

# Chapter 12

## On OV and VO at the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands

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While most Niger-Congo languages have SVO word order, a few outliers display S(Aux)OV(X) patterns, either in restricted TAM contexts or across the board. These OV languages include a handful of Guthrie zone A40 languages of Cameroon (Tunen, Nyokon), Bantoid languages (Tikar), and broader Niger-Congo (e.g. Gur and Kru languages). For the A40 languages, Nyokon ([nvo]/A45, Cameroon) has VO order in most tenses but OV order in the past tense, while its neighbour Tunen ([tvu]/A44, Cameroon) has OV consistently. This paper presents new data on Tunen and Nyokon, using controlled elicitation to test the accuracy of previous TAM and information structure (IS)-based accounts. I provide evidence that OV is the most pragmatically-neutral word order in Tunen, consistent across TAM contexts. For Nyokon, OV versus VO order is shown to be dependent on the TAM pattern and not directly conditioned by IS. I show that both languages otherwise consistently pattern as head-initial in their syntax. Based on these results, I reflect on the potential grammaticalisation source(s) of their OV syntax. Finally, I note that Tikar appears to pattern similarly to Nyokon in having a TAM-based OV/VO system.

### 1 Introduction

A basic feature of syntactic typology is the classification of a language's word order as having the verb preceding the object (VO) or the object preceding the verb (OV). Data from WALS feature 83A (Order of object and verb; Dryer 2013) show that the Niger-Congo languages in the WALS sample are overwhelmingly VO, with a few non-VO outliers, as reproduced in Figure 1 below. Note that there are



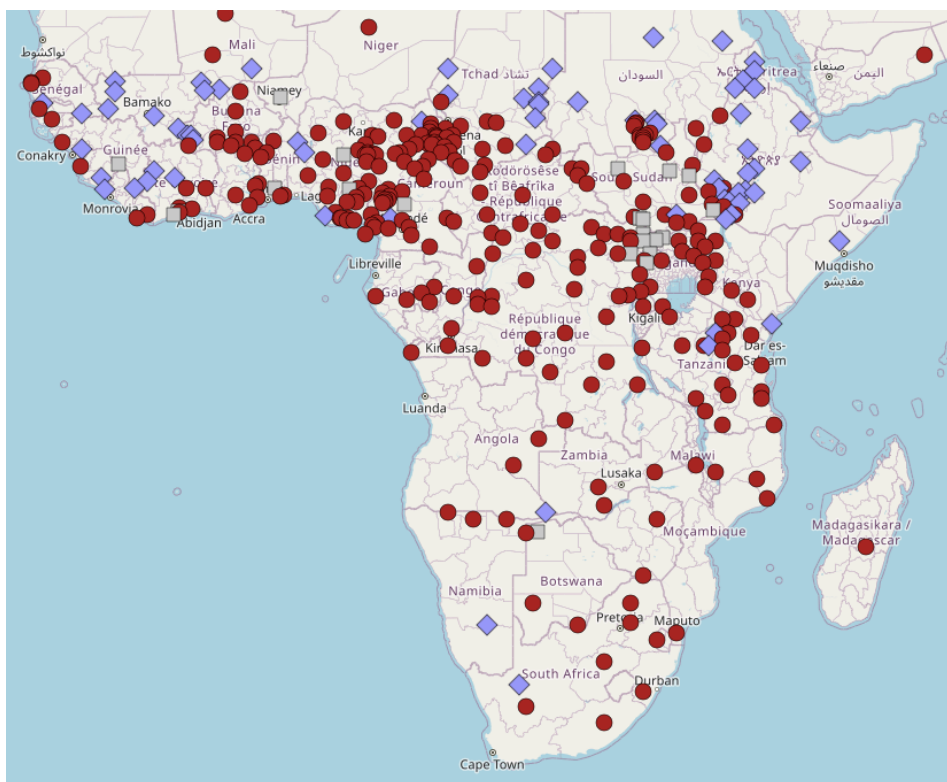


Figure 1: Map of WALS feature 83A (order of object and verb) data for sub-Saharan Africa (Dryer 2013). Key: red dot = VO word order, purple diamond = OV word order, grey square = no dominant word order.

no Niger-Congo languages on the map in the central, east, and southern Bantu-speaking areas that are coded as having OV; all the OV languages in those areas are from unrelated language families. In the Northwest of the Bantu region, Tunen (Bantu zone A, Cameroon) is one noticeable outlier in being coded as having OV as its base word order. Tikar (Bantoid, Cameroon) is another outlier in Cameroon, though is coded grey to indicate “no dominant order”. All other Cameroonian Bantu and Bantoid languages of the WALS sample are VO. Turning to the west, outside of Narrow Bantu, a handful of (potentially) Niger-Congo OV languages are found in West Africa. These include Ijò (Ijoid, Nigeria) (Williamson 1965); Senufo languages (Gensler 1994); Kru languages, and Mande languages (Gensler 1994, Creissels 2005, Nikitina 2011, Sande et al. 2019).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The classification of several of these languages as Niger-Congo is doubtful, notably for the Ijoid and Mande languages (see e.g. Güldemann 2018). I do not take a stance on this question here, and simply note the presence of OV syntax in these languages.

In short, we see that Niger-Congo languages typically have VO syntax, but there are various outliers in Central and Western Africa. The syntax of many of these OV languages of West Africa has been discussed by Sande et al. (2019), who propose that they have different underlying syntactic derivations (related to earlier proposals of multiple causation, for which see e.g. Gensler & Güldemann 2003: 4, Güldemann 2007: 84). In this paper, I turn to the remaining Central African cases, considering the Bantu/Bantoid outliers in Cameroon: Tunen, Nyokon, and Tikar.

Tunen and Nyokon are classified as Narrow Bantu zone A40 (Guthrie no. A44 and A45 respectively), spoken in the Mbam-et-Inoubou area of the Centre region of Cameroon and therefore referred to as Mbam languages.<sup>2</sup> Previous work on Tunen provided evidence for OV as the basic word order (1; Dugast 1971, Mous 1997, 2003, 2005, 2014). While the editor of Dugast (1971: 6)’s grammar of Tunen writes in the introduction that Tunen OV order is “à ma connaissance absolument unique en bantu” [to my knowledge completely unique in Bantu], Mous (2005, 2022) reports that its neighbour Nyokon has a partial OV pattern, which he argues is determined by the TAM context (2):<sup>3</sup>

- (1) a. bá-ndɔ́ *bɛ-kana* tála ɔ́ yɔkɔ́  
SM.2-PRS 8-basket put PREP 7.chair  
‘They are putting baskets on the chair.’
- b. bá-ná *bɛ-kana* tála ɔ́ yɔkɔ́  
SM.2-PST2 8-basket put PREP 7.chair  
‘They put baskets on the chair.’ (Tunen; Mous 1997: 125, adapted)
- (2) a. mù nàá: yíl wóó nítān  
SM.1SG COP take small stone  
‘I take a small stone.’
- b. ù kifá ús yíl  
SM.1 stick short take  
‘He took a short stick.’ (Nyokon, Mous 2005: 5)

<sup>2</sup>The Guthrie classification is a geographical classification of Narrow Bantu languages; see Maho (2003, 2009) for further details. Bantu is a sub-group of Bantoid, itself a subgroup of Benue-Congo and ultimately of Niger-Congo (see e.g. Marten 2020).

<sup>3</sup>See the Abbreviations section at the end of the paper for a list of glossing abbreviations. For clarity, the verb here is indicated in bold font, while the object is in italics. Tone marking is as follows: á = high tone; ā = mid tone; à or a = low tone; <sup>!</sup> = downstep; <sup>H</sup> = floating high tone; <sup>L</sup> = floating low tone.

In their overview of S-Aux-O-V-Other word order patterns in Africa, Gensler & Güldemann (2003) and Güldemann (2007), based on data from Mous (1997), list Tunen as a language in which this word order is determined by information structure (IS), with S-Aux-O-V-Other treated as an exceptional pattern rather than the unmarked order. Güldemann (2007: 100) characterises Tunen under languages with unmarked VO order, with OV order synchronically determined by IS status of the object as less focal. In the absence of discourse context in Mous' data, it is hard to evaluate the extent to which IS conditions such word order patterns, i.e. whether S-Aux-O-V-Other in Tunen is an IS-conditioned word order variant or the pragmatically neutral order.<sup>4</sup> This paper will therefore investigate the word order of Tunen and Nyokon in closer detail by providing new data which controls the IS context versus the TAM context in order to test their respective influence on the use of OV versus VO order. While these zone A40 Mbam languages are the focus of the paper, it can also be argued based on secondary sources that the Tikar pattern coded in the WALS database as 'no dominant order' is a Nyokon-type system with a TAM-based alternation between OV and VO word order. I will thus return to Tikar at the end of the paper.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In section §2 I provide background on the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands region and its linguistic significance, provide background on proposals of the reconstruction of OV versus VO syntax in Niger-Congo, and formulate the research questions. Section §3 explains the methodology. Section §4 walks through the results in turn: §4.1 discusses the influence of IS versus TAM, §4.2 discusses the extent of head-finality within each language, and §4.3 considers the possible diachronic analysis. Finally, section §5 comments on Tikar, and section §6 concludes.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 The Bantu/Bantoid borderlands

In this paper I use the term "Bantu/Bantoid borderlands" to refer to the region where Narrow Bantu zone A borders (non-Bantu) Bantoid in central/West Cam-

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<sup>4</sup>The full detail of the argument includes Mous (1997)'s proposal that there is an SVO strategy in Tunen used for contrast, where the object is preceded by a contrast marker *á*. In other work I argue that such constructions relate to biclausal clefts and ex-situ marking of contrastive focus, and are thus crucially different from the basic SVO constructions found in languages like Nyokon. See Kerr (to appear) for further detail. For space reasons, I will restrict the discussion in this paper to showing how S-Aux-O-V-Other in Tunen is, in contrast to the phrasing in Gensler & Güldemann (2003) and Güldemann (2007), synchronically the unmarked (i.e. pragmatically neutral) word order (i.e., not an IS-determined variant of an unmarked VO order).

eroon. To give an idea of the geography, on the road from Yaoundé to Bafoussam, the town NdikiniMéki is in the Tunen-speaking region. NdikiniMéki is followed by the town Makenene, where Nyokon (A45) is spoken, and then by the towns of Tonga and Bangangté, where Mèdèmbà (Bantoid, East Bamileke) is spoken. Tunen and Nyokon are therefore the last Narrow Bantu languages before Bantoid languages are reached, as shown in Figure 2 below.<sup>5</sup>

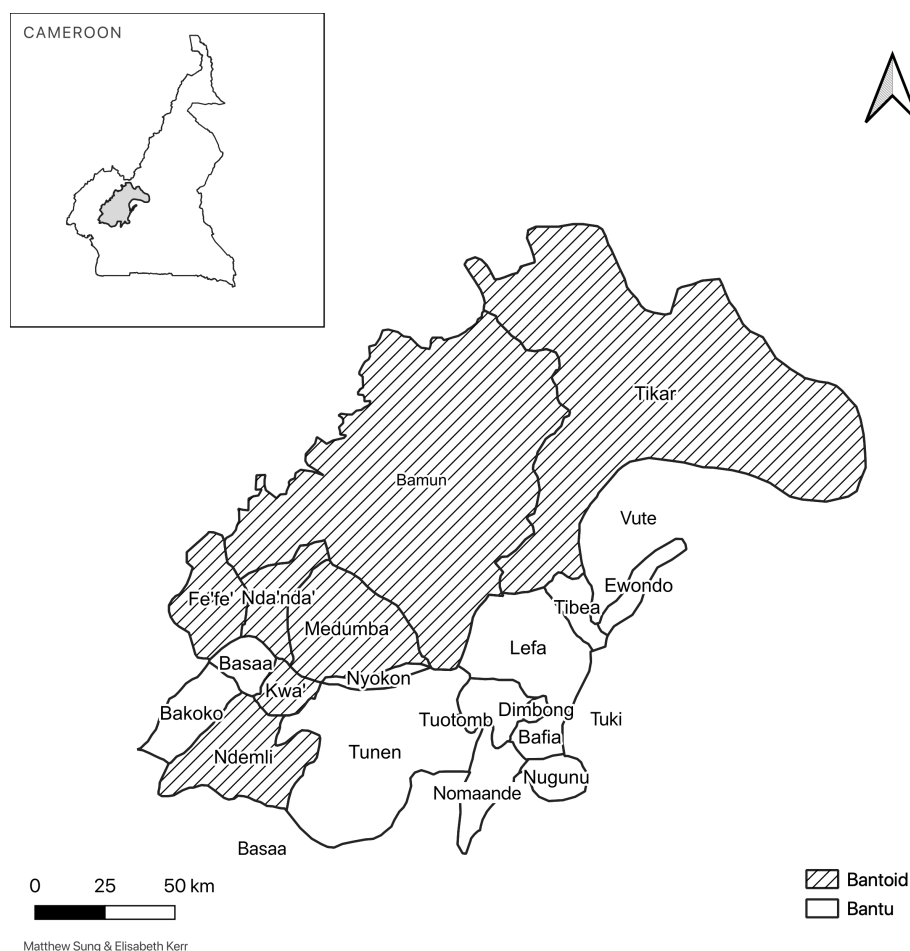


Figure 2: Map showing location of Tunen and Nyokon at the borderlands between Bantu and non-Bantu Bantoid languages of Cameroon, with Tikar a near neighbour to the Northeast (based on Ethnologue (Simons & Fennig 2018), ALCAM (Bikoi 2003), and Welaze Kongne).

<sup>5</sup>I thank Matthew Sung for help creating this map using QGIS.

While Tunen and Nyokon are typically considered to be Narrow Bantu languages, the proper classification of zone A40 as Narrow Bantu has been questioned (e.g. Nurse 2008, Blench 2022).<sup>6</sup> The A40 languages have been noted to be outliers for various linguistic properties, for example the loss of final vowels, the development of ATR harmony systems, and S-Aux-O-V-Other word order (Güldemann 2008, Nurse 2008, Downing & Hyman 2016, Rolle et al. 2020, a.o.). Note that this last feature is not found in all A40 languages – while I do not have original data on the other Mbam languages, other sources state that they are VO, not OV (Mous 2005, 2014). The presence of OV word order in Tunen and Nyokon is therefore particularly unusual and worth further investigation.

2.2 Reconstructions of word order

Having seen that certain Cameroonian languages are outliers in Niger-Congo in having OV word order, we can ask what this may tell us about the word order of the proto-language. There have been several different proposed reconstructions for the word order of Proto-Niger-Congo, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Hypotheses of Proto-Niger-Congo word order

Proposal	Source
*SOV	Givón (1975); Hyman (1975); Williamson (1986)
*SVO	Heine (1980); Heine & Reh (1984); Claudi (1993)
*S-Aux-O <sub>Pron</sub> -V-Other/SVO	Gensler (1994); Gensler & Güldemann (2003)

Of these hypotheses, sole \*SOV is the hardest to maintain, as it raises the question of why such a large number of present-day Niger-Congo languages have SVO word order (as argued by e.g. Mous 2005). It is therefore more generally preferred to take \*SVO as the starting point (e.g. Heine & Claudi 2001, Nurse 2008: 58). There are however two points of complexity worth repeating here.

Firstly, Gensler (1994, 1997) points out that it is misleading to frame the choice of reconstruction as a dichotomy between OV and VO, because (i) there can also be the intermediate ‘syntagm’ S-Aux-O-V, and because (ii) a language may have

<sup>6</sup>Gensler & Güldemann (2003: 5) go so far as to exclude Tunen data from evaluation of the reconstruction of Proto-Bantu syntax, on the grounds of Tunen being “not Narrow Bantu”. Relevant to the discussion below, if zone A40 languages are excluded from the definition of Narrow Bantu in this way, then the time depth of reconstruction necessarily has to be further back than Proto-Bantu in order to account for the origins of their syntax.

multiple orders at once to different extents. Therefore, instead of asking the question “OV or VO?”, we should ask “what was the word order syntax of Proto-Niger-Congo actually like?” (Gensler 1997: 90). We have in fact already seen evidence in favour for such an approach, as (2) showed that Nyokon has both OV and VO patterns synchronically. In this paper I therefore formulate my discussion in terms of whether a language is ‘canonically’ OV or VO, not excluding that they may have other word orders available in particular discourse contexts.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, there are different time depths of reconstruction to consider:

- (3) Proto-Niger-Congo > Proto-Benue-Congo > Proto-Bantoid<sup>8</sup> > Proto-Bantu

The larger the time depth, the more cycles of change are possible and likely to have occurred (Gensler 1997, Hyman 2011, a.o.). Proto-Niger-Congo is estimated as dating to 10000+ years ago (Blench 2006, cited in Nurse 2008: 226), while Proto-Bantu is put at 4000–5000 years ago (Nurse 2008: 228). This means that it is much harder to convincingly reconstruct Proto-Niger-Congo word order than Proto-Bantu or a close-by time depth that encapsulates zone A Bantu and (some of) the Bantoid varieties. This paper deals only with data from the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands, and I therefore focus solely on this lower-level reconstruction, leaving the question of Proto-Niger-Congo syntax aside.

### 2.2.1 SOV and reconstruction: The influence of IS

While the data that has been cited for Tunen and Nyokon to date is only at the level of the sentence,<sup>9</sup> more recent work has called for consideration of the possible impact of information structural context on word order. For example, Güldemann (2007) argues that information structure (IS) can be taken as a key factor conditioning the position of the object in Benue-Congo: OV word order

<sup>7</sup>See Kerr (to appear) for a more detailed description of the different word order patterns available in Tunen for various discourse contexts, e.g. clefting and the use of right- and left-dislocation. Such constructions can be seen as departures from the canonical word order which is the focus of this article.

<sup>8</sup>I use ‘Proto-Bantoid’ as a placeholder term for an intermediate stage further back than Proto-Bantu (capturing zone A Bantu and (some) non-Bantu Bantoid) but not as far removed as Proto-Benue-Congo or Proto-Niger-Congo, without committing to ‘Proto-Bantoid’ as a meaningful ontological stage.

<sup>9</sup>Some discourse-level data is available for Tunen in the selection of folktales (*contes*) transcribed in Dugast (1975). Mous refers to these *contes* in his work (e.g. Mous 2003), but the examples he provides in discussion of Tunen OV order are elicited examples without discourse context. I am not aware of any prior work on Nyokon beyond the level of the sentence.

is found when the object is “less focal or even extrafocal, non-asserted information” (Güldemann 2007: 83), with the proto-language having basic VO syntax (Güldemann 2007: 104). Linked to this is the form of the object as a pronoun versus a full lexical noun phrase, and the development of the agglutinative Narrow Bantu verbal template (which contains a pre-stem object marker; Meeussen 1967). Güldemann also follows Hyman & Watters (1984) in drawing a connection between certain TAM contexts, focus, and negation.

In terms of word order typology, Good (2010) points out that for Naki, a Bantoid language of Cameroon, the ‘canonical’ word order is SVO, but SOV, VSO, and other orders are also found. After considering the IS situation, he argues that Naki syntax is more accurately characterised as “Topic Field – Focus Field” than in terms of grammatical role (‘subject’/‘object’). This research raises the question as to whether Tunen and Nyokon word order is better captured in terms of IS notions, or whether the grammatical role notions of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ are the most appropriate. This is another motivation to test to what extent IS controls word order in Tunen and Nyokon. I will end up concluding that Tunen and Nyokon OV word order is not primarily determined by IS context, unlike what Good argues for Naki, and so I maintain the use of grammatical role-oriented terms in this paper (but see Kerr et al. (2023) for more detailed discussion for discourse role-oriented approaches to Tunen and Bantu more broadly).

### 2.2.2 Research questions

Having considered this background, we can develop three main research questions for the current paper, as listed below.

- (4) **RQ1:** To what extent do TAM and IS influence OV versus VO word order in Tunen and Nyokon? Is it accurate to classify these borderland languages as canonically OV?
- (5) **RQ2:** To what extent do the languages with OV orders differ syntactically from languages with VO orders?
- (6) **RQ3:** Is OV at the borderlands historical or innovative? If innovative, how did it grammaticalise?

Before going through each of these research questions in turn, I will explain the methodology used for the study.

### 3 Methodology

The data in this paper, unless otherwise indicated, were collected as part of fieldwork on Tunen as part of the Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS) project, for a period of approximately 3.5 months in 2019 and 3.5 months in 2021/2022, in Ndikiniméki and Yaoundé, Cameroon. The Nyokon data are from Mous (2005) and Lovestrand (2020) together with follow-up fieldwork I conducted with one Nyokon speaker in 2022 in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Tunen data from my fieldwork are cited with the consultant's initials and unique form ID corresponding to the entry within the Tunen Dative database (to be archived open access at end of project, expected 2024). The Nyokon data were all elicited in Yaoundé with the consultant René Atchom (RA).<sup>10</sup> Some clarifications were also provided remotely in the preparation of this paper.

I used two field questionnaires for the data collection: the Bantu Syntax and Information Structure (BaSIS, Leiden University) project methodology on syntax & information structure, and (ii) a draft version of the Consequences of Head-Argument Order on Syntax (CHAOS/C08, Universität Potsdam) project questionnaire on OV/VO patterns.<sup>11</sup> The former questionnaire builds on the earlier Questionnaire on Information Structure (QUIS; Skopeteas et al. 2006) and investigates how information structure influences syntax. The latter questionnaire investigates which syntactic features correlate with VO versus OV order, testing to what extent the headedness of the verb phrase correlates with headedness in other syntactic domains. Together, and supplemented (for Tunen) with natural speech data, they address the research questions in §2.2.2 above.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 RQ1: TAM and IS

RQ1 asks to what extent TAM and IS influence OV versus VO word order, and how accurate it is to classify Tunen and Nyokon as canonically OV. In order to answer this research question, two steps are necessary: (i) investigate different

<sup>10</sup>One important caveat for the Nyokon data is that the transcriptions are initial versions based on the Nyokon community orthography developed by René, amongst others. This differs from the more IPA-based version used in Lovestrand (2011) in the use of replacements for certain IPA symbols, such as <gh> for the voiced velar fricative ɣ and an apostrophe <'> for the glottal stop ʔ. I also believe that there are some differences in the transcription of tone and vowel length, but have not investigated this in any detail. I also follow Mous (2022) in not glossing Nyokon noun classes, in absence of a detailed study of Nyokon's nominal classification system.

<sup>11</sup>The BaSIS methodology is freely available online at [hdl.handle.net/1887/3608096](https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3608096). I thank the late Gisbert Fanselow for sharing and discussion of the C08 questionnaire.

TAM contexts, and (ii) investigate different IS contexts (e.g. topic, focus, contrast) using controlled elicitation and natural speech. The results are shown in Table 2.<sup>12</sup>

Table 2: Results for RQ1

Property	Tunen result	Nyokon result
Present tense	OV	VO
Past tenses	OV	OV
Future tense	OV	VO
Thetics	OV	VO/OV dependent on TAM
Object focus	OV	VO/OV dependent on TAM
Sub-NP focus	OV	VO/OV dependent on TAM
VP focus	OV	VO/OV dependent on TAM
Other PCF	OV	VO/OV dependent on TAM

In the interest of space, I will not walk through every single property for both languages, but rather give a selection of representative examples.<sup>13</sup>

The Tunen example in (7) below shows SOV for term focus on the direct object (with the recipient object preceding the theme object). The next examples show SOV in an out-of-the-blue discourse context (8), where there is no focus on the object, and SOV with VP focus (9).

- (7) Context: ‘What did the woman give to the other woman?’  
a nɔ ɔsókɔ hɛtɛtɛ indi  
/a nɔ ɔsókɔ hɛ-tɛtɛ índiá/  
SM.1 PST1 other 19-gourd give  
‘She gave [a gourd]<sub>FOC</sub> to the other.’ (Tunen; PM 1541)
- (8) Context: You enter the room and see a broken window. Someone announces...  
Biále a ná itúbá san.  
/Biále a ná ɛ-túbá sána/  
1.Pierre SM.1 PST2 7-window break  
‘Pierre broke the window.’ (Tunen; EE+EB 1669)

<sup>12</sup>This table gives a simplified summary of the TAM systems. More detail will be provided when evaluating TAM-based grammaticalisation proposals in section 4.3.1 (see Table 5 and 6).

<sup>13</sup>A complete set of supporting evidence can be found in the Appendix to this paper and in the BaSIS archival deposit.

- (9) Context: What did Maria do?

Maliá a ná bilóliə fəfókíə.

/Maliá a ná bɛ-lóliə fəfókíó/

1.Maria SM.1 PST2 8-varnish anoint.DUR

‘Maria [applied the varnish]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

(Tunen; JO 2518)

Pronominal objects behave like full noun phrases, i.e. are canonically in a pre-verbal position (OV). This is exemplified in (10), where the class 1 pronoun *wéɛya* ‘her’ appears before the verb, just as the noun phrase objects did in the previous examples.

- (10) mɔndɔ ɔwá móná ándɔ naa anó wéɛya ákánana ɔ ndókɛt

/mɔ-ndɔ ɔwá mɔ-ná a <sup>H</sup>ndɔ ná a nó wéɛya ákánana ɔ

1-person REL.1 1-child SM.1 PRS be.sick SM.1 PST1 PRON.1 leave.APPL PREP

ndóketa/

7.doctor

‘The man whose child is sick took her to the clinic.’

(Tunen; PM 2179)

From this, we see that OV word order is available both for focal and non-focal objects, and both for pronominal and non-pronominal objects, meaning that it should be considered the pragmatically neutral word order in Tunen.

In Nyokon, the results show a mixture of OV and VO patterns, directly dependent on TAM but not on IS context. For example, past tense examples are OV, consistent across different IS contexts. In (11) below, we see that OV can be used both for focus on the whole predicate and focus on the object in the past tense, while VO order is dispreferred.

- (11) a. Context A: ‘What did your father do?’ (VP focus),  
Context B: ‘What did your father kill?’ (object focus)

itá ángam ghó.

father spider kill

‘My father [killed a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

‘My father killed [a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

(Nyokon; RA 216)

- b. Context: ‘What did your father kill?’ (object focus)

? itá ghó ángam.

father kill spider

Intd.: ‘My father killed [a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

(Nyokon; RA 224)

All present tense examples were VO regardless of IS context. This is exemplified below, where VO order is found both for narrow focus on the numeral

modifying the object (i.e. sub-NP term focus; (12)) and for predicate-centred focus (VP focus in (13) and truth focus in (14)).

- (12) Context: ‘How many chickens do you see?’  
táá ndukɲ iko’ɔ itá.  
SM.1PL see chickens three  
‘We see [three]<sub>FOC</sub> chickens.’ (Nyokon; RA 34)
- (13) Context: ‘What are you doing today?’  
taa nə tsá’a Rɛnɛ.  
SM.1PL PRS receive Rene  
‘We are [hosting René]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ (Nyokon; RA 233)
- (14) Context: Kinyo is sick and unable to eat a lot. Someone asks ‘Can Kinyo eat rice?’  
áa, u fɛr anyé álif.  
yes SM.1 can eat rice  
‘Yes, she [can]<sub>FOC</sub> eat rice.’ (Nyokon; RA 151)

To sum up, we have seen that S(Aux)OV(Other) word order in Tunen is compatible with various different information structural contexts, including thetics, VP focus, and object focus. For Nyokon, OV or VO is dependent on the TAM context and consistent across different IS contexts. We can therefore conclude that TAM rather than IS is the primary synchronic conditioning factor for OV word order in Nyokon.<sup>14</sup>

## 4.2 RQ2: Head-finality versus head-initiality

Let us turn now to the second research question: “To what extent do the languages with OV orders differ syntactically from languages with VO orders?”. To answer this question, we need to investigate the general syntactic profile of each language, considering whether we find head-finality in other domains. Table 3 gives the results for various diagnostics of head-finality versus head-initiality.

<sup>14</sup>As mentioned above, it can be argued that TAM is intrinsically linked to IS (Güldemann 2007), and therefore, a TAM-dependent system is also an IS-dependent system. For the purposes of this research question, I consider what is the *primary* conditioning factor, leaving this more indirect relation aside. I will return to discuss the possible diachronic relation between TAM and IS in section 4.3 below. Note that a convincing argument that TAM-based alternations reflect IS requires exposition that the TAM contexts for which Nyokon has OV versus VO map onto a coherent set of IS contexts. An alternative account for a TAM-based system is based on the presence or absence of segmental morphology in the TAM slot, as has been crucial for example in syntactic analyses of Kru languages, where the difference in OV and VO syntax is argued to depend on the ability for the verb to move to a higher tense node in the absence of a TAM marker (e.g. Koopman 1984, Sande et al. 2019); cf Mous (2005: 6, 11), Mous (2022: 29).

Table 3: Results for RQ2

Property	Tunen result	Nyokon result
Order of N and Mod	N-Mod	N-Mod
Adposition type	Prepositions	Prepositions
Order of N and Poss (pronoun)	Poss-N	Poss-N
Order of N and Gen	N-Gen	N-Gen
Canonical order of O and V	OV	OV/VO
Order of O and V in imperatives	VO (V-IO-DO)	VO (V-DO-IO)
Order of Aux and V	Aux-V	Aux-V
Order of C and Comp	C-Comp	C-Comp
Order of Cop and Compl	Cop-Compl	Cop-Compl
Order of V and manner adverb	V-Adv	V-Adv
Canonical adjunct position	SOVX	SOVX/SVOX
Low subjects (VS)?	✗	✗

These results present a more in-depth study of head-initiality in Tunen and Nyokon beyond the discussions in the literature that have focussed more narrowly on the verb phrase, and therefore allow us to evaluate the extent to which the languages pattern as head-final.<sup>15</sup> As we have already seen evidence for the order of the object and verb in §4.1 above, in this section I will present evidence for the other properties.<sup>16</sup>

Firstly, imperatives are interesting in being the only context where Tunen has VO syntax. Tunen affirmative imperatives have VO (V-IO-DO) order; Nyokon ones also have VO (V-DO-IO) order. Note that there is no TAM marker here.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>As argued by Sande et al. (2019), having a deeper understanding of the syntax of the languages allows us to make more insightful comparisons between these languages and other languages with S-Aux-O-V-Other surface order, given that this surface order may in fact be derived in various different ways in different languages (both synchronically and in terms of the grammaticalisation processes), and taking general patterns of syntactic headedness as potentially diagnostic of underlying syntactic structure (as also part of the motivation behind the C08 questionnaire).

<sup>16</sup>The same note as for RQ1 about only providing a set of representative examples applies here.

<sup>17</sup>A reviewer points out the possible confound in that the Nyokon example has a pronominal where the Tunen has a full noun phrase. Note first of all that the theme object is a full noun phrase in both examples. Secondly, Tunen imperatives with pronominals are still VO. Finally, RA confirms remotely that the non-pronominal equivalent of the Nyokon example (15b) cannot be OV (while *nda manyí apā ghó!* ‘give the child water!’; V-DO-Prep-IO) is also grammatical).

- (15) a. *índiá məná imit!*  
           /*índiá məná ε-mítá/*  
           give 1-child 7-calabash  
           ‘Give the child a calabash!’ (Tunen; JO 1594)
- b. *nda manyí ngóm!*  
           give water PRON.1SG  
           ‘Give me water!’ (Nyokon; RA 1)

The examples in (16) illustrate N-Mod order in the nominal domain (with D elements preceding NPs, as expected if the DP is head-initial), therefore providing further evidence for head-initial syntax.

- (16) a. *tóóye tobanána toté<sup>l</sup>té tófititiə tófandε*  
           /*tóóye tɔ-banána tɔ-té<sup>l</sup>téá tɔ-fititiə tɔ-<sup>H</sup>fandε /*  
           13.DEM.PROX 13-banana 13-small 13-black 13-two  
           ‘these two small black bananas’ (Tunen; JO 885)
- b. *pí pimbótɔ pífu*  
           DEM.PROX bananas two  
           ‘these two bananas’ (Nyokon; RA 191)
- c. *pimbótɔ kúpóm*  
           bananas ripe  
           ‘ripe bananas’ (Nyokon; RA 188)

In terms of verbal and clausal syntax, we see Cop-Compl and C-Compl order, both head-initial properties.

- (17) a. Context: ‘Where are you?’  
           *mε lε ɔ nioní.*  
           /*mε léá ɔ nε-oní/*  
           SM.1SG be PREP 5-market  
           ‘I am at the market.’ (Tunen; PM 102)
- b. Context: ‘Where are you?’  
           *mu nə a nyí.*  
           SM.1SG COP PREP market  
           ‘I am at the market.’ (Nyokon; RA 174)

Finally, while a canonical head-final language would have SOV with the verb final (SOV#), in both Tunen and Nyokon, non-arguments typically appear postverbally (S-(Aux)-O-V-Other), with adverbs after the verb (V-Adv) (18).

- (18) a. Context: ‘Where did he build his house?’  
a ka yayéá miímə lúmákə ɔ iNdiki naánekol.  
/a ka yayéá miímə lúm-aka ɔ iNdiki naánekolə/  
SM.1 PST3 POSS.PRON.1.3 3.house build-DUR PREP Ndiki yesterday  
‘He built his house yesterday in Ndiki.’ (Tunen; JO 1121)
- b. Context: ‘Where did you put the clothes?’  
mu piye ghá avuə.  
SM.1SG clothes put outside  
‘I put the clothes outside.’ (Nyokon; RA 72)
- c. Context: PM and EO are discussing how PD should be considered a true Munen [i.e. a local], despite being born somewhere else.  
a ka nyɔkɔ háaha ɔ uwəsú mɔŋɛŋ.  
/a ka nyɔ-aka háaha ɔ uwəsú mɔŋɛŋə/  
SM.1 PST3 work-DUR here PREP PRON.POSS.1PL much  
‘He worked a lot here in our region.’ (Tunen; EO 1043)
- d. Context: After visiting a friend’s house, you announce:  
punú páa liak tsú.  
POSS.2PL children cry much  
‘Your children cry a lot.’ (Nyokon; RA 7)

To summarise this section, we have seen that both Tunen and Nyokon show consistent evidence for head-initial syntax, with (partial) OV word order their only head-final property.<sup>18</sup> This makes them pattern more generally with VO languages than a canonical OV language. These results are significant when arguing for a syntactic analysis of the languages, as they provide evidence for an underlyingly head-initial syntax under a transformational model of syntax, as argued for West African languages by Sande et al. (2019). This therefore makes S-(Aux)-O-V-(Other) syntax in Tunen and Nyokon appear to be quite different from the S-(Aux)-O-V syntax discussed for consistently head-final languages such as Kru languages (e.g. Sande et al. 2019) and Ijo (Williamson 1965).

<sup>18</sup>Table 3 shows Poss-N in addition to N-Gen order, with Poss-N the order found with a possessive pronoun (e.g. *my house*). As will be discussed in section 4.3, there is evidence that N-Poss is the historic order. Note also that while there are sentence-final question particles, following Biberauer (2017) I do not take this to be evidence for head-finality, in that such particles are likely not syntactic heads.

4.3 RQ3: Diachrony

The third research question is: “Is OV at the borderlands historical or innovative?” As I stated in §2.2 above, the favoured null hypothesis is that OV is innovative for Bantu, given that positing OV as the sole historical order means that VO order has to be derived for the majority of present-day Niger-Congo languages.

Various grammaticalisation paths have been proposed in both Africanist and general typological literature for the development of OV word order, as listed in Table 4 below. Such grammaticalisations can arise independently in different languages, though they can also be influenced through contact. For a given language, multiple grammaticalisation pathways can interact, for example in the development of auxiliaries from verbs as part of earlier serial verb constructions (see e.g. Claudi 1993, Williamson 1986).

Table 4: Proposed grammaticalisation pathways for S-(Aux)-O-V-  
(Other) in Niger-Congo

Pathway	Example proponent(s)
V>Aux(>TAM)	Claudi (1993: 102)
Serial verbs	Givón (1975), Claudi (1993); Heine & Claudi (2001)
Periphrasis of nominal complement (Gen-N)	Claudi (1993); Heine & Claudi (2001)
IS status of object (extrafocal/focal, pronoun/NP)	Gensler & Güldemann (2003), Güldemann (2007)
Interaction between TAM, negation, and focus	Gensler & Güldemann (2003), Güldemann (2007) (building on Hyman & Watters 1984)
Nominalisation through infinitival constructions	Mous (2005)

In this section I consider whether we find evidence for one or more of these paths for Tunen and Nyokon, focussing on the V>Aux and infinitival paths. The other pathways are excluded for the reasons I give below.

Firstly, the serial verb constructions pathway is not considered because there is no evidence for serial verb constructions in the Mbam group of the kind found for the West African languages for which this path was proposed (Mous 2005: 11), and so this is not a plausible source for the Mbam OV patterns.

Secondly, for word order change related to Gen-N word order, it is significant that Tunen has N-Gen order, with the exception of possessives, which are Possessee-Possessor, i.e. Gen-N. Mous (1997: 124) provides evidence based on Dugast (1971, 1975) that indicates that the Poss-N order is a more recent development in Tunen, given that in certain frozen possessive expressions the order is N-Gen (e.g. *òṅwâm* ‘my friend’, from *wâm òṅwáyè*; Dugast 1971: 137). Gen-N syntax should therefore not be taken to be the trigger for the development of OV syntax, as N-Gen is the historic order in Tunen (Mous 2005: 11). The same N-Gen patterning applies to Nyokon, and so Gen-N is an unlikely grammaticalisation source of OV order in the Mbam languages.

Finally, it has been suggested that the development of OV versus VO order can be related to the differential position of given and non-given objects (e.g. Güldemann 2007 on Benue-Congo in general), which in turn relates to the difference between full noun phrases and pronouns. Of the pathways I do not discuss in detail, this is the most promising one and fairly likely to have played a role historically, as Güldemann argues. However, I have shown already in section §4.1 that the preverbal position is synchronically available both for focal and non-focal objects, with no difference in word order between pronominal forms and lexical noun phrases. The synchronic picture therefore does not provide convincing evidence for such a distinction.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4.3.1 RQ3: V>Aux(>TAM)

The first grammaticalisation path to consider in detail is V>Aux(>TAM), meaning a situation where a main verb develops a function as an auxiliary verb (which can then develop further into a TAM marker). Such a development means that a secondary verb form (as part of a serial verb construction for example) is reanalysed as the main verb, as discussed for example in Claudi (1993) (see Mous 2005:

<sup>19</sup>One relevant note when assessing the likelihood of such a development is that Hyman (2011) writes that Tunen, Basaá, and Eton object/oblique pronouns are “clearly a secondary development”, not retraceable to Proto-Bantu, with no evidence of object pronouns in a language like Tunen becoming procliticized onto the verb (as is taken to have been the case in the development of Narrow Bantu verbal object markers; see e.g. Nurse 2008). See also fn28 below on Ewondo.

11 for discussion related to the A40 languages). An example of such a grammaticalisation from Eastern Bantu is the development of the Swahili anterior TAM marker *-me* from the main verb *-mala* ‘to finish’ (Nurse 2008: 59-60).

In Tunen and Nyokon, the TAM marker appears together with the subject marker as a separate phonological word from the verb stem (as evidenced by the ability for other material, such as the object, to intervene) (19). Note that I consider the forms “TAM markers” rather than auxiliaries due to their invariant and reduced phonological forms and their inability to occur as main verbs, but the choice of terminology is not too significant for the current purposes.<sup>20</sup>

(19) SM-TAM(-Deixis)(-O)-V(-Other) (adapted from Mous 2003: 291)

The identification of verbal sources for the TAM markers found in Tunen and Nyokon would provide evidence for such a V>Aux pathway. I therefore provide the TAM paradigm for the two languages in Tables 5 and 6 below (with the Nyokon paradigm adapted from Mous 2022).<sup>21</sup>

Table 5: Tunen affirmative tense markers

TAM marker	Gloss	Time point
<i>ɲɔ</i>	FUT	future from tomorrow onwards
<sup>H</sup> <i>ndɔ</i>	PRS	present, immediate future
<i>nɔ́</i>	PST1	recent past, just an instant ago
<i>ná</i>	PST2	a few hours ago (hodiernal)
<i>ka</i> / <sup>L</sup> <i>ná</i>	PST3	yesterday and before (hestiernal)
<i>lɛ</i>	PST4	far past; many years ago, before birth

While V>Aux(>TAM) grammaticalisation is considered to be crosslinguistically common, I am not aware of previous work identifying verbal sources for

<sup>20</sup>The terminology becomes significant if one takes verbal origin to be a necessary criterion for an element to count as an auxiliary, as done by Dryer (1992). As this section will show that verbal origins are not always visible, I use TAM marker here as a more neutral term (although the term auxiliary could be maintained under a more generous definition, as for example employed by Gensler & Güldemann 2003 and Anderson 2007).

<sup>21</sup>I have simplified the Nyokon table to focus on the form of the TAM marker as opposed to the whole syntactic construction. “Unclear” means that both a preverbal and a postverbal object slot was indicated as possible, complicating the classification as OV or VO. The TAM markers and time points are given as in Mous (2022), with the imperative, subjunctive, negative tenses and focus tenses omitted. ‘OV/VO’ is written for the present tense to reflect the data presented.

Table 6: Nyokon affirmative tenses (adapted from Mous 2022: 4)

TAM marker	Time point	OV or VO
∅	present	OV/VO
∅	recent past	OV
∅	far past	OV
∅	remote past	OV
<i>noó, nəkú</i>	perfect	VO
<i>nǎ</i>	present continuous	VO
<i>ná</i>	conditional	OV
<i>mbíá</i>	past imperfective 1	unclear
<i>mbíá ku</i>	past imperfective 2	VO
<i>mbíā</i>	background	VO
<i>mbíá</i>	background (past remote)	VO
<i>maa</i>	background moment	unclear
<i>mə</i>	future	VO
<i>pí</i>	narrative	OV

tense markers in Tunen or Nyokon. Therefore, to consider the possible verbal origin of the present-day TAM markers, I turn to the verbs that are listed in Heine & Reh (1984) as common grammaticalisation sources for TAM markers (cf Heine & Kuteva 2004; Nurse 2008) (20). I provide the Tunen and Nyokon equivalents of these verbs in Table 7 below.

- (20) **Common verbal origins of TAM markers** (Heine & Reh 1984: 113-135)  
 ‘to begin’, ‘to finish’, ‘to return’, ‘to come’, ‘to go, to leave’, ‘to enter’, ‘to exit’, ‘to see’

A first observation from Table 7 above is that there appear to be surprisingly few cognates between the Tunen verb forms and the Nyokon ones, which is notable considering that the languages are neighbours. Furthermore, when comparing these infinitival verb forms in Table 7 to the TAM markers for each language (Table 5/6), there are also no clear correspondences that lead to potential sources (i.e., there is no TAM marker which can be easily analysed as a contracted form of one of the verb forms from Table 7).

While this does not mean that the TAM forms could not have been derived from a verbal source, the lack of clear overlap is nevertheless interesting. This

Table 7: Tunen and Nyokon translations of verbs in (20)

Verb	Tunen	Nyokon
‘to begin’	<i>ɔlúmá</i>	<i>utɔ’ɔ</i>
‘to finish’	<i>ɔhóá</i>	<i>umán</i>
‘to return’	<i>utilá, ɔhíáná</i>	<i>uyám</i>
‘to come’	<i>ɔsáá</i>	<i>ufe</i>
‘to go, to leave’	<i>ɔwakáná</i>	<i>utfɔp</i>
‘to enter’	<i>ɔfínə</i>	<i>utfó</i>
‘to exit’	<i>ɔfámálána</i>	<i>utfós</i>
‘to see’	<i>ɔsinə</i>	<i>utiin, undukɿ</i>

is not to say that the TAM systems of the A40 languages are completely independent of each other, however. Mous (2005: 11) identifies various cognates between the A40-A60 languages, for example between Tunen and Nomaande (A46). He proposes one Tunen-Nyokon cognate of the Tunen PST2 *ná* and the Nyokon present tense continuous marker *nə* (in turn cognate with the certain future *ná* in Gunu (A62a)). Furthermore, the TAM systems share the common property of having a large number of tense gradations, which Nurse (2008: 126) (drawing on Watters 2003: 246-7) identifies as a common feature of zone A40 Bantu languages and Eastern Grassfields.

We are left with the question of where the TAM markers for Tunen and Nyokon came from, if not from one of the verbal sources from (20). Nurse (2008: 125-6) argues that the tense markers of the Northwestern region are likely local innovations that arose after loss of earlier TAM forms, with Tunen PST3 *ka* perhaps a rare example of retention of *\*k* in the Northwest, though possibly derived from another origin than the *-ka-* found in other Bantu tense systems. The identification of sources of the Mbam TAM markers in the area is therefore a question requiring further research.

In summary, we have seen that Tunen and Nyokon TAM markers appear together with an obligatory subject marker, with the SM-TAM cluster separate from the verb. While one common source for auxiliaries and TAM markers cross-linguistically is verbs like ‘to come’ and ‘to go’, the study of these forms for Tunen and Nyokon did not provide any clear correspondences.

### 4.3.2 The infinitival pathway

An alternative (or additional) hypothesis is the infinitival grammaticalisation path sketched briefly by Mous (2005) for Tunen and Nyokon. The basic idea is that Mbam languages had basic VO syntax, with an IS-conditioned variant as in (22), in which a given object could precede the verb (as in Güldemann 2007, and in relation to Mous 1997, 2005's analysis that the postverbal object position is more contrastive in Tunen). Mous suggests that the presence of an infinitival construction of form (21) led to generalisation of the OV syntax of (22) applying to all objects via analogy (together with V>Aux grammaticalisation of the initial verb in (21)); (Mous 2005, p.c.).

(21) S V ∘ O (∘) V<sub>INF</sub>

(22) S TAM O<sub>PRON</sub> V

Mous writes that both OV and VO word order is found in Mbam infinitival constructions (23). He relates the different available positions of the object to a difference in interpretation between the object as the argument of the verb (e.g. OV 'at the field') or a circumstantial reading (e.g. VO 'work at the field').

(23) S Aux/V [O V] ~ S Aux/V [V O] (Mous 2005: 12, p.c.)

The data to support such a hypothesis are limited and Mous does not give many details on the exact proposal, making it difficult to evaluate. The origin of O-V<sub>INF</sub> order is not explained, despite the fact that it is surprising: while Tunen has N-Mod/N-Gen order in the nominal domain (i.e. head-initiality; cf Table 3), here the verbal head follows its complement (head-finality). The question of the origin of OV in general is therefore pushed back to the question of the origin of OV within infinitival constructions.

Mous notes that the limited data he had available for Nyokon did not show any OV word order in infinitives, unlike in Tunen. In this section I therefore provide some extra data from Tunen and Nyokon to illustrate the infinitival construction in question, highlighting some points of interest for further study.

In Tunen, the infinitive marker ∘ is homophonous with the general preposition ∘.<sup>22</sup> For the current purposes, I gloss these forms as INF and PREP respec-

<sup>22</sup>The infinitive may surface as [u] as a predictable result of ATR harmony (for which see Boyd 2015 and references therein). While my consultants considered the infinitive and preposition to be homophonous, there is also potential dialectal variation in the presence of a vowel /ʊ/, argued to be found in the infinitival prefix but not the preposition (see Mous 2003, Boyd 2015).

tively. In Nyokon, the infinitive prefix is *u-*, while the general preposition is *a*.<sup>23</sup> Embedded clauses require the infinitive marker together with prepositions, as indicated below in boldface.<sup>24</sup>

- (24) a. mé ndo siə ɔ mənífə ɔ ɔnyá.  
           /me   <sup>H</sup>ndo siə   ɔ    ma-nífə ɔ    ɔ-nyá/  
           SM.1SG PRS   want PREP 6-water PREP INF-drink  
           ‘I want to drink water.’ (Tunen; JO 609)
- b. miəkó a lé óso ɔ bɛŋgwɛtɛ (ɔ) ɔbáta.  
           /miəkó   a   lɛ   óso ɔ   bɛ-ŋgwɛtɛ ɔ    ɔ-báta/  
           9.chicken SM.1 NEG can PREP 8-potato   PREP INF-collect  
           ‘The chicken wasn’t able to collect up her potatoes.’ (Tunen; JO 1764)

Such contexts were also remarked upon by Dugast (1971), but, unlike in my data, her examples do not have an extra ɔ before the infinitival marker (25). The data from Mous (2005) pattern with Dugast’s data in having no additional ɔ directly before an infinitive-marked verb form (26).<sup>25</sup>

- (25) mɛ    nábékánén ɔ   malex ɔ   wíndi  
           SM.1SG PST2.try   PREP 6.advice INF give  
           ‘J’ai essayé de donner des conseils.’  
           (‘I tried to give some advice.’) (Tunen; Dugast 1971: 309)
- (26) a. a-ná    húánána ɔ   wâw ɔ   m<sup>w</sup>əlúk owíndi  
           SM.1-PST2 must:H   PREP you   PREP 6.wine   INF.give  
           ‘She/He was obliged to give you wine.’
- b. bá-ná lumín ɔ   etɔpɔtɔpɔ ɔ-nyɔ  
           2-child agree:H PREP 7.field   INF-work  
           ‘They agreed to cultivate the field.’ (Tunen, Mous 2005: 10)

<sup>23</sup>A form *a* appears in other contexts in Nyokon, such as in sentence-final position after negation. I leave an analysis of whether these contexts are linked to the prepositional use as a topic for further research. Tunen does not have ɔ in the equivalent contexts.

<sup>24</sup>The parentheses around the second ɔ in (24b) is due to vowel elision making it inaudible in fast speech (this sentence was taken from a story). The consultant however said during transcription that there was an ɔ present.

<sup>25</sup>Note in terms of time depth that Mous’ elicited data are based on fieldwork he conducted in 1984/1986. I adapt the glossing for consistency with my data, but leave the transcription line and translation unchanged. The English translation of the Dugast example is my own addition.

I suggest that this distinction is interesting because the prepositional *ɔ* in Tunen appears to be necessary to license postverbal nominals.<sup>26</sup> Supporting evidence for *ɔ* as a nominal licenser in Tunen comes also from the ability for such verb forms to appear as subjects (Dugast 1971), and its presence on topics in non-argument positions (Kerr to appear). The apparent systematic difference in number of *ɔ* forms between my own and Dugast/Mous' data therefore raises the question as to whether such a difference is linked to a change in progress with regards to nominal/verbal syntactic status. Mous (2005) suggests briefly that the homophony of the preposition and infinitive relates to the development of OV dominant order in Tunen, arguing that the infinitival verb in the OV construction was first marked by the infinitival *ɔ* and the preposition *ɔ*, and then, given homophony, the infinitival *ɔ* could be dropped. I suggest that the differences in our data could be understood as syntactic reanalysis of the scope of the nominal complement preceded by *ɔ* *PREP*, as sketched in (27) below.

(27) *S V ɔ [O ɔ-V] → S V ɔ [O] ɔ [ɔ-V]*

One issue with applying such an analysis to Nyokon is the lack of homophony between the infinitival prefix and the preposition in Nyokon, although the basic similarity in construction holds: infinitives in my Nyokon data have multiple marking, as in Tunen. However, the embedded non-finite verb appears before the object (VO; (28)). Unlike in Mous (2005)'s study, I found one example with OV syntax, although here the embedded clause was finite (29).

(28) *Vivianə (nə) yár a náám a kɔndáf*  
*Vivianne COP want A cook A pork*  
 'Vivianne wants to cook pork.' (Nyokon; RA 51-2)

(29) *Vivianə yár usáá Roger kú a kɔndáf náám*  
*Vivianne want SM.1.say Roger TAM A pork cook*  
 'Vivianne wants Roger to cook the pork.' (Nyokon; RA 53)

The more accurate explanation for OV in (29) is likely the presence versus absence of a TAM marker, although it is also possible that the *kú* form in (29) is a verb rather than a TAM marker, therefore showing VO syntax with *a* licensing a postverbal object (*S V [S V a [O V]]*). This could in turn be related to the more general TAM-dependent alternation between OV and VO seen for Nyokon in

<sup>26</sup>An exception is a small number of inherently locative nouns, e.g. 'riverside', which do not require a preposition and can be taken as inherently licensed (see Mous 2003: 305).

§4.1 above. We therefore see that the infinitival pathway is harder to argue for as the source of OV syntax in Nyokon than it is for Tunen, at least with the limited data that are currently available.

#### 4.4 Section summary

To sum up this research question, we have seen that there have been multiple grammaticalisation scenarios invoked in the literature for innovation of OV. While  $V > \text{Aux}(>\text{TAM})$  grammaticalisation is crosslinguistically common, no clear examples were found for Tunen and Nyokon. Infinitival constructions were proposed by Mous (2005) as a possible grammaticalisation scenario for OV in Tunen and Nyokon, although Mous (2005) found no such OV examples in Nyokon. I showed that Nyokon retains VO in embedded non-finite clauses but could have OV in a finite example, while Tunen has OV consistently. I also highlighted a difference in the number of  $\text{ɔ PREP/INF}$  forms in my Tunen data and the 20th-century data of Dugast (1971); Mous (1997, 2003, 2005), which I suggested may relate to changes in nominal licensing (i.e. syntactic interpretation of an element as nominal versus verbal and thus requirement to be licensed by a preposition). In summary, the infinitival path still requires further development, but is an interesting possibility given the presence of the multiple  $\text{ɔ/a}$ -marking constructions in both languages. Such a grammaticalisation scenario could be better motivated if further relevant data are collected for Nyokon and neighbouring languages.

### 5 A note on Tikar

Before concluding, I will briefly comment on Tikar, given that it is the other Cameroonian language of the WALS sample which has been identified as having a (partial) OV system (Mous 2005, Dryer 2013), and is therefore of interest for understanding the development of OV syntax at the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands region. Recall from Figure 2 that Tikar is a close but not immediate neighbour of Tunen or Nyokon, being spoken approximately 50–150km to the North-East, and is classified as Bantoid (Northern Bantoid) rather than Narrow Bantu.

The classification of Tikar as having a mixed OV system is based primarily on the data from Stanley (1997), which are detailed but limited to sentence-level discussion. Stanley shows that Tikar has OV word order in imperfective tenses (30), while VO appears in the perfective (31) (Stanley 1997: 36).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>The Tikar data are unchanged, with the exception of boldface/italics, translation of French lexical glosses into English, and the addition of an English free translation.

- (30) à tǎ nye yili.  
 he IPFP0 house sweep  
 ‘Il balaie la maison.’  
 (‘He is sweeping the house.’) (Tikar; Stanley 1997: 103)

- (31) m̀n k̀nnd-â kw̃n.  
 I add-PRF salt  
 ‘J’ai ajouté du sel.’  
 (‘I have added salt.’) (Tikar; Stanley 1997: 139)

For Tikar, it is hard to fully evaluate the possible influence of IS due to the lack of discourse context in the sentences provided in the grammar. However, pronominal objects appear in the same position as lexical objects (e.g. (32)), which suggests that the givenness of the object does not affect its position relative to the verb, just as we saw above for RQ1 for Tunen and in contrast to the historical scenario discussed by Güldemann (2007).<sup>28</sup>

- (32) à ji-â bon.  
 he eat-PRF them  
 ‘Il les a mangés.’ [sic.]  
 (‘He has eaten them.’) (Tikar; Stanley 1997: 248)

In terms of the other research questions RQ2 and RQ3, the data available in Stanley (1997) suggest that Tikar aligns with the results for Tunen and Nyokon. For example, it has VO (V-IO-DO) syntax in imperatives (33), N-Mod order, (34) and OV syntax of embedded non-finite verbs (35). Note however that there is no preposition or infinitival marking in (35), which is different from the Tunen and Nyokon construction (and thus significant for Mous 2005’s infinitival grammaticalisation proposal).

- (33) k̀nndi m̀n nw̃.  
 add me meat  
 ‘Donne-moi plus de viande.’  
 (‘Give me more meat.’) (Tikar; Stanley 1997: 139)

- (34) k̀n nywæb  
 pot new  
 ‘une marmite neuve’  
 (‘a new pot’) (Tikar; Stanley 1997: 273)

<sup>28</sup>Güldemann (2007) does mention data from Redden (1979) on Ewondo, a Bantu A72 language spoken near Tikar, which shows an IS-conditioned distinction in that only pronominal objects may be OV, and therefore would be a candidate for such a distinction holding synchronically.

- (35) m̀̀n yě    d̀̀nmi    b̀̀rik̀̀i    ywæ̀li.  
I      1PF1 AUX.begin bricks hit  
'Je vais commencer à fabriquer des briques.'  
(I will start to make some bricks.) (Tikar; Stanley 1997: 133)

In terms of grammaticalisation, Hyman (2011: 11-12) provides arguments based on Stanley (1997) that certain Aux components in Tikar are recent grammaticalisations from verbal sources, supporting a TAM-based V>Aux path from an earlier VO order. While a full analysis of Tikar requires further data on the language, these initial results suggest that it has a similar syntactic profile to Nyokon, differing from Tunen in having VO order in certain TAM contexts, and differing from both languages in its infinitival constructions.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper set out to investigate the rare OV word order patterns found in two languages at the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands region of Cameroon, testing the previous proposal of Mous (2003, 2005) in light of the possible influence of information structure as primary conditioning factor (Güldemann 2007, Good 2010). It was shown from new data with controlled discourse contexts that Tunen has a fully-established SOV order, while Nyokon has a partial SOV system with TAM as the primary synchronic conditioning factor. IS was shown to not be a directly significant factor conditioning order of the object and verb in either language. Both languages were shown to have a wide range of syntactic properties that fit the typical syntactic profile of a VO language, i.e. head-initial properties. Two grammaticalisation paths were then reflected upon. While V>Aux(>TAM) grammaticalisation is cross-linguistically common and likely, no evidence was found to support OV order having originated from this source in Tunen and Nyokon. Some extra data was then added to discussion of the possible grammaticalisation source via nominalisation in infinitival constructions sketched by Mous (2005). Finally, it was shown that Tikar patterns similarly to Nyokon in having a primarily TAM-based OV versus VO alternation, and differs from the Mbam languages in its infinitival constructions.

There are various questions for further work. One is empirical, as to whether other languages at the Bantu/Bantoid borderlands show OV patterns under certain TAM or IS contexts. This requires data collection on these languages, including discourse context (and ideally a corpus of natural speech). More detailed data on Nyokon is also important, especially for embedded non-finite clauses,

and considering the precise semantics of the TAM marker in relation to IS. Another question is what role contact has played. If OV is innovative, to what extent was it a shared innovation? This can be linked to the discussion of innovations in other domains in the proposed Macro-Sudan Belt region (Clements & Rialland 2008, Güldemann 2008, Hyman 2011). A more detailed comparison of the TAM systems of the Mbam languages would be of interest here. Finally, a syntactic analysis for each language would be desirable, considering other evidence for the structural height of the verb and object.

## Abbreviations

Glossing conventions in this chapter follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules, with the following additions/differences.

### Glossing conventions

1, 2, 3...	Bantu noun class marker	PST1	first-degree past tense (just now)
A	“Nyokon a form”		
ASSOC	associative marker	PST2	second-degree past tense (hodiernal)
IPFF1	imperfective “future premier degré” (from Stanley 1997)	PST3	third-degree past tense (hestiernal)
IPFP0	imperfective “non-passé” (from Stanley 1997)	PST4	fourth-degree past tense (ancient past)
IPFP1	imperfective “passé premier degré” (from Stanley 1997)	REM	remote past
PREP	preposition	SM	subject marker
PRN	pronoun		

### In-text abbreviations

ATR	Advanced Tongue Root	IS	Information structure
Aux	Auxiliary	Mod	Nominal modifier
C	Complementiser	NP	Noun phrase
Comp	Complement clause	O <sub>Pron</sub>	Pronominal object
Compl	Complement	PCF	Predicate-centred focus
DP	Determiner Phrase	SOV	Subject-Object-Verb
\H	H grammatical tone (Mous 2022)	SVO	Subject-Verb-Object
Intd	Intended interpretation	TAM	tense/aspect/mood

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## Appendix A RQ1 data sheet: TAM versus IS influence

This appendix provides supplementary supporting data for RQ1 of the paper “On OV and VO at the Bantu/ Bantoid borderlands”.

### A.1 TAM context

#### Present tense

Tunen OV, Nyokon VO

- (36) *Tunen present tense, focus on recipient object, OV:*

Context: ‘Who is the woman returning the calabash to?’

muəndú á ndɔ imítá túmbiə ɔ mən.  
/mɔ-əndú a <sup>H</sup>ndɔ ɛ-mítá túmbiə ɔ mɔ-ná/  
1-woman SM.1 PRS 7-calabash return PREP 1-child

‘The woman returns the calabash [to the child]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ (Tunen; JO 1586)

- (37) *Nyokon present tense, VO/\*OV:*

a. mu nə náám alif (ákitsia).  
/mu nə náám alif ákitsia/  
SM.1SG PRS cook rice today

‘I am cooking rice today’ (Nyokon; RA 10)

- b. \*mu nə alif náám (ákitsia)  
 /mu nə alif náám ákitsia/  
 SM.1SG PRS rice cook today  
 Intd.: I am cooking rice today.' (Nyokon; RA 11)

Note that Mous (2022) distinguishes the Nyokon simple present from the present continuous, which differ in OV versus VO order.

### Past tenses

Tunen OV, Nyokon OV

Tunen has four degrees of past tense, which in the affirmative have TAM markers *nɔ* PST1 (just now, a moment ago), *ná* PST2 (hodiernal), *ka* PST3 (hestiernal), and *lɛ* PST4 (ancient past). All have OV order.

*Tunen, first/second/third-degree past tense,thetic, OV:*

- (38) a. Context: You are at the riverside outside the village and see an elephant, which very rarely occurs, so run to tell the others.  
 mɛ nɔ misəku siəkin!  
 /mɛ nɔ mi-səku siəkinə/  
 SM.1SG PST1 3-elephant see.DUR  
 'I just saw an elephant!' (Tunen; PM 316)
- b. Context: Your friend asks what happened at church.  
 mɔtát a ná imbónu yɛ fəkin né Yəsəs ɔ  
 /mɔ-táta a ná ɛ-mbónu yɛ fəkinə né Yəsəsɔ ɔ  
 1-pastor SM.1 PST2 7-news 7.ASSOC 5.entrance 5.ASSOC Jesus PREP  
 Yerusaleḿ nəḡɔnak.  
 Yerusaleḿə nəḡɔn-aka/  
 Jerusalem tell-DUR  
 'The pastor told the news of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.' (Tunen; DM 166)
- c. Context: 'What happened?'  
 yəmisə a ka wáyíə mɔtɔ́á lú.  
 /yamíá-isə a ka wáyíə mɔ-tɔ́á lúə/  
 POSS.PRON.1SG.9-9.father SM.1 PST3 POSS.PRON.1.3 3-car sell  
 'My father sold his car.' (Tunen; JO 2445)

*Tunen, fourth-degree past, OV:*

- (39) məkɔ le wamiá món ón.  
leopard PST4 POSS.PRON.1SG.1 1.child kill  
'Le léopard avait tué mon enfant.'  
(‘The leopard killed my child.’) (Tunen; Dugast 1971: 182, adapted)

*Nyokon past tense, OV, ?VO:*

- (40) mu álif náám akitsía  
/mu alif náám ákitsia/  
SM.1SG rice cook today  
'I cooked rice today.' (Nyokon; RA 12)
- (41) a. Context A: 'What did your father do?' (VP focus),  
Context B: 'What did your father kill?' (object focus)  
itá ángam ghó.  
father spider kill  
'My father [killed a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>.'  
'My father killed [a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>'. (Nyokon; RA 216)
- b. Context: 'What did your father kill?' (object focus)  
? itá ghó ángam.  
father kill spider  
Intd.: 'My father killed [a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>'. (Nyokon; RA 224)

More examples for Nyokon past tenses are available in Mous (2022). Mous (2005) also provides TAM paradigms for Tunen (for which see also Dugast 1971).

### Future tenses

Tunen OV, Nyokon VO.

*Tunen future tense, out-of-the-blue, OV:*

- (42) Samuélé á ŋɔ ɔlésa néák.  
/Samuélé a ŋɔ ɔ-lésa néá-aka/  
1.Samuel SM.1 FUT 3-rice eat-DUR  
'Samuel will eat rice.' (tomorrow) (Tunen; EE+EB 1656)

*Tunen, future conditional, promoninal object, OV:*

- (43) ábá bá sɔ ɲɔ bəsú lúkə, bá tuán.  
 /ábá bá sɔ ɲɔ bəsúə lúkə bá tuánə/  
 if SM.2 NEG FUT PRON.1PL feed SM.2 leave  
 ‘If they don’t feed us, then that’s on them.’ (Tunen; EE 1701)

*Nyokon, future tense, VO:*

- (44) mə mu náám álif (a ɪŋɛ) aku’u.  
 FUT SM.1SG cook rice PREP toward evening  
 ‘I will cook rice in the evening.’ (Nyokon; RA 13)

*Nyokon, future conditional, VO:*

- (45) nàá nɔ ɲǝr mó.  
 2PL COND.FUT have money  
 ‘If you(pl) will have money.’ (Nyokon; Mous 2022: 19)

## A.2 IS context

### Thetics

Tunen OV, Nyokon VO/OV dependent on TAM.

*Tunen, thetics, OV:*

- (46) a. Context: You enter the room and see a broken window. Someone announces...  
 Biólɛ a ná itúbá san.  
 /Biólɛ a ná ɛ-túbá sána/  
 1.Pierre SM.1 PST2 7-window break  
 ‘Pierre broke the window.’ (Tunen; EE+EB 1669)
- b. Context: You are at the riverside outside the village and see an elephant, which very rarely occurs, so run to tell the others.  
 mə nɔ misəku siəkin!  
 /mə nɔ mi-səku siəkinə/  
 SM.1SG PST1 3-elephant see.DUR  
 ‘I just saw an elephant!’ (Tunen; PM 316)

- c. Context: Your friend asks what happened at church.  
 mətát a ná imbónu ye fəkin né Yəsəs ɔ  
 /mɔ-táta a ná ɛ-mbónu ye fəkinə né Yəsəsu ɔ  
 1-pastor SM.1 PST2 7-news 7.ASSOC 5.entrance 5.ASSOC Jesus PREP  
 Yerúsalem nəŋonak.  
 Yerúsalemə nəŋon-aka/  
 Jerusalem tell-DUR  
 ‘The pastor told the news of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem.’ (Tunen;  
 DM 166)

*Nyokon,thetic, present tense, VO:*

- (47) mu nə náám alif (ákitsia).  
 /mu nə náám alif ákitsia/  
 SM.1SG PRS cook rice today  
 ‘I am cooking rice today.’ (Nyokon; RA 10)

### Object focus

Tunen OV, Nyokon VO/OV dependent on TAM.

*Tunen, term focus on theme object, OV:*

- (48) a. Context: ‘What did the woman give to the other woman?’  
 a nó ɔsókó hetété indi  
 /a nó ɔsókó hɛ-tété índiá/  
 SM.1 PST1 other 19-gourd give  
 ‘She gave [a gourd]<sub>FOC</sub> to the other.’ (Tunen; PM 1541)  
 b. Context: ‘What is the man holding in his hand?’  
 kalótɔ á ná itíá ɔ məkát.  
 /kalótɔ á-á ná itíá ɔ mɔ-kata/  
 7.carrot COP-SM.1.REL PST2 hold PREP 3-hand  
 ‘He is holding [a carrot]<sub>FOC</sub> in his hand.’ (Tunen; JO 1630; Kerr to  
 appear)

*Nyokon, term focus on theme object, OV/?VO:*

- (49) a. Context: ‘What did your father kill?’ (object focus)  
 itá ángam ghó.  
 father spider kill  
 ‘My father killed [a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ (Nyokon; RA 216)

- b. Context: ‘What did your father kill?’ (object focus)

? itá ghó ángam.

father kill spider

Intd.: ‘My father killed [a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

(Nyokon; RA 224)

### Sub-NP focus

Tunen OV, Nyokon VO/OV dependent on TAM.

NB: In Tunen, there is a discontinuous noun phrase construction found for numeral, quantifier, and adjectival modifiers (S-O-V-Mod), which complicates this coding. However, sub-NP focus on the possessor shows that the word order follows the general OV pattern:

*Tunen, sub-NP focus on possessor, OV/\*VO:*

- (50) Context: ‘Whose book did Elisabeth buy?’

a. a ka híǎfúlǎ hé Jǎhána ónd.

/a ka hɛ-ǎfulǎ hé Jǎhána óndɔ/

SM.1 PST3 19-book ASSOC.19 1.Jeanne buy

‘She bought Jeanne’s book.’

(Tunen; EB+JO 2798)

b. \*a ka híǎfúlǎ hé Jǎhána ónd.

/a ka hɛ-ǎfulǎ hé Jǎhána óndɔ/

SM.1 PST3 buy 19-book ASSOC.19 1.Jeanne

Intd.: ‘She bought Jeanne’s book.’

(Tunen; EB+JO 2801)

*Nyokon, sub-NP focus on numeral, present tense, VO:*

- (51) Context: ‘How many chickens do you see?’

táá ndukɲ iko’ɔ itá.

SM.1PL see chickens three

‘We see [three]<sub>FOC</sub> chickens.’

(Nyokon; RA 34)

### VP focus

Tunen OV, Nyokon VO/OV dependent on TAM.

*Tunen, VP focus, past tense, OV:*

- (52) Context: What did Maria do?

Malía a ná bilǎliǎ fǎfǎkiǎ.

/Malía a ná bɛ-lǎliǎ fǎfǎkíǎ/

1.Maria SM.1 PST2 8-varnish anoint.DUR

‘Maria [applied the varnish]<sub>FOC</sub>.’

(Tunen; JO 2518)

*Nyokon, VP focus, past tense, OV:*

- (53) Context A: ‘What did your father do?’ (VP focus),  
Context B: ‘What did your father kill?’ (object focus)  
itá ányam ghó.  
father spider kill  
‘My father [killed a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>.’  
‘My father killed [a spider]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ (Nyokon; RA 216)

*Nyokon, VP focus, present tense, VO:*

- (54) Context: ‘What are you doing today?’  
taa nə tsá’a René.  
SM.1PL PRS receive René  
‘We are [hosting René]<sub>FOC</sub>.’ (Nyokon; RA 233)

### Other PCF

Tunen OV, Nyokon VO/OV dependent on TAM.

*Tunen, truth focus, present tense, OV:*

- (55) Context: ‘Do you see the sheep?’ (truth focus)  
mé nd(ɔ) endómbá sin.  
/mɛ <sup>H</sup>ndɔ ɛ-ndómbá sinə/  
SM.1SG PRS 7-sheep see  
‘I see the sheep.’ (Tunen; EO 695)

*Tunen, state-of-affairs focus (verb focus), past tense, OV:*

- (56) Context: ‘What did he do with the beans and the plantains?’ (PCF)  
Context: ‘What happened?’ (thetic)  
a ka makondʒɛ néáka. a ná bilikó lu.  
/a ka ma-kondʒɛ néá-aka a ná bɛ-likó lu/  
SM.1 PST3 6-plantain eat-DUR SM.1 PST2 8-bean sell  
‘He [ate]<sub>FOC</sub> the plantains. He [sold]<sub>FOC</sub> the beans.’ (JO 908; Kerr to appear)

*Nyokon, truth focus, present tense, VO:*

- (57) Context: Kinyó is sick and unable to eat a lot. Someone asks ‘Can Kinyó eat rice?’  
 áa, u fúr anyé álif.  
 yes SM.1 can eat rice  
 ‘Yes, she [can]<sub>FOC</sub> eat rice.’ (Nyokon; RA 151)

### Other relevant data on the order of O and V

Pronominal objects

Pronominal objects pattern the same as lexical DPs in Tunen.

*Tunen, pronominal object, OV:*

- (58) mɔndɔ ɔwá móná á ndɔ naa a nó wéɛya ákánana ɔ ndókɛt  
 /mɔ-ndɔ ɔwá mɔ-ná a <sup>H</sup>ndɔ ná a nó wéɛya ákánana ɔ  
 1-person REL.1 1-child SM.1 PRS be.sick SM.1 PST1 PRON.1 leave.APPL PREP  
 ndóketa/  
 7.doctor  
 ‘The man whose child is sick took her to the clinic.’ (Tunen; PM 2179)

NB: In a paper published since this paper was submitted, Mous reports postverbal object pronouns for past tense in Nyokon:

- (59) ò liá’ vê.  
 ò lè:K\H vê  
 3SG say:REM\H O3PL  
 ‘He had told them.’ (Nyokon; Mous 2022:15)

### Negation

Order of O and V in negative clauses matches order of O and V in affirmative clauses in both Tunen and Nyokon.

*Tunen, negation, pronominal and full noun phrase object, OV:*

- (60) a. mɛ lɛ aɲǎá nimb. (Neg-O-V, Tunen)  
 /mɛ lɛ aɲǎá nimbə/  
 SM.1SG NEG PRON.2SG.EMPH deceive  
 ‘Je ne te trompe pas.’  
 ‘I’m not lying to you.’

- b. mɛ lɛ ndɔ tunəni ɔkɔ. (Neg-O-V, Tunen)  
 /mɛ lɛ <sup>H</sup>ndɔ tu-nəni ɔkɔ/  
 SM.1SG NEG PRS 13-Nen understand  
 ‘I don’t understand the Tunen language.’

*Nyokon, negation, present tense, VO:*

- (61) Kinyó sɛ nyé alif a.  
 Kinyo NEG eat rice A  
 ‘Kinyo doesn’t eat rice.’ (Nyokon; RA 126)
- (62) m̩ sí swó ákíná.  
 1SG NEG wash calabash:F  
 ‘I don’t wash the calabash (never).’ (Nyokon; Mous 2022: 25)

There is no difference in order of O and V between negation in matrix versus embedded clauses.

#### Embedded clauses

Order of O and V in embedded clauses matches order of O and V in matrix clauses in Tunen and Nyokon.

*Tunen, embedded clauses, OV/\*VO:*

- (63) a. mé ndɔ manya ɔwá Matéŋɛ a ka hiəfulə fanak.  
 /mɛ <sup>H</sup>ndɔ manya ɔwá Matéŋɛ a ka hɛ-əfulə fana-aka/  
 SM.1SG PRS know REL.1 1.Martin SM.1 PST3 19-book read-DUR  
 ‘I know that Martin has read the book.’ (Tunen; JO 905)
- b. Malía a ná láá ásea Jɔhánes(ɛ) á ndɔ bilíbilíbí  
 /Malía a ná laa a-séá Jɔhánesɛ a <sup>H</sup>ndɔ bɛ-líbilíbí  
 1.Maria SM.1 PST2 say SM.1-say 1.Johannes SM.1 PRS 8-chili.pepper  
 nyɔ ɔ wayéá ɔmbél.  
 nyɔ ɔ wayéá ɔ-mbéla/  
 cultivate PREP POSS.PRON.1.3 3-house  
 Maria said that Johannes grows chillies at home.’ (Tunen; JO 2450)
- c. \*Malía a ná láá ásea Jɔhánes á ndɔ nyɔ  
 /Malía a ná laa a-séá Jɔhánesɛ a <sup>H</sup>ndɔ nyɔ  
 1.Maria SM.1 PST2 say SM.1-say 1.Johannes SM.1 PRS cultivate

bilíbilíbi.

bɛ-libílibí/

8-chili.pepper

Maria said that Johannes grows chillies.'

(Tunen; JO 2451)

*Nyokon, embedded clauses:*

(64) Vivianə yár usáá Roger kú a kəndáf náám

Vivianne want SM.1.say Roger TAM A pork cook

'Vivianne wants Roger to cook the pork.'

(Nyokon; RA 53)

**Definiteness**

Order of O and V with definite objects matches order of O and V with indefinite objects. Definiteness is generally unmarked, but can be seen in different discourse contexts and in Tunen through the use of the specific indefinite determiner *-mɔ́tɛ́* (see Kerr 2020) and modification by possessive pronouns (indicating definiteness).

*Tunen, definite/non-specific indefinite/specific indefinite object, OV:*

(65) mé ndɔ́ mɔ́ndɔ́ si.

/mɛ ʰndɔ́ mɔ́-ndɔ́ siə/

SM.1SG PRS 1-person search

'I'm looking for {someone/a person/the person}.'

(Tunen; JO 898; Kerr

2020: 246)

*Tunen, indefinite object, OV:*

(66) Context: You are looking for your friend Daniel.

mé ndɔ́ wɔ́mɔ́tɛ́ mɔ́ndɔ́ si. neayá nínyə á Təniel.

/mɛ ʰndɔ́ ɔ́-ʰmɔ́tɛ́ mɔ́-ndɔ́ siə neayá nɛ-nyə á Təniéle/

SM.1SG PRS 1-one 1-person search 5.POSS.PRON.1 5-name COP 1.Daniel

'I'm looking for someone. His name is Daniel.' (Tunen; JO, 891; Kerr 2020: 246)

*Tunen, definite object, OV/\*VO:*

(67) Context: 'What happened?'

a. yəmisə a ka wáyíə mɔ́tɔ́á lú.

/yamíá-isə a ka wáyíə mɔ́-tɔ́á lúə/

POSS.PRON.1SG.9-9.father SM.1 PST3 POSS.PRON.1.3 3-car sell

'My father sold his car.'

(Tunen; JO 2445)

- b. \*yəmisá                      a    ka    lúə wáyíá                      mətóá.  
       /yamiá-isá                      a    ka    lúə wáyíá                      mɔ-tóá/  
       POSS.PRON.1SG.9-9.father SM.1 PST3 sell POSS.PRON.1.3 3-car  
       Intd.: ‘My father sold his car.’                      (Tunen; JO 2446)

## Appendix B RQ2 data sheet: Head-finality versus head-initiality

This appendix provides supplementary supporting data for RQ2 of the paper “On OV and VO at the Bantu Bantoid borderlands”.

### B.1 Order of N and Mod

Tunen N-Mod, D-NP order; Nyokon N-Mod, D-NP order.

*Tunen, N-Mod, D-NP order:*

- (68) tóóye                      tɔbanána tɔtɛ́tɛ́    tɔfítitiə tɔfandɛ  
       /tóóye                      tɔ-banána tɔ-tɛ́tɛ́á    tɔ-fítitiə tɔ-<sup>H</sup>fandɛ /  
       13.DEM.PROX 13-banana 13-small 13-black 13-two  
       ‘these two small black bananas’                      (Tunen; JO 885)

*Nyokon, N-Mod, D-NP order:*

- (69) a. pí                      pimbótɔ pífu  
       DEM.PROX bananas two  
       ‘these two bananas’                      (Nyokon; RA 191)  
       b. pimbótɔ kúpóm  
       bananas ripe  
       ‘ripe bananas’                      (Nyokon; RA 188)

### Adposition type

*Tunen prepositions, Nyokon prepositions:*

- (70) a. Context: Where are you?  
       mɛ lɛ ɔ nioní.  
       /mɛ    léá ɔ    nɛ-oní/  
       SM.1SG be PREP 5-market  
       ‘I am at the market.’                      (Tunen; PM 102)

- b. Context: ‘Where are you?’

mu nə a nyí.

SM.1SG COP PREP market

‘I am at the market.’

(Nyokon; RA 94)

NB: There are some elements that appear like postpositions but are derived from nouns, e.g. *nuumə* ‘inside’; see Dugast (1971) and Mous (2003:305).

## B.2 Order of N and Poss (pronoun)

Tunen Poss<sub>PRON</sub>-N; Nyokon Poss<sub>PRON</sub>-N.

*Tunen, Poss<sub>PRON</sub>-N (for subjects, direct objects, indirect objects):*

- (71) a. wàmɛ mɔ̀na li ò mĩm.

POSS.PRON.1SG.1 1.child be PREP house

‘Mon enfant est dans la case.’

- b. níamía néhɔ̀ka nánìmin

POSS.PRON.1SG.5 5-axe PAST2-disappear

‘Ma hache a disparu.’

- c. mèkɔ̀ ná yàm ìmwinyí 'étà

leopard PST2 PRON.POSS.1.7 7.goat take

‘Le léopard a pris ma chèvre.’

- d. mé ndò wám úmbienyi tilin

SM.1SG PRS POSS.PRON.1SG.3 sibling write

‘J’écris à mon neveu utérin.’

(Tunen; Dugast 1971: 135)

*Nyokon, possessive pronouns, Poss<sub>PRON</sub>-N.*

- (72) Context: After visiting a friend’s house, you announce:

punú páa liak tsú.

POSS.2PL children cry much

‘Your children cry a lot.’

(Nyokon; RA 7)

See §4.3 of the main paper re: N-Poss<sub>PRON</sub> order in certain frozen possessive expressions.

## B.3 Order of N and Gen

Tunen N-Gen, Nyokon N-Gen.

Non-pronominal possessives are formed with the associative (aka connective, genitive) construction N<sub>1</sub>-Assoc-N<sub>2</sub>.

*Tunen, N and Gen, N-Gen:*

- (73) a. *mùteká wà mònd* ‘l’esclave de l’homme’ (‘the man’s slave’), pl. *bàteká bá mònd* (1/2)  
 b. *mìǎkó yè mùənd* ‘la poule de la femme’ (‘the woman’s chicken’), pl. *mìǎkó yé múənd* (9/10) (Tunen; Dugast 1971: 133).

*Nyokon, N and Gen, N-Gen:*

- (74) *unyám yímambəŋ*  
 man ASSOC.POSS.PRON.1SG.friend  
 ‘le mari de mon amie’ (my friend’s husband) (Nyokon; RA 179)
- (75) *pí nòó ngər ápín mápín mǐ twin.*  
 3PL PRF must dance 6.dance 6:of twins  
 ‘One has to dance the twin-dance.’ (Nyokon; Mous 2022: 18)

#### B.4 Canonical order of O and V

Tunen OV, Nyokon OV/VO dependent on TAM. The canonical order (aka ‘basic word order’) is based on thetics and VP focus (see section 1.2).

#### B.5 Order of O and V in imperatives

Tunen VO (V-IO-DO), Nyokon VO (V-DO-IO).

*Tunen, Nyokon, imperatives, VO:*

- (76) a. *índíə məná imit!*  
 /índíə mɔ́-ná ɛ-mítə/  
 give 1-child 7-calabash  
 ‘Give the child a calabash!’ (Tunen; JO 1594)
- b. *nda manyí ngóm!*  
 give water PRON.1SG  
 ‘Give me water!’ (Nyokon; RA 1)

Note that Tunen imperatives with pronominals are still VO. Finally, RA confirms remotely that the non-pronominal equivalent of the Nyokon example (76b) cannot be OV (while *nda manyí apə ghó!* (‘give the child water!’; V-DO-Prep-IO) is grammatical).

## B.6 Order of Aux and V

Tunen Aux-V, Nyokon Aux-V.

If TAM markers are considered as auxiliary elements (as in ‘S-Aux-O-V-Other’ word order), then both languages are Aux-V. For true auxiliaries, i.e. auxiliary verbs, the order Aux-V is found.

- (77) tɔ ná tɪkɔ́ sáá.  
 /tɔ ná tɪkɔ́ sá/  
 SM.1PL PST2 stay come  
 ‘We will follow.’ (Tunen; PM 1058)

## B.7 Order of C and Comp

Tunen C-Comp, Nyokon C-Comp.

*Tunen, C-Comp:*

- (78) a. mé ndɔ́ manya ɔ́wá Matéŋɛ a ka hiəfulə fanak.  
 /mɛ <sup>H</sup>ndɔ́ manya ɔ́wá Matéŋɛ a ka hɛ-əfulə fana-aka/  
 SM.1SG PRS know REL.1 1.Martin SM.1 PST3 19-book read-DUR  
 ‘I know that Martin has read the book.’ (Tunen; JO 905)
- b. Malíá a ná láá ásea Jóhánɛs(ɛ) á ndɔ́ bilíbilíbí  
 /Malíá a ná laa a-séá Jóhánɛsɛ a <sup>H</sup>ndɔ́ bɛ-libilibí  
 1.Maria SM.1 PST2 say SM.1-say 1.Johannes SM.1 PRS 8-chili.pepper  
 nyɔ ɔ́ wayéá ɔ́mbél.  
 nyɔ ɔ́ wayéá ɔ́-mbéla/  
 cultivate PREP POSS.PRON.1.3 3-house  
 ‘Maria said that Johannes grows chillies at home.’ (Tunen; JO 2450)

*Nyokon, C-Comp:*

- (79) a. pu lə pusáá mu fé.  
 /pu lə pu-sáá mu fé/  
 SM.3PL say 3PL-say SM.1SG come  
 ‘They said that I should come.’ (Nyokon; RA 41)
- b. Vivianə yár usáá Roger kú a kɔ́ndáf náám  
 Vivianne want SM.1.say Roger TAM A pork cook  
 ‘Vivianne wants Roger to cook the pork.’ (Nyokon; RA 53)

## B.8 Order of Cop and Compl

Tunen Cop-Compl, Nyokon Cop-Compl.

*Tunen/Nyokon, locative complements, Cop-Compl:*

- (80) a. Context: Where are you?  
mɛ lɛ ɔ nioní.  
/mɛ lɛ́á ɔ nɛ-oní/  
SM.1SG be PREP 5-market  
'I am at the market.' (Tunen; PM 102)
- b. Context: 'Where are you?'  
mu nə a nyí.  
SM.1SG COP PREP market  
'I am at the market.' (Nyokon; RA 174)

*Tunen/Nyokon, predication, Cop-Compl:*

- (81) a. Context: 'She was already set up.'  
á muəndú anyam.  
/á mɔ-əndú a-nyama/  
COP 1-woman 1-brave  
'She's a brave/impressive woman.' (Tunen; EO 1020)
- b. mu nə mutsɛgɛ.  
SM.1SG COP teacher  
'I am a teacher.' (Nyokon; RA 178)

NB: Cop-Compl also applies in negative copular clauses.

## B.9 Order of V and manner adverb

Tunen, V-Adv (\*Adv-V); Nyokon V-Adv (\*Adv-V).

*Tunen/Nyokon, manner adverbs, V-Adv:*

- (82) a. Context: PM and EO are discussing how PD should be considered a true Munen [i.e. a local], despite being born somewhere else.  
aka nyɔɔkɔ háaha ɔ uwəsú mɔŋɛŋ.  
/a ka nyɔ-aka háaha ɔ uwəsúá mɔŋɛŋa/  
SM.1 PST3 work-DUR here PREP PRON.POSS.1PL much  
'He worked a lot here in our region.' (Tunen; EO 1043)

- (83) a. Malíá a ná nyókó biabia.  
/Malíá a ná nyó-aka biabia/  
1.Maria SM.1 PST2 work-DUR slowly  
'Maria worked slowly.' (Tunen; JO 2560)
- b. \*endánáná yé 'ná biabia yólaka.  
/ε-ndánáná yé 'ná biabia yóla-aka/  
7-ice SM.7 PST3.REL slowly melt-DUR  
Intd.: 'The ice melted slowly.' (Tunen; JO 2558)
- (84) a. Context: After visiting a friend's house, you announce:  
punú páa liak tsú.  
POSS.2PL children cry much  
'Your children cry a lot.' (Nyokon; RA 7)
- b. Context: As above.  
\*punú páa tsú liak.  
POSS.2PL children much cry  
Intd.: 'Your children cry a lot.' (Nyokon; RA 8)

### B.10 Canonical adjunct position

Tunen: SOVX, Nyokon SOVX/SVOX dependent on TAM.

*Tunen, adjuncts, SOVX:*

- (85) a. Context: 'Where did he build his house?'  
a ka yayéá miímə lúmákə ɔ iNdíki naánekol.  
/a ka yayéa miímə lúm-aka ɔ iNdíki naánekola/  
SM.1 PST3 POSS.PRON.1.3 3.house build-DUR PREP Ndiki yesterday  
'He built his house yesterday in Ndiki.' (Tunen; JO 1121)
- b. Context: PM and EO are discussing how PD should be considered a true Munen [i.e. a local], despite being born somewhere else.  
a ka nyɔkɔ háaha ɔ uwəsú mɔŋɛŋ.  
/a ka nyɔ-aka háaha ɔ uwəsú mɔŋɛŋa/  
SM.1 PST3 work-DUR here PREP PRON.POSS.1PL much  
'He worked a lot here in our region.' (Tunen; EO 1043)

*Nyokon, adjuncts, SOVX/SVOX dependent on TAM:*

- (86) mu nə náám alif ákitsia.  
/mu nə náám alif ákitsia/  
SM.1SG PRS cook rice today  
'I am cooking rice today.' (Nyokon; RA 10)

- (87) Context: ‘Where did you put the clothes?’

mu piye ghá avuə.  
 SM.1SG clothes put outside  
 ‘I put the clothes outside.’

(Nyokon; RA 72)

### B.11 Low subjects (VS)?

Tunen: No, Nyokon: No.

*Tunen, low subjects, \*VS:*

- (88) a. \*a ka nyɔkɔ kɪŋə naáneɔkɔl.  
 /a ka nyɔ-aka kɪŋə naáneɔkɔla/  
 SM.1 PST3 work-DUR 7.chief yesterday  
 Intd.: ‘The chief worked yesterday.’

(Tunen; EO 2894)

- b. \*a ná fámá mɔndɔ hɛmɔtu.  
 /a ná fámá mɔ-ndɔ hɛmɔtuə/  
 SM.1 PST2 arrive 1-person quickly  
 Intd.: ‘A man suddenly appeared.’

(Tunen; PM WA.70)

- c. \*yé ná yɔlaka ɛndánáná biabia.  
 /yé ná yɔla-aka ɛ-ndánáná biabia/  
 SM.7 PST2 melt-DUR 7-ice slowly  
 Intd.: ‘The ice melted slowly.’

(Tunen; PM WA.70)

*Nyokon, low subjects, \*VS:*<sup>29</sup>

- (89) a. \*ghó itá anyam.  
 kill father spider  
 Intd.: ‘My father killed the spider.’

(Nyokon; RA 220)

- b. \*tsás vəs.  
 appear somebody  
 Intd.: ‘Somebody came out.’

(Nyokon; RA 206)

- c. \*ngark alif.  
 burn rice  
 Intd.: ‘the rice burnt.’

(Nyokon; RA 209)

<sup>29</sup>Compare the grammatical SV versions: (a) *itá anyam ghó* ‘My father killed the spider’ (RA 216) (good as A to question ‘What did your father do?’); *vəs tsás váás apús* ‘Someone appeared in front of us’ (RA 204); *alif ngark* ‘The rice is burnt’ (RA 208); *Mari kiə a itsár* ‘Marie walked quickly’ (RA 210).

- d. \*kiə Mari a itsór.  
 walk Marie A quickly  
 Intd.: 'Marie walked quickly.' (Nyokon; RA 213)

NB: The unavailability of VS order applies whenever the verb precedes the lexical subject (regardless of the position of the SM-TAM cluster). The pattern holds across verb types (transitive, verbs of appearance, unaccusatives, unergatives) and the sentences above are grammatical if the subject is in initial position (i.e., before the SM-TAM cluster).

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