

Gweno, a little known Bantu language of Northern Tanzania

by

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1.0. General

Gweno (E 65 in Guthrie's classification; own name : *kiɣonu*) is spoken by several thousand people in the North Pare Mountains of north-eastern Tanzania. The Gweno - *myonu* (sg.) / *βaɣonu* (pl.) - are included under the blanket ethnic term "Pare", which they generally acknowledge, but it should be noted that the proper ethnonym for the majority group inhabiting the Pare Mountains (North and South) is Asu (*mwasú* (sg.) / *vasú* (pl.) for the people, *tʃasú* for the language¹). All Gweno are, and probably have long been, bilingual in Asu, although the reverse is definitely not true. Most Gweno as well as Asu nowadays also speak Swahili.

All observers (e.g. Guthrie 1971, Nurse and Philippson 1980, Winter 1980) classify Gweno as a dialect of the Chaga group². It is of interest partly because it has long been geographically separate from the rest of Chaga, spoken on the slopes of Kilimanjaro, and partly because the language is under increasing pressure from Asu and Swahili. Within Gweno there are dialect divisions, but they do not appear to be very significant in the opinion of Gweno speakers themselves, with the possible exception of the Ngofi dialect at the very northernmost tip of the massif.

Our information comes, in chronological order, from: extensive interviews conducted by both of us in the 1970s with Mr. Mangachi Msuya, then a student at the University of Dar es Salaam, who also filled out a 1000-word list; tape recordings of three stories recorded by another University of Dar-es-Salaam student (whose name we are regrettably unable to identify at present), which filled approximately 10 written pages; an undergraduate paper on the Gweno tense/aspect system by Mr. W.A. Issae;

several hundred lexical items collected in September 1988 by G. Philippson from Mr. Mfangavo, also a student at the University of Dar es Salaam at the time ; and half a dozen tapes of lexical data and recorded texts from several villages in Ugweno Division, collected by G. Philippson during a field trip in September 1991 (for which the assistance of Mr. A. Mreta, then a Tutorial Assistant at the University of Dar es Salaam is gratefully acknowledged)³.

2.0. Phonology

2.1. Consonants

Table 1 presents the consonant inventory of the language :

p	t̪	t		k	
b		d		g	
f	θ		ʃ		h
pf ⁴			tʃ		
β			dʒ	ɣ	
w		l, r	y		
m		n	ɲ	ŋ	
mb	n̪	nd	ndʒ	ŋg	

Table 1

Comments :

- Gweno is notable for its dental consonants; whereas alveolar /t/ is articulated quite close to the dental ridge (it sounds, in fact, much more like French than English "t"), /t̪/ is actually inter-dental and rather hard to distinguish from fricative /θ/. No such problem arises with the pre-nasal stops, since /nd/ is articulated quite far back, and there is no voiced dental to confuse with /n̪/⁵

- /d/ is articulated at approximately the same place as /t/ but not strongly implosive, whereas /b/ is definitely [b] with most speakers; /g/ is very infrequent and so is (non-pre-nasalised) /dʒ/.

Other consonants do not present any peculiarity relative to the systems of most neighbouring languages.

2.2. Vowels

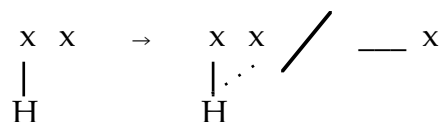
Gweno has five vowels, /i, e, a, o, u/, all short, although hetero-syllabic sequences are found when an etymological consonant (mostly /l/) has dropped out, e.g. : -andaa "prepare", -háa "shave", mkúu "fig-tree", -fwéé "many", etc.

2.3. Suprasegmentals

Gweno tone is relatively simple in comparison with other members of the Chaga group (for an example of which see Mc Hugh, to appear). It is rather reminiscent of the various Asu tone systems (as described by Kähler-Meyer 1962, 1964 and Odden 1985). Whether this similitude is due to simplification through contact with Asu or rather to the fact that Gweno has escaped the increase in complexity undergone by other Chaga tone systems is not known.

Basically, Gweno distinguishes High (indicated by an acute accent over the vowel) and Low tones (no mark). Tones tend generally to remain associated to the vowel to which they are initially linked (in contrast to the situation found in most Chaga dialects⁶). The most notable - and practically the only - tone process in Gweno is Tone Doubling, which can be formulated as follows

Tone Doubling :



I.e. a H linked to a vowel will associate again to an immediately following non-H vowel, provided the latter is not itself immediately followed by a H or a pause. E.g. :

- (1) mbú r i "goat"
- (2) mbú r í y akwá "my goat"

but

- (3) mbú r i t á kwá "my goats"

In (1) the H first syllable of mbú r i cannot associate again to the second syllable, since the latter is followed by pause. In (2), the syllable in question is followed by another L syllable so the H of the first syllable can associate to it. On the other hand, in (3) it is also followed by another syllable, but this one is H and so Tone Doubling cannot apply.

This is what occurs in careful speech. In more natural speech, Tone Doubling tends to apply even when a H syllable follows, but then a down-step (or key-lowering, here symbolised by a raised exclamation mark) occurs between the syllable having received a H by Tone Doubling and the next H syllable, so : mbú r í ! ṭá kwá. We will not indicate this phenomenon in the present article since it would make examples less easy to read and would not contribute much to the discussion since our focus is not here on tonal processes.

3.0. Noun phrase.

3.1. Noun classes

class	noun	adjective	pronominal	enumerative
1	m-	m-	u-	u-
2	βa-	βa-	βá-	βá-, bá-
3	m-	m-	ú-	ú-
4	mi-	mi-	i-	i-
5	i-	i-	lí-	lí-
6	ma-	ma-	ɣá-	á-
7	ki-	ki-	kí-	kí-
8	fi-	fi-	fí-	fí-
9	n-	n-, ndzi-	i-	i-
10	n-	n-, ndzi-	ṭí-	í-
10a	ndzu-	n-, ndzi-	ṭí-	í-
11	u-	lu-	lú-	lú-
12	ka-	ka-	ká-	ká-
13	ru-	ru-	rú-	rú-
14	βu-	βu-	βú-	βú-
15	ku-	ku-	kú-	kú-
16	ha-	ha	há-	há
17			kú-	

Table 2

Independent and dependent class prefixes

3.1.1. Notes on table 2

3.1.1.1. The various categories presented in each column are as follows :

- Nouns : all the independent nominals in the language, that is those whose class membership is not determined by morphological agreement with another item

- Adjectives : a fairly restricted list of stems, which can take any of the class prefixes of the language, as determined by their head noun. The most common adjectival stems of Gweno are :

- a t f á : long, tall	- i t f á : good, beautiful
- d ú : small	- é wa : white
- y w í h í : short	- h y á : new
- í ŋ g i : many	- í u : black
- r w é : big	- θ ú θ e : narrow
- β í t f w a : bad, ugly	- β í f i : unripe

(It should be noted that a number of adjectival concepts are expressed in Gweno by verb forms, particularly in the "perfect" stem).

- Pronominal elements are : demonstratives (but cf. below), possessives, and the stems - ó f e "all", - i ŋ g í "other" and - (l) i ŋ g á (tones doubtful) "which".

- Enumerative elements are cardinal numbers 1 to 5 (included), namely :

- m w í : one	- β í : two
- r á r u : three	- n a : four
- t á n u : five	

Other numerals (e.g. m t á n d á t ú, six, or k e n d á, nine) are in fact independent nominals and do not agree in class with their head noun.

Note that with the class 10 prefix, the numeral stems - r á r u, - n a and - t á n u appear as - θ á r u, - ŋ a and - θ w á n u respectively; thus (regular shape) m a r é n d é á - r á r u, á - n a, á - t á n u '3, 4, 5 legs', but n d e y é í - θ á r u, í - ŋ a, í - θ w á n u '3, 4, 5 birds'.⁸

3.1.1.2. Remarks on the shape and distribution of class prefixes and morphophonemics :

a) generally speaking, the class prefixes are identical for nouns and adjectives (exceptions : classes 10a and 11 and partly 9 and 10) and for pronominal and enumerative elements (exceptions : classes 10 and 10a and partly 2)

b) the vowel of any prefix of the shape / (C)i - / desyllabifies before /u/, /o/, /e/ and /a/ yielding / (C)y - / :

cl. 7 : kyámu 'face' < ki-ámu; kyombó 'banana dish' < ki-ombó

cl. 8 : fyúri 'mortar' < fi-úri; fyéru 'our' < fi-éru

before /i/, the result is coalescence :

cl. 7 : kímbe 'corpse' < ki-ímbe; kíndze 'shadow' < ki-índze

cl. 8 : fínge 'many' < fi-ínge

In one case, we find coalescence with /e/ :

keru 'chin' < ki-eru

N.B. in some cases, desyllabification does not take place, presumably because of the presence of a stem initial consonant at an earlier stage of the language :

kió 'night' < *ki-ló; kiéngé 'store' < *ki-(?)éngé

Furthermore, the class 5 nominal prefix does not seem ever to desyllabify :

iéndzé 'cockroach'; iópa 'flower'

On the other hand the class 10 pronominal prefix /tí- / always drops its vowel before another vowel :

tóje 'all' < tí-óje; tákwá 'my' < tí-ákwá

c) Similarly, prefixes of the shape (C)u- desyllabify before /a/, /e/ and /i/ :

cl. 3 : mwíri 'moon, month' < mu-íri

cl. 11 : lwéru 'our' < lú-éru

cl. 14 : βwáγá 'Chaga country' < βu-aγá

before back vowels coalescence takes place :

cl. 3 móngó 'lie' < mu-óngó; mumu 'mouth' < mu-umu

cl. 11 lúfwi : chameleon < lu-úfwi

cl. 14 βúkí 'honey' < βu-úkí; βóngó 'brain' < βu-óngó

In a few cases in classes 1 and 3, the initial stem vowel disappears, leaving only its H tone as witness to its underlying presence :

cl. 1 : mmi 'husband' < mu-úmi

cl. 3 : mfwa 'thorn' < mu-úfwa

d) a prefix of the shape Ca- coalesces with /a/ to give /a/, with /e/ and /i/ > /e/, with /o/ and /u/ > /o/ :

cl. 2 : $\beta\acute{a}na$ 'children' < $\beta a-\acute{a}na$; $\beta\acute{e}r\acute{u}$ 'our' < $\beta\acute{a}-\acute{e}r\acute{u}$; $\beta\acute{o}mi$ 'husbands' < $\beta a-\acute{u}mi$

cl. 6 : $me\ t\acute{f}\acute{a}$ 'good' < $ma-e\ t\acute{f}\acute{a}$; $m\acute{e}\eta gi$ 'many' < $ma-\acute{i}\eta gi$

e) the class 1 and 3 nominal and adjectival prefixes which are underlyingly /mu-/ have the allomorph /m-/ before consonant stems: $mr\acute{i}\ mt\acute{f}\acute{a}$ 'good tree', but $mw\acute{i}n\acute{i}\ mwa\ t\acute{f}\acute{a}$ 'long handle'

f) the class 5 nominal prefix is generally /i-/, but there are a few exceptions where it is /r(i)-/, e.g. : $r-\acute{i}\theta o$ 'eye', pl. $m\acute{e}\theta o/m\acute{i}\theta o$ < $ma-\acute{i}\theta o$.

g) in classes 9 and 10 the nominal prefix is an homorganic nasal, which coalesces with stem-initial consonants to produce pre-nasalised initials. A relatively few alternant stems, either adjectival or nominal, offer evidence of such processes, whereby $N + r > ndr$, $N + l > ndl$, $N + \theta > nd\theta$, $N + k > \eta g$, $N + \gamma > \eta g$, $N + \beta > mb$, $N + h > mb$ as in :

- $r\acute{w}\acute{e}$: big > $nduw\acute{e}$ (cl. 9/10)	$ur\acute{i}\theta i$, pl. $nd\acute{i}\theta i$: string
- $\beta\acute{i}\ t\acute{f}wa$: bad > $mb\acute{i}\ t\acute{f}wa$ (")	$uliko$, pl. $ndiko$: spoon
- $hy\acute{a}$: new > $mby\acute{a}$ (")	$u\theta\acute{e}\eta ge$, pl. $nd\acute{e}\eta ge$: stick
- $\gamma w\acute{i}h\acute{i}$: short > $\eta gw\acute{i}h\acute{i}$ (")	$ukw\acute{i}$, pl. $\eta gw\acute{i}$: firewood

A trace of $N + h > mb$ can also be seen in the following pair :

$w\acute{e}mb\acute{e}$, pl. $mb\acute{e}mb\acute{e}$: horn

where however the evidence is rather of a diachronic nature, h (< Eastern Bantu *p) having here reduced to \emptyset .

It thus appears that the result of pre-nasalisation is always a voiced stop and there are indeed no pre-nasalised voiceless stops in Gweno as against the situation in Asu. Although, the majority of noun stems do not alternate, it is easy to see that most 9/10 nouns begin with a pre-nasalised voiced consonant, or else with /p/ before vowel stems (cf. word-list in Appendix I). Nevertheless, a number of class 9/10 nouns begin with a non-nasal consonant or a vowel, such as :

$h\acute{o}r\acute{i}$: giraffe	$\acute{o}ro$: he-goat
$f\acute{i}nd\acute{i}ko$: buttock	$t\acute{u}t\acute{u}$: heel
$t\acute{e}ri$: soil	$t\acute{f}ila$: council

etc. Most of these are loans from non-Bantu sources.

h) class 10a is an alternative form of the nominal prefix for class 10 as the plural of class 11. It is transparently formed by prefixing /ndz(i)/ to

the class 11 form including the prefix, and thus constitutes a case of double prefixation, e.g. :

u-lími : tongue > pl. ndz-u-lími

u-ríθi : string > pl. ndz-u-ríθi

In many cases, the class 10 and 10a prefixes can apparently be used interchangeably :

uríθi : string > pl. ndíθi / ndzuríθi

uβari : rib > pl. mbari / ndzuβari

It must be stressed that only the nominal prefix exhibits this specifically class 10a form; all the concords are identical to ordinary class 10 :

many ribs: mbari níngi / ndzuβari níngi

three strings: ndíθi íráru / ndzuríθi íráru

The initial prefixal element in 10a, namely /ndz/, is strongly reminiscent of the allomorph /ndzi/ of the class 9/10 adjectival prefix to be found before monosyllabic stems, and occasionally elsewhere :

pumbá ndzidú : a small house, small houses

mbúri mbítɟwa / ndziβítɟwa : a bad goat, bad goats

i) it will be noted that adjectival prefixes are identical with independent nominal prefixes, except in classes 10a and 11; also enumerative concords are identical with pronominal except in classes 6 and 10 (one should note the curious behaviour of the class 2 enumerative concord, which is /βá-/ in most cases (identical with the pronominal concord), but exceptionally /bá-/ with the stem /-na/ 'four', as in

βandu βáráru : 3 people, vs. βandu bána : 4 people

j) nominal and adjectival prefixes are all L, pronominal and enumerative prefixes are all H apart from classes 1, 4 and 9 (a common occurrence in Eastern Bantu).

k) the class 5 pronominal prefix /lí-/ is generally realised /y/ before /a/ (for instance in the connective /yá/ 'of') and occasionally before other vowels as well (cf. demonstratives below).

l) class 16 contains only the one noun handu 'place' which shows regular concords. Lexicalised remnants of Class 17 (with fossilised ku- prefix) appear in items such as kua 'far' and kumoθó 'on the left'.

N.B. There exists in Gweno, as in many East African Bantu languages, a general locative suffix *-iɲi*. If the final vowel of the noun to which this suffix cliticises is /a/, then it changes to /e/, as in *ndiβa* 'pool' > *ndiβeɲi*; otherwise, the initial /i/ of the suffix drops, as in *mfo* 'river' > *mfoɲi*, *mri* 'town' > *mriɲi*, *ɲuŋgú* 'pot' > *ɲuŋgúɲi*, *iɣwe* 'stone' > *iɣweɲi*, etc. The meaning of this suffix is very general and can be translated as 'at, in, to, on, etc.'. It should be noted that, contrary to the situation in Swahili, this suffix in no way affects the class membership of the noun to which it cliticises.

Cf.

átʃítʃa mtáéɲi wérú wé : he doesn't come to our village
(N.B. *mtáa wérú* "our village"; and contrast with Swahili :
ki j i j i chetu "our village", *ki j i j i ni kwetu* "to our village")

3.2. Demonstratives :

As Swahili, Gweno has a three-way contrast in demonstratives, referring respectively to 'this, that, that-just-over-there or already mentioned'. Their shapes are as follows.

class	near dem.	far dem.	dem. of ref.
1	˘u	uyá, wiyá	˘θo, ˘wo
2	˘βa	βáyá	˘βo
3	˘u	úyá, wíyá	˘θo
4	˘i	iyá	˘yo
5	˘li	líyá, íyá	˘yo
6	˘ɣa	ɣáyá	˘ɣo
7	˘ki	kíyá	˘kyo
8	˘fi	fíyá	˘fyo
9	˘i	iyá	˘yo
10	˘t̪i	t̪íyá	˘t̪o
11	˘lu	lúyá, lwíyá	˘lwo
12	˘ka	káyá	˘ko
13	˘ru	rúyá, rwíyá	˘rwo
14	˘βu	βúyá, βwíyá	˘βwo
15	˘ku	kúyá, kwíyá	˘kwo
16	˘ha	háyá	˘ho

Table 2

3.2.1. Comments on table 2 :

- the shape of the demonstratives of the first and the third columns (on whose function more below) needs some explanation. As given, they are all L-toned, but preceded by a floating H. This can be seen most clearly when their head noun (to whose final syllable they cliticise directly) is itself entirely L. In this case, the final syllable of the noun is raised to H. Examples :

ɲumbé t̩o t̩ít̩firéka : the cows (in question) usually get lost
(lexical tones ɲumbe)

mɣaŋgá u n̩í mt̩f̩á kirúmō : this medicine-man is very good
(lexical tones mɣaŋga)

mfirí θo... : on that day... (lexical tones mfiri)

With nouns whose final syllable is H, there is of course no difference :

ɲgúkú i n̩í nduwé : this chicken is big (lexical tones ɲgúkú)

The origin of this floating H is probably to be seen in the shape of the demonstratives used pronominally, for which we have unfortunately but few examples, e.g. :

f̩indó f̩í kaná ífi f̩íŋgí? : these things or those ? (litt.
these things or these others?)

ífi n̩í f̩ipf̩úbí? : are these chairs ?

It is probable that the cliticisation of the demonstrative has brought about the loss of the initial vowel, with the H tone remaining to dock on the final vowel of the noun, thus :

f̩indo ífi > f̩indo ʼfi > f̩indó fi

3.2.2. it is to be noted also that although the shape of the far demonstrative stem is /-yá/ there is epenthesis involved if the immediately preceding vowel is /u/, as in cl. 1 u-yá giving wi yá, etc.

3.2.3. as to their meaning, the near and far demonstratives, as their names imply, refer to entities situated near and far from the speaker respectively; the so-called "demonstrative of reference" is usually used to refer to entities previously mentioned in discourse.

3.3. The connective (extra-dependent prefix) and possessives

The connective (extra-dependent prefix in M. Guthrie's terminology) appears as /-a/ (intrinsically toneless, but assimilating to the tone of the class prefix cf. 3.1.1.2.j) to which are prefixed class markers of the pronominal series; the agreement is always with the head noun (i.e. the pos-

sessed). Various relations are marked by the connective, rather similar to the use of the genitive in several Indo-European languages :

ɲama ʈ-á sakéɲi : wild animals (lit. animals of in-the-bush)
 irítʃa y-á βáyonu : the flight (lit. running) of the Gweno
 uríyóɲi w-á maθálé : at the hedge of Dracaena plants
 ndiβa y-a kiβia : Kivia's pool¹⁰

When the connective is followed by a noun bearing the class 7 prefix *ki-*, the construction translates as adjectival (the same is found widely among Bantu languages)

mwáná w-a kiθwía : a Suya child, i.e. of the Suya clan¹¹
 káθí y-a kimaɲgí : chiefly activity (maɲgí 'chief')

N.B. The two colour adjectives *-éwa* 'white' and *-íu* 'black', in fact always appear as nominalised forms in cl. 9 (/10 ?) preceded by the connective, e.g. :

igóndzi y-á ndzíu : a black sheep
 ndzofu ʈ-á ndzíu : black elephants
 mbúrí y-a ndzéwa : a white goat
 ɲgúkú ʈ-á ndzéwa : white chickens

- Ordinals are formed by use of the connective and the Class 12 enumerative prefix on the numeral in the case of a stem taking agreement, or just the connective followed by the numeral noun: *mndu wa ká-βí*, *wa ká-ráru*, *wa ká-na*, *wa ká-tánu*, but *wa kendá*, etc, '2nd, 3rd ... 9th person'. 'First' is expressed by *-eβóka* (connective *a+i-βóka* 'to-start'): *mndu w-eβóka*, *handu h-éβóka*, *ɲumbe y-eβóka*, *βurá βw-éβóka*, *ibóré ly-éβóka*, *mabóré γ-éβóka* 'first man, place, cow, bow, egg, eggs'.

The possessive seems to be formed by the connective prefixed to a series of stems :

my	-akwá	our	-erú
thy	-apfó	your	-eɲú
his / her	-akwé	their	-aβó

In the same way as with the connective, the tone of the first syllable of the possessive stems is always identical to that of the prefix, so :

miri yaβó 'their villages' < *i-a-βó*, but *miri wáβó* 'their village' < *ú-á-βó*

In theory, there should be as many possessive stems as there are classes; although our data are scarce on this point, it seems that, like in Swahili, contemporary usage does not generally use those forms.

3.4. Class pairings (genders)

The common Eastern Bantu pairings obtain (singular first): 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-10 (or 10a), 12-13, 14-6, 15-6. Examples:

- 1/2 m-ɣonu/βa-ɣonu : Gweno(s)
 3/4 m-rí/mi-rí : tree(s)
 5/6 i-bóré/ma-bóré : egg(s)
 7/8 ki-pfúmbí/fi-pfúmbí : chair(s)
 9-10 n-dí/n-dí : knee(s)
 11-10 u-kwí/ŋ-gwí : stick(s) of firewood
 12/13 ka-m-rí / ru-mi-rí : small tree(s)¹²
 14/6 βu-rá/ma-βu-rá : bow(s)¹³
 15/6 ku-βóko/ma-βóko : arm(s).

For other possible pairings our data are sparse: e.g. 14/10a βu-rá/ndzuru-rá 'bow(s)' (as an alternative to 14/6).

12/13 is the (derived) diminutive pair. For most classes, the diminutive marker is prefixed to the existing marker (ka-m-ndu 'small person', ka-m-rí 'small tree', plurals ru-βa-ndu, ru-mi-rí): in a few, it replaces the regular marker (ku-réndé 'leg' but ka-réndé 'small leg').

8 can also act as the plural of 12, so ngúkú 'chicken', ka-ngúkú 'small chicken', plural either ru-ngúkú or fi-ngúkú. Within any class, further degrees of size can be added by using adjectives, so ngúkú ndzi-dú 'small (ordinary) chicken', but ka-ngúkú ka-dú 'small (small) chicken'.

3.5. Agreement

Gweno is unlike Swahili in that there are no adjectives that do not agree, and concord is not affected by factors such as +/- animate. Grammatical concord tends to obtain throughout those elements affected by concord. Thus kíte kíyá kíllepfwíe 'that dog died' (Swahili : mbwa yule alikufa).

4.0. Verb

The Gweno one-word verb has the shape:

(1) Preprefix - (2) Subject Prefix - (3) Tense Aspect Marker - (4) Object Prefix - (5) Radical - (6) Extension - (7) Tense Aspect Mood Suffix

Only positions 5 and 7 must be filled in all verb forms, although position 2 is only empty in the imperative. Most conjugated forms exhibit morphemes at positions 2, 3, 5 and 7. Here is an example of one form with all positions filled :

ńfwâβákóréra "we are cooking for them" < n í - f u - a - β á - k ó r - e r - a

Radical and extension(s) (i.e. (5) and (6)) taken together are called the **base**; the base plus the suffix at (7) make up the **stem**.

We now examine each position in turn (positions 3 and 7 will be discussed together in the section on tenses cf. 4.2. below) :

Position 1 is only occupied by the morpheme ń- in one tense (cf. below 4.2.1.4.3.)

Position 2 is occupied by the subject prefix which always agrees in class with the subject either expressed or implied; position 4 is occupied by the object prefix which agrees in class with the direct object of the verb but cannot normally co-occur with it¹⁴ (contrast with Swahili, where both can be present, e.g. niliona kitabu "I saw a book", nilikiona kitabu "I saw the book"). The following table lists subject and object prefixes (including 1st and 2nd person markers, singular and plural, which can be considered as part of classes 1 and 2 respectively). The similarity in shape with the pronominal prefixes dealt with above is conspicuous with a few exceptions.

class	subject	object
1a (i.e. 1st person sg.)	n i - / θ i - ¹⁵	-n i -
1b (2nd. person sg.)	ku-, u- ¹⁶	-ku-
1c (3rd. person sg.)	a-	-m-
2a (1st person pl.)	f u -	-f ú -
2b (2nd person pl.)	m-	-ń-
2c (3rd. person pl.)	β a -	-β á -
3	u-	-ú-
4	i-	-í-
5	l i -	-l í -
6	ɣ a -	-ɣ á -
7	k i -	-k í -
8	f i -	-f í -
9	i-	-í-
10	ṭ i -	-ṭ í -
11	l u -	-l ú -
12	k a -	-k á -

13	ru-	-rú-
14	βu-	-βú-
15	ku-	-kú-
16	ha-	-há-

N.B. Class 1 object prefixes are L, all others H¹⁷. On the other hand, the tones of subject prefixes vary with the type of verb tense in which they are found. Basically, in positive non-dependent tenses, 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b prefixes are L, all the others H. In relative and other dependent forms, all subject prefixes are L; in negative forms all are H.

Position 5 : as in most Bantu languages the canonical form of verb radicals is -CVC-, but there are numerous exceptions. A list of verb radicals will be found in the Lexicon. Tonally, radicals divide into H and L.

Position 6 : Extensions

Extensions are derivational suffixes which are added to a verbal radical to modify its syntactic valency or its lexical meaning.

Six such extensions can be clearly identified, denoting: reversive, stative, applicative, reciprocal, causative, and passive. Although we have some data containing combinations of these, the data are inadequate to make definitive statements about the order in which they are combined.

The stative, applicative, and causative show vowel harmony with the final stem vowel. In the stative and causative, /e/ appears after the two mid-vowels, otherwise /i/. In the applicative, the same situation seems to obtain, except that here both /-i-/ and /-e-/ occur after /-e/, with no obvious conditioning.

4.1.1. Reversive /-u-/

Exs. :

-déγa 'trap' > -déγ-ú-a 'release from trap'
 -téma 'cut down' > -tém-ú-a 'clear field'

4.1.2. Stative /-ek-, -ik-/

Exs.

-réma 'farm' > -rém-ék-a 'be cultivatable'
 -βóna 'see' > -βón-ék-a 'be visible'
 -áγa 'build' > -áγ-ík-a 'be buildable, be a-building'

-*ɲwá* 'drink' > -*ɲúɣ-ík-a* 'be drinkable' (-*ɲúɣ-* is a suppletive radical for /-*ɲw-*/).

4.1.3 Applicative /-(l)e-, -(l)i-, -er-, -ir-/

The first two forms are the most frequent: /-l-/ is inserted after vowel stems. /-er-/ and /-ir-/ occur only with a handful of stems, with no obvious conditioning context.

- radicals with /-a-/, /-i-/ and /-u-/

-*iβara* 'walk' > -*iβar-i-a* 'walk after = follow'
 -*láa* 'sleep' > -*lál-í-a* 'sleep on'
 -*fika* 'arrive' > -*fik-i-a* 'arrive at, approach'
 -*íríka* 'answer a call' > -*írík-i-a* 'accept, agree'
 -*fúma* 'go out' > -*fúm-í-a* 'leave = go out from'
 -*ɣaluka* 'turn around' > -*ɣaluk-i-a* 'surround'

- radicals with /-e- or -o-/
 -*léɣa* 'refuse' > -*léɣ-í-a* 'prevent'
 -*kwéa* 'climb' > -*kwé-lé-a* 'climb onto'
 -*lémba* 'cheat' > -*lémb-é-a* 'id.'
 -*tóla* 'jump' > -*tól-é-a* 'jump onto'
 -*toyota* 'speak loud' > -*toyot-e-a* 'rebuke'

-*kóra* 'cook' > -*kór-ér-a* 'cook for'
 -*kúndza* 'twist' > -*kúndz-ír-a* 'be round'

-*yá* 'eat' > *kakidzó kadú ké-líɣ-í-a* 'a little food for the-eating-of' (-*líɣ-* is a suppletive radical also found in other forms: see -*ɲwa* / -*ɲuɣ-* in X above)

4.1.4 Reciprocal /-an-/ Exs.:

-*káβa* 'hit' > -*káβ-án-a* 'fight'
 -*iβar-i-a* 'follow' > -*iβar-i-an-a* 'follow one another'
 -*leka* 'leave' > -*lek-an-a* 'separate'

4.1.5 Causative : various

Causative suffixes are several and varied, some verbs having more than one possible form. In the ancestral language, the causative suffix

must have been a super-close front vowel, which caused a number of changes in the radical-final consonant. These changes nowadays appear as alternants. The following cases are attested

/-k/ > /-t̪/
 /-m/ > /-p/
 /-ø < -l/ > /-r/
 /-β/ > /-ʃ-/

[It was probably the case that in the past the main causative formative was /-i-/, which caused regular change in the preceding stem final consonant, and was deleted after some consonants. Cases of which we have more than one example are:]

-i nuka 'go home' > -i nu t̪ a 'divorce = make go home'
 -ʃe ka 'laugh' > -ʃe t̪ a 'make laugh'
 -βúka 'wake up' > -βú t̪ a 'wake sb. up'
 -fúma 'go out' > -fúpa 'emit = make go out'
 -nu a 'recover' > -nu r a 'cure = make recover'
 -βaβa 'be sharp' > -βa ʃ a 'sharpen'

Such forms have increasingly been replaced by two forms, /-ʃ-/ (/ -eʃ-/, / -iʃ-/) and /-θ-/ (/ -eθ-/, / -iθ-/), generalised from contexts once predictable. Most causatives are no longer predictable and have to be learned. Examples:

-runduka 'fly' > -rundu-ʃ-a 'blow away' (the old shape can be seen in -rundu t̪ i r e, which is the /-i r e/ 'perfect' form: see 4.2. below)
 -hó a 'be cool' > -hó r-éʃ-a 'make cool' (-hó r a is the old form)
 -kánga 'be startled' > -káng-íʃ-a 'startle'
 -ywa 'fall' > -yu-θ-a 'drop'
 -ánána 'match' > -ánán-iʃ-a 'compare'
 -óŋga 'suck' > -óŋg-éθ-a 'make suck'

4.1.6. Passive /-w-/

Exs.:

-θamba 'wash' > -θamb-w-a 'be washed'

- l o l e a 'look at' > -l o l e -w -a 'be looked at'
- β í k a 'put' > -β í k -w -a 'be put'; -β í k -í -a 'put on' > -β í k -í -w -a 'be put on'
- dú 'small' > -dú í k a 'be diminished': mndu a -dú -í k -i r í -w -e n í mrwé 'person whose mind ('head') has gone'

Note the agent of the passive verb is introduced by n í.

4.2. Tense and Aspect

Tense and aspect are expressed by some combination of formatives at positions (3) and (7) in the formula given above under 4.0. Position (3) can be filled by a multiplicity of morphemes, on which more will be said presently. Position (7) can be filled by only three suffixes: /-a/, /-e/ and /-ie/, tones varying according to the particular form used. /-a/ is the general, unmarked suffix; /-e/ is characteristic of the dependent form generally called "subjunctive" by Bantuists (see 4.3.7. below); /-ie/ is the suffix of the so-called "perfect stem" (cf. Berger 1938, Bastin, 1983), which has in Gweno the following allomorphs :

- in the majority of cases /-ie/ :
 - γ end-a : go > -γ end-ie
 - f u r -a : want > -f u r -ie
 - r em -a : cultivate > -r em -ie
 - β í k -a : put > -β í k -ie
 - o β o h -a : be afraid > -o β o h -ie
 - t f -a : come > -t f -ie
 - b a r i k -a : be broken > -b a r i k -ie
- if the verb base ends in a vowel, then /-rie/
 - k o l e -a : find, meet > -k o l e -rie
 - k u -a : be large, grow > -k u -rie
 - embe-a : herd cattle > -embe-rie
 - ondo-a : take > -ondo-rie
- this also applies if the base-final vowel is an extension
 - β í k -i -a : put for > -β í k -i -rie
 - f um -i -a : happen > -f um -i -rie
- if the base ends in the passive marker /-w-/, results may vary:
 - t f a b -w -a : be carved, cut > -t f a b -w -e
 - r e γ -w -a : be left > -r e γ -w -e
 - r um -w -a : be sent > -r um -i -w -e
 - b a r -w -a : be broken > -b a r -i r -w -e

Not enough is known about the conditioning of such variations, although it would seem that if the base ends in /-rw-/, then the perfect stem will take /-i rwe/.

- with other extensions, imbrication applies (for which cf. Bastin 1983):

-kaβ-a n-a : fight (reciprocal extension) > -keβ-e n-e

-θaŋg-a n-a : meet, mix > -θeŋg-e n-e

cf. also

-i l a γ-a : call > -i l e γ-e (where -a γ- does not seem to be an extension)

- other cases:

-n i k-a : give > -n i k-e

-r u a : live, stay > -r u-e

-u r-a : have > -u r-e

-i t f w-a : hear > -i t f w-e

-βw a r-a : get > -βw e r-e (note imbrication)

-l a-a : sleep > -l e-e

-f w-a : be numerous > -f w-e e

Note also :

-βo n-a : see > -βo n-i r-e

-βu ṭ-a : remove > -βu ṭ-i r-e

4.2.1. Past and future tenses

The exact number of past and future tenses in Gweno is rather hard to establish. Although some informants would insist that Gweno has a three-way distinction for both past and future, data from texts and questionnaires do not make it absolutely clear that this is so. A remote / recent past distinction is obvious (the tense markers are discussed immediately below) but the supposed "middle" past category involves two markers of rather dubious status, namely /-γe-/ and /-βe-/.

We will first deal with the two clear past categories.

4.2.1.1. Remote past¹⁸ /-l é- -i e/ (N.B. subject prefixes have 'normal' tones, i.e. 1st and 2nd person prefixes, singular and plural, are L, all others H).

As can be seen, the stem of this tense is the perfect stem detailed above under 4.2. The tense marker /-l é-/ has a deviant tonal behaviour, in so far as, on the one hand, its H tone never doubles onto a following L sylla-

will offer an analysis of that stem in the section on the negative near past below (4.2.3.)

As regards the semantics of this tense, it seems to extend from the remotest past up to, and including, yesterday, as the following examples illustrate:

iβóká βayonu βá-le-rúé θehému ṭá táβetá : at first, the Gweno lived around Taveta.

findó fi fí-le-fúmírie kalá : these things happened long ago

ípfó kalá βáyonu βá-le-kéβéne na βakwáβi : long ago the Gweno fought with the Maasai

á-le-βúkíe képí na kakidzó kadú ká ndzía : he had left home with a very small amount of food for the road

ku-lé-βwáyíe kí íyuó ? : what did you kill yesterday ?

íyuó ikéró, maṅgí á-lé-ileye βandu : yesterday morning, the chief called the people

ḡumbe yakwá í-le-rékíe íyuó : my cow got lost yesterday

We even have found the following example with reference to "this morning", which is normally rendered by the Near Past:

fu-lé-ítjwe mwána ákyâfúyá iθapá ikéro : we heard the child crying this morning

4.2.1.2. Near Past/-Ø- -íe/. (NB : Subject prefixes are all L in this tense)²¹

This tense form would be more precisely described as referring both to near past time but also to perfect aspect (with point of origin not necessarily near). Some examples clearly illustrate the former, others the latter and many are ambivalent.

fu-βúkíe kwá maṅgí iθapá ikéró : we left the chief's place this morning

a-ḡendíé iḡepwá mríṅga : he has gone to drink water

ku-θambíé θaháni ṭó na mríṅga wá móro ? : have you washed the plates with hot water ?

ni-éंबरíe mbúrí mifiri míṅgi : I have herded goats for many days

mndú ú a-βwáyíé mndu uṅgí : this person has killed someone else

kió ni-furíé ilolea mwírí na nondó : at night I like to
 watch the moon and the stars
 pama t̥íngí t̥i-boríe : some of the meat is rotten

4.2.1.3. Other pasts ?

The perfect stem is also used with two other Tense/Aspect markers, namely /-ye-/ and /-βe-/. Some informants, when pressed to translate these, suggest they refer to some sort of "middle" past, intermediate between Remote and Near. Evidence in our possession does not seem to bear out such an analysis. We will refer to each marker in turn.

4.2.1.3.1. /-ye-/

This marker has a variety of uses which need spelling out:

- 1) it differs from all other tense/aspect markers in that it can appear in nominal forms with the meaning "agent", thus

-áya 'build' > m-ye-áya 'builder, mason'

-kafa 'hunt' > m-ye-kafa 'hunter'

-βúmba 'mould pots' > m-ye-βúmba 'pot-maker', etc.

- 2) it appears in infinitive forms (infinitives are in class 5 in Gweno), generally after a verb of motion:

ínâyenda i-ye-rúyúa mlaŋgo : I am going to open the door

akâyenda i-ye-rémá : he went farming

nitfiβwíá i-ye-mtéθéa mamá ndimá t̥á képi : I return to help my mother with her homework

- 3) it (frequently) replaces the subjunctive, also after verbs of motion:

maŋgí akarúmá βandu βéŋgí βá-yé-lambua handu βakeí :
 the chief sent other people to look for the place where they were
 akaβáβíá ku βáyénde βá-yé-mwondoa : they told them to go
 and remove him

βakamtíka kwá m̥yanga néθa á-yé-riyitwa : they took him
 to the medicine-man so that he be cured

- 4) it is part of the Near Future marker /-aye-/ (see below 4.2.1.4.2)

- 5) it is frequently found in hypothetical phrases (see below 4.3.6.)

Apart from all the uses outlined above /-ye-/ also co-occurs with the perfect stem in relationship to events conceived as having taken place before the reference point (generally rendered in English by the Pluperfect) [N.B. subject prefixes have 'normal' tone]:

kiθibíti tʃéróra ku na mria-mri á-γé-ɲie handu hó : a
proof showing that the town-watcher too had defecated in that
place

mká wiyá aránaǵmália ikóra, βá-γé-tʃie : before that
woman had finished cooking, they (had) arrived

Most examples of this tense are in relative constructions (see below
4.3.1. for general considerations on the relative - NB: subject prefixes in
positive relative forms are all L):

βakayenda handu titílá a-γe-βwá rí riwe : they went to the
place where Titila had been caught

wiyá unḡí a-γe-léγíe imfíá mafúra akaréγwa hó : that
other one who had refused to smear her with oil was left there

mká wiyá a-γe-ítʃúe mwáná wiyá akíimbá θakéɲí
akaléγá iβáβía handu mwáná akeí : the woman who had
heard the child singing in the bush refused to tell them where
the child was

In the face of these data, it does not seem likely that the reference of the
marker /-γe-/ with perfect stem is to any "middle" past. Rather it appears
to be a perfect aspect with relative past tense reference.

4.2.1.3.2. /-βe-/

This marker is much less frequent than the previous one. It is mostly
found with the perfect stem, and often in hypothetical contexts (see below
4.3.6.. Practically the only other example in our corpus is:

maḡí áβéγambie ku áletʃúkí rwe kirúmo : the chief said he
was very angry [when is not clear]

No conclusion can be drawn from such restricted data.

4.2.1.4. Present and future tenses:

As in many languages, there is considerable overlapping between pre-
sent and future tenses in Gweno

4.2.1.4.1. Far future: /-atʃe- -a/

This tense, of which we have extremely few examples is said by infor-
mants to refer to a remote future tense:

f-w-atʃe-γua maruyú : we will buy bananas (some day)

mfiri úmwí á-tʃé-θaḡana na kindo : some day he'll get
into trouble (lit. he will meet with something)

4.2.1.4.2. Near future: /-aɣe- -a/ (cf. 4.2.1.3.1. above)

This tense is reasonably frequent and seems to refer to a future not as distant as the previous tense; subject prefixes have ‘normal’ tone:

kóle kámba yó ikarúbúka, fw-aɣe-ʃiɣa iŋgí : if this rope breaks, we’ll look for another one

kw-aɣe-tʃa ŋgamá : will you come tomorrow ?

fw-aɣe-fika índí ? fw-aɣe-fika kió : when shall we arrive ? we’ll arrive at night

βána β-áɣe-rúmwa ní βáɣoθí : the children will be sent by the elders

4.2.1.4.3. Present-future /-a- -a/

Nevertheless the vast majority of both present and future situations are rendered by this tense, which occurs under two variants: general and progressive:

a) The general present-future tense can be found in contexts referring to general present situations, to the present of perfective verbs (want, be able to, etc.), as well as to near future situations. Examples (subject prefixes have ‘normal’ tone, which coalesces with the L tone of the /-a-/ marker to give a falling tone in the case of a H prefix and a H initial stem syllable):

kílá kidzó tʃ-a-íra, titíla â-yá kadú : each food that passes by, Titila eats a little

kw-a-ʃiɣa ikí ? : what do you want ?

fw-a-ʃiɣa mríŋga wéfúlia : we want water for washing

kw-a-íríma úβóne ŋumbe n̄t̄âyá mará : you can see the cows (they are) grazing the grass

handu a-íríma idúdúma : a place where he can squat

â-βwíya índí ? : when is she coming back ?

kámba t̄ó t̄iké hó marépi ní t̄ápfó, fw-a-t̄íóndoa : the ropes that are there in the grass are yours, we’ll take them

fw-a-mwílaya ndíó ikéro : we’ll call your father in the morning

afuβíríé ku kw-a-βúká ŋgamá : he told us you will be leaving tomorrow

b) The progressive form is identical to the general present but the subject prefix is preceded by a H tone nasal consonant that we will symbolise as /ñ-/ and which assimilates to the place of articulation of the following consonant. There is however an exception: when the subject is in class 1 (non-participant) the progressive form is borrowed from another tense,

(briefly mentioned below); its shape is /á-kyâ- -a/. For clarity we present here the paradigm for class 1 and 2 subjects of the verb -yua 'buy':

ń-n-â-yua 'I am buying'	ń-fw-â-yua : we are buying
ń-kw-â-yua : you (sg.) are buying	ń-mw-â-yua : you (pl.) are buying
á-ky-â-yua : he is buying	ń-b-â-yua : they are buying

The reference of this tense is to situations in progress at the reference point, but future does not seem to be entirely excluded either. Examples:

ń-n-â-kutia mríngá ɲuɲgúɲi : I am pouring water into the pot

ń-kw-â-bara ɲgwí na ikí ? : what are you chopping wood with ?

βayaɲga ń-b-â-tfémhá mrí : the medicine-men are preparing medicine

nawé iβóná ku βandu ń-b-â-mrítfá akaβá rítfília : and he, seeing that people were running away from him, ran towards them

papá á-ky-â-yamba á-ky-â-réra móɲgó : my father says that she's telling lies

álemβíríe ńmí ku á-ky-â-yenda ikúβwáya : she told her husband that she was going to kill herself

When used in two-verb forms, either the /ń-/ or the /ń-/less form can be used with little discernable difference in meaning, which seems always progressive; the tones of the prefixes of the /ń-/less form (always L, so far as the reliability of the material allows us to judge) seem to indicate that we are dealing here with a relative construction:

mká umwí álé a-yenda iyefiya ɲgwí θakéɲi : a certain woman was going looking for firewood in the bush

ndza ikaβá í-a-mβáβía mnú : hunger was making him suffer greatly

βandu βakaβá ń-b-â-βéra : the people were waiting

βakaβá ń-b-â-mdéyía kílá mfiri : they were laying ambushes for him [lit. trapping him] every day

4.2.2. Aspect

Several aspects can be identified morphosyntactically. In general, aspect is marked by a formative at position (3). When the verb is unmarked for

tense, aspect occurs by itself. Combinations of tense and aspect are expressed by 1- or 2-word verbs. In 1-word verbs, the time reference also occurs at position (3), preceding the aspect marker. In 2-word verbs, tense is marked on the first verb, often an auxiliary, and aspect on the second. 2-word verbs most often have the same subject, but it is possible to have sequences of verbs in which the first and the second members have different subject referents. In these it is still the first member which establishes tense. Identifiable aspects are as follows:

4.2.2.1. Perfect: as seen above (4.2.1.2.) perfect aspect can be, and frequently is, expressed by the Near Past. However, another form is also found, namely: /-ndé(mi)- -a/. It would appear that the morpheme /-mi-/ (actually mostly realised as /-m-/ when present) is optional. The difference between this form and the Near Past as regards aspect is that the /-ndé-/ form is verb-focusing, whereas the Near Past in its aspectual meaning is noun-focusing²². Examples (subject tones are ‘normal’):

aka í t fwa á-ndé-í yú t a : he felt satiated
 akaβáβíá ku mwáná waβó á-ndé-mírwa ní ndíβa : he told them that their child had been swallowed by a lake
 ɲuɲgú í-ndé-bá r i k a : the pot is broken
 mwána á-ndé-γá l u k a akaβá m r í : the child had turned into a tree (lit. he had changed and had become a tree)
 ɲumbe yakwá í-ndé-pfwá : my cow has died
 βakaβwíá βakaβíá maɲgí kíndo βa-ndé-βóna : they came back and told the chief what they had seen

(We also found a couple of instances of an /-emi- -a/ form with apparently the same meaning on which we do not feel able to elaborate. Example:

maɟamba γérú ye-mi-βíáγwa mahémbá : our fields have been planted with maize [N.B. tones transcribed as heard])

4.2.2.2. Habitual: the marker for this aspect is /-tɟi-/ which can combine with tense markers to locate the habitual aspect in relation to the reference point.

- unmarked / present habitual /-tɟi- -a/ (subject tones are normal):

na m r í n g a θ ó βá-tɟi-rérá ku ú-tɟi-fúmá ndiβɛɲi kwá kíβi a : and that water, they say it comes out from Kivia’s lake
 kí l á m f i r i ṭí-tɟi-βwáγá ɲumbe : every day they [lions] kill cattle

ikéró ni-tʃi-ɣenda ʃúlé na ná mθáɣarí ni-tʃi-βwíá
 iyemtéθéa mamá ndimá ʔá kéɾi : in the morning I go to
 school and at noon I return and help my mother with [her]
 homework

ndʒaɣú ʔi ʔí-tʃi-káβána kílá mʃiri : those bulls are al-
 ways fighting

akaβáβíá ku ndiβa í-tʃí-mira βaθwía dú : he told them
 that the lake only swallowed members of the Suyá clan

As the last example shows, this form can refer to a past situation pro-
 vided another verb sets the reference point (in this case the consecutive
 past akaβáβíá ‘he told them’). Otherwise, the time reference is taken as
 being present.

- past habitual /-léʔʃi- -a/, i.e. the habitual marker preceded by the
 remote past marker (subject tones are ‘normal’):

βá-léʔʃi-ondoa ɲumbe ʔá βáɣonu kaná mbúri ʔáβó kwá
 ɲgúdzu : they would take the Gwenos’ cattle or goats by force

na βakíʃiɣá ímβwára ɲgumbe ʔákwé ʔí-léʔʃi-reka dú :
 and if they tried to catch him, his cattle would just disappear

fu-léʔʃi-βíáa mimaɲga ya maɲgí : we used to plant cassava
 for the chief

βá-léʔʃi-ɣenda kwá maréndé : they used to go on foot

A frequent alternative to simple /-tʃi-/ is the use of a form of -
 tʃiβia ‘be accustomed to’²³, thus:

mirá kwáku titíla á-lé-tʃiβirie ilolewa kwió akaʔía
 dú : but, since Titila was used to being looked at in that way, he
 just remained silent

4.2.2.3. Continuous / progressive: we already saw the /ǻ-/ form of the
 present-future /-a-/ tense, and how it can, in parallel with the /ǻ-/less
 form, be used in two-verb forms to indicate past (and probably future) pro-
 gressive (4.2.1.4.3.). There exist several other forms, of which we have but
 few examples each, within approximately the same range of meaning.
 Several include a marker /-kya-/ that we have already met above as a
 suppletive to the (non-existent) class 1 /ǻ-/ form. This occurs in a
 paradigm used by some of our informants, which we exemplify with the
 verb -ɣenda ‘go’:

ni-ky-a-ɣenda	fu-ky-a-ɣenda
ku-ky-a-ɣenda	m-ky-a-ɣenda

á-ky-â-γenda βá-ky-â-γenda

We found examples such as this in elicited material:

βá-ky-â-rémá mirémí yaβó : they are cultivating their fields
 marwí γá mγepi γá-ky-â-βáβa : the stranger's ears are hurt-
 ing
 βána βá-ky-â-γenda handu hamwí : the children are going
 together

Nevertheless, our main consultant, Mr. Mangachi Msuya, did not seem to use this form at all. The /-kya-/ morpheme only appeared with 3rd person class 1 subjects, consistently in the present tense (for which see 4.2.1.4.3. above) and occasionally in conjunction with /-le-/ (one example) and with the mysterious /-βe-/ marker²⁴ (two examples, one of which has a present tense gloss !):

βaγepi βakítjá íγuó, mká wo á-lé-ky-a-kóra : when the
 visitors arrived yesterday, the woman was cooking
 mká wiyá á-βé-ky-a-ǰiya kyandwí kyékwárrira : the
 woman is [?] looking for a knife for scraping
 mwána á-βé-ky-a-fúγá ikéro : the child was crying this
 morning

On the other hand, Mr. Joeli Msuya from Msangeni, from whom we obtained some of our examples, alternated freely between the /-kya-/ form and another present, apparently replacing for him the /ŋ-/ form which he didn't use at all in elicited material; thus:

ní n-a-réma	fú fw-a-réma
kú kw-a-réma	mú mw-a-réma
(ákyâ réma)	(βákyâ réma)

This is apparently the simple present preceded by a copy of the subject marker (with H tone). The latter might well be an allomorph of the copula, since many compound forms seem to exemplify a construction “(tense-bearing) copula + (aspect-bearing) main verb”. These forms will be examined together with the copula, whose allomorphs are many and varied.

4.2.2.4. Finally it must be mentioned that the verb /-βóna/ ‘see’ has an exceptional suppletive form for the present²⁵, namely /-Ø- -i /; we only have a couple of examples in the relative, but judging from neighbouring languages, the non-relative form probably also exists:

mrí wiyá ku-úβóni ní mwa tǰá : the tree you see is tall
 mirí iyá ku-íβóni ní mí a tǰá : the trees you see are tall

The verb /-ítʃi/ ‘know’, only used in the present and Remote Past (/maɲa/ is used otherwise) might diachronically be analysed in the same way. Synchronically, it does not alternate and is just defective.

4.2.3 Non-dependent negatives

Gweno (as most languages of the area) uses widely different forms for main-clause and dependent negatives. We will deal below with negatives in dependent clauses. Main-clause negatives have two characteristics: first, the subject prefix is always H (and the 1st person singular subject prefix has optionally the shape /θí-/); second, a postverbal element follows the verb (sometimes at some distance). For all classes except cl. 1, this post verbal element is identical in shape to, but different in tone from, the ‘demonstrative of reference’ given under 3.2. Whereas the demonstrative is L preceded by floating H, the postverbal negative element is H, so that we can distinguish between:

βáleβόνίρε βαγανγά βο : they saw those witch-doctors
βáleβόνίρε βαγανγα βό : they didn’t see witch-doctors

In class 1 the postverbal negative is /wé/; for persons we have: 1st singular /ɲí/, 2nd. sg. /pʃó/, 1st. pl. /fwé/, 2nd. pl. /mwé/.

The negative is identical to the positive form, apart from the change in tone and the postverbal, in all tenses and aspects presented above, with the exception of the Near Past / Perfect. We shall deal with the latter presently. For the time being, we give a few examples for all the other tense and aspect forms enumerated above:

- Remote Past:

mká θo kwáku á-le-γίρε mwána wé... : that woman, because she had no child...
níθó ku-lé-mbónίρε ? θί-le-βόνίρε mndu ɲí : who did you see ? I didn’t see anybody

- General Present:

fw-á-ʃiya ipfwá fwé : we don’t want to die
ɲaɲá á-ky-â-ʃiya itʃa wé : so-and-so doesn’t want to come
β-â-íríma iírá handú ho βó : they cannot pass by that place

-Progressive Present:

ń-fw-â-íngíá fwé luβáha, merá fwâtʃa láβu : we’re not coming in now, but we’ll come the day after tomorrow

- Present Habitual:

βómi βá-tʃi-kórá kidzó βó, iyá ní ndimá yá βaká :
men do not cook, that is women's work
nama t̥í-tʃi-réra t̥ó : animals don't talk

- Past Habitual:

βá-létʃi-βóná iβé yo βó : they used not to see that lake

4.2.3.1. The case of the Near Past:

It is in this tense that we find an example that would seem to buttress the falling tone analysis invoked above to explain the behaviour of the Remote Past marker /-le-/.

First, the stem tones are different between the positive and the negative. In the former, as we saw under 4.1.2. the tones are /-Ø- -íe/; but the negative stem tones are in fact /-ié/, as can be seen from the following examples:

á-fúrié wé ítʃa mfoɲi : she doesn't like coming to the river
á-íβié ɲama wé : she didn't steal / hasn't stolen the meat

There is neutralisation between H and L verb stems here²⁶, since the radical syllable will always be H (either lexically or by doubling from the H prefix) and doubling of the radical H is blocked by the final H.

Let us then return to the evidence for the falling tone simplification rule postulated under 4.2.1.1.

The perfect stem of /-ɣíra/ "have" is /-ɣire/ (see above 4.2.) and while the first stem syllable behaves tonally as expected in all forms where it is preceded by a L prefix, it seems to become L whenever it is preceded by a H prefix:

ní-ɣíré ɲumbe : I have cattle
á-ɣíré máɣeɣo wé : he doesn't have teeth

Let us assume the perfect stem has an underlyingly long first syllable, thus: /-ɣiire/²⁷. According to what we just saw, the negative stem tones would be /-ɣíiré/. We would then have

á-ɣíiré > á-ɣíiré (vacuous application of Doubling) >
á-ɣiiré (Falling tone simplification) > á-ɣiré

We would expect other 'imbricated' perfect stems to present the same alternation, but data in our position are too meagre to make any pronouncement. We however noted the single example:

á-1eé wé : he isn't asleep < /-1á-i é/

which could be explained by the same rules as above. We cannot however confirm it.

4.2.3.2. It has been seen that the postverbal negative can occur at a number of points after the verb, up to, and including, sentence final position, and that the positioning has to do with focus. Most common are the immediate postverbal, and sentence final, position, but we are not sure which is the unmarked position. The sentence 'We didn't go to Same to drink beer' could thus be rendered in the following ways:

fúléyendie fwé θámé iyepwá ndzafí

fúléyendie θáme fwé iyepwá ndzafí

fúléyendie θámé iyepwá ndzafí fwé

More research is again needed here.

4.3. Dependent verb forms:

Dependent verb forms can be roughly defined as those that appear outside of main clauses, namely: relative, consecutive, hypothetical, 'participial', subjunctive, ; they can be positive or negative.

4.3.1. Positive relative forms: they are found for each of the main tenses and aspects given above, and examples have already been provided; positive relative forms are distinguished from non-relatives in that the subject prefixes are all L. Some further examples are:

βundu βayonu βa-lé-tjie βuyonu : how the Gweno came to Ugweno [relative of manner; Remote Past]

háleyíre mwáná umwí a-lé-dáhíe βandu mnú : there was a certain child who disregarded people very much [subject relative; Remote Past]

kafúbú kó a-létji-ikaa kiβia : the little hill where Kivia used to live [locative relative; Past Habitual]

kalá háleyíré myoθí umwí a-létji-ilaywa titíla : formerly there was a certain man who was called Titila [subject relative; Past Habitual]

akakóléa ní hándu dú ha-úmíe : he found that it was just a barren place (lit. a place which had dried up) [subject relative; Perfect]

íki níkyó kyandwí a-kúβéγíé na íkyo: *this* is the knife he has cut himself with (lit. with it) [object relative in focussed construction; Near Past/Perfect]

βandu βakamfura kwá βúndu a-ndé-γáluka: people liked him because he had changed [relative of manner; Perfect]

akayenda kwá mndu uηgí â-kumba maβírí: he went to another man who was (lit. is) selling ripe bananas [subject relative; Present]

handu mwáná waβó â-ímbía θakéni: the place where their child is singing in the bush [locative relative; Present]

Negative relative forms will be presented later.

4.3.2. Consecutive: /-ka- -a/ [N.B. all subject prefixes are L; the 2nd. person sg. subject prefix is /u-/]

This form is not strictly speaking 'found only outside of main clauses' since it can and does frequently appear on its own in narratives. Nevertheless it always refers to a situation initiated previously and cannot in principle be the first form in a narrative:

háleyíre mwáná umwí alédáhíe βandu mnú, mfiri úmwí álerúmíwe ηgwí θakéni, a-ka-γenda θakéni iyejiya ηgwí: there was (Remote Past) a certain child who disregarded people a lot, one day he was sent (Remote Past) to the bush for firewood, and he went (Consecutive) into the bush to look for firewood

mfiri úmwí titílá áleβúkíe ikéró iyenda ufuβá βwayá íyekumba ηηgú; a-ka-kúrúká mdzίyo wákwé wá ηηgú, a-ka-dúηga ndámbó yéyenda βwayá kwá maréndé: one day Titila got up [Remote Past] early to go to the market in Chagaland in order to sell pots; he loaded himself up [Consecutive] with his load of pots and he started [Consecutive] his journey to Chagaland on foot

In general, consecutives are found in succession, sometimes in great numbers:

βa-ka-γera mwondoa βa-ka-lemwa βa-ka-γenda kwá mγaηga, βa-ka-láfía, βa-ka-kóléa ku mwáná aβwérwe ní máβuγaηga: they tried to take him, and failed and went to the diviner and practiced divination and found that the child had been taken by the means of medicines

Apart from this, its most frequent use by far, the /-ka- -a/ form is also found with a potential meaning. We do not have many examples of this²⁸:

kóle kámba yó i-ka-rúmbúka, fwayefiya ingí: if the rope breaks, we'll look for another one
 βαγону βέγγι βáítjí kindó ki, u-ka-ikaa na βαγοθί
 βá kalá βâíríma βákuβίλίε: all the Gweno know this, and if you sit down with elders they can tell you

4.3.3. There is another form which looks very much like a combination of the Consecutive and the /-mi-/ perfect. It is /-kam- -a/. Its meaning is a subordinate perfect or the equivalent of a 'when'-clause in English [Prefixes as for the Consecutive]:

mwanáké áγεβáβίρίε ku kóle βáfiya imβóná kiβia
 βáyénde képi kwákwé, βα-kam-fika uríγópi wá maθáλέ
 βáóndoe iθáλέ límwí βáλίτέμε; βα-kam-témá iθáλέ
 βâíríma βámβóne: the boy told them that if they wanted to see Kivia they should go to his homestead, and having arrived at his Dracaena fence they should take one Dracaena leaf and cut it; when they had cut the Dracaena they would be able to see him²⁹
 ναγερνίκα πέθά a-kam-malia ndimá: I'll give him money when he has finished the work
 νέθα βαγερνί βα-kam-tjfa βádúnge iyá: so that when the guests had come they should start eating

4.3.4. 'Participial': /-kí- -á/ [N.B. subject prefixes all L]

'Participial' is a not too adequate label for a dependent form whose most general meaning is that a situation obtains co-occurently with, and in mutual dependance to, another one; as in English "he saw us *as we were coming back* from town" or "if you find him there, you can tell him".

akaítjwa mwána θó a-kí-ímbá: he heard that child singing
 nilemníke πέθά a-kí-malíá ndimá: I gave him money when he finished the work [i.e. on the occasion of his finishing the work]
 mká wó a-kí-kórá íyuó, βαγερνί βakatjfa: as the woman was cooking yesterday, the guests came
 akaβíá mká ku ándéβóná βαγερνί βα-kí-tjá: he told his wife that he had seen the guests coming

mifiri ingí bakámbá βa-kí-βúra náma, βálétjiondo
 gumbe ṭá βáγonu: sometimes [lit “other days”] if the Kamba
 lacked meat they would take away the Gweno’s cattle

4.3.5 Another form where /-ki-/ appears is probably unrelated since the tone of the marker differs. Its formula is /-ekina-é/ (subject prefixes L). It is a “when” form as the one dealt with in 4.3.3. The difference in meaning between these two forms is not entirely clear to us:

βáγonu β-ekina-fiké βúγonu níhó βαθwíá βakadúnga
 káθí yaβó yá kimaηgí: it is when the Gweno had arrived in
 Ugweno, that the Suyu began their work as chiefs
 akaβátíka kwá m̄yanga βakataθα β-ekina-malíé
 βakayenda mr̄ipi: she took them to the witch-doctor and they
 made a ritual, when they were done they went to the tree

It is possible that this is in fact the Asu form and that 4.3.3. represents the genuine Gweno equivalent (?).

4.3.6. Hypothetical forms are little attested in our corpus: the verb in both the protasis and apodosis seems to always be in either a /-ye-/ or /-be-/ form (cf. above 4.2.1.3.); whether there is a difference between these two markers in this context, we do not feel confident to say. Examples:

kólé ni-γé-ítjí iandika, ni-γé-ítjwá kitjá: if I knew
 how to read, I would feel well
 kólé βa-γé-tjíe ikéró, βa-γé-ndzikóléa: if they had
 come in the morning, they would have found me
 kólé fu-γé-βwáyie kíte kyérú, fu-βé-jékwa fwé ní
 βáandu βéηgí ? : if we had killed our dog, wouldn’t we be
 laughed at by other people ?

[N.B. the tones of these verb forms couldn’t be checked and are somewhat dubious]

4.3.7. Subjunctive: /-Ø- -e/. In this form, the subject prefix is always H; furthermore this H deletes a subsequent H, namely the radical H (since the TAM is -Ø-)³⁰. Note that if an Object Prefix is present the tones are different: /-Ø- -é/; also since the OP intervenes between the subject and the radical, it undergoes tone deletion, thus protecting the radical H.

The subjunctive is mostly - but not exclusively - found in clauses introduced by *néθa* “in order to” or by a verb such as “want” or “be able to”.

βakamfika uríγōŋi wá maθálé βá-óndoe iθálé límwí βá-litémé: when they would be at the *Dracaena* hedge they should take one *Dracaena* plant in order to cut it

kwaíríma ú-βóne ŋumbe ntâyá mará: you can see the cattle grazing (lit. they are eating grass)

βá-tíke igóndzi yá ndzíú na findo fíŋgí néθa βá-ḿtaθíé á-lékerwe: they should take a black sheep and other things in order to sacrifice for him so that he be set free

akaβíwá ku á-ámke néθa á-rére: he was told that he should stand in order to speak

akalómbá fidziko fí-éndwe: he asked for the spoons to be brought

maŋgí áléγambie ku ní-ḿlihé ŋumbe ikúmi: the chief said I must pay him ten cows

4.3.8. /-ye-/ subjunctive

There also exists a subjunctive form with /-ye-/ and final /-a/. It seems to be used exclusively as a complement of verbs of motion (cf. 4.2.1.3.1 where examples were given).

4.4. Negatives in dependent forms

Contrary to negatives of verbs in main clauses, dependent relatives are characterised by one of two formatives (sometimes by both) found at position (3) in the formula given under 4.0. Postposed elements are not normally present (with one exception mentioned below). The two formatives are /-rá-/ and /-na-/.

4.4.1. In negative relative tenses /-rá-/ is used:

bandu βa-rá-ky-â-γua maruyú βâyírá ndza: the people not buying bananas will be hungry

futfikaa bwáŋá kólé ha-rá-γiré mwéra: we usually sit outside if there is no rain

ha nékí ku-rá-tjié íγuó ? why didn't you come yesterday³¹

níθó a-rá-kuβóniré íγuó ? : who didn't see you yesterday?

ha nékí ku-rá-lé-tjie kalá ? : why didn't you come long ago ?

4.4.2. In hypothetical negatives we found /-rá-/ combined with /-βe-/:

kólé myerémá a-rá-βe-βóníre θoká yápfó, áβékuβía : if the farmer hadn't found your axe, he would have told you
kólé ku-rá-βé-tjie, kúβéndzikóléa pfó : if you hadn't come, you wouldn't have found me

4.4.3. Negative subjunctives are marked by /-na- -a/³²

βakamlambua néθα á-na-γenda na héla ṭáβó : they watched him so that he shouldn't go away with their money
akaβóna áfíγε ndzia aíríma iyá búre, néθα á-na-lemwa iβwíá βuyonu : he saw he should look for a way that would enable him to eat gratis, so that he shouldn't be prevented from going back to Ugweno

4.4.3.1. This construction often translates as a "without" clause in English:

βandu βέηγι βâíríma iíra dú βá-ná-mirwa : other people can just pass without being swallowed
akaβúrá handu héfúmía ufuβá á-na-βónwa : he couldn't find (lit. he lacked) a place from where to leave the market without being seen

4.4.3.2. More generally, this form serves as the negative for the /-ka-/consecutive:

ηumbe ṭákwé ṭíletjíréka dú ṭí-na-βónékana : his cows used to get lost and couldn't be seen (lit. weren't visible)

4.4.3.3. /-naγε-/ and sometimes /-natje-/ are also found:

néθα βaγεηi βakamtja βádúηγε iyá βá-na-γε-tjéléwa iínúka : so that when the guests would arrive, they should start eating so as not to return home late
mká θó kwáku áleyíre mwána wé, akaβóna á-na-γε-βáβía : that woman since she had no child thought (lit. saw) that she shouldn't go tell them
ndíé akambúlá na imtoyotea á-ná-tje-βwíllía : his father beat and scolded him so that he wouldn't do it again

4.4.4. There also exists a subordinate form /-rána-^{β3}, with the meaning ‘before having’:

kúnayenda ku-rá-na-βara ηgwí : don’t go before having chopped firewood

fu-rá-na-yá, fwayeθamba maβóko γέρú héná mríηga : before eating we wash our hands with (lit. in) water

We found one example of /-nára-/ but cannot decide whether our informant’s tongue slipped...:

néθα άγέandaa kábla βαγεπι βα-ná-ra-tʃa : so that she should prepare (i.e. food) before the guests had arrived

4.4.5. Finally, although it isn’t a dependent form we’ll mention the ‘not-yet tense’ /-na- -a/ which is followed by the postverbal negative:

kyumbá ki kí-na-kulwa kyó : this room hasn’t been swept yet

fuβúkíe kwá maηgí íθαηá ikéro na fú-na-βwíá ihó fwé : we left the chief’s place this morning and haven’t been back there yet

βá-na-βóna βó kikápu ? : haven’t they seen the basket yet ?

Here also, we found one example with /-ra-/ instead of /-na-/:

á-ra-fúmá ηumbá wé : he hasn’t come out of the house yet

4.4.6. Imperatives:

4.4.6.1. Without prefixed object: /-∅- -a/ (singular)

Our data on the imperative are not as complete as we would like. Dissyllabic H toned verb stems do not seem to offer any difficulty:

níká mká θó makáa : give charcoal to that woman

fíηgá ml aηgo wíyá : close that door

tíká midzίγó ya ηgwí : carry the loads of firewood

The only exception is the irregular verb /-énde/ ‘bring’ (always appearing with an /-e/ suffix) which seems to have the tone-pattern endé in the imperative:

endé kipfúmbí kyékáliá ho : bring a stool for sitting on

endé mirí yeáγía ηumbá : bring poles for building the hut

(On the other hand, this tonal peculiarity might be common to all vowel-initial H-toned stems, since we do not have any other example of them in the imperative).

Dissyllabic L-toned stems (of which we only have a few examples in the imperative) apparently change their lexical tone for H (so that the difference between H- and L-toned stems is here neutralised):

γúá ma ruγú : buy bananas
 γénda úye lómbá maθuθú : go and ask for fresh milk
 kúlá na uβwáyíro lwíá : sweep with that broom

As in many Eastern Bantu languages, the imperative of /-tʃa/ 'come' is irregular: ndzó.

The imperative plural is formed with a suffix /-iɲi/ whose first syllable coalesces with the /-a/ suffix of the imperative: γua-iɲi > γueɲi. We are not sure of its tones.

4.4.6.2. With prefixed object: the suffix is /-a/ with an object prefix referring to 1st person singular and /-e/ with all others. In the case of L-toned verb radicals the underlying tone is preserved when the object prefix precedes; the suffix on the other hand appears to be H:

ndzi-lihá ηúmbe ikúmi : pay me ten cows
 m-leké wiyá áβíe βáná βo βátʃe : allow him to tell the children to come

With H-toned radicals, the suffix is probably L³⁴:

βá-níké kambúri kéηgí kadú : give them another small goat
 ndzi-níká ibéθa yéβíkía mabóré γa : give me a calabash to put the eggs in
 ndzi-βía rína lyápfó : tell me your name
 m-tíke mwáná θo kwá mθúηgu : take that child to the European

4.4.6.3 The negative imperative is identical to the negative subjunctive (cf. 4.4.3. above):

kú-na-γua ɲama ɲíηgí iθaɲá : don't buy much meat today!
 kú-na-fíηgá mlaηgo wá ɲumbá : don't close the door of the house!
 m-naγenda : don't go (pl.)!

4.4.7. General conclusion on one-word verb forms

As can be seen, the number of one-word verb forms in Gweno is very large. We do not claim to have listed them all here; in fact we deliberately left out of the account several other forms for which we had only one example each, and whose meaning and use we couldn't pinpoint with any

certainty. Gweno also has many two-word verb forms which we'll deal with partly in the section on the copula.

5. The copula

5.1. The simple copula without any relation to time is *ní*

mndú u ní mrwé : this person is big

maṅgí u ní mndu mrwé : this chief is a big man

mθúṅgú wiyá ní mwatfá mnú : that European is very tall

The negative is either *θí* or *ní* followed in both cases by the negative particle in agreement with the subject of the sentence:

mθúṅgú wiyá θí / ní mwatfá mnú wé : that European isn't very tall

βayaṅgá βa θí / ní βáandu βetfá βó : these witch-doctors aren't good people

A 'focalising' use of the copula is expressed by *ní-* prefixed to the demonstrative referring to the class of the antecedent:

íki ní-kyó kipfumbí m̄yepi ayekalerie : *this* is the chair that the guest sat on

íya ní-yó mafúra mká ú ayurie : this is the oil the woman bought

The negative is *θí-* (*ní-* ?) with postposed negative particle

iyá θí-yó ṅuṅgú ilébarikie yó : *that* isn't the pot which got cracked

5.2. A similar copula with past meaning is *níle*:

ní-le mndu aléítjí mnú íkumba findo : he was someone who knew very well how to sell things

ní-le mri uélíe kirúmo : it was a town which was very clean

The negative is *θíle*.

5.3. There is also a locative copula */-ke/*, probably derived from */-ikee/*, the perfect form of */-ikaa/* 'sit, stay'. By itself it refers to present or 'no time' and is always followed by a complement:

titílá ilambua akakóléa á-ke wéká ufuβá : on looking around, Titila discovered he was alone at the market

ṅuṅgú í-ke ríkwépi : the pot is on the fire-place

βá-ké mfoṅi ? iye, βá-ke hó : are they at the river ? yes, they are

It has a negative:

kí-ke áha kyó : it (cl. 7) isn't here

and a relative³⁵:

mafúrá γo γa-ké nuŋgúni γófe ní γákwa : all the oil that is
in the pot is mine

fipfúmbí fyó fi-ké haywíhí ná pumbá yo ní fyákwé :
the chairs that are by the house are his

5.4. With past reference, we have /-leke/, always followed by a complement (few examples):

fu-lé-ke pumbá : we were at home

...βαγα βόσε βα-lé-ke mfoɲi : ...as all the Chaga were in the
river (relative)

5.5. When the locative copula is final in its clause - which can only occur in the relative-, the form is /-kéí/ (tones doubtful):

yénda úyélolea handu βαγοθί βα-ké-í : go and look for
the place where the elders are

5.6. Gweno has many two-word verb constructions in which the first word is clearly (in some cases) or possibly (in others) a form of the copula: one can list forms of /-ke/, namely: /-ke/ itself, /-leke/, /-yeke/. We have but few examples of each and mostly from elicited material; the meaning seems to be 'progressive' and the main verb is in what appears to be the relative form of the general present:

á-ké a-rítʃa : he is running

fu-lé-ke fw-a-γua : we were buying

á-γé-ke a-réra : he was talking

It would be tedious to list all possible combinations so we will limit ourselves to two others which are likely to be forms of the copula; the first one is formed with /-le/ and has the meaning 'past continuous'

mká umwi á-lé a-γenda iyefiya ηgwí tákwe θakéni : a
certain woman was going in order to look for her firewood in
the bush

mwáná wa kiθwía á-lé a-kafa ndeyé : a Suya child was
hunting birds

Judging from all other contexts, /-le-/ has the meaning 'past', so that the copula might here be taken as having a zero allomorph.

Another combination is with /-ye-/ and in this case we do have an example of straightforward use as copula (first example):

kóle ní-γé mθuri, níγéγua θóri níŋgi : if I were rich, I
would buy many clothes

mirá luβáha á-γé a-fúya : but now he was crying

5.7. There are also many cases where the first word in a two-word verb combination is itself a conjugated form of the verb /-βά/ 'be, become'. By far the most frequent in narrative texts is where /-βά/ is in the consecutive and the second verb in the present, either 'general' or 'progressive'; the meaning is always past imperfective:

βα-κά-βά μ-β-â-mdéγία kílá mfirmi néθα βάμβwáré: and they were laying traps for him every day so that they catch him
ηγαθου kwá maηγι í-ka-βά í-â-endelea dú: and the feast at the chief's place just kept going on

The two verbs can also be separated by the complementiser *ku*, with no change in meaning;

idúηγία mfirmi θó βαθwíá βα-ka-βά ku β-â-íríma íirá handú ho βó: and starting from that day, the Suyas could not pass by that place (any more) [lit. and they were that they cannot...]

The second verb can also be in one of the perfect forms:

titíllá a-ka-βά a-lée dú akíβáβíwá ní ndéni βundu βwéyá mnú: Titila was just lying with stomach pains because of over-eating
í-ka-βά ku titílla á-ndé-yá maβírí γá βáundu bíllá ilíha: and so it was that Titila had eaten people's ripe bananas without paying

6. Our last remark about conjugation will mention the role of the infinitive. Apart from functioning as a verbal noun, often in complement function, it can also play the part of a subordinate temporal expression, somewhat similar to the /-kí-/ form (cf. 4.3.4.):

βαθwíá í-βóná ku kibia ándéβárítjá βakamkafa: the Suyas seeing that Kivia had escaped them hunted him down
akaβwía kéni, í-fika dú ákaβíá mká ku ándéβóná βayeni βakítjá: he came back home, and immediately on arriving he told his wife that he had seen the guests coming
mká wá danielí í-βíwá ku hayíré βayeni akaúlá mtjeré mwíηgi: Daniel's wife when she was told that there were guests pounded a lot of rice
titíllá í-lambua akakóléa áke wéká ufuβá: Titila on looking around realised he was alone in the market

This construction is very frequent in narratives.

We hope that this overview of a hitherto undescribed language will arouse interest in some readers for a more thorough study, including syntax and the clarification of some of the more obscure points in morphology and tonology. Gweno is certainly in no **immediate** danger of disappearing, but it only has a few thousand speakers, none of them monolingual, as far as we may ascertain, so it stands in danger of being replaced with Asu and / or Swahili within the space of one generation. As the most outlying member of the Chaga group, it is of especial interest for comparative purposes. So we hope our call for further studies will not pass unheeded.

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¹ The transcriptions are based on the pronunciation of Southern Asu speakers, that most Asu would acknowledge as being "standard Asu" (because it has been used for translating the Bible). Northern Asu speakers have a pronunciation much influenced by Gweno, a quite different language. The Asu language is - rather unenlighteningly - labelled G 22 by Guthrie.

² Although several linguists would prefer the designation 'Kilimanjaro Bantu'

³ We also had access to three pages of notes on Gweno collected by M. Guthrie from H. Minja as part of his survey of Bantu languages : they contain very little material.

⁴ A more 'narrow' phonetic transcription would be [p̥̥]

⁵ A notation [ṅ̄̄] with homorganic nasal would be more accurate, but since there is no distinctive dental nasal in the language, we will dispense with it.

⁶ The Mashati dialect of Chaga, spoken on the eastern flank of the mountain apparently does not have tone shift either (work in progress by G. Philippson and M.-L. Montlahuc).

⁷ A variant stem /-r a n d a r u / (tones unknown) which does take the enumerative concord series is also apparently in use; it is likely to be the older, since mtándátu is in all probability an Asu loan.

⁸ This phenomenon also occurs in neighbouring languages, for instance the Central Kenyan group. It might reflect an old process in Bantu.

⁹ The 9/10 form of this stem seems to be disyllabic, whereas in all other classes it is monosyllabic : cl. 1 m r w é, cl. 2 β a r w é, cl. 7 k i r w é, etc. There is no explanation for this phenomenon, which cannot be due to a constraint preventing morphemes of the shape NCwV, since these are attested in Gweno as for instance in ṅgwí "firewood".

¹⁰ Kivia is a famous *Kulturheld* of the Gweno.

¹¹ The Suyu were the chiefly clan of Ugweno; it is still a very large clan today.

¹² Note that the 12/13 prefixes are added to but do not displace the original class prefixes, cf. immediately below.

¹³ Here, too, the class 6 prefix does not displace the class 14 morpheme.

¹⁴ In fact it sometimes co-occurs with the object, doubtless under Swahili influence

¹⁵ The prefix on the right of the oblique bar is an optional (but frequent) alternant for 1st. sg. *negative* . Negative subject prefixes do not otherwise differ from positive ones in Gweno (an uncommon situation in East African Bantu).

¹⁶ The prefix is u- with certain dependent verb forms (see below 4.3.)

¹⁷ There is a further object prefix, namely reflexive -kú- 'oneself'. It doesn't change for person and is distinguished by its H tone from the L tone 2nd. person object prefix.

¹⁸ We give, for this and all subsequent tenses, the formula /-x- -y/ where x represents the marker(s) at position (3) and y the suffix at position (7) in the scheme given under 4.0

¹⁹ As mentioned above, subject prefixes of main tense forms are normally H, apart from 1st and 2nd persons which are L.

²⁰ Similar rules are to be found in many Eastern Bantu languages

²¹ There is some doubt as to whether the same form can also be found with "normal" tone on the prefixes, "normal" being as defined in 4.2.1.1. Our data are unfortunately unclear on this point, but neighbouring Bantu languages do exhibit a difference in subject prefixal tone, generally with a contrast in focus; this particular tense, however, certainly with its "perfect" meaning, is definitely noun-focusing, as will be shown when examining other "perfect" forms. So that a possible variation in prefixal tone would only concern the "Near Past" meaning of the tense. More research is needed on this point.

²² Such a difference in verb form to reflect a focus contrast is frequent in Eastern Bantu languages (cf. Besha, 1989)

²³ Most likely the origin of the marker itself; a clear case of grammaticalisation, usual in Bantu languages

²⁴ Cf. 4.2.1.3.2. above.

²⁵ This is also found in other languages of the Chaga group, in some of which (e.g. the Old Moshi dialect) a couple of other verbs are also concerned.

²⁶ This is valid for -(C)VC- radicals; evidence for longer verbal bases is lacking, although we assume no neutralisation would take place.

²⁷ This in turn is derived from /-y i r - i e / with imbrication.

²⁸ Although it is quite frequent in East African Bantu

²⁹ It should be noted that all the 'should' forms here translate subjunctives, for which see below under 4.3.7.; on the other hand the 'would' constructions do not have an equivalent in Gweno which uses the present/future instead.

³⁰ This is reminiscent of "Meeussen's rule" (for which see Philippson, forthcoming) found in a number of Bantu languages and whose effect is to delete the second of two successive H tones. In Gweno, however, it is not found outside the specific context of this verb form.

³¹ Question words are always followed by relative forms in Gweno.

³² Note that /-na- / often seems to resist H doubling, for unknown reasons. We have transcribed it as heard.

³³ The H on /-r á- / doesn't seem to double onto the following syllable.

³⁴ Our data are really not such as to permit a firm conclusion to be drawn.

³⁵ Note that in the relative /-ke/ has a *H* tone.