restricted to plosives, fricatives and nasals of the labial, velar and labiovelar series, as in the following chart:

Consonant Cluster	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/kw/	[kw]	Kw kw	kwəlf <i>c5.cheek</i>	kikweye <i>c7.palm branch</i>	—
/kpw/	[kpw]	Kpw kpw	kpwi <i>c1.fool</i>	—	—
/bw/	[bw]	Bw bw	bwáj <i>c3.cup</i>	səmbwá <i>c1.donkey</i>	—
/gw/	[gw]	Gw gw	gwíŋ <i>c3.spear</i>	kigwâŋ <i>c7.door</i>	—
/fw/	[fw]	Fw fw	fwá <i>c1.fox</i>	kifwəŋ <i>c7.lip</i>	—
/mw/	[mw]	Mw mw	mwô <i>c3.razor</i>	—	—

2.1.4 Consonant Orthography Rules

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

1. Never write **z** without a **d** in front of it.
2. Never write **p** without a **k** in front of it.
3. The only consonant that can be word-final is **ŋ**.
4. If you hear a nasal consonant before **b**, **f**, **kp** or **gb**, always write **m**.
5. If you hear a nasal consonant before **k** or **g**, always write **n**.
6. Never write **v**. If you hear a “v”, write **f**.
7. Never write an **r**. If you hear an “r”, write **s**.

2.2 Vowels

The Kemezung language has 9 vowel phonemes, presented with their allophones and proposed graphemes in the table below. The sounds are shown as they occur in different positions of the word.

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/i/	[i]	I i	—	kifílô <i>c7.corn cob</i>	fî <i>c9.kidney</i>
/i/	[i̥]	Ī ĩ	ibə <i>c4.cracked egusi</i>	gbìnâ <i>c1.your in-law</i>	fî <i>c3.swelling</i>
/u/	[u]	U u	—	kifúlô <i>c7.cap</i>	fu <i>c9.army ant</i>
/e/	[e]	E e	—	kikwéyê <i>c7.forest</i>	fê <i>c4.bone marrow</i>
/ə/	[ə]	Ə ə	śəŋ <i>yes</i>	yəsí <i>c3.eye</i>	fə <i>do!</i>
/o/	[o]	O o	—	dzòwá <i>c9.mushroom</i>	fô <i>c3.head</i>
/ɛ/	[ɛ]	Ɛ ɛ	—	shemi <i>c10.chaff</i>	fɛ <i>two</i>
/a/	[a]	A a	—	nasi <i>c3.grinding stone</i>	fâ <i>at that time</i>
/ɔ/	[ɔ]	Ɔ ɔ	—	bəlu <i>c3.sky</i>	fɔ <i>c3.axe</i>

2.2.1 Vowel Length

Kemezung has both short and long vowels. The long vowels are written as a sequence of two vowels, with identical tone diacritics if the tone is level, or with a sequence of low and high tone diacritics if the tone rises or falls. Long vowels are however quite rare. Examples of these vowels and the contrasting short vowels are given below:

mfi̱i̱	<i>round</i>	mfi̱i̱	<i>magic</i>
kàiyèè	<i>slow</i>	yè	<i>snake</i>
bòò	<i>white</i>	bo	<i>bird sp.</i>
mbèè	<i>address to the chief</i>	kàmbê	<i>snail</i>
tə	<i>full</i>	tê	<i>loincloth</i>
díáàŋ ¹	<i>correct</i>	bidiaŋ	<i>food</i>
gòò	<i>red</i>	gô	<i>worms</i>

Notes:

¹ Note that it is possible to have a sequence of three vowels. In this case, the glide vowel *i* is not marked for tone.

2.2.2 Vowel Diphthongs

The only sequences of two or more different vowels which are permissible in Kemezung result from the occurrence of a palatalised consonant as described in section 2.1.2. In all cases, the first vowel is *i*. All vowels are possible after *i*, although *e* and *o* are rare. Level tone is marked on both vowels with an identical diacritic; rising or falling tone is indicated by the appropriate sequence of high and low tone diacritics.

Phoneme	Allophone	Grapheme	Initial position	Medial position	Final position
/i:/	[i:]	ii	—	bi̱i̱ni <i>c3.upper grinding stone</i>	nèdii <i>right hand</i>
/iu/	[iu]	iu	—	—	kitù <i>c7.ear</i>
/ie/	[ie]	ie	—	mfiende <i>c9.termite</i>	fiè <i>c9.debt</i>
/iə/	[iə]	iə	—	biəna <i>c1.week</i>	nsafiə <i>c1.elder</i>
/io/	[io]	io	—	—	kidio <i>c7.swallow</i>
/iɛ/	[iɛ]	iɛ	—	diɛse <i>c9.hip</i>	cefiɛ <i>c1.spider</i>
/ia/	[ia]	ia	—	biako <i>c9.rat</i>	bəmfà <i>c2.slaves</i>
/iɔ/	[iɔ]	iɔ	—	biəsù <i>c9.fish</i>	budio <i>c14.fight</i>

2.2.3 Vowel Orthography Rules

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

1. With the exception of **áàŋ** “yes”, the only vowel that can start a word is **i**; it should only appear after a pause indicated by a full stop, colon or comma as it drops out in other positions.
2. Never write **i** between **sh** and another vowel.
3. With the exception of **hàhó** “okay”, the letter **h** should always be written between two identical vowels.

3. Tone

We have identified 9 tone melodies in Kemezung: 3 level tones, high [a¹], mid [a²] and low [a³]; and 6 contour tones, rise-to-mid [a³²], rise-to-high [a²¹], high-falling [a¹³], low-falling [a³⁴], mid-falling [a²⁴] and mid-low [a²³].

3.1 Lexical Tone Contrasts Marked by Diacritics

As of this point in time, we have discovered numerous minimal tone pairs for words that contrast high tone, mid tone or mid-low tone with low tone or low-falling tone. On the other hand, minimal tone pairs are rare between high-falling, mid-falling and mid-low tones and non-existent between low and low-falling tones and also between high and rise-to-high tones. They are also somewhat rare between rise-to-mid and mid tones. In view of this, we propose an orthography where high, low (together with low-falling), the remaining falling tones and the two rising tones are marked and mid tone is unmarked. (It is common orthographic practice to indicate one of the well-attested contrastive tones by specifically omitting to mark a diacritic over the vowel.)

Although we think it might be possible to leave both rising tones unmarked as well, there are a few minimal tone pairs which could cause difficulties. Moreover, relatively few words use these tone patterns, so it is no great addition to the orthography to mark them. See the chart below:

Tone	Phonetic	Grapheme (Diacritic)	Examples	Frequency
High	[a ¹]	á áá	bósó, mbá <i>c3.fire, coming</i>	many nouns several verbs
Mid	[a ²]	a aa	wɛŋ, ntɔ <i>c1.child, carrying</i>	very many nouns many verbs
Low	[a ³]*	a	yòndú, ngəndə <i>c9.grass, walking</i>	many nouns many verbs
Low-falling	[a ³⁴]*	àà	tsòŋ, mfə <i>c9.house, doing</i>	very many nouns many verbs
Mid-falling	[a ²⁴]	â ââ	gwîŋ, ntə <i>c3.spear, jumping</i>	some nouns many verbs
High-falling	[a ¹³]		fô <i>c3.head</i>	many nouns no verbs
Mid-low	[a ²³]		yâ <i>c3.shame</i>	some nouns no verbs
Rise-to-mid	[a ³²]	ă ăă	nyĩ <i>c9.leaf</i>	some nouns no verbs
Rise-to-high	[a ²¹ **]		fĩndăŋ <i>c19.tree sp.</i>	very few nouns no verbs

Notes:

* Low-falling tones only occur at the end of an utterance, while low tones usually do not occur in that position.

** Rise-to-high tones only occur after a mid tone in a few words.

Note that when a level tone occurs on a long vowel or diphthong, both vowels are marked the same way. Rising and falling tones, however, are marked by using one low and one high tone diacritic in the appropriate order. In the rare case where there are three vowels in sequence (that is, *i* followed by a long vowel), no diacritic can ever appear on the first vowel.

Our proposal is to write most Kemezung words as they occur in isolation (that is, as they occur when pronounced by themselves), and it is these forms that will be written in the lexicon.

Kemezung speakers should have no problem reading or pronouncing the actual phonetic pitch of all

the words in a sentence once they recognize the meanings of the individual words that make up that sentence.

Only two exceptions are proposed. First, some nouns in class 4 and class 10 take a prefix in isolation which is only retained after a pause in normal speech. The proposed rule, discussed further in section 5 below, is to write the prefix only after pauses indicated by a full stop, comma or colon, or at the beginning of a text. Secondly, although the tense markers **ná** “PRES”, **nə** “P2” and **nó** “P3” are pronounced with a long initial [n] in isolation, it is replaced with a short [n] except after a pause. Since these words are used so frequently, we propose a corresponding rule for these words: after a pause indicated by a full stop, comma or colon, or at the beginning of a text, they will be written with two **ns**; a single **n** will appear elsewhere. (Examples appear in sections 6.1 and 6.2).

It is fairly easy to find Kemezung words where the only difference between them is tone. For example, note the minimal tone pairs below between the four most frequently contrasted tones:

fiu [f ^h u ²]	<i>chalk</i>	yâ [ja ²³]	<i>shame</i>
fiù [f ^h u ³⁴]	<i>vessel</i>	yà [ja ³⁴]	<i>buffalo</i>
nsé [nse ¹]	<i>remember</i>	bushî [bu ² ʃi ¹³]	<i>face</i>
nsè [nse ³⁴]	<i>untie</i>	bushi [bu ² ʃi ²]	<i>hot</i>

As mentioned above, there are rare tone pairs that contrast different types of falling tones. It is our feeling that these words can be marked with the same diacritics and that they will be disambiguated by how they are used in context. All of the orthographically ambiguous word pairs that we have found are shown below:

fiô [f ^h ɔ ¹³]	<i>slippery soup</i>	mmê [mme ²³]	<i>c4.how many?</i>
fiò [f ^h ɔ ²³]	<i>worry</i>	mmê [mme ²⁴]	<i>here</i>

Although the two nouns “slippery soup” and “worry” belong to the same noun class, their meanings are different enough that confusion between them is unlikely in context. The pair of words “how many?” and “here” will be easily disambiguated as they have entirely different grammatical functions. It is because of these facts that we dare to write high-falling, low-falling and mid-low tones without using different diacritics to distinguish them.

3.2 Kemezung verb forms

Kemezung verbs do not normally occur in speech as they occur in isolation. Sometimes suffixes are added to the lexical root, and sometimes the vowel of the lexical root is altered slightly. While we have not studied the full range of verb forms that may be used, our proposal is that, regardless of the tone pattern of the particular verb form, the tone marking of the isolation form should be retained on the lexical root and any other syllables should be left unmarked. It is our belief that this will enable Kemezung speakers to recognise the words and the forms and therefore to pronounce them correctly.

Note the following examples of commands:

<i>Root</i>	<i>Command</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Root</i>	<i>Command</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Tone</i>
ntê	tè	<i>say</i>	rise-to-mid	mficè	ficè	<i>turn around</i>	low high
ntê	tê	<i>jump</i>		nlètê	lètê	<i>run</i>	
nwə	wə	<i>hear</i>	mid	nwondo	wondo	<i>fetch</i>	mid high
mbá	bá	<i>come</i>					

Even though the command “say!” is pronounced with rise-to-mid tone, it is marked as the root form of the word. Similarly, “jump!”, “hear!” and “come!” are pronounced with mid-tone, “turn!” with a low-tone followed by a high-tone and “run!” and “fetch!” with mid-tone followed by high-tone, but all are marked the same way as their root forms.

Note also the following examples, in the present tense, where the verbs have suffixes:

Mfôtowa bìŋ. “I am going out.”
Nlêmiwa wê. “I am standing up.”

The isolation forms of the corresponding verbs are **mfô** and **nlêŋ**. Even though the vowel in the first example has changed, the same tone mark is used over the modified vowel as appeared in the lexical form. The remaining syllables in the word are left unmarked.

3.3 Grammatical Meanings Marked by Diacritics

Kemezung grammatical tone will hopefully be examined in detail at a later time. For now, we note that gender 9/10 nouns discriminate the singular from the plural primarily on the basis of tone (although sometimes **ĩ-** is prefixed to class 10 nouns after a breath pause). Some examples of these changes are listed below:

<i>Singular (c9)</i>	<i>Plural (c10)</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
tsambo	tsámbo	<i>spring, springs</i>
yòndú	yóndú	<i>song, songs</i>
bìsù	bìsû	<i>fish, many fish</i>

In addition, there is a distinction between the normal past tense and a remote past tense which is indicated by high tone on the remote past tense marker:

Yù nó beyê mì.
 3s P3 give-birth 1s
 “She gave birth to me (years ago).”

Yù nê beyê fâ fùkwáŋ.
 3s P2 give-birth at-that-time yesterday
 “She gave birth yesterday.”

The recent past tense is also sometimes marked exclusively by tone. This is discussed in section 5 on elision below.

4. Word Division

Kemezung word division will hopefully be examined further at some later point in time. It will be especially important to develop appropriate criteria for distinguishing compound nouns from associative noun phrases.

In the meantime, we mention that all the normal noun class prefixes and suffixes will be written as part of the nouns, as for the classes shown below:

1	Ø-,n-	nkúŋ	chief	2	bə-,bən-	bənkúŋ	chiefs
3	Ø ^(w) - ¹	kpɔŋ	ridge	4	(i)-	kɔŋ	ridges
5	Ø-...-lə,-ə	gíŋ	egg	4	Ø-	gí	eggs
7	ki-	kída	broom	8	bi-	bída	brooms
9	Ø-,n-`	bì	goat	10	(i)-, (i)n-´	ibi	goats
14	bu-	budómfi	story	25	mən-	məndómfi	stories
19	fi-	fisô	knife	26	mun-	munsô	knives
6a	mən-,n-	məndimbî	smoke				

Notes:

¹ Most nouns of gender 3/4 have the same form in singular and plural. But the singular of nouns commencing with a velar plosive replace the initial consonant with the corresponding labialvelar plosive, which can be considered a different type of labialized form. The mark (^w) indicates this process.

5. Elision

In the recent past tense, the sounds of the tense marker **sá** are often deleted, although the high tone associated with it is transferred to the previous syllable. In the orthography this **sá** is always written, as below:

Wà sá gèŋ mmàŋ? [wə³¹ gəŋ³ mməŋ³⁴] ~ [wə³ sə¹ gəŋ³ mməŋ³⁴]

2s P1 go where?

“Where did you go just now?”

Also, when talking of the future, the combination **jìwa** is often shortened to [ja] in speech but will not be shortened in the orthography.

Njìwa bá bá ngóŋ. [ndʒa ba bæ ŋgɔŋ] ~ [ndʒiwa ba bæ ŋgɔŋ]

1s.be.c1 come with water

“I will bring water.”

Similarly, the associative markers **wú**, **wù**, **yí** and **yì** sometimes merge in pronunciation with the preceding word. They also will always be written in full.

mmî wú yà [miu³¹ jə²] ~ [miɪ³ wu¹ jə²]

person AM red

“white man”

In noun classes 4 and 10, the prefix **i-** is sometimes heard when words are pronounced in isolation. After another word, however, the prefix is no longer pronounced. We propose writing the prefix only after a pause which is indicated by a full stop, a colon or a comma, or at the beginning of an utterance.

ɪbi yá yidiì bəndzùlù.

goats those c10.eat.CONT corn

“The goats are eating corn.”

Nná n̄ì bó bì tiɛ.
PRES 1s.be with goats three
“I have three goats.”

6. Punctuation and Capitalisation

The punctuation marks and the rules that govern the Kemezung language are similar to those for English. The punctuation marks used for Kemezung are therefore as follows:

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

6.1 Full Stop

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

Nná mbi yù.
PRES 1s.ask 3s
“I am asking him.”

6.2 Question Mark

The question mark (?) marks the end of an interrogative sentence.

Wè ná ḡinti læ wè taŋ là?
2s PRES go.CONT CMPZR 2s buy.INF what?
“What are you going to buy?”

Additionally, in yes-no questions, the last vowel is doubled and marked with low tone.

Wè sá diə bunaà?
2s P1 eat fufu.QM
“Have you eaten food?”

6.3 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, surprise, excitement, and forceful comments as well as simple commands; as below.

Dza n̄è mení!
leave.IMP from here
“Go away!”

Wè mà kəf̄kə!
2s thus NEG.do.NEG
“You should not do that!”

6.4 Comma

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

Bó ná g̃ntəhə shibí, bó ná lètì kə.

3p PRES go.CONT.NEG market.on 3p PRES go-out.CONT farm
“They are not going to market, they are going to the farm.”

Nná mfòtəhə ndêŋ, njìwa kí njì tsòŋ.

PRES 1s.come-out.CONT.NEG today 1s.be.c1 CONT be.INF house
“I am not going out today, I will be in the house.”

Wə gəŋ só shibíŋ, wə taŋ nka, mməŋ bó k̃njembíə.

2s go there market.on 2s buy salt oil with bitter-leaf
“If you go to market, buy salt, oil and bitter leaves!”

6.5 Colon

Colons are used to separate a clause which refers to a concept in general terms from a clause or phrase which makes the concept more specific. It represents a pause in speech that could be replaced by the words “that is” or “as follows” in English.

Kə ná k̃li k̃lāŋ kahá k̃i nteshê l̃ə: Lə m̃i ci j̃iwa yù bá.

1p PRES know.CONT law our AM₁ meeting AM₂ CMPZR person all be.c1 3s come
“We know our law of the meeting: Everyone should come.”

6.6 Quotation Marks

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

Nkúŋ t̃ə l̃ə, “Mm̃i ci shə tsòŋ w̃kí.”

chief say CMPZR person all stay.IMP house tomorrow
“The Fon said, “Everyone should stay home tomorrow.””

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

6.7 Capitalisation

Capital letters are used at the beginning of sentences (see sections 6.1 to 6.6 above), for proper nouns (illustrated below), and after a colon (section 6.5 above).

Yi yi beŋ bemi l̃ə ná j̃i Nabùlá bó Nəmfiə.

names AM₁ children my AM₂ PRES be Nabula and Nomfio
“The names of my children are Nabula and Nomfio.”

7. Need for further testing of the orthography

Any new orthography needs people to use it for a time before potential problems reveal themselves. It is our hope that this proposal will be a significant first step in allowing people to start reading and writing the language.

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