

# Nominal possessive constructions and compounds in Wam

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# Overview

1. General information on Wam
2. Inalienable possessive constructions in Wam
3. Alienable possessive constructions in Wam
4. Nominal compounds in Wam

# General information on Wam



– *ná: wàm* ‘the Wam language’

- Spoken in a number of villages in Mayo-Belwa LGA and Fufore LGA of Adamawa State
- Yendang group of the Adamawa language family
- 5000 speakers (Ethnologue)

## Previous research on Wam

- First field trip conducted in Yola, the capital of Adamawa State, in January 2014 as part of research for my BA and later for my MA theses at St. Petersburg State University, Russia
- Second fieldwork mission to Wam communities in March–June 2017 as part of my PhD project from Labex EFL (project LC2 “Areal phenomena in northern sub-Saharan Africa”)

# Possessive constructions

- Head marked
- [Possessee] [Possessor]
- Distinction between alienable and inalienable
- **3 stem shapes require particular attention**

# Stem shapes

1. CVi: the final vocoid can be analyzed as a separate vowel, the final part of a diphthong or a consonant.

For the purpose of this preliminary analysis, I will treat it as a vowel.

2. CVN

3. CV<sub>k</sub>V

# Inalienable possessive constructions

## [Possessee] [Possessor]

### CVi stems

1. the final vocoid gets deleted
2. vowel is lengthened

lèī cheek

là: Músá Musa's cheek

ɲéì [ɲæi] mouth

ɲâ:-mí? my mouth

## CVi stems

### 3. vowel height changes (in some cases)

/ɛ/ ([æ], [ɛ]) → /a/

/ɔ/ → /ɔ/ ([ɔ], [o], [ʊ]) ?

/ʊ/ → /u/

/u/ → /u/

ḅḗī belly

ḅâ: Lúkpêwà

Lukpewa's belly

kḥī neck

kḥ: Lúkpêwà

Lukpewa's neck

dūī tooth

dû: Lúkpêwà

Lukpewa's tooth



## CVi stems

4. after labialized consonants

/ɔ/ → /uɔ/

/ʊ/ → /uu/

k<sup>w</sup>ʊ̄i village

k<sup>ũ</sup>: Lúkpêwà Lukpewa's village

k<sup>w</sup>ʊ̄i vagina

k<sup>ū</sup>ɔ Lūkpêwà Lukpewa's vagina

# Inalienable possessive constructions (continued)

## CVkV stems

dʒé-ké house

dʒé: Lúkpêwà Lukpewa's house

ɲó-kí daughter

ɲó: Lúkpêwà Lukpewa's daughter

# Inalienable possessive constructions (continued)

## CVN stems

gbíŋ            hip

gbíŋ Lúkêpwà    Lukpewa's hip

jéŋ            mother

jéŋ Lúkêpwà    Lukpewa's mother

# Alienable possessive constructions

[possessee + possessive marker -ri/ri] [possessor]

## CVi stems

1. the final vocoid gets deleted
2. no vowel changes
3. no vowel length

dʒéī̄ (zei) dog

dʒé-rî̄ Lūkpêwà

Lukpewa's dog

sòī̄ dance

sò-rí Lúkpêwà

Lukpewa's dance

## Cf. alienable and inalienable possession

gbéĩ horn

gbɛ-rĩ Ali the horn of Ali

**but** gbá:-nā:kĩ cow horn (horn-cow)

wéĩ [wæi] meat

wé-rĩ Lūkpêwà the meat of  
Lukpewa

wēĩ [wæi] penis

wā: Músá Musa's penis

# Careful pronunciation of **CVi stems**

## Alienable possessive constructions

nó:lēī gun

nó:lē̄-rì Lūkpêwà

**But** nó' #lēī#-rì Lūkpêwà  
Lukpewa's gun

wéī [wæi] meat

wé̄-rî Lūkpêwà

**But** wæi-rî Lūkpêwà  
Lukpewa's meat

# Other stems in alienable possessive constructions

**CVkV stems**

**CVN stems**

zóm poison

zóm-rí Lúkpêwà Lukpewa's poison

# Nominal compounds

## CVi stems

lèī cheek

là:-dí: gill (cheek – fish)

dúī tooth

dú:-dān elephant's tusk (tooth-elephant)

pūi hole

pù:-kǒī throat (hole – neck)

gbéī horn

gbá:-nā:kī cow horn (horn – cow)

jēi wind

jà:-líè storm (wind-rain)



# Nominal compounds

## CVi stems

uĩ	head	ú-nēì	lip (head-mouth)
ḅéĩ	belly	ḅá-dìnē̄	palm (belly-fist)

### Cf. inalienable possessive construction vs. compounds

néì [næi] mouth	ná: wàm	the Wam language
	ná-jé̄kē̄	breast (mouth-?)
	ná-hō̄ì	nose (mouth-?)
	ná-dà-kpá	road (mouth-inside?-towards)

# Nominal compounds

## CVN stems

kóm	body hair
kóm-nóì	eyelash (body hair – eye)
wīm	person
wēnī	people
wí-pōkē	farmer (person – farm)
wēnī-pōkē	farmers (people – farm)

# Nominal compounds

## CVkV stems

nókí / nʲókí

daughter

nò:-jéŋ

sister (daughter-mother)

# Future research

Other stem shapes in possessive constructions and compounds

Tone rules

Prepositions