

## Typology and Evolution of Diminutives in the Kikongo Language Cluster

Heidi Goes & Koen Bostoen

This article proposes both a typology of the variation which languages of the Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC) manifest in terms of diminutive marking and a reconstruction of how this variation evolved through time. The high diversity of diminutives within this low-level Bantu subgroup parallels the variation documented for the entire Bantu family. The three main strategies, each with their own subtypes, are (1) noun class prefix marking (either additive or substitutive), (2) reduplication, and (3) word formation with reflexes of PB \**jánà* ‘child’. Diachronically speaking, it is argued that the most recent common ancestor of the entire KLC, i.e. Proto-Kikongo, had three types of diminutives, all of them retentions from Proto-Bantu: (1) noun class pair 12 (\**kâ-*, SG) / 13 (\**tû-*, PL), (2) noun class pair 19 (\**pî-*, SG) / 13 (\**tû-*, PL), and (3) nominal compounds with *mwana* as initial element. Morphological innovation in diminutive marking only started after initial divergence within the KLC. Several of these shared innovations tie in with the KLC lexicon-based internal phylogeny. Noun class pairings 7/8 and 19/8 and total reduplication corroborate that the West Kikongo, South Kikongo and East Kikongo subgroups are more closely related to each other than to North Kikongo or Kikongoid. Other innovations are diagnostic of specific subgroups: so-called ‘stabilizers’ in reduplication for South, East and Central Kikongo, the *mwa-* prefix for North Kikongo, partial reduplication and the *-ana* suffix for South-West Kikongo. This last innovation stands out as it has commonly been seen as a typical southern Bantu feature, possibly due to Khoisan substrate interference.

**Keywords:** Bantu, Kikongo, diminutives, morphological change, Comparative Method, grammatical reconstruction, subclassification

## Introduction

Most of the world's languages have a morphological device whose basic grammatical function is the expression of smallness, i.e. the 'diminutive'. Cross-linguistically, diminutives not only display similarities in terms of formation strategies, such as affixation, (partial) reduplication and changes in noun class or gender. They also manifest universal semantic tendencies in that they often convey a wide array of meanings other than small physical size (Jurafsky 1993, 1996). Some of these, such as individuation or smallness in quantity, smallness in age or part of an entity, are closely related to smallness in size; other commonly attested meanings of diminutives are more remotely related and sometimes seemingly contradictory, most notably pejoration (negative connotation) and amelioration (positive or affectionate connotation), including endearment names, and equally reference to humans with specific characteristics (skill, deficiency) and superlatives.

In Bantu, two common diminutive formation strategies are (i) the use of specific noun class prefixes, in particular of classes 12 (*\*kà-*, SG) and 13 (*\*tù-*, PL)<sup>1</sup> with the meaning 'small' and of class 19 (*\*pì-*)<sup>2</sup> with the meaning 'very small', and (ii) nominal compounds beginning with reflexes of *\*(j)ánà* 'child', both of which have been reconstructed to Proto-Bantu (PB) (Meeussen 1967: 96, 103, see also Kadima 1969 and Maho 1999). Reduplication is a third widespread strategy, as Gibson *et al.* (2017) point out in a recent typological study on the formation and semantics of diminutives based on a Bantu-wide sample of 48 languages.

In this article, we narrow down the typological-comparative take of Gibson *et al.* (2017) on Bantu variation in diminutive marking and functions to the Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC), and add a historical-comparative approach in order to assess which diminutive strategies can be reconstructed with which meanings in Proto-Kikongo (PK), the most recent common ancestor of the KLC. As much of the variation observed by Gibson *et al.* (2017) for the entire Bantu domain also occurs with a close-knit subgroup as the KLC, the expression of diminutives within Bantu seems to have undergone several parallel innovations. On the other hand, certain strategies commonly believed to be unique for particular regions, such as *-ana* suffixation in Southern Bantu, turn out to also exist within the KLC, where they cannot be attributed to Khoisan contact (cf. *infra*). Moreover, our study focused on the KLC shows that shared innovations in diminutive marking can be a good diagnostic for the internal classification of low-scale Bantu subgroups (see also Nikitina 2019 for a similar approach in Southeastern Mande).

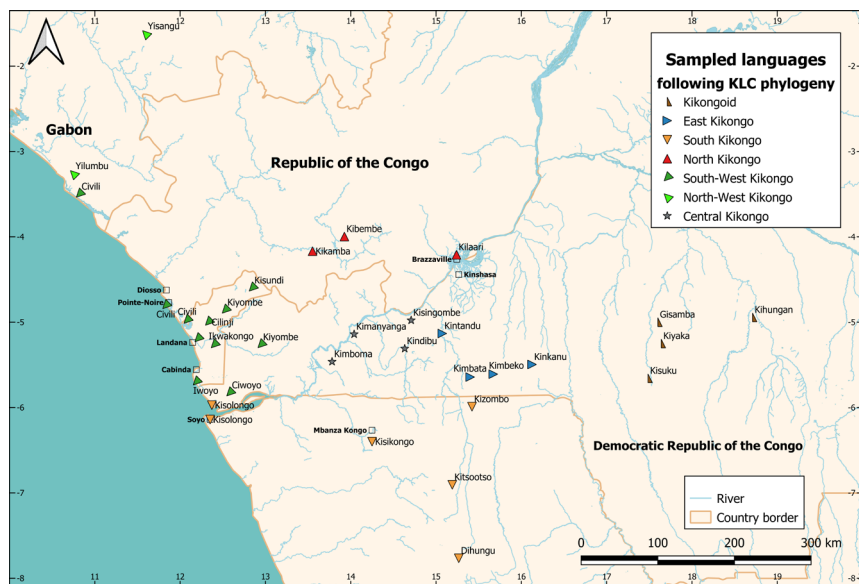
The KLC is a group of 40-odd closely-related Bantu languages spoken in a contiguous area covering parts of southern Gabon, southern Congo-Brazzaville,

1. The PB diminutive noun class prefix *\*kà-* goes back as far as Proto-Benue-Congo (PBC) (cf. De Wolf 1971: 171, cited in Maho 1999: 251-2). Such is the case for the class 13 prefix which De Wolf (1971: 171-172) reconstructs in PBC as *\*tì-*. These two classes would already have formed a diminutive class pair in PBC.

2. The PB diminutive noun class prefix *\*pì-* was possibly also inherited from PBC. Following Westermann (1927), Kähler-Meyer (1971: 347-348) suggests a possible relation with the stem *pì* 'small' attested in Sudanic languages, while Heine (1982: 214) rather considers it to be derived from Niger-Congo *\*bi* 'child'. Noun class prefix 19 appears in fewer Bantu languages than class 12, but it is widely attested in north-eastern and north-western Bantu.

south-western Congo-Kinshasa and northern Angola including Cabinda. According to phylogenetic classifications relying on basic vocabulary (de Schryver *et al.* 2015; Grollemund *et al.* 2015; Bostoen & de Schryver 2018a; Pacchiarotti *et al.* 2019), the KLC constitutes a discrete sub-clade of ‘West-Coastal Bantu’ (WCB) (Vansina 1995), also known as ‘West-Western Bantu’ (Grollemund *et al.* 2015), itself a major clade of the Bantu family. The different subgroups within the KLC are the Kikongoid (KK), South Kikongo (SK), East Kikongo (EK), West Kikongo (WK) (further subdivided in South-West and North-West), and North Kikongo (NK) clades and the Central Kikongo contact zone (CK). It includes not only H10 languages from Guthrie’s referential classification, but also the Shira-Punu group (B40), the Yaka group (H30), Hungan (H42) of the Mbala-Hungana (H40) group, and Gisamba (L12) of the Pende group (L10). On Map 1 the colored symbols show to which subgroup each variety included in this study belongs.

In Section 1, we give an overview of the main diminutive types in the KLC, which largely correspond to those documented for Bantu more widely (cf. Gibson *et al.* 2017). In Section 2, we examine how these different types are distributed across the genealogical subgroups of the KLC in order to assess how they evolved through time. Conclusions follow after Section 2.

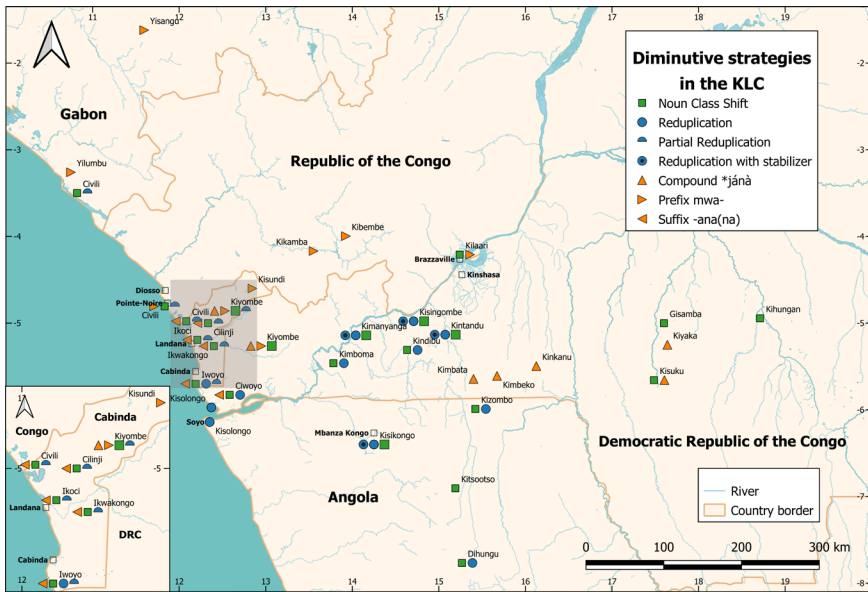


Map 1. KLC clades and varieties included in this paper

## 1. Typology of diminutives in the KLC

Bantu languages commonly form diminutives through one or several of the following processes (cf. Gibson *et al.* 2017): (i) noun class prefix marking, either by adding a diminutive noun class prefix as a preprefix to a noun’s primary class prefix (‘additive’) or by replacing a noun’s primary class prefix by a dedicated

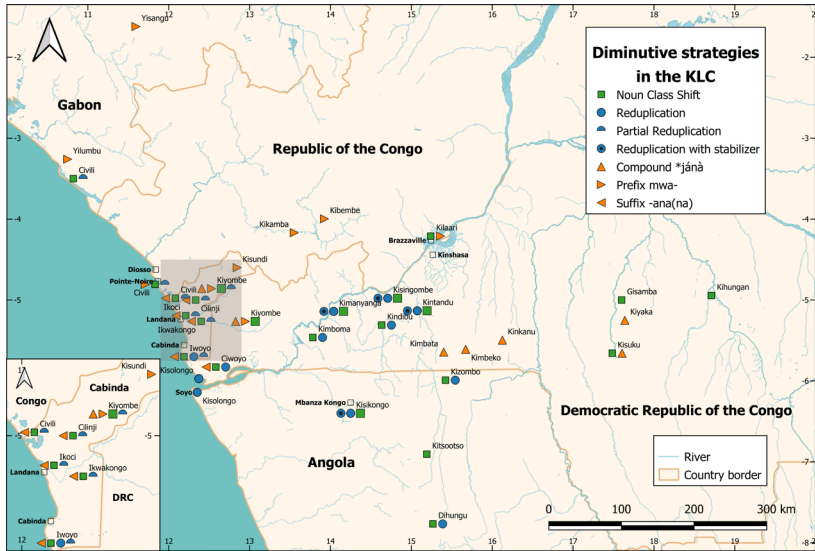
diminutive noun class prefix ('substitutive') (see §1.1), (ii) (partial) reduplication of the noun stem, with or without an additive or substitutive diminutive noun class prefix (see §1.2), and (iii) the use of a morpheme originating in \**jánà* 'child' (BLR 3203), either the noun *mwana* as the first element of a compound diminutive noun (see §1.3.1), *mwa* - (*mwa*-) as a diminutive marker prefixed to the noun (see §1.3.2) or the derivational suffix *-ana* (see §1.3.3). All of these strategies are also attested and combined within the KLC with quite some intra- and interlinguistic variation. Map 2 depicts the distribution of the different strategies separately across the KLC, as documented in the literature and through fieldwork by the first author.



Map 2. Diminutive strategies in the KLC

### 1.1. Noun class prefix marking

The use of specific noun classes to mark diminutive nouns is a strategy found across the KLC, though with a lot of cross-linguistic variation. Not only diminutive noun class prefixes reconstructed to PB are attested, but also a wide array of other ones. Map 3 shows which KLC varieties use which noun classes as diminutive markers. For the names of the varieties, we refer to the two previous maps. Those varieties missing noun class numbers do not use noun class alternation as a diminutive strategy (see also Map 2).



Map 3. Noun class shift as a diminutive strategy in the KLC

### 1.1.1. Class pairing 12/13

Meeussen (1967: 103) reconstructs noun classes 12 (\**kà-*, SG) and 13 (\**tù-*, PL) as dedicated diminutive markers to PB. In the KLC, this diminutive noun class pairing has become nearly extinct. It is still productive in two KK languages, such as Kihungan (H42) where these prefixes seem to be substitutive (i.e. they replace the noun's inherent class prefix), as shown in (1), and Kisuku (H32) where they tend to be additive (i.e. they are added to the noun's inherent class prefix), as illustrated in (2). According to Piper (1977: 201-202), Kisuku diminutives often have a pejorative connotation, a semantic value not mentioned by Kifindi (1997: 102, 104). Gisamba (L12a) is another KK language where this diminutive class pair has been noted during recent fieldwork by a former MA students of ours (Van Acker 2018: 46).

(1) Kihungan (H42) (Kasuku-Kongini 1984: 40)

<b>ká-án</b>	‘small boy’	<	<b>mú-án</b>	‘child’ (cl. 1/2)
<b>tú-nzó</b>	‘maisonettes, small houses’	<	<b>nzó</b>	‘house’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>ká-nwín/tú-nwín</b>	‘birdie(s)’	<	<b>nwín</b>	‘bird’ (cl. 9/10)

(2) Kisuku (H32) (Piper 1977: 201-202; Kifindi 1997: 102-104)

<b>ka-di-isú/tu-ma-isu</b>	‘small eye(s)’	<	<b>di-isú</b>	‘eye’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>ka-ki-vudi/tu-bi-vudi</b>	‘small shadow(s)’	<	<b>ki-vudi</b>	‘shadow’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>ka-lu-hó/tu-ma-hó</b>	‘small bird(s) of prey’	<	<b>lu-hó</b>	‘bird of prey’ (cl. 11/6)
<b>ka-mu-tu/tu-ba-tu</b>	‘miserable little man/men’	<	<b>mu-tu</b>	‘person’ (cl. 1/2)

<b>ka-ki-nunu/tu-bi-nunu</b>	‘unworthy old little man/men’	< <b>ki-nunu</b>	‘old man’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>ka-mw-ana/tu-ba-ana</b>	‘little child(ren)’	< <b>mw-ana</b>	‘child’ (cl. 1/2)

In SK, diminutive prefixes of classes 12/13 have only been reported in Dihungu where they are additive, as exemplified in (3).

(3) Dihungu (Atkins 1954: 148-149)

<b>ka-m-tuba/tu-mi-tuba</b>	‘small basket(s)’	< <b>m-tuba</b>	‘basket’ (cl. 3/4)
<b>ka-khalu/tu-khalu</b>	‘small calabash(es)’	< <b>khalu</b>	‘calabash’ (cl. 9/10)

In South-West Kikongo (SWK), traces of the class 12 prefix **ka-** are only found in proper names, such as the name of the former kingdom of Kakongo. In Kiyombe (H16c), traces are found in names of places, such as Kavati, Kavuzi, and Kasadi, and persons, such as Kabangu (Bittremieux 1923-1927: 181). These relics are not shown on Map 3.

Where it has survived and has a plural equivalent, class 12 always pairs with class 13 in the KLC. Pairings of plural class 13 with other singular classes, such as 19, as attested elsewhere in Bantu (cf. Gibson *et al.* 2017: 367), almost do not occur in the KLC, except maybe in Kizombo (SK) (cf. §1.1.2). However, a peculiar pairing with class 8 as a singular class is found in the KLC, more specifically in Kitsootso (SK) (cf. §1.1.2). Class 13 also occurs as the plural of class 11 (§1.1.3). In the KLC, the class 13 prefix is not used for individuation, i.e. turning mass nouns into count nouns, as it is in some East Bantu languages (Gibson *et al.* 2017: 363-364).

### 1.1.2. Class pairing 8/13

In Kitsootso (SK), the noun class prefix of class 13 serves as the plural of singular diminutive nouns of class 8, as shown in (4). The use of class 8 to derive singular diminutives is remarkable, as its prefix is usually a plural marker in Bantu. While diminutive **bi-** is always additive in Kitsootso, **tu-** only is added when the original noun has its plural in a class other than 13, in (4a). As shown in (4b), **tu-** cannot be added as secondary prefix to a primary **tu-** prefix. The plural form of the basic noun and diminutive are identical.

(4) Kitsootso (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)

a. <b>bi-n-ti/tu-mi-n-ti</b>	‘small stick(s)’	< <b>n-ti/mi-n-ti</b>	‘tree(s)’ (cl. 3/4)
<b>bi-∅-vata/tu-ma-vata</b>	‘small village(s)’	< <b>vata/ma-vata</b>	‘village(s)’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>bi-di-nkondo/tu-ma-nkondo</b>	‘small banana(s)’	< <b>di-nkondo/ma-nkondo</b>	‘banana(s)’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>bi-lu-kaya/tu-ma-kaya</b>	‘small leaf/ves’	< <b>lu-kaya/ma-kaya</b>	‘leaf/ves’ (cl. 14/6)

b. <b>bi-lu-yalu/tu-yalu</b>	‘small government(s)’	< <b>lu-yalu/tu-yalu</b> ‘government’ (cl. 11/13)
<b>bi-lw-andu/tw-andu</b>	‘small mat(s)’	< <b>lw-andu/tw-andu</b> ‘mat’ (cl. 11/13)

Although class 8 is used for plural diminutive marking in other languages of the KLC, its singular use has been reported in only one other language than Kitsootso, i.e. Kizombo, which is also spoken in the eastern part of the SK distribution area. Mpanzu (1994: 90) mentions **bì-mù-ànà** ‘small child’, **bì-mù-tù** ‘small person, dwarf’ and **bi-Ø-káálù** ‘small car’ along with other diminutive strategies, especially the use of class 19 (§2.1.4).<sup>3</sup> Mpanzu (1994: 89) also signals the use of class 13 for plural diminutives with a pejorative connotation, i.e. **tù-ànà** ‘very small children’ and **tù-nzó** ‘small houses’. He specifies that class 13 is the only one that occasionally can function as a plural of the otherwise singulative class 11, but does not provide any diminutive examples of class 11. We assume that diminutive class 13 is the plural to diminutive classes 8 and 19 in Kizombo. Carter & Makondekwa (1987) also do not report the diminutive use of class 11 in Kizombo.

### 1.1.3. Class pairings 11/13 and 11/8

Class 11 has been signaled as a diminutive prefix, with either class 13 or class 8 as its plural, in at least one language of the KLC, i.e. Kimanyanga (CK), which also has many other diminutive strategies (cf. *infra*). According to Laman (1912: 241), “the diminutive in **lu** is an older form, which still occurs in a few words”. As seen in (5), it usually occurs with class 9/10 nouns or nasal-initial noun stems belonging to other classes. Class 8 (**bi-**) is preferably used as its plural, but class 13 (**tu-**) is also possible. Both the singular and plural diminutive prefixes are usually substitutive and occur in combination with reduplication of the noun stem, as in (5a), or without reduplication, as in (5b). The example in (5c) is one of the rare cases in which the initial nasal is still interpreted as a prefix of class 9-10, and not as part of the stem as in (5a-b), and is substituted by the diminutive prefix.

(5) Kimanyanga H16b (Laman 1912, 1936)

a. <b>lu- nzu-nzu</b>	‘little cooking pot’	< <b>ki-nzu</b> ‘cooking pot’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>lú-mpinda-mpinda</b>	‘shallow, low’	< <b>mpinda</b> ‘deep(ness)’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>lu-m-òngo-m-óngo</b>	‘hill, hillock’	< <b>m-òngo</b> ‘mountain’ (cl. 3/4)
<b>lu-mvula-mvula</b>	‘drizzle’	< <b>mvula</b> ‘rain’ (cl. 9/10)

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3. Mpanzu (1994: 90) designates this singular diminutive **bì-** prefix as “class 20”, possibly because the non-diminutive prefix of class 8 in Kizombo is **yì-**. We believe, however, that Kizombo diminutive **bì-** is also class 8, at least historically. Within the KLC prefixes of a given class often differ in shape depending on when they are used derivationally or not, the derivational form (often additive) generally being the more archaic one (cf. Bostoen & de Schryver 2015).

	<b>lú-mpū-mpu</b>	‘small headdress’	< <b>mpù</b> ‘headdress’ (cl. 9/10)
b.	<b>lu-mpinu</b>	‘average strength’	< <b>mpinu</b> ‘strength, violence’ (cl. 9/10)
	<b>lú-nkunkì</b>	‘small protuberance, knot’	< <b>nkúunki</b> ‘hump, hunch’ (cl. 9/10)
	<b>lu-nkita</b>	‘deceit (not serious), prank’	< <b>bu-nkita</b> ‘deceit’ (cl. 14)
c.	<b>lu-vinda</b>	‘small depth’	< <b>m-pinda</b> ‘deep(ness)’ (cl. 9/10)

To form a diminutive, the class 11 prefix can also be used in combination with a suffix which looks exactly like the reflex of PB applicative *\*-id*. However, the class 11 prefix is not mandatory.<sup>4</sup> See example (6), where both are possible.

(6) Kimanyanga (H16b) (Laman 1936: 433, 582)

**lu-mpimpila**, **mpimpila** ‘dusk (evening), dawn (morning), fog, darkness; to start darkening; to have eyes with troubled sight)’ (also **ki-mpimpila**)  
< **mpimpa** ‘night, darkness’

In at least one other Bantu language, i.e. Oshindonga R22, class 11 has been reported with a diminutive meaning ‘small, lean/thin’, i.e. **olu-yóka** ‘small thin snake’, **olu-ntú** ‘small lean person’ (Fivaz 1986: 44, cited in Maho 1999: 76). The derivational diminutive semantics of class 11 can be accounted for by the fact that it commonly contains nouns referring to long, but thin entities across Bantu (Katamba 2003: 115). Lexical items meaning ‘thin’ are not frequently reported as sources for the grammaticalization of diminutive markers in the world’s languages (though see Xydopoulos 2009 for the diminutive-like marker **psilo-** in Modern Greek originally meaning “thin”). Nonetheless, “little” and “thin” are of course closely related semantic notions, as shown by the original meaning “thin” of English **small**.

#### 1.1.4. Class pairing 19/8

Not only the PB diminutive class pair 12/13 (*\*kà-/\*tù-*) left relics in the KLC, but also the PB diminutive class 19 (*\*pi-*). According to Bentley (1887: 536), the diminutive character of class 19 is ‘somewhat more’ emphasized in Kisikongo (H16a), which Laman (1912: 241) also observes for Kimanyanga (H16b): “Diminutives formed with **fi** have as a rule a somewhat reinforced diminutive meaning, and need not necessarily be reduplicated”.

4. There are, however, also examples of words which already have a class 11 prefix and which receive an additional **-il** suffix (with allomorph **-in** after nasal harmony) to form a diminutive, e.g. **lu-mwàngina** ‘light shower, light rain’ < **lu-mwànga**; **lu-vimbila** ‘lesser extent of something, e.g. at the wrist, instep’ < **lu vimba** (Laman 1936: 434, 458). There are also examples where only the **-il** suffix is added to form the diminutive: **mvimbila** ‘little swelling’ < **mvimbu** ‘swelling’, **mwidila** ‘rill’ < **mwila** ‘river’, **mbàbila** ‘small bottle’ < **bàaba** (Laman 1912).



The singular diminutive class 19 prefix **fi-** is actually more widespread within the KLC than its equivalent in class 12 **ka-**. It is especially prevalent in the central contact zone with attestations in Kimboma, Kisingombe, Kimanyanga and Kindibu as well as in languages in its immediate vicinity, such as Kilaari (NK), Kisikongo (SK), Kizombo (SK), Kintandu (EK), Cilinji (SWK), Kiyombe (SWK) and Iwoyo (SWK). It is only entirely absent from Kikongoid and the northernmost WK languages (i.e. Guthrie's B40).

In the KLC, class 19 mostly pairs with class 8 as its plural. Both diminutive prefixes are generally additive, although also a few instances of substitution have been noted. Substantiating the analysis that **fi-** marks reinforced diminutives is the fact that its plural in **bi-** commonly involves reduplication of its noun stem, or even triplication in the case of monosyllabic stems, as shown in Kintandu (7) (EK), Kimboma (8), Kimanyanga (9) and Kindibu (10), all CK. For another CK language, Kisingombe (11); two SK languages, Kisikongo (12) and Kizombo (13); and WK Kiyombe (14) no plural has been found for this strategy. All examples in (7) to (14) illustrate the additive use of the class 19 **fi-** prefix. In Kimboma (8) the plural class 8 is also additive. In Kindibu, a class 10 prefix is added in front of each of the doubled plural nouns, as shown in (10).

(7) Kintandu (H16g) (Daeleman 1966: 246)

- fi-nyoka/bi-nyoka-nyoka** 'small snake(s)' < **nyoka** 'snake' (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-mbwa/bi-mbwa-mbwa-mbwa** 'small dog(s)' < **mbwa** 'dog' (cl. 9/10)

(8) Kimboma (H16a) (Kisilu Meso 2001: 9)

- fi-nsusu/bi-nsusu-nsusu** 'small chicken (s)' < **nsusu** 'chicken' (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-mú-ntu/bi-bá-ntu-ba-ntu** 'small person(s)' < **mú-ntu** 'person' (cl.1/2)

(9) Kimanyanga (H16b)(Makokila Nanzanza 2012: 91-92)

- fi-m-oongó/bi-m-ongo-m-ongó** 'small mountain(s)' < **m-ongo** 'mountain' (cl. 3/4)  
**fí-lekwa/bi-lekwá-lekwa** 'small thing(s)' < **lekwa** 'thing' (cl. 7/8)

(10) Kindibu (Coene 1960: 3-4)

- fi-mu-ana fi-ame** 'my little child' < **mu-ana** (cl. 1/2)  
**bi-m-ba-na-m-bá-na** 'small children'

(11) Kisingombe (N'laandu-Láanda-Ntôôtila 1975: 62)

- fi-dy-ááki** 'small egg' < **dy-ááki** 'egg' (cl. 5/6)  
**fi-ma-za** 'a bit of water' < **ma-zá** 'water' (cl. 6)  
**fi-kí-íti** 'small chair' < **kí-íti** 'chair' (cl. 7/8)

(12) Kisikongo (H16a) (Bentley 1887: 536)

- fi-mbele** 'tiny knife' < **mbele** 'knife' (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-nzo** 'tiny house' < **nzo** 'house' (cl. 9/10)

- (13) Kizombo (H16h) (Carter & Makondekwa 1987: 84; Mpanzu 1994: 90)  
**fi-mw-àná** ‘small child’ < **mw-àná** ‘child’ (cl. 1/2)  
**fi-nzó** ‘small house’ < **n-zo** ‘house’ (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-n-lele** ‘small piece of cloth’ < **n-léle** ‘cloth’ (cl. 3/4)

- (14) Kiyombe (DRC) (H16c) (De Clercq 1907: 456; De Grauwe 2009: 39)<sup>5</sup>  
**fi-mu-ána** ‘small child’ < **mu-ána** ‘child’ (cl. 1/2)  
**fi-mbēle** ‘small knife’ < **mbēle** ‘knife’ (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-wāyi** ‘small cat’ < **wāyi** ‘cat’ (cl. 7/8)

Not only in the plural, but also in the singular with **fi-** reduplication may occur, as the examples from Kiyombe (15), Iwoyo (20) (SWK), Kimanyanga (16), Kisingombe (17) (CK), Kizombo (18) and Kisikongo (19) (SK) show. Note that the plural is not provided for all forms in the original sources. In one of the possible plural forms of Kimanyanga (16) (CK), the entire plural noun is reduplicated, just like in Kindibu (CK) in (10).

- (15) Kiyombe (DRC) (H16c) (Bittremieux 1923-1927: 221; Laman 1936: 149-150; De Grauwe 2009)

**fi-ndangu-ndangu/bi-ndangu-ndangu** ‘small water course(s)’  
 < **n-langu** (cl. 3/4)  
**fi-manga-mánga** ‘short distance’  
**fi-mbumbu-mbumbu/bi-mbumbu-mbumbu** ‘small red ant(s)’  
**fi-ndubi-ndubi/bi-ndubi-ndubi** ‘small pupil(s)’  
 < **ndùbi** (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-k’utu-k’utu** ‘little bag’  
 < **k’utu** (cl. 9/10)

- (16) Kimanyanga (H16b) (Laman 1912: 68, 241)

**fi-ntaudi-ntaudi/bi-ntaudi-ntaudi** ‘little boy(s), little girl(s)’  
 < **ntaudi** (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-mbwa-mbwa** ‘small (young) dog’  
 < **mbwa** (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-n-ti-n-ti** ‘bush, cane, small stick’  
 < **nti** (cl. 3/4)  
**fi-koko-koko/bi-koko-koko, bi-moko-moko** ‘little hand(s), arm(s)’  
 < **koko/moko** (cl. 5/6)

- (17) Kisingombe (N’laandu-Láanda-Ntôôtila 1975: 63)

**fi-mw-áná-mw-ána** ‘a very small child’ < **mw-ána** (cl. 1/2)  
**fi-`nkándá-`nkándá** ‘a very small book’ < **nkáanda** (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-nzilá-nzilá** ‘a very small path’ < **nzilá** (cl. 9/10)

5. No examples were given for the plural but similar examples in De Clercq (1921: 14) get **bi** as plural marker.

- (18) Kizombo (H16h) (Mpanzu 1994: 98)  
**fi-mw-àná-mw-àná** ‘small child’ < **mw-àna** (cl. 1/2)
- (19) Kisikongo (Bentley 1887: 536)  
**fi-mbele-mbele** ‘tiny knife’ < **mbele** (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-nzo-nzo-nzo** ‘tiny house’ < **nzo** (cl. 9/10)
- (20) Iwoyo (Anônimo 1948)  
**fi-tchi-tchi-tchi** ‘detail, a little’  
**fi-tchi-tchi** ‘kid’

Substitutive use of **fi-** is much less prevalent in the KLC, but it is attested in Kiyombe (SWK) (21), Cilinji (SWK) (22) and Kisingombe (CK) (23).

- (21) Kiyombe (DRC) (Bittremieux 1923-1927: 161)  
**fi-lavu** ‘a sip of palm wine’ < **ma-lavu** ‘palm wine’ (cl. 6)
- (22) Cilinji (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018, p.c. André Sibi)  
**fi-ncio/bi-ncio** ‘small thing(s)’
- (23) Kisingombe (N’laandu-Láanda-Ntôôtila 1975: 62)  
**fi-íma** ‘little thin’ < **ki-íma/bi-íma**

In some varieties, additional prefixes or diminutive markers are observed. In Kisingombe (CK), class 7 prefix **ki-** can be inserted between **fi-** and the (reduplicated) noun (24). In Kilaari (NK), one can also add **mwaa**, the first syllable of the reflex of \***jánà** ‘child’, following the **fi-** prefix (25). In Kiyombe (SWK), the plural has an additional **biena** without repetition of the root and with preservation of the original plural (26).

- (24) Kisingombe (N’laandu-Láanda-Ntôôtila 1975: 64)  
**fi-ki-mw-áána** ‘small child’ < **mw-ána** (cl. 1/2)  
**fi-ki-nzõ** ‘maisonnette’ < **nzõ** (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-ki-mw-áná-mw-ána** ‘very small child’ < **mw-ána** (cl. 1/2)
- (25) Kilaari (H16f) (Ngoma-Nkanga wa ne Ndimbu 1975: 38)  
**fi-mu-ntú** or **fi-mw-áa-mu-ntú** ‘small man’ < **mu-ntu** (cl. 1/2)  
**fi-`n-tí** or **fi-mwáà-n-ti** ‘small tree’ < **n-ti** (cl. 3/4)
- (26) Kiyombe (DRC) (H16c) (De Clercq 1921: 14)  
**fi-mw-ana/biena bi b-ana** ‘small child(ren)’ < **mw-ana/b-ana** (cl. 1/2)  
**fi-di-ambu/biena bi m-ambu** ‘small thing(s)’ < **di-ambu/m-ambu** (cl. 5/6)

In Kiyombe as spoken in Cabinda, **bina bi** can also be used, but in combination with **mwa-**prefixation, although this is not necessary, as illustrated in (71) further down.

Added to collective or plural nouns, the diminutive prefix of class 19 conveys the meaning ‘some, a little, in small quantity’, as shown for Kintandu (EK) (27) and Kimanyanga (CK) (28).

(27) Kintandu (H16g) (Daeleman 1966: 246)

<b>fi-ma-sa</b>	‘some water’	<	<b>ma-sa</b>	‘water’	(cl. 6)
<b>fi-ma-asi</b>	‘a little palmoil’	<	<b>ma-asi</b>	‘palmoil’	(cl. 6)
<b>fi-ma-nkondo</b>	‘some bananas’	<	<b>di-nkondo</b>	‘banana’	(cl. 5/6)

(28) Kimanyanga (H16b) (Laman 1912: 68)

<b>fi-`n-langu</b>	‘a little water’	<	<b>`n-langu</b>	‘water’	(cl. 3/4)
<b>fi-ma-azi</b>	‘a little fat or oil’	<	<b>ma-zi</b>	‘fat, oil’	(cl. 6)

### 1.1.5. Class pairing 7/8

All languages of the KLC have reflexes of PB classes 7 (\***k̩r-**) and 8 (\***b̩-**), which commonly form a singular/plural pairing. Across Bantu, these noun classes are often used derivationally, though not only for diminutives, but also to derive inanimate, manner and augmentative nouns (Gibson *et al.* 2017). The diminutive has not been reconstructed as a derivational function of classes 7/8 in PB. In the KLC, however, class 7/8 prefixes are frequent as diminutive markers. They are attested in all clades except Kikongoid and North Kikongo (see Map 3). Some examples of the diminutive use of classes 7 and 8 in combination with other class prefixes have already been given in previous subsections. They are most common though as a diminutive class pairing, very often combined with reduplication of the noun stem, as was already the case in 17<sup>th</sup> century South Kikongo (Van Gheel 1652). As the examples in (29a) show, both **qui-** (cl. 7) and **i-** (cl. 8) are substitutive, except with vowel-initial stems as in (29b), in front of a non-syllabic nasal prefix as in (29c) or with monosyllabic noun stems as in (29d).

(29) 17<sup>th</sup> century South Kikongo = Kisikongo (H16a) (Van Gheel 1652)

a.	<b>qui-leque-lequé/i-leque lequé</b>	‘small boy(s)’
	< <b>mú-leque/a-leque</b>	(cl. 1/2)
	<b>qui-ta-ta/i-tá-ta</b>	‘small bow(s)’
	< <b>u-ta/ma-ta</b>	(cl. 14/6)
	<b>qui-lunga-lunga</b>	‘small handle(s)’
	< <b>mu-lunga/mi-lunga</b>	(cl. 3/4)
	<b>quí-tari-tari/i-tari-tari</b>	‘small stone(s)’
	< <b>e-tari/ma-tari</b>	(cl. 5/6)
b.	<b>qui-mu-ana-mú-ana/ÿ-mu-ana mú-ana</b>	‘small child(ren)/son(s)’
	< <b>mu-ana/a-na</b>	(cl. 1/2)
c.	<b>qui-ntungu-ntungu/i-ntungu ntungu</b>	‘small building(s)’
	< <b>ntungu/ntungu</b>	(cl. 9/10) <sup>6</sup>

6. Also the total reduplication of the noun without addition of diminutive class 7/8 prefixes is attested in Van Gheel (1652), i.e. **ntungu-ntungu** ‘small building’.

<b>qui-nzo-nzo/i-nzo-nzo</b>		‘small building(s)’
< <b>nzo</b>	(cl. 9/10)	
d. <b>qui-mu-ntu-mu-ntu</b>		‘small person/man’
< <b>mu-ntu/a-ntu</b>	(cl. 1/2)	

In 19<sup>th</sup> century Kisikongo, the most direct descendant of 17<sup>th</sup> century South Kikongo, the same strategy is attested, as shown in (30), i.e. diminutive class prefixes **ki-** (7) and **yi-** (8) in combination with reduplication of the noun (stem), or even triplication in the case of monosyllabic stems. As shown in (30b), initial nasal prefixes in front of monosyllabic stems – whether of class 3 or class 9 – are sometimes conserved in the reduplicants but not systematically. In the case of prefixless monosyllabic nouns, as in (30c), a nasal is added in between the diminutive class 7 prefix and the triplicated root. As shown in (30d), the nasal can also be maintained in reduplicants of plurisyllabic class 3 and class 9 nouns. The nasal can also be added in between the diminutive class 7 prefix and the base of reduplicated plurisyllabic noun stems belonging to other classes as in (30e). However, the rules seem to have been quite loose, as the nasal can also be added to the reduplicant, e.g. **kindongandong** ‘small plate’, along with **kindongalonga**.<sup>7</sup> As illustrated in (30f), the original class 7 prefix **ki-**, which is not reduced to zero in front of nasal-initial and vowel-initial stems (Bostoen & de Schryver 2015), can also be included in the reduplication and preceded twice by a nasal prefix before a diminutive class 7 prefix is added. In other words, Kisikongo class 7/8 diminutives show considerable language-internal variation in terms of reduplication and nasal prefix insertion.

(30) Kisikongo (H16a) (Bentley 1887: 294, 535; Laman 1936: 254)<sup>8</sup>

a.	<b>ki-mu-ntu-mu-ntu</b>	‘little person’	< <b>mu-ntu</b>	‘person’	(cl. 1/2)
	<b>ki-mw-ana-mw-ana</b>	‘little child’	< <b>mw-ana</b>	‘child’	(cl. 1/2)
	<b>ki-m-ongo-m-ongo</b>	‘little hill’	< <b>m-ongo</b>	‘hill’	(cl. 3/4)
	<b>ki-longa-longa</b>	‘small plate’	< <b>e-longa</b>	‘plate’	(cl. 5/6)
b.	<b>ki-n-ti-ti-ti</b>	‘stick’	< <b>n-ti</b>	‘tree, stick’	(cl. 3/4)
	<b>ki-ndia-ndià-ndia</b>	‘small intestine’	< <b>ndia</b>	‘intestine’	(cl. 9/10)
	<b>ki-nzo-nzò-nzo</b>	‘small house’	< <b>nzo</b>	‘house’	(cl. 9/10)
	<b>ki-mbwa-mbwà-mbwa</b>	‘small dog’	< <b>mbwa</b>	‘dog’	(cl. 9/10)
c.	<b>ki-m-pe-ve-ve</b>	‘small eyelash’	< <b>ve</b>	‘eyelash’	(cl. 7/8)
	<b>ki-n-su-sù-su</b>	‘small mortar’	< <b>su</b>	‘mortar’	(cl. 7/8)
	<b>ki-mfwa-fwà-fwà</b>	‘corpse of a child’	< <b>fwa</b>	‘corpse’	(cl. 15/6)
d.	<b>ki-n-tima-n-tima</b>	‘little heart’	< <b>n-tima</b>	‘heart’	(cl. 3/4)
	<b>ki-ngulu-ngulu</b>	‘little pig’	< <b>ngulu</b>	‘pig’	(cl. 9/10)
	<b>ki-mbele-mbele</b>	‘little knife’	< <b>mbele</b>	‘knife’	(cl. 9/10)
	<b>ki-nkunga-nkunga</b>	‘little song’	< <b>nkunga</b>	‘song’	(cl. 9/10)

7. The adding of the nasal prefix of class 9 to both base and reduplicant, in combination with the diminutive class 7 prefix for singular and class 8 for plural, is also found in Kizombo (SK), e.g. **kí-n-dekwa-n-ndekwa** ‘tiny thing’ < **lékwa** ‘thing, object article’ (cl. 7/8), **kí-n-khoko-n-khoko** ‘stream’ < **n-kóko** ‘river’ (cl. 3/4) (Carter & Makondekwa 1987: 136).

8. Bentley (1887: 536) also mentions some instances of diminutive reduplication missing the class 7 prefix, i.e. **longa-longa** ‘small plate’ along with **ki-longa-longa**, and **bwa-bwa-bwa** ‘small dog’ along with **ki-mbwa-mbwà-mbwa**.

- e. **ki-n-deke-leke** ‘little child’ < **n-leke** ‘child’ (cl. 1/2)  
**ki-n-dungu-lungu** ‘little canoe’ < **n-lungu** ‘canoe’ (cl. 3/4)  
**ki-n-donga-longa** ‘little plate’ < **e-longa** ‘plate’ (cl. 5/6)  
**ki-n-tadi-tadi** ‘little stone’ < **e-tadi** ‘stone’ (cl. 5/6)  
**ki-n-dekwa-lekwa/yi-n-dekwa-lekwa** ‘little thing(s)’  
< **lekwa** ‘thing’ (cl. 7/8)  
**ki-n-koko-koko/yi-n-koko-koko** ‘little arm(s)’  
< **koko** ‘arm’ (cl. 15/6)
- f. **ki-n-ki-nzu-n-ki-nzu** ‘little pipe’ < **ki-nzu** ‘pipe’ (cl. 7/8)  
**ki-n-ki-ana-n-ki-ana** ‘little garden’ < **ki-ana** ‘garden’ (cl. 7/8)

Diminutive class 7/8 prefixes in combination with reduplication are also attested in the oldest historical WK source, i.e. the dictionary manuscripts of the Kakongo variety (Anonyme 1772-73) from which the data in (31) are taken. Examples of nouns where the prefix is substitutive are shown in (31a). Those where it is additive, i.e. nouns starting with a nasal and nouns with a vowel-initial stem, are given in (31b).

(31) Kakongo (H16d) (Anonyme 1772-73)

- a. **ki-bongua-bongua/bi-bongua-bongua** ‘small pot(s)’  
< **i bongua/zi-bongua** (cl. 9/10)
- b. **ki-muila-muila** ‘fountain; small river’  
< **mu-ila** ‘river’ (cl. 3/4)  
**ki-nbélé-bélé/bi-nbélé-bélé** ‘small knife/ves’  
< **i nbélé** ‘knife’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ki-buatu-buatu/bi-buatu-buatu** ‘trough(s)’  
< **bu-atu** ‘(big) trough’ (cl. 14/4)

A century later, the same strategy is still attested in the Kakongo variety (Le Louët 1890), as shown in (32).

(32) Kakongo (H16d) (Le Louët 1890)

- ki-m-ongo-m-ongo/bi-m-ongo-m-ongo** ‘hill(s)’  
< **m-ongo** ‘mountain’ (cl. 3/4)  
**ki-samu-samu/bi-samu-samu** ‘small story/ies’  
< **m-samu** ‘announcement’ (cl. 3/4)<sup>9</sup>  
**ki-kanda-kanda/bi-kanda-kanda** ‘pellicule(s)’  
< **mkanda** ‘paper’ (cl. 3/4)

Noun class pairing 7/8 combined with reduplication, or triplication for monosyllabic nouns, also occurs in CK and EK, as shown in (33) for Kimanyanga and in (34) for Kintandu respectively. In Kimanyanga, the diminutive plural is sometimes formed from the original plural, e.g. **bi-ba-ntu-ba-ntu**, **bi-m-ambu-m-ambu** (Laman 1912: 240). In both languages, triplication is observed with monosyllabic

9. The class 7/8 noun **ki-samu/bi-samu** ‘anecdote’ is possibly a diminutive of **m’samu** ‘announcement’ (cl. 3/4) without reduplication.

nouns as well as the addition of a nasal in between the diminutive class 7 prefix and the reduplicated or triplicated stem, both in the singular and plural. The nasal can be added to either the base only or both the base and the reduplicant.

- (33) Kimanyanga (Laman 1912: 240, 1936: 281)
- ki-mù-ntu-mú-ntu/bi-ba-ntu-ba-ntu** ‘small person(s)/man/men’
  - < **mù-ntu** ‘person’ (cl. 1/2)
  - ki-mw-āna-mw-ana** ‘tiny child’
  - < **mw-āna** ‘child’ (cl. 1/2)
  - bi-bá-ala-bá-ala/bi-m-bā-ala-m-bā-ala** ‘small children, small animals’
  - < **bá-ala** ‘children’ (cl. 2)
  - ki-n-disu-ndi-su, ki-di-su-disu/bi-n-di-su-n-di-su, bi-me-so-me-so**  
‘little eye(s)’
  - < **di-su/me-eso** ‘eye(s)’ (cl. 5/6)
  - ki-di-ambu-di-ambu/bi-m-ambu-m-ambu** ‘small affair(s)’
  - < **di-ambu** ‘affair’ (cl. 5/6)
  - ki-m-pàta-m-pàta, ki-vata-vata** ‘small village’
  - < **váta** ‘village’ (cl. 5/6)
  - ki-n-túti-n-tuti, ki-tuti-tuti** ‘little cloud’
  - < **túti** ‘cloud’ (cl. 5/6)
  - ki-n-sū-n-sū** ‘small mortar’
  - < **sú** ‘mortar’ (cl. 7/8)
  - ki-mēme-meme** ‘lamb, small sheep’
  - < **mēme** ‘sheep’ (cl. 9/10)
  - ki-mvūla-mvula** ‘shower’
  - < **mvūla** ‘rain’ (cl. 9/10)
  - ki-nzēnze-nzenze** ‘very small cricket crying terribly in the night’
  - < **nzēnze** ‘cricket’ (cl. 9/10)
  - ki-mpu-mpu, ki-mpū-mpu-mpù** ‘small headdress’
  - < **mpú** ‘hat’ (cl. 9/10)
- (34) Kintandu (Daeleman 1966: 246)
- ki-mw-ana-mw-ana/bi-m-ba-na-m-ba-na** ‘small child(ren)’
  - < **mw-ana/ba-na** ‘child(ren)’ (cl. 1/2)
  - ki-mbwa-mbwa-mbwa/bi-mbwa-mbwa-mbwa** ‘small dog(s)’
  - < **mbwa** ‘dog’ (cl. 9/10)
  - ki-nyoka-nyoka/bi-nyoka-nyoka** ‘small snake(s)’
  - < **nyoka** ‘snake’ (cl. 9/10)

In Kiyombe as spoken in the DRC, the class 7 prefix is used for creating names to designate people belonging to so-called Nzola associations for mutual aid (cf. **nzóólá** ‘friendship, love, friendliness’ in De Grauwe 2009: 91). These names can be derived from verbs or nouns and refer to the kind of help or support one could get from other members, even in the future when one will have passed away. Some examples are provided in (35). Some of these names as well as others formed in the same way are nowadays also used in Cabindan Kiyombe as endearment names for

lovers without any link whatsoever to Nzola associations (A. Massiala p.c., 01/2019). Such is probably also the case in the DRC, but more fieldwork would be needed to confirm this.

(35) Kiyombe (DRC) (Mbadu ki-a-Manguedi 1981)

<b>ki-bwatana</b>	‘the-one-who-is-intimately-linked-to-me’
<b>ki-ntima</b>	‘the-one-who-is-of-my-heart’
<b>ki-nsosula</b>	‘the-one-who-talks-with-me’
<b>ki-kuthalanga</b>	‘the-one-who-watches-me’
<b>ki-nseva</b>	‘the-one-who-laughes-with-me’
<b>ki-kundila</b>	‘the-one-who-will-cry-for-me’

#### 1.1.6. Class pairing 9/10

The addition of a stem-initial nasal frequently observed with KLC diminutives in class 7/8 in §1.1.5 is in all likelihood prompted by the analogy with another common diminutive strategy in the KLC, i.e. the substitutive use of the nasal prefixes of the class pairing 9/10. As illustrated in (36), it is also already attested in 17<sup>th</sup> century in South Kikongo (Van Gheel 1652), most often without mention of the plural. As observed in §1.1.5 with class 7/8 diminutives, the nasal prefix of classes 9/10 is added to the base only, not to the reduplicant, although exceptions do occur, e.g. **n-donga-n-donga** ‘small plate’ (< **e-longa** ‘plate’, cl. 5/6). The noun’s original prefix is maintained neither in the base nor in the reduplicant.

(36) 17<sup>th</sup> century South Kikongo = Kisikongo (H16a) (Van Gheel 1652)

<b>n-tari-tari</b>	‘small stone’
< <b>e-tari/matari</b>	‘stone’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>n-toco-toco</b>	‘very young man’
< <b>e-toco</b>	‘adolescent’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>n-tembo-tembo/n-tembo-tembo</b>	‘little wind(s)’
< <b>qui-tembo</b>	‘wind’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>n-pata-bhata/n-pata-bhata</b>	‘small village(s)’
< <b>qui-bhata</b>	‘town’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>n-pissi-bhissi</b>	‘small bone’
< <b>qui-bhissi</b>	‘bone’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>n-cata-cata</b>	‘small box’
< <b>lu-cata/n-cata</b>	‘box’ (cl. 11/10)
<b>n-ta-ta</b>	‘small bow’
< <b>u-ta/ma-ta</b>	‘bow’ (cl. 14/6)

In Kimanyanga (CK) both base and reduplicant receive a nasal prefix, as seen in (37). It either substitutes the noun’s original prefix or it is added to the noun stem in the case of prefix-less nouns. There are exceptions such as **ndinu-ndinu** ‘small tooth’ where it is added twice in front of the original prefix. As the last example shows, class 8 **bi-** can occasionally be added to the plural form.



## (37) Kimanyanga (Laman 1936)

<b>n-deke-n-deke</b>	‘little brother’	<	<b>n-leke</b>	‘brother’ (cl. 1/2)
<b>n-kòko-n-kòko</b>	‘young rooster’	<	<b>kòko</b>	‘rooster’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>ng-yùku-ng-yùku</b>	‘small fever’	<	<b>yùku-yùku</b>	‘fever’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>n-dínu-n-dínu</b>	‘small tooth’	<	<b>dì-inu</b>	‘tooth’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>m-bāka-m-baka</b>	‘part of a wall’	<	<b>bāka</b>	‘wall’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>m-bèmba-m-bèmba</b>	‘small basket’	<	<b>bèmba</b>	‘basket’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>n-dòza-n-dóza</b>	‘small shop’	<	<b>lòza</b>	‘shop’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>n-tāyi-n-tayi</b>	‘small twig’	<	<b>tāyi</b>	‘branch’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>ngy-ozì-ngy-ozì</b>	‘small cold’	<	<b>ky-ozì</b>	‘cold’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>ngi-oko-ngi-oko/bi-ngi-oko-ngi-oko</b>	‘little hand(s), arm(s)’	<	<b>ko-oko</b>	‘arm’ (cl. 15/6)

## 1.1.7. Summary

Nearly all of the noun classes with diminutive use which Gibson *et al.* (2017) have detected in their Bantu-wide sample of 48 languages also occur in the KLC, except for classes 5 and 14, which do occur but never as diminutive markers, and class 20 (\*yù-), which does not exist in the KLC, just like classes 21 and 22 mentioned by Maho (1999).

Gibson *et al.* (2017: 369) observe that languages which use combinations of classes 12, 13, 14, and 5 (but not 7/8 or 19) form a broad belt from the northeast of the Bantu area, through the centre and stretching to the southwest. They have found class pair 7/8 in the northeast, southeast and in the northwest, i.e. Makaa (A83) and the west, more specifically in Kisikongo (H16a). They situate class 19 in the northwest and northeast, while Maho (1999) considers it typical of the rainforest area.

Across the KLC, diminutive noun class pairings 12/13 (§1.1.1), 8/13 (§1.1.2), 11/13 and 11/8 (§1.1.3), 19/8 (§1.1.4), 7/8 (§1.1.5), and 9/10 (§1.1.6) are attested. Of these pairings, 12/13, 7/8 and 9/10 are substitutive diminutive markers, while 8/13, 11/13, and 11/8 tend to be additive and 19/8 is found both additively and substitutively. While 12/13, 8/13, 11/13 and 11/8 (almost) never combine with doubling or tripling as diminutive strategy, 7/8 and 9/10 are almost never found without. Once again, 19/8 is found both with and without. The combination of reduplication with noun class shift might originally have reinforced diminutivization.

## 1.2. Reduplication

Cross-linguistically, reduplication can convey a range of derivational meanings, diminutive being one of them, also in Bantu (cf. Maho 1999; Gibson *et al.* 2017). Reduplication also occurs as a diminutive strategy in the KLC, often in combination with a shift in noun class, as discussed in §1.1, sometimes also with a part of the reflex of \*jánà ‘child’, as discussed in §1.3. The reduplication can be total (reduplicant = total stem or total noun), partial (reduplicant = part of stem) or double (= triplication of the noun or stem). The reduplicant of polysyllabic stems usually is the stem only, without the prefix. Triplication typically happens in monosyllabic nouns. The reason for this double reduplication would be the tendency for the reduplicant to

be bisyllabic (Hyman 2009: 185). In the KLC, reduplication, whether total, partial or double and whether or not combined with another diminutive strategy, occurs in WK, SK, EK and CK (see map 2), but not in NK and KK.

### 1.2.1. Total reduplication

All cases of reduplication also involving a shift in noun class, discussed in §1.1, are cases in which at least the whole noun stem is doubled or even tripled, whether or not with the inclusion of a prefix. We consider these as cases of total reduplication. Without additional shift in noun class, such cases are relatively rare. They are most prominently documented in Kisolongo (SK) as spoken in northern Angola (Tavares 1915), as exemplified in (38). The original noun class prefix is maintained and only the noun stem is doubled. Only nasal prefixes and prefixes preceding a vowel-initial stem tend to be included in the reduplication. These are cases in which the prefix does not add a syllable to the reduplicant.<sup>10</sup> Southern Kisolongo is probably the only KLC variety in which original noun class prefixes are also maintained when they are not a simple nasal or do not occur in front of a vowel-initial stem, together with the original agreement patterns.

(38) Southern Kisolongo (H16a) (Tavares 1915)<sup>11</sup>

<b>n-tekulu-n-tekulu</b>	‘little grandchild’	<	<b>n-tékulu/a-tékulu</b>	‘grandchild(ren)’ (cl. 1/2)
<b>n-kentu-n-kentu</b>	‘little woman’	<	<b>n-kentu/a-n-kentu</b>	‘woman/women’ (cl. 1/2)
<b>mu-ana-mu-ana</b>	‘little child’	<	<b>mu-ana/i-ana</b>	‘child(ren)’ (cl. 1/2)
<b>mi-nti-mi-nti</b>	‘small trees’	<	<b>n-ti/mi-nti</b>	‘tree(s)’ (cl. 3/4)
<b>di-vitu-vítu/ma-vitu-vitu</b>	‘small door’	<	<b>di-vitu/ma-vitu</b>	‘door(s)’ (cl. 5/6)
<b>i-nkutu-nkutu</b>	‘small shirts’	<	<b>ki-nkutu/i-nkutu</b>	‘shirt(s)’ (cl. 7/8)
<b>zi-mbele-mbele</b>	‘small knives’	<	<b>m-bele/zi-m-bele</b>	‘knife/ves’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>mpuku-mpuku</b>	‘little rat’	<	<b>m-puku/zi-m-puku</b>	‘rat(s)’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>lu-muenu-muenu</b>	‘small mirror’	<	<b>lu-muenu/tu-muenu</b>	‘mirror(s)’ (cl. 11/13)
<b>tu-inda-tu-inda</b>	‘small lights’	<	<b>lu-inda/tu-inda</b>	‘light(s)’ (cl. 11/13)

10. Under similar circumstances, the conservation of prefixes in reduplications has also been reported elsewhere in Bantu, for instance in reduplicated verbs in Kihehe (G62) and Swati (S43) (Hyman 2009: 192-193).

11. During recent fieldwork (Goes 2020), our Angolan Kisolongo consultants did not recognize reduplication as a diminutive strategy. They only used lexical diminutives with the modifier *-a kete* ‘small’, e.g. *nzo ya kete* ‘small house’, *ci ya kete* ‘small tree’, *mbizi ya kete* ‘small fish’.

In Kisolongo (SK) spoken to the north of the Congo mouth in the current-day DRC, diminutive marking happens through the total reduplication of the noun stem, though with the loss of the original noun class prefix, except in front of vowel-initial stems. Such is the case in both 19<sup>th</sup> c. Kisolongo (39) and in the present-day variety recently studied through fieldwork in Muanda, DRC (40).

(39) Northern Kisolongo (H16a) (Visseque 1890: II-III)

**tadi-tadi** ‘small stone’ < **di-tadi/ma-tadi** ‘stone(s)’ (cl. 5/6)  
**singa-singa** ‘small rope’ < **n-singa/zi-n-singa** ‘rope(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  
**kata-kata** ‘small case’ < **lou-kata/tou-kata** ‘case(s)’ (cl. 11/13)

(40) Northern Kisolongo (H16a) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2019)

**mw-elu-m-welu** ‘small door’ < **mw-elu/my-elu** ‘door(s)’ (cl. 3/4)  
**singa-singa** ‘small rope’ < **n-singa/mi-n-singa** ‘rope(s)’ (cl. 3/4)<sup>12</sup>  
**dy-aki-dy-aki** ‘small egg’ < **dy-aki/ma-aki** ‘egg(s)’ (cl. 5/6)  
**tadi-tadi** ‘small stone’ < **di-tadi/ma-tadi** ‘stone(s)’ (cl. 5/6)  
**bota-bota/bota-bota** ‘small star’ < **m-bota/zi-m-bota** ‘star(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  
**bizi-bizi** ‘small fish’ < **m-bizi/zi-m-bizi** ‘fish(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  
**kata-kata** ‘small case’ < **lu-kata/tu-kata** ‘case(s)’ (cl. 11/13)

Within WK, total reduplication as a diminutive strategy without the addition of a diminutive noun prefix is the best documented in Iwoyo spoken in Cabinda. As shown in (41), the original noun prefix is lost, even when it is a simple nasal.<sup>13</sup> Only noun prefixes forming a syllable with the first vowel of the stem are conserved. It is important to note that **i** (SG) and **u** (PL) are so-called ‘augment’ or ‘pre-prefixes’ (cf. De Blois 1970; Bostoen & de Schryver 2018b: 95), and not proper noun class prefixes. Despite the absence of overt noun class prefixes, the agreement patterns in (41) show that all of these reduplicated diminutives belong to class pair 7/8, even those including the original prefix of another noun class, such as **mwana-mwana**.

(41) Iwoyo (H16d) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)<sup>14</sup>

**mw-ana-mw-ana ci-itu/b-ana-b-ana bi-itu** ‘our small child(ren)’  
 < **mw-ana/ba-ana** ‘child(ren)’ (cl. 1/2)<sup>15</sup>  
 (i) **tebe-tebe ci-ame/(u) tebe-tebe bi-ame** ‘my small banana(s)’  
 < (i) **tebe/(u) tebe** ‘banana(s)’ (cl. 7/8)

12. Le Louët (1890: 70) provides the same example in the WK variety of Kakongo, but with maintenance of the original noun class prefix before the base, i.e. **m’singa-singa** ‘string’ < **m’singa** ‘tie, cord, lace’. Le Louët (1890: 98) also mentions **i mingo mingo/u mingo mingo** ‘hillock(s)’ < **m’ongo/miongo** ‘mountain(s)’ (pl. 3/4).

13. Mingas (1994: 132-133) provides some counterexamples to the loss of nasal prefixes in Iwoyo diminutive reduplication, i.e. **mbúwà-mbúwà** ‘small dog’ < **mbúwà** ‘dog’ (cl. 9/10); **’nti-’nti** ‘stick’ < **’nti** ‘tree’ (cl. 3/4).

14. In Ciwoyo (H16d), the DRC variety of the same language, total diminutive reduplication also occurs, e.g. **mianya-mianya/manyá-manyá** ‘small stone(s)’ < **mianya/manyá** (cl. 5/6), **nkala-nkala/nkyala-nkyala** ‘small field(s)’ < **nkala/nkyala** ‘field(s)’ (cl. 9/10), **singa-singa/singa-singa** ‘small cord(s)’ < **singa/singa** ‘cord’ (cl. 9/10) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2019).

15. De Mattos e Silva (1904: 103) provides the same diminutive, i.e. **muâna-muâna/bâna-bâna** ‘suckling, nursing’.

- (i) **kundu-kundu ci-ame/(u) kundu-kundu bi-ame** ‘my small chair(s)’  
 < (i) **kundu** ‘chair(s)’ (cl. 7/8)
- (i) **zungu-zungu ci-ame/(u) zungu-zungu bi-ame** ‘my small pot(s)’  
 < **n-zungu/zi-n-zungu** ‘pot(s)’ (cl. 9/10)
- (i) **bele-bele ci-ame/(u) bele-bele bi-ame** ‘my knife/knives’  
 < **m-beele/zi-m-beele** ‘knife/knives’ (cl. 9/10)
- (i) **bungu-bungu ci-ame/(u) bungu-bungu bi-ame** ‘small mug(s)’  
 < **m-bungu/zi-m-bungu** ‘mug(s)’ (cl. 9/10)
- bw-ala-bw-ala/ma-ala-ma-ala** ‘small village(s)’  
 < **bw-ala/ma-ala** ‘village(s)’ (cl. 14/6)

Given that classes 7/8 have zero prefixes in Iwoyo, even when used derivationally, the reduplicated diminutives in (41) are not fundamentally different from the diminutives combining reduplication with overt class 7/8 prefixes discussed in §1.1.5. During fieldwork of the first author, Iwoyo speakers observed that diminutives formed by total reduplication have an affectionate connotation, just like diminutives with suffixation (§2.3.3).

### 1.2.2. Partial reduplication

More often than being total, diminutive reduplication in WK is partial, i.e. only the first syllable of the noun stem is doubled. This reduplication strategy is not only common in several WK varieties, it is also restricted to them, more specifically almost exclusively to varieties spoken in Cabinda. In no other clade of the KLC has partial diminutive reduplication been reported. Among Cabindan WK varieties, it is first described by Le Louët (1890) by means of the examples in (42). Augments **i** (SG) and **u** (PL) show that partially reduplicated diminutives mostly shift their noun class to 7/8, as in (42a). Once more, the noun prefixes are lost, but the augments are conserved. However, in some cases the original prefix was conserved in the diminutive reduplication, as in (42b).

- (42) Kakongo (H16d) (Le Louët 1890)
- |                              |                   |                                                              |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>i me-mème/u me-mème</b>   | ‘lamb(s)’         | < <b>i meme/ma-meme</b><br>‘sheep’ (cl. 5/6)                 |
| <b>i ma-magna/u ma-magna</b> | ‘gravel(s)’       | < <b>i/li-magna/ma-magna</b><br>‘stone(s)’ (cl. 5/6)         |
| <b>i be-bembe/u be-bembe</b> | ‘young pigeon(s)’ | < <b>li bembe/ma-bembe</b><br>‘pigeon(s)’ (cl. 5/6)          |
| <b>i ba-baïa/u ba-baïa</b>   | small board(s)    | < <b>li baïa/ma-baïa</b><br>‘board(s)’ (cl. 5/6)             |
| <b>i sa-savu/u sa-savu</b>   | ‘small story/ies’ | < <b>i sivu/u savu</b><br>‘story/ies, history/ies’ (cl. 7/8) |
| <b>i ta-tali/ub ta-tali</b>  | ‘hatchet(s)’      | < <b>i tali/ub tali</b><br>‘axe(s)’ (cl. 7/8)                |

<b>i bo-bola/u bo-bola</b>	‘bowl(s)’	< <b>bola/zi-bola</b>	‘feeding bowl’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>n-sa-sava/zi-sa-sava</b>	‘little calabash(es)’	< <b>n-sava/zi-sava</b>	‘calabash(es)’(cl. 9/10)

Recent fieldwork has shown that this same strategy is still used in present-day Iwoyo (43), Ikoci (44) and Ikwakongo (45) (SWK). The noun class shift to classes 7/8 is not noticeable in the singular because of the prefix reduction, except with monosyllabic roots. It is also manifest in the agreement pattern they trigger. The strategy is used also, but for a limited number of words, in Kiyombe as spoken in Cabinda, where the prefix shift is very clear.

(43) Iwoyo (H16d) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)

<b>i zu-zungu</b>	‘small pot’	< <b>n-zungu</b>	‘pot’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>(i) nu-nuni</b>	‘small bird’	< <b>nuni</b>	‘bird’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>bu-bungu</b>	‘small mug’	< <b>m-bungu</b>	‘mug’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>i ka-kanda ci-mpheemba/u ka-kanda b’mpheemba</b>	‘small white paper(s)’	< <b>n-kanda</b>	(cl. 3/4)
<b>kwa-kwali ci-mpheemba/kwa-kwali b’mpheemba</b>	‘small white basket(s)’	< <b>i kwali</b>	(cl. 5/6)
<b>i-su-su-su ci-nombe/bi-su-su-su bi-nombe</b>	‘small black chicken(s)’	< <b>susu/zi-susu</b>	(cl. 9/10)

(44) Ikoci (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)

<b>i ya-yaka/u ya-yaka</b>	‘small cassava(s)’	< <b>li-yaka/m’yaka</b>	(cl. 5/6)
<b>i bu-bulu/u bu-bulu</b>	‘small animal(s)’	< <b>i bulu/u bulu</b>	(cl. 7/8)
<b>i bu-bulu ci-bi/bu-bulu bi-bi</b>	‘bad small animal(s)’		(cl.7-8)
<b>i (mi)pha-phaanza/u (m)pha-phaanza</b>	‘small cassava(s)’	< <b>mphaanza/zi-phaanza</b>	‘cassava(s)’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>i (mi)pha-phaanza ci-bote/u (m)pha-phaanza bi-bote</b>	‘good small cassava(s)’		

(45) Ikwakongo (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)

<b>zu-zungu</b>	‘small pot, pan’	< <b>n-zungu</b>	‘pot’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>bu-bungu</b>	‘small mug’	< <b>m-bungu</b>	‘mug’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>be-beele</b>	‘small knife’	< <b>m-beele</b>	‘knife’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>bu-buku</b>	‘small book’	< <b>buku</b>	‘book’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>ne-neela ci-mbote</b>	‘nice small window’	< <b>neela</b>	‘window’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>be-beele ci-meenu</b>	‘sharp small knife’	< <b>m-beele</b>	‘knife’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>bu-buku ci-mbote/bu-buku bi-mbote</b>	‘good small book(s)’	< <b>buku</b>	‘book’ (cl. 9/10)
<b>me-meza ci-mpheembe</b>	‘a small white table’	< <b>me-za</b>	‘table’ (cl. 9/10)

The same strategy is also used in Civili as spoken in Cabinda (46), Congo (47) and Gabon (48) and in Kiyombe (49) as spoken in Cabinda. In these varieties the noun class shift is clearly visible, as there is no prefix reduction, and the concordance is following the prefix shift. Monosyllabic nouns are tripled.

- (46) Civili (Cabinda) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018 & 2019, João Leca Chidimbo Macaya p.c., 7/12/2020)
- ci-mwa-mwana/bi-ba-bana** ‘small child(ren)’  
 < **mw-ana/ba-ana** ‘child(ren)’ (cl. 1/2)
- ci-mwa-mwana ci-boti/bi-ba-bana bi-boti** ‘good small child(ren)’  
 < **mw-ana/ba-ana-** ‘child(ren)’ (cl. 1/2)
- ci-sa-sanga/bi-sa-sanga** ‘small banana tree(s)’  
 < **saanga/si-sanga** ‘banana tree(s)’ (cl. 9/10)
- ci-mba-mbala/bi-mba-mbala** ‘small potato(es)’  
 < **m-bala/si-m-bala** ‘potato(es)’ (cl. 9/10)
- ci-su-su-su/bi-su-su-su** ‘small chicken(s)’  
 < **suusu/si-suusu** ‘chicken(s)’ (cl. 9/10)
- ci-nzu-nzungu/bi-nzu-nzungu** ‘small pot(s)’  
 < **n-zungu/si-n-zungu** ‘pot(s)’ (cl. 9/10)
- ci-nzu-nzungu ci-nthama/bi-nzu-nzungu bi-nthama** ‘old small pot(s)’  
 < **n-zungu/si-n-zungu**
- (47) Civili (Congo) (Ndamba 1977: 123, 166-167, 190, 285-286)
- a. **cí-mvúú-mvubu/bí-mvúú-mvubu** ‘small hippopotamus(es)’  
 < **m-vúbu/sí-m-vúbu** ‘hippopotamus(es)’ (cl. 9/10)
- cí-vaa-vali/bí-vaa-vali** ‘small squirrel(s)’  
 < **lú-vali/tú-vali** ‘squirrel(s)’ (cl. 11/13)
- b. **cí-tóó-tolu/bí-tóó-tolu** ‘small cheek(s)’  
 < **lí-toolu/mí-toolu** ‘cheek(s)’ (cl. 5/4)
- cí-kóó-kopa/bí-kóó-kopa** ‘small glass(es)’  
 < **kóópa/má-kóópa** ‘glass(es)’ (cl. 5/6)

When the structure of the root is CVCV, the vowel in this reduplicated syllable is lengthened, as can be seen in (47a). When the structure is CV-CV<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>CV<sub>2</sub>, the reduplicated first syllable is also long, but in second position, it is shortened, as can be seen in (47b). High tones remain high in the partial reduplicant, but are lowered in the base. So both CV-CV<sub>1</sub>CV<sub>2</sub> and CV-CV<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>CV<sub>2</sub> → CV-CV<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>CV<sub>1</sub>CV<sub>2</sub>.

In Civili as spoken in Gabon the same strategy is possible (48), but the reduplication does not seem to be a necessity. Reduplication is also possible without shifting to class 7.

- (48) Civili (Gabon) (Loembe 2005: 91, 146, 197; Mavoungou & Ndinga-Koumba-Binza 2010: 76)
- A tchi mwa-mwana ise!** ‘Little one, come!’  
**tchi-kufi, tchi-ku-kufi** ‘person of small height, short person’  
**li-ka-kayi** ‘small leaf’
- (49) Kiyombe (Cabinda) (H16c) (A. Massiala p.c., 12/2020)
- ki-mwa-mwana/bi-ba-bana** ‘small child(ren)’  
 < **mwana/bana** ‘child(ren)’ (cl. 1/2)
- ki-le-leezi/bi-le-leezi** ‘small youngest brother(s)/sister(s)’  
 < **ki-leezi/bi-leezi** ‘youngest brother(s)/sister(s)’ (cl. 7/8)

- ki-kho-khodi/bi-kho-khodi** ‘small thick(s)’  
 < **ki-khodi/bi-khodi** ‘thick(s)’ (cl. 7/8)  
**ki-nza-nzaala/bi-nza-nzaala** ‘small hunger(s)’  
 < **nzaala/zi-nzaala** ‘hunger(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ki-ngu-nguula/bi-ngu-nguula** ‘small current of river’  
 < **nguula/zi-nguula** (cl. 9/10)

The only language variety where partial reduplication is found without class shift to 7/8 is Kiyombe as spoken in Cabinda (50).

- (50) Kiyombe (Cabinda) (H16c) (A. Massiala p.c., 12/2020)  
**pha-phaandu/zi pha-phaandu** ‘small sorcerer(s)’  
**phaandu/zi-phaandu** ‘sorcerer(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  
**pha-phaanza mboti/zi pha-phaanza zi-mboti** ‘small cassava(s)’  
**phaanza/zi-phaanza** ‘cassava(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  
**nza-nzaala/zi-nza-nzaala** ‘small hunger(s)’  
**nzaala/zi-nzaala** ‘hunger(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ngu-nguula/zi-ngu-nguula** ‘small current of river’  
**nguula/zi-nguula** ‘current of river’ (cl. 9/10)

### 1.2.3. Reduplication with stabilizer

One remarkable secondary diminutive strategy observed in certain KLC varieties is the use of what Cole (1955) and Gowlett (1984) call ‘stabilizers’, which is discussed in this section because it always accompanies reduplication. However, as with reduplication in itself, it also often involves a shift in noun classes, i.e. towards class pairing 7/8 or to class 19. Cole (1955), cited in (Gowlett 1984: 187), defines stabilizers in Tswana (S31) as “[...] prefixal or suffixal elements which have no intrinsic significance or concordial function, their sole purpose being to provide an additional syllable for words which, generally speaking, would otherwise be monosyllabic, and thus to accommodate the characteristic penultimate accent.” Gowlett (1984: 189) adds to this that ‘true’ or ‘proper’ stabilizers do not have any other function in the language, but that there are also “other morphological entities which function as stabilizers while presumably fulfilling some other function at the same time”. Hyman (2009: 191) calls these kinds of syllables ‘dummies’ with regard to **yi** which is used in monosyllabic verb stems in Ndebele (S44) to form a bisyllabic reduplicant. With regard to **IV** in lexicalized CV-reduplications in Yao (P21), Hyman (2009: 181) speaks of an ‘intrusive’ element.

In the KLC, two types of stabilizers occur: (i) **IV** following the first reduplicant in triplicated monosyllabic nouns, as in Kintandu (51) and Kisingombe (52), and (ii) **kVIV** following the (only) reduplicant in reduplicated monosyllabic nouns, as in Kimanyanga (53) and Kisikongo (54). The vowel is always a copy of the root vowel. This second type, i.e. **kVIV**, is according to Gowlett (1984) the sole example of true stabilizers outside South-Eastern Bantu. It seems to us that also the form **IV** would be such a stabilizer, possibly linked with the Bantu lexical reconstruction \***do** ‘little, small’ (BLR 7191).

Although triplication without **IV** is also possible, just like triplication instead of reduplication plus **kVIV**, these ‘stabilizers’ are most likely a way of creating the same number of syllables normally available in reduplications of bisyllabic stems, i.e. diminutive noun class prefix plus two times two syllables.

Examples of the first strategy, i.e. adding **IV** following the first reduplicant, are given in (51) for Kintandu (EK), where it is combined with class pairing 7/8, and in (52) for Kisingombe (CK), where it co-occurs with the diminutive class 19 prefix.

- (51) Kintandu (Daeleman 1966: 246; Malolo Kitembo 2003: 40)  
**ki-mbwa-mbwa-la-mbwa/bi-mbwa-mbwa-la-mbwa** ‘small dog(s)’  
 < **mbwa** ‘dog’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ki-nzo-nzo-lo-nzo/bi-nzo-nzo-lo-nzo** ‘small house(s)’  
 < **nzo** ‘house’ (cl. 9/10)
- (52) Kisingombe (N’laandu-Láanda-Ntôôtila 1975: 63-64)  
**fi-nsi-nsi-di-nsi** ‘very small country’ < **nsi** ‘country’ (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-nzô-nzô-lô-nzo** ‘very small house’ < **nzô** ‘house’ (cl. 9/10)  
**fi-ntu-ntu-lu-ntu** ‘very small head’ < **n-tu** ‘head’ (cl. 3/4)

Examples of the second strategy, adding **kVIV** following the reduplicant, are presented in (53) for Kisikongo (SK) and in (54) for Kimanyanga (CK). In both languages, it combines not only with the diminutive class 7 prefix, as in (53b) and (54a), but also with the class 19 prefix, as in (53c) and (54b). In Kisikongo, this strategy is also attested without class shift, see (53c). Considering the variety of meanings one observes in the literature as well as the possibility of using different or no added prefixes, the strategy seems to have been quite productive with monosyllabic stems.

- (53) Kisikongo (Bentley 1887; Laman 1936: 254)
- a. **ki-n-ti-ti-kidi** ‘small stick’ < **n-ti** ‘tree’ (cl. 3/4)  
**ki-n-tu-tu-kulu** ‘tiny little head’ < **n-tu** ‘head’ (cl. 3/4)  
**ki-m-pè-ve-kèle** ‘tiny little eyelash’ < **ve** ‘eyelash’ (cl. 7/8)  
**ki-n-sù-su-kùlu** ‘tiny little mortar’ < **su** ‘mortar’ (cl. 7/8)  
**ki-n-dià-n-dia-kàla** ‘small intestine’ < **n-dia** ‘intestine’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ki-m-bwà-bwa-kàla** ‘puppy’ < **m-bwa** ‘dog’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ki-n-sè-se-kèle** ‘tiny little spot’ < **se** ‘spot’ (cl. 7/8)  
**ki-n-zò-n-zo-kòlo** ‘tiny little house’ < **n-zo** ‘house’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ki-m-fwà-fwa-kàla** ‘corpse of a child’ < **fwa** ‘corpse’ (cl. 15/6)
- b. **fi-n-zo-n-zo-kolo** ‘tiny house’ < **n-zo** ‘house’ (cl. 9/10)  
c. **bwa-bwa-kala** ‘small dog’ < **m-bwa** ‘dog’ (cl. 9/10)
- (54) Kimanyanga (Laman 1912: 242, 1936: L, 2)
- a. **ki-n-ti-n-ti-kidi** ‘small tree, bush, stick, ...’  
 < **n-ti** ‘tree’ (cl. 3/4)  
**ki-n-zū-n-zu-kulu** ‘light noise’  
 < **zú** ‘noise’ (cl. 5/6)  
**ki-n-sē-n-se-kele** ‘little father’  
 < **se** ‘father’ (cl. 5/6)



- ki-n-sū-n-su-kulu** ‘small mortar’  
 < **sú** ‘mortar’ (cl. 7/8)  
**ki-m-bwā-m-bwa-kala** ‘small young dog (new-born)’  
 < **m-bwa** ‘dog’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ki-n-zo-n-zo-kolo** ‘little house’  
 < **nzo** ‘house’ (cl. 9/10)  
 b. **fi-n-ti-n-ti-kidi** ‘bush, cane, wand, rod’  
 < **nti** ‘tree’ (cl. 3/4)  
**fi-m-bwā-m-bwa-kalà** ‘small (young) dog’  
 < **m-bwa** ‘dog’ (cl. 9/10)

More attestations of reduplication are found in the KLC, combined with the use of the reflex of \***jánà** ‘child’ as a suffix, as can be seen in the next subsection.

### 1.3. Word formation with reflexes of **jánà** ‘child’

The third of the three main strategies found in Bantu is the use of (parts of) the reflex of \***jánà** ‘child’, either as a derivational affix (either suffix or prefix) or as part of a compound.

According to both Gibson *et al.* (2017: 358, 362) and Maho (1999: 215, 219), diminutive compounds formed with a word meaning ‘child’ or using the first part of \***jánà** for prefixation are chiefly found in the north-western region/rainforest languages, along with languages of zone P in the south-east (e.g. Cuwabo P34) (cf. Guérois 2015).

In the south-east region of the Bantu area, Gibson *et al.* (2017) have found suffixation of the stem of the reflex of \***jánà** in Venda, Tsonga and Ronga in combination with a shift in noun classes to 7/8, while in North Sotho, Tswana, Sesotho and Zulu using only the suffix **-ana**.

In the KLC, the use of \***jánà** ‘child’ to form diminutives is found in WK (both northern and southern varieties), EK, NK and KK, but not in CK and SK, as shown on Map 2.

In the KLC all three Bantu strategies using the reflex of \***jánà** are attested: (i) compounding with the reflex of \***jánà**, including its prefix or (ii) prefixing only its first syllable, **mwa-** or (iii) suffixation of the stem of the reflex of \***jánà**. Reduplication of this suffixation is also possible (in Civili, see §1.3.3.). Some of these are still combined with noun class shift and/or other morphemes, such as **bina bi** and **bana ba** in Kiyombe (see §1.3.3.)

#### 1.3.1. Compounding

Compounding with the full reflex of \*NP<sub>1</sub>-**jánà** or \***mò-jánà**, i.e. **mwana**, occurs in KK, EK and WK. In some KK and EK languages this is the only \***jánà** based strategy used, while in WK the other two also occur.

In Kiyaka (KK) (55), when applied to animals, the form with **mwana** also refers to their offspring. In Kintandu (EK), the vowel in the form meaning ‘offspring’ is long, as in (56a), in contrast to the vowel in the diminutive, as in (56b). In

Kintandu, this strategy is also used for pejoratives, as in (56c), but it is not clear how to distinguish between a neutral diminutive and a pejorative diminutive. As the examples across varieties show, diminutive compounds with **mwana** occur both with animates and inanimates.

- (55) Kiyaka (H31) (Van Den Eynde 1968: 107-108)  
**mwáná-mbwá** ‘small dog/ offspring of the dog’  
**bana-bángo** ‘offspring of leopard’ (PL)
- (56) Kintandu (H16g) (Daeleman 1966: 246; Malolo Kisembo 2003: 49)  
 a. **mwááná nsusu** ‘offspring of chicken, chick’  
**mwááná méeme/bááná báméeme** ‘offspring of sheep, lamb’  
 b. **mwáná nyoka/báná bá-nyoka** ‘small snake(s)’  
**mwáná méeme/báná bá-méeme** ‘small sheep’  
**mwáná nzo/báná bánzo** ‘small hut(s), small house(s)’  
 c. **mwáná nsusu** ‘a sickly hen or rooster of little value’  
**mwáná kíti** ‘a small chair of little value’
- (57) Kimbeko (Fieldnotes KongoKing 2012)  
**mwana mbeedi** ‘a small knife’  
**Kaka mwana mwana mosi mbwenengi.** ‘Only a small boy has seen me.’
- (58) Kimbata (Fieldnotes KongoKing 2012)  
**Mwána tóko kaká umbwéní.** ‘Only a small boy has seen me.’
- (59) Kinkanu (Fieldnotes KongoKing 2012)  
**Mwana bakala kaka umbwene.** ‘Only a small boy has seen me.’

In Kisuku (KK), **mwana** can take an additive diminutive prefix of class 12 in the singular, but even if it does not, it triggers agreement in that class, as shown in (60a). Plurals do not take the additive diminutive prefix of class 13 and also do not trigger agreement in that class. As illustrated in (60b), this diminutive can also have a pejorative connotation.

- (60) Kisuku (H31) (Piper 1977: 201-202)  
 a. **ka-mwaaná nzu ka-mósí** ‘one little hut’  
**baana bá-nzu bóódí** ‘two little huts’  
**mwaaná hàta ka-mósí** ‘one small village’  
**mwaana núní ka-mósí** ‘one small bird’  
 b. **mwaana mú-tú ka-mósí** ‘one miserable little man’  
**baana báátú bóódí** ‘two miserable little men’

In West Kikongo this strategy is already attested in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Kakongo dictionary of Le Louët (1890), illustrated in (61), and in the ‘Fiote’<sup>16</sup> wordlist by

16. ‘Fiote’, meaning ‘small, black, African’ is a glossonym used towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in grammars, dictionaries and catechisms

De Mattos e Silva (1904), as shown in (62). The latter lived in the “new township of Cabinda”, so probably in the now Iwoyo-speaking region. In both varieties, it primarily refers to offspring. The **mwana**-strategy is not found in more recent sources of Iwoyo, nor in the most closely spoken varieties Ikoci and Ikwakongo.

(61) Kakongo (H16d) (Le Louët 1890: 7)  
**mu-ana mème/b’ana ba [mème]** ‘lamb(s)’

(62) ‘Fiote’ (H16d) (De Mattos e Silva 1904: 384)  
**muana-khombo** ‘kid, billy (goat)’  
**muana mééma** ‘lamb’  
**muâna-muâna** ‘little child’

This strategy also occurs in the Congolese variety (63) and Cabindese variety (64) of Kiyombe and in Ciwoyo, the Congolese equivalent of Cabindese Iwoyo (65). In Congolese Kiyombe, the plural consists of the plural reflex of \***jánà** and class 8 prefix **bi**. In Cabindese Kiyombe, it combines with class 2 prefix **ba**.

(63) Kiyombe (DRC) (H16c) (De Clercq 1907)  
**muâna mbêle/bâna bi mbêle** ‘small knife/knives’ (cl. 9/10)  
**muâna wâyi/bâna bi wâyi** ‘small cat(s)’ (cl. 7/8)

(64) Kiyombe (Cabinda) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)  
**mwana nti/bana ba mi-ti** ‘small tree(s)’ (cl. 3/4)  
**mwana ci-tebi/bana ba bi-tebi** ‘small banana(s)’ (cl. 7/8)

(65) Ciwoyo (H16d) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2019)  
**mwana mwana/bana bana** ‘small child(ren)’ (cl. 1/2)  
**mwana ci/bana ba ci** ‘small tree(s)’ (cl. 3/4)  
**mwana mbizi/bana ba mbizi** ‘small fish’ (cl. 9/10)

### 1.3.2. Prefixation

Prefixation of the first syllable of \***mù-jánà**, i.e. **mwa-**, is attested in NK and WK, both SWK and NWK.

In SWK, Civili as spoken in Congo (66) and Kiyombe as spoken in Cabinda (67) stand out because of the use of the complete plural of \***jánà** for the plural diminutive, as attested by Marichelle (1907) for Civili and by Abel Massiala for Kiyombe. Ndamba (1977) stresses that in Civili the vowel of **mwa-** is lengthened and that it can also be used for the plural, e.g. **mwáá sí-mbata ási** ‘these small chairs’. Adding **mwáá** is also possible in front of adverbs.

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in Cabinda and part of the DRC to refer to local language varieties or as a cover term for Kikongo in general. Cabindans still use it today in addition to the newer and more nationalist ‘Ibinda’ as the cover term for all language varieties spoken in Cabinda.

- (66) Civili (H12) (Congo) (Marichelle 1907: 17; Ndamba 1977: 123, 166-167, 190, 285-286)
- |                                      |                   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>mwa n'kanda/b'ana ba mi kanda</b> | 'small letter(s)' |
| <b>mwáá mwáána</b>                   | 'small child'     |
| <b>mwáá mbata</b>                    | 'small chair'     |
| <b>mwáá fwááti</b>                   | 'very little bit' |

In Kiyombe as spoken in Cabinda, **bana-ba** is used as a plural form as well, but there **mwa-** can be added. Both these forms, with and without **mwa-**, can be used in a pejorative way depending on the context. There is no class shift and there does not seem to be a corresponding diminutive singular form (67).

- (67) Kiyombe (Cabinda) (H16c) (A. Massiala p.c., 12/2020)
- |                                          |                             |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>(mwa)-bana ba ba-kieto (ba)ba-kio</b> | 'small women'               |
| < <b>nkieto/ba-kieto</b>                 | 'woman/women' (cl. 1/2)     |
| <b>(mwa)-bana ba mi-inda</b>             | 'small lights'              |
| < <b>mwiinda/miinda</b>                  | 'light(s)' (cl. 3/4)        |
| <b>(mwa)-bana ba zi-khoto</b>            | 'small meetings'            |
| < <b>khoto/zi-khoto</b>                  | 'meetings' (cl. 9/10)       |
| <b>(mwa)-bana ba zi-nzo</b>              | 'small houses'              |
| < <b>nzo/zi-nzo</b>                      | 'house(s)' (cl. 9/10)       |
| <b>(mwa)-bana ba zi-tsaanga</b>          | 'small banana trees'        |
| < <b>tsaanga/zi-tsaanga</b>              | 'banana tree(s)' (cl. 9/10) |
| <b>(mwa)-bana ba zi-nduumba</b>          | 'small girls'               |
| < <b>nduumba/zi-nduumba</b>              | 'girl(s)' (cl. 9/10)        |
| <b>(mwa)-bana ba zi-tho</b>              | 'small spoons'              |
| < <b>lu-tho/zi-tho</b>                   | 'spoon(s)' (cl. 11/10)      |
| <b>(mwa)-bana ba mi-atu</b>              | 'small canoes'              |
| < <b>bu-atu/mi-atu</b>                   | 'canoe(s)' (cl. 14/4)       |

In all other languages where we have found attestations for the use of **mwa-** for diminutives, this prefix is used for singular and plural.

Apart from several other possible strategies, prefixing of **mwa-** [without **bana ba**] is also possible in Kisundi (Cabinda) (68) and Kiyombe varieties both in DRC (69) and Cabinda (70). In the literature no plural was found for this strategy, but fieldwork in Cabinda has shown that **mwa-** is preceding both the singular and plural. Prefix concordances are following the original class of the word, as shown in Kisundi (68) and Kiyombe (70).

- (68) Kisundi (Cabinda) (H131) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2019)
- |                                    |                     |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>mwa-mu-kheetu/mwa-ba-kheetu</b> | 'small woman/women' |
| <b>mwa-nti/mwa-mi-ti</b>           | 'small tree(s)'     |
| <b>mwa-di-kia/mwa-ma-kia</b>       | 'small egg(s)'      |
| <b>mwa-nuni/mwa-zi-nuni</b>        | 'small bird(s)'     |

- (69) Kiyombe (DRC) (H16c) (De Clercq 1907: 456; Bittremieux 1923-1927)
- |                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>mua-mbele</b>             | ‘small knife’        |
| <b>mwa-nkanda</b>            | ‘small letter, note’ |
| <b>muâ-muana</b>             | ‘small child’        |
| <b>mue (sic) k’utu-k’utu</b> | ‘little bag’         |
- (70) Kiyombe (Cabinda) (H16c) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018, A. Massiala p.c., 12/2020)
- |                                                     |                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>mwa-nkieto nkio/mwa-ba-kieto ba-kio</b>          | ‘small woman/women’ (cl. 1/2)    |
| <b>mwa-di-ambu di-kio/mwa-ma-ambu ma-kio</b>        | ‘small problem(s)’ (cl. 5/6)     |
| <b>mwa-ki-ika ki-kulu/mwa-bi-ika</b>                | ‘old small bed(s)’ (cl. 7/8)     |
| <b>mwa-mbungu/mwa-zi-mbungu</b>                     | ‘small mug(s)’ (cl. 9/10)        |
| <b>mwa-mbungu mona/mwa-zi-mbungu zi-mona</b>        | ‘new small mug(s)’ (cl. 9/10)    |
| <b>mwa-phaandu/mwa-zi-phaandu</b>                   | ‘small sorcerer(s)’ (cl. 9/10)   |
| <b>mwa-neela ikhulu/mwa-zi-neela zikulu</b>         | ‘old small ring(s)’ (cl. 9/10)   |
| <b>mwa-meeza ikhulu/mwa-zi-meeza zikulu</b>         | ‘old small table(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  |
| <b>mwa-janeela ikhulu/mwa-zi-janeela zikulu</b>     | ‘old small window(s)’ (cl. 9/10) |
| <b>mwa-lu-thó/mwa-zi-thó</b>                        | ‘small spoon(s)’ (cl. 11/10)     |
| <b>mwa-lu-thó lu-mona/mwa-zi-thó zi-mona</b>        | ‘new small spoon(s)’ (cl. 11/10) |
| <b>mwa-bw-aatu bu(bu)-cio/mwa-mi-aatu mi(mi)cio</b> | ‘small canoe(s)’ (cl. 14/4)      |

However, in Kiyombe as spoken in Cabinda, the **mwa**-strategy can be used with adjectives with class 19 in the singular, and an ‘extended’ class 8 in the plural: **bina bi**, as shown in (71). Adjectives agree with classes 19/8 or with the original prefix, except when referring to persons. In the latter case, only the original prefix is used in the adjective. Class 19 makes the objects even smaller. In the plural forms **mwa**- and **bina-bi** are optional as one or both of them can be left out. **Bina bi**, with **bina** originally being a demonstrative, always has a pejorative connotation, while **mwa**- again can have a pejorative connotation depending on the context.

- (71) Kiyombe (Cabinda) (H16c) (p.c. A. Massiala 12/2020)
- |                                                                                        |                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>mwa-nkieto fi kio/(mwa)-(bina bi) ba-kieto bi-kio, ba-ki</b>                        | ‘very small woman/women’ (cl. 1/2)    |
| <b>mwa-mwana fi-kio/(mwa)-(bina bi) ba-na bi-kio, ba-kio</b>                           | ‘very small child(ren)’ (cl. 1-2)     |
| <b>mwa-lu-thó fi-kio fi-mona/(mwa)-(bina bi) zi-thó bi-mona, zi-mona</b> <sup>17</sup> | ‘very small new spoon(s)’ (cl. 11/10) |
| <b>mwa-neela fi-kio fi-khulu/(mwa)-(bina bi) zi-neela bi-khulu, zi-khulu</b>           | ‘very small old ring(s)’ (cl. 9/10)   |
| <b>mwa-bwaatu fi-kio/(mwa)-(bina bi) mi-aatu bi kio, mi-kio</b>                        | ‘very small canoe(s)’ (cl. 14/4)      |
| <b>mwa-nnuuni fi kio/(mwa)-(bina bi) zi-nuuni bi-kio, zi-kio</b>                       | ‘very small husband(s)’ (cl. 9/11)    |
| <b>mwa-meeza fi-khulu/(mwa)-(bina bi) meeza bi-khulu, zi-khulu</b>                     | ‘very small old table(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  |

17. Without the original prefix: **mwa-bina bi tho** the significant is even smaller, adding **bi-cio-cio** even smaller (p.c. A. Massiala 12/2020).

In Kiyombe the prefixation strategy combined with noun class shift to class 8 can be combined further with partial reduplication, as in (72). There does not seem to be a directly linked singular for this strategy. This form can – depending on the context – be used pejoratively, e.g. when trying to bargain.

- (72) Kiyombe (Cabinda) (H16c) (A. Massiala p.c., 12/2020)
- |                                          |                             |           |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| <b>(mwa)-bi-bu-lu</b>                    | ‘small animals’             |           |
| < <b>ki-bulu/bi-bulu</b>                 | ‘animal(s)’ (cl. 7/8)       |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-bu-bulu</b>                  | ‘small plastic baskets’     |           |
| < <b>ki-bubulu/bi-bubulu</b>             | ‘basket(s)’                 | (cl. 7/8) |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-pha-phaandu bi-mbi</b>       | ‘bad small sorcerers’       |           |
| < <b>phaandu/zi-phaandu</b>              | ‘sorcerer(s)’ (cl. 9/10)    |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-tso-tsola</b>                | ‘small fields’              |           |
| < <b>tsola/zi-tsola</b>                  | ‘field(s)’ (cl. 9/10)       |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-nga-ngazi</b>                | ‘small palm nuts’           |           |
| < <b>ngazi/zi-ngazi</b>                  | ‘palm nut(s)’ (cl. 9/10)    |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-mba-mbala</b>                | ‘small potatoes’            |           |
| < <b>mbaala/zi-mbaala</b>                | ‘potato(es)’ (cl. 9/10)     |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-nzu-nzuungu<sup>18</sup></b> | ‘small pots’                |           |
| < <b>nzuungu/zi-nzuungu</b>              | ‘pot(s)’ (cl. 9/10)         |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-kho-khoto</b>                | ‘small meetings’            |           |
| < <b>khoto/zi-khoto</b>                  | ‘meeting(s)’ (cl. 9/10)     |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-the-theendi</b>              | ‘baskets’                   |           |
| < <b>theendi/zi-theendi</b>              | ‘basket(s)’ (cl. 9/10)      |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-mbo-mbongo bi-mboti</b>      | ‘good small moneypieces’    |           |
| < <b>lu-bongo/zi-mbongo</b>              | ‘moneypiece(s)’ (cl. 11/10) |           |
| <b>(mwa)-bi-ma-maala</b>                 | ‘small villages’            |           |
| < <b>bu-ala/ma-ala</b>                   | ‘village(s)’ (cl. 14/6)     |           |

In Yilumbu (732), the same prefix **mwà-** is also used for singular/plural diminutives, whether or not with pejorative connotation (Gamille 2013: 143).

- (73) Yilumbu (B44) (Gamille 2013: 143)
- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>mwà-mwâ:n</b>           | ‘small child’             |
| <b>mwà-mù-tù/mwà-bà-tù</b> | ‘insignificant person(s)’ |

In Yisangu, **mwà-** is shortened to **má-** (73). Ondo-Mebiame (2000) describes this as a class 6 prefix, but this is highly unlikely, as class 6 has not been found as a diminutive class in Bantu (Gibson *et al.* 2017) and the use of the same class for both singular and plural would also be unusual.

- (74) Yisangu (B42) (Ondo-Mebiame 2000: 128)
- |                               |                    |   |                         |           |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------------|-----------|
| <b>má-dí:mbù/má-mí:mbù</b>    | ‘small village(s)’ | < | <b>dí:mbù/mí:mbù</b>    | (cl. 5/6) |
| <b>má-í-lingà/má-bí-lingà</b> | ‘small dress(es)’  | < | <b>í-lingà/bí-lingà</b> | (cl. 7/8) |
| <b>má-mwâ:nà/má-bâ:nà</b>     | ‘small child(ren)’ | < | <b>mwâ:nə/bâ:nà</b>     | (cl. 1/2) |

18. Also: **mwa-bi-zungu-zuungu** (p.c. A. Massiala 12/2020).

Examples from Kikamba (75) and Kibembe (76) show that in NK as well, **mwa-** is used for singular and plural diminutives, with the singular/plural distinction marked by the original noun class prefix.

- (75) Kikamba (H112) (Bouka 1989: 126)  
**mwà-mwâná/mwà-bâlà** ‘small child(ren)’  
**mwà-bântù** ‘some people’

- (76) Kibembe (H11) (Jacquot 1981: 25, 29)  
**muá`nzîlà** ‘small way, path’  
**muá`dià`mbu** ‘small affair’  
**mwa muti** ‘small tree’  
**mwa baala** ‘small children’

In Kilaari, another NK language, this strategy is combined with an additive class 19 diminutive prefix, as illustrated in (25).

### 1.3.3. Suffixation

Several WK languages use suffixation of the reflex of \***jánà**, i.e. the noun stem **-ana**, as a diminutive strategy in combination with a shift to the noun class pairing 7/8, for instance Civili (77), Cilinji (77), Ikoci (78), Ikwakongo (79), Iwoyo (81) from Cabinda and Ciwoyo (82) from DRC. The suffix **-ana** is used for bisyllabic or polysyllabic stems, and is duplicated to **-anana** for monosyllabic stems. In Civili (77), Cilinji (78) and Iwoyo (81) this strategy can be combined with partial reduplication of the noun, which is also possible without **-ana** (cf. supra). Noun class shift to class 19 (**fi-**) intensifies the diminutive in Cilinji (78). Just like diminutives formed by total reduplication discussed in §1.2.1, these diminutives derived through suffixation also have an affectionate connotation.

- (77) Civili (Cabinda) (H12) (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018 & 2019)  
**ci-ty-anana/bi-ty-anana** ‘small tree(s)’ < **n-ti/mi-ti** (cl. 3/4)  
**ci-fw-anana/bi-fw-anana** ‘small fish’ < **u-fu/zi-fu** (cl. 9/10)  
**ci-nzw-anana/bi-nzw-anana** ‘small house(s)’ < **nzo/zi-nzo** (cl. 9/10)  
**ci-bo-bol-ana/bi-bo-bol-ana** ‘small bowl(s)’ < **ci-bola** (cl. 7/8)  
**ci-bu-bulw-ana/bi-bu-bulw-ana** ‘small animal(s)’ < **ci-bulu** (cl. 7/8)

- (78) Cilinji (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)  
**i vi-vitu/bi-vi-vitu** ‘small door(s)’ < **li-vitu/ma-vitu** (cl. 5/6)  
**i bwa-bwala/bi-bwa-bwala** ‘little village(s)’ < **bw-ala/ma-ala** (cl. 14/6)  
**fi-cio-cio-ana/bi-cio-cio-ana** ‘even smaller/smallest thing’

- (79) Ikoci (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2019)  
**i ty-anana/u ty-anana** ‘small tree(s)’ < **n-ti/i n-ti** (cl. 3/4)  
**ty-anana bi-itu bi-cio** ‘our small trees’  
**i zw-anana/u zw-anana** ‘small house(s)’ < **n-zo/zi-n-zo** (cl. 9/10)  
**i fw-anana/u fw-anana** ‘small fish’ < **fu/zi-fu** (cl. 9/10)

- (80) Ikwakongo (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)  
**sapatw-ana** ‘small shoe’ < **sapatu** (cl. 9/10)  
**tw-anana** ‘small spoon’ < **lu-to** (cl. 11/10)
- (81) Iwoyo (H16d) (Mingas 1994: 132-133, Fieldnotes H. Goes 2018)  
**ì n-tì-ánà** ‘short stick’ < **’n-tì** (cl. 3/4)  
**í mbùw-ánà** ‘small dog’ < **mbúwà** (cl. 9/10)  
**i mbuw-anana ci-nombe/bw-anana bi-nombe** ‘small black dog(s)’  
 (cl. 9/10)  
**i fu-anana ci-ame/u fu-anana bi-ame** ‘my small fish’ (cl. 9/10)  
**i bakal-ana ci-bote/bakal-ana b’bote** ‘small beautiful man/men’ (cl. 5/2)  
**i su-susu-ana ci-nombe/u su-susu-ana b’-nombe** ‘small black chicken(s)’  
 (cl. 9/10)
- (82) Ciwoyo (Fieldnotes H. Goes 2019)  
**ntu-anana cya mbote/ntu-anana bya mbote** ‘nice little head(s)’  
**nzw-anana cya mbote/zw-anana bya mbote** ‘nice little house(s)’  
**ti-anana cya mbote/t-anana bya mbote** ‘nice small tree(s)’
- This strategy is already attested in the oldest WK source, the manuscript dictionaries of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Anonyme 1772-73), and a dictionary from a century later (Le Louët 1890), both treating the Kakongo variety.
- (83) Kakongo (H16d) (Anonyme 1772-73)  
**ki-k’si-ana** ‘small cooking pot(s)’ < **(ki)k’sia/bi b’sia**  
 ‘cooking pot(s)’ (cl. 7/8)  
**ki-ngalasi-ana** ‘small cup, small glass(es)’ < **i (n)galasi/zingalasi**  
 ‘glass(es)’ (cl. 9/10)
- (84) Kakongo (Le Louët 1890: 12, 16, 17, 80, 135)  
**ki-bakal-ana** ‘small boy’ < **m’bakala** ‘man’ (cl. 1/2)  
**m’ti-anana** ‘shrub’ < **m’ti/miti** ‘tree(s)’ (cl. 3/4)  
**nzo-anana** ‘hut’ < **n-zo/si-nzo** ‘house(s)’ (cl. 9/10)  
**ki-ti-anana** ‘stick’ < **m’ti/miti** ‘tree(s)’ (cl. 3/4)  
**ki-nzo-anana ki mllele** ‘tent’ (litt. little house of textile)  
 < **n-zo/si-nzo** ‘house’ (cl. 9/10)

#### 1.3.4. Summary

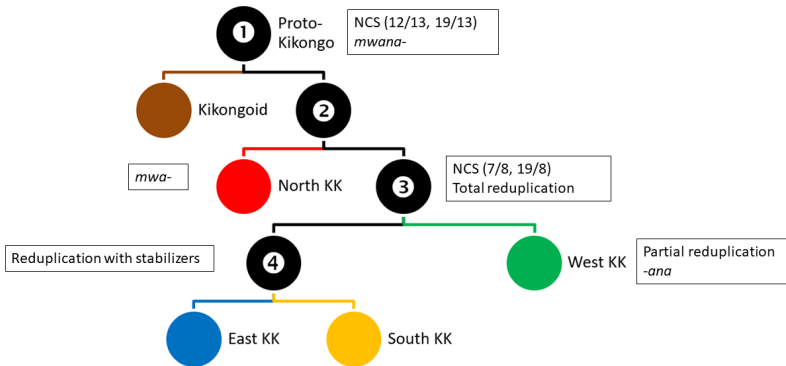
In sum all three strategies involving \***jánà** are used in WK, but other clades use only one of the options. KK (Kiyaka, Kisuku) and EK (Kintandu) rely on compounding with **mwana**. In NK (Kikamba, Kibembe, Kilaari), only prefixation of **mwa-** is attested. Suffixation of **-ana** is used only in WK.

All three strategies can be combined with noun class shift. In Kisuku (KK) prefixation of **mwana-** is combined with additive classes 12/13, in Kilaari (NK) prefixation of **mwaa-** is combined with additive class 19 and in Cijinji, Civili, Ciwoyo, Iwoyo, Ikwakongo, Ikoci and the historical variety Kakongo (SWK) suffixation of **-ana** is combined with additive classes 7/8.



**2. Evolution of diminutives in the KLC**

In Section 1, we discussed and illustrated the different types of diminutive strategies occurring in the KLC since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In this section, we present an attempt to reconstruct the diachronic evolution of the synchronic variation summarized in Table 1. For each of the three principal diminutive strategies and their different subtypes, we have indicated with a check marker whether it is present in a given variety. An empty box signals that we did not find a given strategy in the documentation available for a given variety. However, absence of evidence does not necessarily mean evidence of absence, because the documentation of different KLC varieties is very uneven. Varieties for which no data are available on diminutive marking are not included in Table 1. Moreover, in certain areas, linguistic research has specifically targeted diminutives, but not in others. Thus, the higher diversity in diminutive strategies in South-West Kikongo is undoubtedly partly an artefact of the dedicated fieldwork which the first author carried out on this topic in Cabinda. In Table 1, varieties are clustered according to clades of the lexicon-based KLC phylogeny proposed by de Schryver *et al.* (2015) and schematically represented in Figure 1. Central Kikongo is missing in this genealogical tree, because it is considered the result of intensive language contact rather than a true phylogenetic subgroup. A good understanding of the internal genealogical structure of the KLC is crucial for reconstructing the diachronic evolution of diminutive marking out of the synchronic variation in Table 1. Figure 1 is not taken at face value as a definite statement on the KLC classification. It is seen as a framework against which other historical-comparative evidence can be checked, potentially leading to a revised understanding of the KLC’s internal cohesion.



**Figure 1.** Schematic KLC phylogeny (adapted from de Schryver *et al.* 2015: 140)





Along with Maps 2 and 3 presented in Section 1, Table 1 displays some distinct patterns of synchronic variation in terms of geographic or cross-linguistic distribution. These facilitate the reconstruction of how diminutive marking evolved in the KLC, certainly if one interprets them in light of both the KLC phylogeny and what we know about diminutive strategies in Bantu more generally (cf. Maho 1999; Gibson *et al.* 2017).

As for noun class prefix marking, apart from 19 (\**pì-*, SG) / 13 (\**tù-*, PL), the noun class pairing 12 (\**kà-*, SG) / 13 (\**tù-*, PL) is the only other plausible candidate for reconstruction to the most recent common ancestor of the entire KLC, i.e. node 1 in Figure 1, despite its weak distribution within the KLC. Given its reconstruction to PB (Meeussen 1967: 103, see also Kadima 1969 and Maho 1999), the attestation of cl. 12/13 in Kisuku, Kihungan, Gisamba, and Dihungu must be an archaism. Considering that the KK clade, to which the first three languages belong, is sister to the rest of the KLC, one could postulate that the class 12/13 pairing was lost after their most recent common ancestor split off. However, this assumption is complicated by its occurrence in Dihungu, a language spoken in the extreme southeastern periphery of the KLC area. This unique retention within SK suggests that \**kà-*/\**tù-* must have survived as diminutive prefixes until the main KLC clades had emerged. The persistence of class 13 to mark diminutives in Kitsootso (SK) and in Kimanyanga (CK), as the plural of classes 8 and 11 respectively, points in the same direction, just like the relics of class 12 in (non-diminutive) proper names in SWK (cf. §1.1.1). Remnants of classes 12 and 13, though not as a singular/plural pair and not with diminutive semantics, also occur in Nsong (B85d), Mpiin (B863), Ngong (B864), and Mbuun (B87) (Koni Muluwa 2010: 102, 108), the closest relatives of the KLC within WCB (cf. Pacchiarotti *et al.* 2019).

The most widespread innovations within the KLC, when it comes to diminutive prefix marking, are the class pairings 7/8 and 19/8. With regard to the main clades of the KLC, their distribution is very similar. Both class pairings occur in SWK, SK, EK and CK. NK is the only clade in which 19/(8) is possibly attested but not 7/8. However, it is only reported in one specific doculect (i.e. Ngoma-Nkanga wa ne Ndimbu 1975) of one of the NK languages, i.e. Kilaari, for which earlier on irregularities were identified that could point to contact-induced change (cf. Goes & Bostoen 2019: 34). As there are no other attestations of 19/8 in NK for the time being, it is very uncertain whether this Kilaari attestation was inherited from Proto-NK. For the time being, we therefore assume that both 7/8 and 19/8 did not emerge as diminutive class pairings before node 3 in the KLC tree (cf. Figure 1). In any event, both innovations are clearly attested in the oldest South Kikongo (17<sup>th</sup> c.) source (Van Gheel 1652) and the oldest West Kikongo (18<sup>th</sup> c.) source (Anonyme 1772-73). Both shared innovations seem to corroborate that WK, EK and SK are indeed more closely related to each other than to either NK or KK and that they inherited these innovated diminutive class pairings from their most recent common ancestor. The present-day WK, EK and SK languages in Table 1 missing a check mark for 7/8 and/or 19/8 either lost these innovations again or we do not have sources in which they have been reported. None of the two class pairings are unique to the KLC as diminutive markers. Diminutive classes 7/(8) are mainly attested in the eastern part of the Bantu domain, but also sporadically

in some northwestern languages (see distribution maps in Maho 1999: 222; Gibson *et al.* 2017: 369). The class pairing 19/8 is much rarer, and even more so as a diminutive marker. It has only been reported in the northwestern part of the Bantu area: without diminutive semantics in some North-Western Bantu languages of zones A and B and with diminutive semantics only in WCB, actually exclusively in the KLC except for Fumu (B77) (cf. Maho 1999: 281-309). Given their scattered distribution, it seems safe to assume that both the diminutive use of class pairing 7/8 and the pairing of the singular diminutive class 19 with plural class 8 are parallel innovations that happened independently at different times and in different places within Bantu, so also at ancestral node 3 of the KLC phylogeny. Considering the simultaneity with which both innovations occurred in the history of the KLC, they are possibly also linked causally. If the class pairing 7/8 became the predominant diminutive noun prefix marker at ancestral node 3 of the KLC, to the detriment of the inherited class 12/13 class pairing, it is not unimaginable that singular diminutive class 19 also took class 8 as a plural (cf. §1.1.4) in analogy with the other singular diminutive class prefix. Although class 19 is almost absent from NK and entirely absent from KK, its presence must still be assumed in the most recent common ancestor of the entire KLC (i.e. ancestral node 1 in Figure 1), because \**pì-* was reconstructed to both PB and Proto-Benue-Congo. Even if no single instance of this class pairing survived in the KLC, except maybe in Kizombo (SK), the plural of diminutive class 19 in ancestral node 1 must have been class 13 (\**tò-*), as in most languages where a reflex of \**pì-* (class 19) is still attested, and probably also in PB (cf. Maho 1999: 255). If singular diminutive class 19 paired with the same plural as singular diminutive class 12 in PB and PK, it is not unexpected that it shifted its plural to class 8 in ancestral node 3 of the KLC. At the same node, for reasons unknown but as in several other Bantu languages (cf. Gibson *et al.* 2017), class 7 pushed out class 12 as singular diminutive class. As the semantic difference between class 12 and class 19 in PB is assumed to have been between “small” and “very small”, we can postulate the same distinction in ancestral node 3 of the KLC. If the single 19/8 attestation in Kilaari (NK) would still be a shared retention (rather than a contact-induced change), then all we proposed for ancestral node 3 of the KLC could be moved one node up, i.e. to ancestral node 2. However, total absence of diminutive class 7/8 in NK only adds uncertainty to the reconstruction of both diminutive class pairings 7/8 and 19/8 to ancestral node 2 in Figure 1.

The remaining diminutive class pairings attested in the KLC, i.e. 8/13, 11/13, 11/8, and 9/10, have a very poor distribution, and can therefore be considered to be local and late innovations. The first one only occurs in the SK outlier language Kitsootso and is odd in that it has class 8 as a singular (diminutive) class, which is very uncommon in Bantu more generally though not unattested (cf. Maho 1999). The last three only occur in Kimanyanga (CK), except for 9/10, which is also attested in 17<sup>th</sup> century South Kikongo, the direct ancestor of modern-day Kisikongo (cf. Bostoen & de Schryver 2018b). Neither in 19<sup>th</sup> century Kisikongo (Bentley 1887) nor in any more recent SK variety, has it been reported. Given that just like 11/13, the class pair 9/10 is very unusual as a diminutive marker both in the KLC and in Bantu more generally (cf. Maho 1999), the sharing of this particular idiosyncrasy between 17<sup>th</sup> century South Kikongo and Kimanyanga could be one further piece

of evidence suggesting that the dominant language of the Kongo Kingdom (i.e. 17<sup>th</sup> century SK) did indeed contribute to the contact-induced emergence of CK (cf. Bostoen & de Schryver 2015; Bostoen & de Schryver 2018b).

As for diminutives formed with a reflex of \***jánà**, it should be taken into account that the compounding strategy has been reconstructed to PB (Meeussen 1967: 96, see also Kadima 1969 and Maho 1999). Hence, its attestations within the KLC, i.e. in KK, WK and EK, should be seen as shared retentions from both PB and PK. The diminutive prefix **mwa-** is an innovation of this inherited strategy through the phonological reduction and desyntactization of the first constituent **mwana**. This innovation is particularly well attested in NK to whose most recent common ancestor it seems reconstructible. Otherwise, it has been reported in four WK languages, which are in relatively close contact with NK, i.e. the two B40 NWK varieties Yilumbu and Yisangu as well as the SWK varieties Kiyombe, Kisundi and Civili. If not independent innovations of PB and PK **mwana**, the WK instances of diminutive **mwa-** are most likely contact-induced. The more typical (S)WK innovation derived from \***jánà** is the diminutive suffix **-ana**. From a comparative Bantu perspective, the occurrence of this suffix in (S)WK is very remarkable, as it is commonly assumed to be a typical southern Bantu innovation (Maho 1999: 91; Gibson *et al.* 2017: 368). Along with other head-final suffixes in southern Bantu languages, Güldemann (1999) considers diminutive **-ana** as a possible outcome of substrate interference from Khoisan, because Bantu languages tend to have head-initial structures. Such is the case in the KLC. Nonetheless, Khoisan substrate influence is not a likely explanation here. However, this strategy is also found in the KLC, where Khoisan substrate influence is not a likely explanation. It must be an innovation that is parallel to diminutive **-ana** in Southern Bantu. Although the latter could well be an outcome of Khoisan substrate interference, also a Bantu-internal innovation cannot be excluded (cf. Gunnink *et al.* forthcoming).

Finally, reduplication as a diminutive strategy seems to be another innovation that did not emerge before ancestral node 3 of the KLC. It is entirely absent from the KK and NK subgroups. Just like diminutive class pairings 7/8 and 19/8, it turns out to confirm that WK, EK and SK are more closely related to each other within the KLC than with NK or KK. What is more, while partial reduplication seems to be an innovation characteristic for (S)WK, the use of stabilizers seems a change shared by EK, SK and CK only. The latter lines up with lexicon-based phylogeny in considering EK and SK as more closely related to each other than with WK. Its appearance in CK might be another indication of SK's contribution to its historical make-up.

## Conclusions

Three main diminutive strategies are attested in the present-day KLC: noun class prefix marking (either additive or substitutive), reduplication, and word formation with reflexes of PB \***jánà** 'child'. Within each of the main synchronic types, several subtypes occur which contribute to a considerable variation in diminutive marking across the KLC. The diversity of diminutives observed within this low-level Bantu subgroup is similar to the variation in diminutive strategies observed within the entire Bantu domain. Many of the diminutive subtypes attested in the KLC also

occur in other Bantu languages and vice versa. In terms of noun prefix marking, eight different singular/plural noun class pairs are attested: 12/13, 8/13, 11/13, 19/13, 11/8, 19/8, 7/8 and 9/10. Some of these, such as 12/13 and 7/8, are quite common across Bantu. The others are much more sporadic. As for reduplication, both total and partial occur in the KLC as diminutive strategies, just like in Bantu more widely. The use of dummy phonological elements in reduplication, such as **IV** following the first reduplicant in triplicated monosyllabic nouns and **kVIV** following the (only) reduplicant in reduplicated monosyllabic nouns, known as ‘stabilizers’ in Bantu linguistics, is less widespread both in the KLC and Bantu more generally. Also the third KLC strategy to form diminutives, viz. the use of some kind of reflex of PB **\*jánà** ‘child’, is quite well attested in Bantu, especially the use of **mwana** as first component of compounds, which was reconstructed to PB. Additionally, the KLC not only has the diminutive prefix **mwa-**, derived from this nominal compound, but also the diminutive suffix **-ana**, which emerged independently from **\*jánà** ‘child’. Especially the occurrence of this last subtype is remarkable from a comparative Bantu perspective, as it has always been seen as a typical southern Bantu feature, potentially due to Khoisan substrate interference. Further in-depth research on diminutives in other low-level Bantu language subgroups might further challenge certain patterns identified in the recent comparative Bantu-wide study of Gibson *et al.* (2017).

When it comes to the historical interpretation of this synchronic variation, it is striking that the way in which diminutive strategies are distributed across the KLC lines up quite nicely with its lexicon-based phylogeny, especially when it comes to its internal structure. None of the innovations in diminutive marking corroborate the KLC as a discrete subclade within WCB, but none contradict it either. The strategies reconstructable to the most recent common ancestor of the entire KLC, i.e. node 1 in Figure 1, are retentions from PB, i.e. class prefix pairs 12 (**\*kà-**, SG) / 13 (**\*tù-**, PL) and 19 (**\*pì-**, SG) / 13 (**\*tù-**, PL), and the nominal compounds with **mwana** as initial element. The first and last strategies have relics in the present-day KLC, the class 19/13 pair, used to denote referents that are even smaller than those denoted by class 12/13, can only be assumed based on data from outside of the KLC. The major KLC-specific innovations occurred at ancestral node 3 of the KLC phylogeny and corroborate that WK, EK and SK are more closely related to each other than to NK or KK: the emergence of noun class pairings 7/8 and 19/8, which are historically related in that singular class 19 paired up with plural class 8 in analogy with 7/8, as well as the emergence of total reduplication. Other innovations rather occurred at the ancestral node of specific subgroups: the **mwa-** prefix as a reduction of **mwana** in NK and WK, the **-ana** suffix and partial reduplication in SWK, and the use of stabilizers in SK and EK, which would prove that the latter two subgroups are more closely related to each other than to any other KK subgroups. When it comes to contact-induced change, both diminutive class pair 9/10 and the use of stabilizers in reduplication might indicate that (17<sup>th</sup> century) SK historically contributed to the CK contact zone. The use of the **mwa-** prefix in WK might be a change induced through contact with NK. Finally, the most conservative KLC subgroup in terms of diminutive marking is KK, as it manifests only strategies that were already attested in both PK and PB.

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### Authors' addresses

Heidi Goes  
 UGent Centre for Bantu Studies (BantuUGent)  
 Department of Languages and Cultures  
 Blandijnberg 2  
 9000 Ghent  
 Belgium  
 Heidi.Goes@UGent.be

Koen Bostoën  
 UGent Centre for Bantu Studies (BantuUGent)  
 Department of Languages and Cultures  
 Blandijnberg 2  
 9000 Ghent  
 Belgium  
 Koen.Bostoën@UGent.be

### Résumé

Cet article propose à la fois une typologie de la variation que les langues du groupe linguistique kikongo (KLC) manifestent en termes de marquage du diminutif et une reconstruction de l'évolution de cette variation dans le temps. La grande diversité de diminutifs au sein de ce sous-groupe bantu de bas niveau fait écho à la variation documentée pour l'ensemble de la famille bantu. Les trois stratégies principales, chacune avec leurs propres sous-types, sont (1) le marquage de préfixe de classe nominale (soit additif, soit substitutif), (2) la réduplication et (3) la formation de mots avec des réflexes du PB *\*-jánà* « enfant ». Diachroniquement parlant, il est démontré que l'ancêtre commun le plus récent de l'ensemble du KLC, c'est-à-dire proto-kikongo, avait trois types de diminutifs, tous hérités du proto-bantu : (1) paire de classes nominales 12 (*\*kà*, SG) / 13 (*\*tò*, PL), (2) la paire de classes nominales 19 (*\*pi*, SG) / 13 (*\*tò*, PL), et (3) les nominaux composés avec *mwana* comme élément initial. L'innovation morphologique dans le marquage du diminutif n'a commencé qu'après une divergence initiale au sein du KLC. Plusieurs de ces innovations partagées concordent avec la phylogénie interne du KLC basée sur le lexique. Les appariements de classes nominales 7/8 et 19/8 et la réduplication totale corroborent que les sous-groupes kikongo-Ouest, kikongo-Sud et kikongo-Est sont plus étroitement liés les uns aux autres qu'au kikongo-Nord ou au kikongoïd. D'autres innovations sont le fait de sous-groupes spécifiques : ce qui est qualifié de « stabilisateurs » en réduplication pour les kikongo du Sud, de l'Est et du centre, le préfixe *mwa-* pour le kikongo-Nord, la réduplication partielle et le suffixe *-ana* pour le kikongo du Sud-Ouest. Cette dernière innovation se démarque car elle est communément considérée comme une caractéristique typique du bantu méridional, peut-être en raison de l'interférence avec un substrat khoïsan.