

DENYA TONE ORTHOGRAPHY

by

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1.1 Introduction

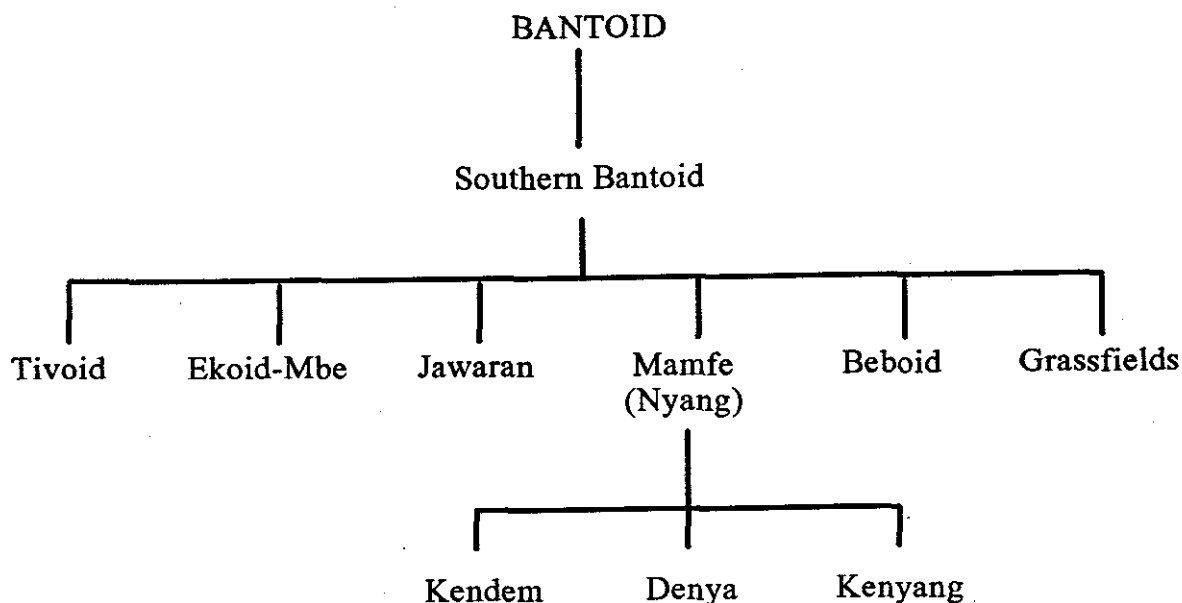
The aim of this document is to propose a system for the marking of tone in Denya orthography. It is hoped that this will help in simplifying the marking of tone for the native speakers who will learn how to read and write Denya.

1.2 Language Background

Denya is a tone language spoken in the Manyu Division of the South-West province in the Republic of Cameroon. The speakers of the language are commonly referred to as Anyang and number about 16000 (1994 estimate). They occupy the forest area of Akwaya Sub-Division and some parts of the Upper Banyang Sub-Division. Neighbouring languages include Kenyang, Ejagham and Kendem to the South-West, Boki to the West, Asumbo, Amasi, Menka to the north.

Denya has four main dialects: Takamanda, Basho, Bitieku and Bajwa. In this analysis, the Takamanda dialect is used because it is the reference dialect accepted and adopted by the language committee.

1.3 Classification



There has been a lot of discussion among scholars as regards the classification of Denya. However, it has quite recently been classified as a Southern Bantoid by Watters (1989) and Watters and Leroy (1989), and this is the classification I have displayed above.

1.4 Review of literature

Abangma (1981) worked on the use of modes in Denya discourse in which he obtained a Doctorat de 3e cycle from the University of Yaoundé. Tyhurst (1983) undertook the linguistic survey of the Nyang languages. Tyhurst and Tyhurst (1983) also undertook a sociolinguistic survey of Kenyang and Denya. In 1994, the author proposed an orthography for Denya. Ongoing work includes the phonology and lexicon of Denya. The orthography statement will be revised and published next year.

2 Tone

Phonetically, Denya has two level tones, High [´] and Low [˘] and two contour tones falling [ˆ] and rising [ˊ]. In addition there is a downstep high / !H/. Below, I represent some examples of Denya words phonetically:

[gèbà]	‘area’
[gébà]	‘bag’
[gèbá]	‘spot’
[m̀byà]	‘flute’
[m̀byǎ]	‘soup’
[tí]	‘to pierce’
[tí]	‘to wipe’
[m̀ègò]	‘python’
[m̀ègǒ]	‘boa’
[bá]	‘to marry’
[bà]	‘to stick on’
[m̀èkè]	‘cage’
[m̀èkě]	‘pasture’
[à ǹè]	‘he is eating’
[á !ǹé]	‘they ate’
[á f̀è]	‘he or they should lock’
[á f̀è]	‘they have lock’
[dé ǹé]	‘we should eat’
[dè ǹé]	‘we ate’
[ð ǹè]	‘you are eating’
[ð !ǹé]	‘you ate’
[á k̀úlè g̀è]	‘they are rising’
[à k̀úlè g̀è]	‘he is rising’

bá	'to marry'
ba	'to stick on'
meke	'cage'
mekéé	'pasture'
a nye	'he is eating'
á nyé	'they ate'
á fée	'he (they) should lock'
á fe	'they have locked'
dé nyé	'we should eat'
deé nyé	'we ate'
o nye	'you are eating'
ó nyé	'you ate'
á kúle ge	'they are rising'
a kule ge	'he is rising'
a nye nyée	'he will eat'
á nyée nyée	'they will eat'
ndofó aá nyée fó	'he might not eat'
ndofó á nyée fó	'they might not eat'
a kú mé	'he has called'
á kú mé	'they have called'
ébége a nye	'if he is eating'
ébége a nyé	'if he ate'
aá gyí géé fó	'he is not asking'
á gyíi géé fó	'he should not ask'

In this system, the complexity of marking many tones has been reduced by only marking one, the H tone. The above system was first used by Abangma (1981). The research accompanying the present study has shown that no lexical or grammatical information is lost by using this simplified scheme for marking tone.

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