

Pluralization Strategies in Sam

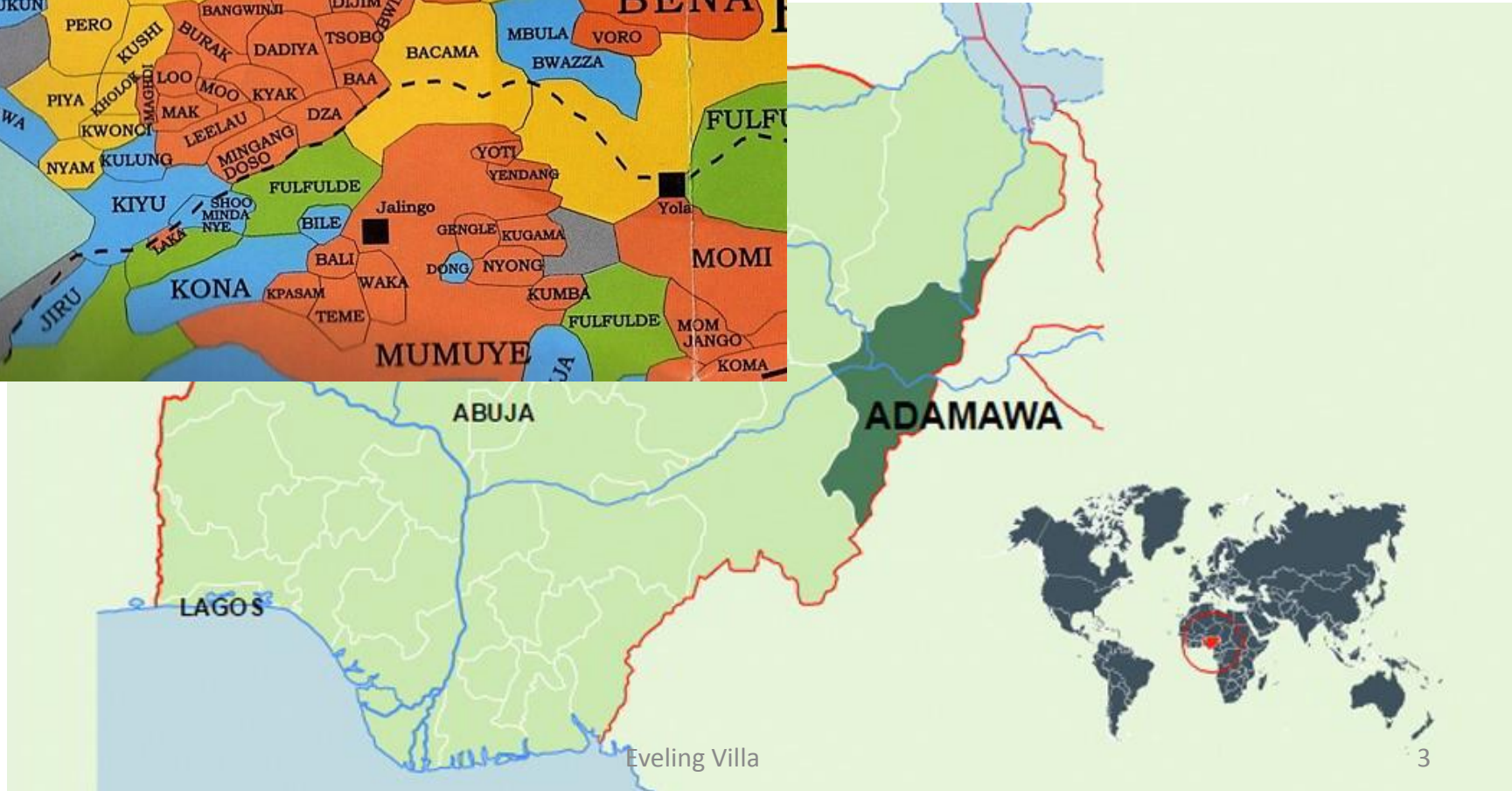
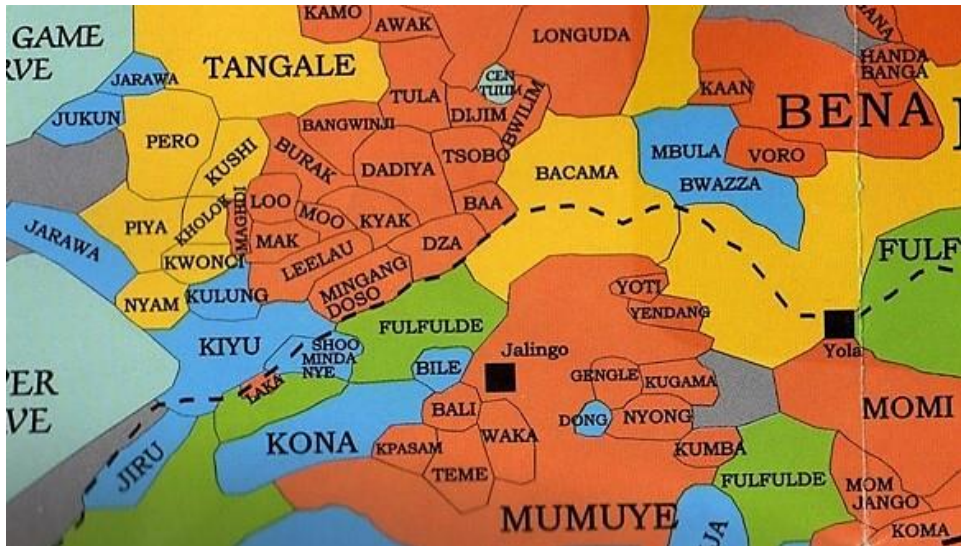
Eveling Villa



Overview

- Language and Location
- General features of Sam
- Pluralization strategies in Sam
- Issues with pluralization

Sam, an Adamawa language of Nigeria



General Features of Sam

- SVO
- Canonical syllable stem shapes:
CV(V), CV(V)C
- Grammaticalized prepositions
- Nasality and Vowel Length
- Tones: three level (H,M, and L), and two contour tones (Rising and Falling)

Phonemic Inventories

	Labial		Coronal		Dorsal			Laryngeal
	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labio-velar	Glottal
Nasal	m			n	ɲ	ŋ		
Plosive	p b		t d				kp gb	ʔ
Implosives	ɓ			ɗ				
Fricative		f v		s z		(χ)		h
Africate								
Approximant					j		w	
Tap, Flap				r				
Trill				(r)				
Lateral				l				

	Front	Central	Near-Back	Back
Close	i			u
Near close			ɯ	
Close Mid		ə		
Mid				
Open mid	ɛ			ɔ
Open	a			

Corpus

- Data used in the analysis consist on 980 Nouns, recorded both in isolation and as part of a sentence frame.
- Tonal notation is consistent but more lexical data needed in order to design tone rules.

- **N.B:** Most Sam nouns can be pluralized.
Some of these nouns seem to be
Singularia Tantum.
No Pluralia Tantum has been found.

Pluralization Strategies

1. Plurals can be formed by the addition of bound plural markers.
2. Plural marker replaces Singular marker
(Inflectional affixes?)
3. Suppletive Forms
4. Also by means of adding quantifiers and numerals above two.

Preposed bound plural markers

- **N (sg) → zá-N (pl)**: Used with general kinship terminology.
- **ǂV-N (sg) → zá-N (pl)**: Same morpheme (-zá), accompanied by a stem-initial variation. Also used with human nouns.
- **N (sg) → é-N (pl)**: Used with human nouns and “senior” kinship terms.
- **N (sg) → gún-N (pl)**: Generalized form. Used across different semantic categories.

N (sg) → zá-N (pl): used with kinship terms

- (1) /níná/ → /zá-níná/ ‘mother’
- (2) /tùŋ/ → /zá-tùŋ/ ‘father’
- (3) /sòyē/ → /zá-sòyē/ ‘sister’

ḡV-N (sg) → zḡ-N (pl): morpheme change

- (4) /ḡé-bé1é/ → /zḡ- b1é1/ ‘son-in-law’
- (5) /ḡí-gē1ē/ → /zḡ-gē1ā/ ‘host’
- (6) /ḡú-bē1í/ → /zḡ-bē1í/ ‘kid’

It is not an allophonic variation.

Possible Explanations

- Synchronically ($\text{b}\acute{\text{V}}-$) represents a single prefix.
- Diachronically, ($\text{b}\acute{\text{V}}-$) is probably a combination of two different morphemes, ($\text{b}-$) and ($\acute{\text{V}}-$)
- Perhaps class markers.
- Similarity could also be accidental.

N (sg) → é-N (pl): Human Ns/kinship terms

- (7) /búŋ/ → /é-búŋ/ ‘first born’
- (8) /kánám/ → /é-kánám/ ‘nephew’
- (9) /wó- zàmà/ → /é-zàmà/ ‘master’
person- owner PL-owner

N (sg) → gún-N (pl): Generalized plural marker

Cognates of gún in some related languages:

- Baa: “many” (Moller 2017)
- Bali: “A quantifier kàm 'many' is a modern form. The word gúnì was previously used with the same meaning (Zheltoy 2012).

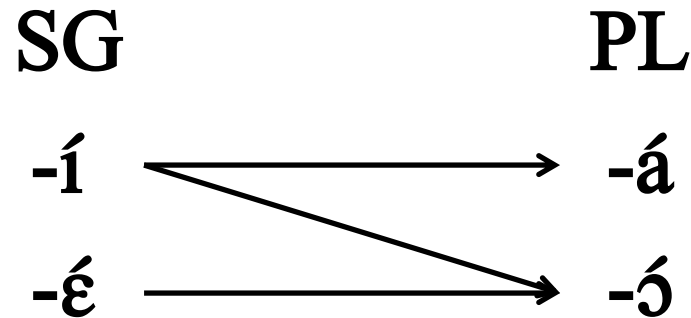
a. /gún-ḃēn^wé/ ‘flock (of birds)’

b. /gúnì/ ‘crowd’

c. /gún-nàyé/ ‘herd (of cows)’

Postposed bound plural markers

- N-∅ (sg) → N-á (pl)
- Morphological vowel change (simplified):



N- ∅ (sg) → N-á (pl)

- (10) /tún̄/ → /tún̄-á/ ‘widow’
- (11) /ɲòblán̄/ → /ɲòblán̄-á/ ‘traveler’
- (12) /ɲésūm̄/ → /ɲésūm̄-á/ ‘messenger’
- (13) /wámmán̄/ → /wámmán̄-á/ ‘encounter’

nasal#(sg) → -á# (pl) ?

(14) /tárá/

‘in-law’

(14a) /é-tárá/

‘in-laws’

(15) /tárá-m/

‘my in-law’

(15a) /é-tárá-m/

‘my in-laws’

(15b) /tárá-m-á/

‘my in-laws’

Observations

(16) /bùŋ/ → /é-bùŋ-á/ ‘senior brother’

(17) /búŋ/ → /é-búŋ/ ‘first born’

- Tonal distinction trigger different PL markers.
- Either is used

(18) /s^wẽãm-à/ → /é-s^wẽãm-ø/ ‘older sister of wife’

Morphological Vowel change

- N-ί (sg) → N-ά (pl)

(19) /̀ndεgεpéí/ → /̀ndεgεpéá/ ‘weaver’

- N-ί (sg) → N-ό (pl)

(20) /̀ns^wénuírí/ → /̀ns^wénuíró/ ‘wife’

- N-έ (sg) → N-ά (pl)

(22) /̀nd^wéné/ → /̀nd^wená/ ‘white-man’

(22) /sóré/ → /sór-á/ ‘fellow-wife’

Suppletive Forms

- (23) /wákḃĩi/ → /̀̀nzáwākḃĩĩ/ ‘she-goat’
- (24) /wò̀n-náá/ → /̀̀nnáá/ ‘rich man’
- (25) /sĩ́'áá/ → /sía/ ‘threshing floor’
- (26) /sĩĩ/ → /wúú/ ‘mourning’

Singularia Tantum?

198 entries from various semantic domains were reported only in their singular form.

54 of those entries refer to body parts.

Singularia tantum or singular forms identical to plural?

- /k^wǎnè-̀̀nbéé/ ‘father-in-law’
- /íám̀̀bitún/ ‘relative by blood’
- /tòrúk/ ‘descendant’

?

- Blench reported PL forms for those 54 entries (2009).
- Zheltov (2012) analyzed them as lexicalized genitive constructions of the form:

N-1PLPossessivePronoun

/ɲé/ → /ɲé-rô/ ‘mouth’

Summary of possible variations in the pluralization of Nouns

Preposed bound plural marker	Postposed bound plural marker	Morphological vowel change	Singularia Tantum???	Suppletion
zá-	-á	<i>/-i/ → /-a/</i>	198 Nouns	
é-		<i>/-i/ → /-o/</i>		
gún-		<i>/-ε/ → /-a/</i>		

Future Research

- Pluractional Verbs
- Associative Plurals
- Stacked affixes
- Remnants of Noun classes

Thank You!

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