Divergent Structure in Ogonoid Languages

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0. Location and Demographics

The Ogonoid (Ogoni/Kegboid) language family of southeastern Nigeria (Benue-Congo, Niger-Congo) comprises five languages spoken in a contiguous area across the Niger Delta. Despite shared ethnographic practices, frequent intermarriage and the immediate physical adjacency of these linguistic communities, Ogonoid languages (1) present with strikingly divergent morpho-syntactic structure. All the Ogonoid languages (except Baan) are spoken in an eponymous Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State; the political boundaries of each largely reflect the linguistic boundaries. Baan (previously known as Ogoi) is spoken in eastern parts of Eleme LGA and western parts of Tai LGA (2).

(1) Population Figures for the Ogonoid Languages

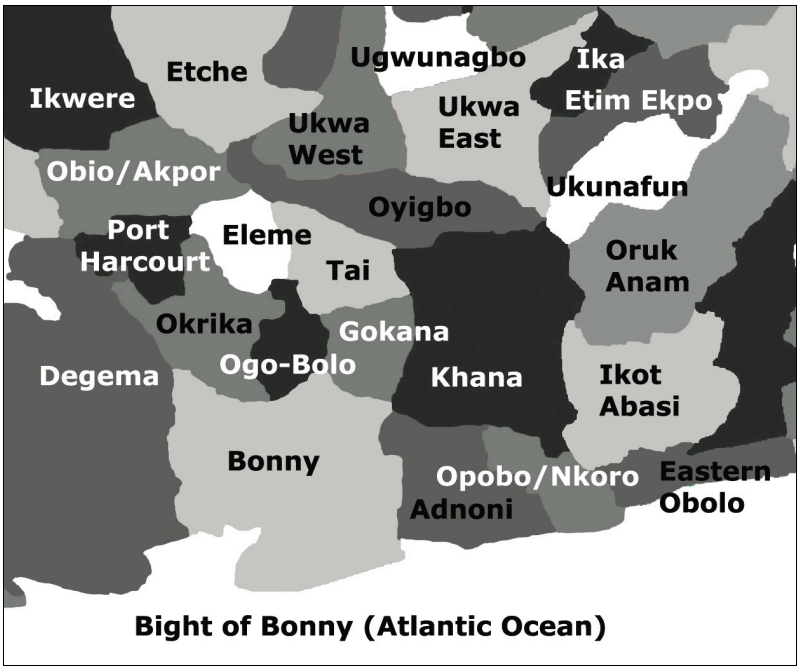
Language	**Gokana**	**Kana/Tai**	**Eleme**	**Baan**
Population	100000	200000	50000	<5000

In this paper, we examine the structural diversity exhibited among the various Ogonoid languages as a contribution to the reconstruction of the linguistic prehistory of the Ogonoid-speaking peoples and the comparative-typological, historical, and areal/genetic analysis of the grammar of Ogonoid languages generally and of Eleme in particular.

1. Phonology and Lexis of the Ogonoid Languages

To date, classification of the Ogonoid languages as a linguistic family–as is typically the case–has been based on 'systematic' correspondences in the phonology and lexicon of the individual varieties (3). Early classifications of the language family treated Tai as a dialect of Kana (Wolff 1964; Williamson 1985; Faraclas 1989) and in the first published comparison of the Ogonoid languages (Wolff 1964), Baan was likewise omitted, and then informally considered a dialect of Eleme. We reckon at least five genetic units within Ogonoid: Gokana, Kana, Tai, Baan, and Eleme.

(2) Local Government Areas in south-eastern Nigeria



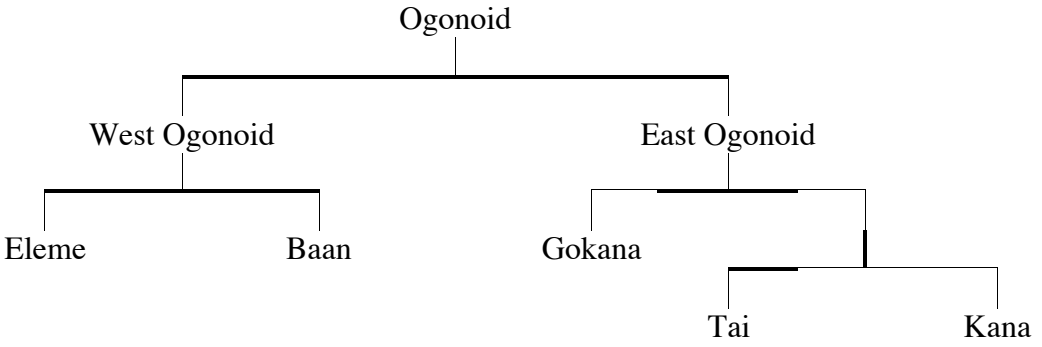
(3) Cognate vocabulary in the Ogonoid languages

	Gokana	**Kana**	**Tai**	**Baan**	**Eleme**
dance	*zòb*	*yèb*	*yèb*	*dʒee*	*dʒè*
pound	*kŭmĭ́*	*kŭm*	*kũm*	*kũũ*	*kŭ̂*
sweep	*kpárî*	*kpáe*[1]	*kpɛɛ*	*kpari*	*kparî*
story	*lóg*	*lóó*	*lóó*	*yógi*	*èlóî*
child	*nẽn*	*nẽ̃ẽ̃*	*nẽ̃ẽ̃*	*nẽ̃ẽ̃*	*ɔ̀nẽ̃*
cooking pot	*bã́*	*bã́*	*bã́*	*bã́ã́*	*àbã́*
tree	*té*	*té*	*té*	*té*	*èté*
wife	*va*	*wa*	*wa*	*wa*	*ɔ̀wa*
salt	*ló*	*ló*	*ló*	*ǹdó*	*ǹló*
rope	*mã́*	*mã́*	*mã́*	*mĭ́mã́*	*mǹmĭ́mã́*

The table in (3), based on data from Williamson (1985) and supplemented with additional material from Tai (Nwi-Bari 2002), illustrates the differences in the phonological realization of cognate vocabulary across the languages. Generally speaking, Tai and Kana seem to cluster together, and these less so with Gokana, while Baan and Eleme appear themselves to group together, appearing to support the initial classification of Ogonoid listed in (4), adapted from Williamson and Blench (2000:33).

[1] Williamson (1985:434) notes that *l is lost in this citation form from Kana, but retained as [r] in the perfect verb form *è-kpár-a* 'he has swept'.

(4) Classification of the Ogonoid languages (Williamson and Blench 2000:33).



This classification of Ogonoid is based purely on phonological aspects of lexical data rather than a systematic analysis of the languages crosswise. The comparative picture discussed in brief below is not nearly so clear when structural (morphological, syntactic) or even the ostensibly diagnostic phonological data are considered. On closer examination, it is uncertain that an East Ogonoid node exists *per se*, or that Gokana and Kana actually have a special relation to one another, as opposed to simply being 'not West Ogonoid'.

2. Divergent Structure in Ogonoid

For the purposes of the following analysis, we limit ourselves to but a handful of the numerous features that characterize the Ogonoid languages both collectively and individually. This includes phonological features, morphological features of nouns and in particular verbs, and some features of noun phrase syntax. Within the domain of phonology, the types of coda restrictions exhibited among the Ogonoid languages are examined. The degree of retention of archaic noun class prefixes is also explored, as well as a range of verbal features, including systems of subject and object marking, tense and aspect encoding, use of reduplication in finite verb morphology and presence of grammaticalized verbal negatives. Data used in the analysis comes from the available published literature on Gokana, Kana, Tai, and Baan, combined with the authors' field notes on Eleme.[2]

2.1. Coda Restrictions

We start our discussion with a phonotactic feature that has figured prominently in the classification of the Ogonoid languages, namely the presence or absence of coda consonants. As it turns out, Eleme (and insofar as this can be determined Baan as well) indeed differs from Gokana, Kana and Tai in having lost all original final consonants. However, there is actually considerable variation in what are

[2] Structural data on Baan is almost entirely lacking and as such Baan does not figure heavily into the discussion below. Further research on Baan may cause some or all of the statements contained in this paper to be modified or revised accordingly.

permissible coda consonants in the different 'East' Ogonoid languages as seen in (5)

(5) Coda consonants in Ogonoid (Williamson 1985: 431; Nwi-Bari 2002)

Gokana: *b, l, g, m, n, ŋ*
Kana: *b, g, m, ŋ*
Tai: *b, m, [ŋ], [s]*[3]

According to Faraclas (1986: 40), coda-consonants are common in Cross-River languages and indeed are to be reconstructed for proto-Cross-River (which was typified by *-CVC, *-CVV and *–CVVC roots).

Even Kana and Gokana show considerable systematic differences in cognate lexemes despite being treated as an undifferentiated type in comparative Ogonoid studies (6).

(6) Coda variation in Kana and Gokana

	forest	**call**	**grass**	**town**	**reject**
Gokana:	*kɔ̀l*	*kól*	*víl*	*bɔn*	*kìn*
Kana:	*kùɛ̀*	*kúé*	*ábîé*	*bũɛ̃*	*kĩĩ*

There is thus a tendency to restrict coda position that grows increasingly stronger from right to left in this continuum across the Ogonoid family in the following cline: Gokana > Kana > Tai >> Eleme

2.2. Noun Class Prefixes

In addition to coda restrictions in Ogonoid languages another 'diagnostic' feature that lumps Gokana and Kana together in opposition to Eleme is the absence vs. presence of noun-class prefixes that represent archaic features presumably inherited from Proto-Benue-Congo. As with coda restrictions, the correspondences among the Ogonoid languages are not nearly as straightforward as has been alleged in the literature. With noun class prefixes, there appears to be more or less the reverse hierarchy where Eleme is the most archaic and preserves the greatest amount of prefixes while Gokana has lost them (completely or nearly so). Kana on the other hand appears to preserve prefixes to a greater degree than was previously realized.

Noun class prefixes in Ogonoid, when present, usually carry a low tone or the tone is copied from the initial syllable of the root. Kana shows that this is merely a tendency, not a rigid absolute (cf. the words meaning 'onion' or 'malaria' below). The shape of the prefix is either vowel or syllabic nasal. In Eleme the

[3] The last two are found in exactly one word each in Nwi-Bari (2002) which appear to either belong to some sort of loan strata or 'affective, 'ideophonic' or 'expressive' register or style.

vowel is either *a*, *E* or *O* (with harmonic variants), the syllabic nasals showing assimilation to place of articulation of a following consonant.

(7) (Faraclas 1986: 47, 50; Nwi-Bari 2002)

	Eleme	**Baan**	**Kana**	**Gokana**	**Tai**	**Proto-Benue-Congo**
tooth	*à-dá:*	*dá:*	*dá:*	*dá:*	*dáa*	**li-* (sg) * *à-* (pl)
tree	*è-té*	*té*	*té*	*té*	*té*	**ki-* (sg) **bi-* (pl)
ashes	*ǹ-tɔ̃*	*ǹ-tɔ́̃*	*tɔ́̃*	*(-rù)*	*tɔ́̃*	
animal	*ǹ-nã*		*nãm*	*nɔ̃m*	*nãm*	**ì-* (sg) *í-* (pl)
goat	*m̀-bó*	*m̀-bó*		*ból*		**ì-* (sg) *í-* (pl)

Kana has preserved prefixes in a significantly greater number of lexemes than previously believed (8). It thus does not 'clearly' pattern with Gokana in this innovation, but rather, as with coda consonants occupies an intermediate position between the two, with Tai[4] closer to Gokana in this respect and Baan even perhaps between Kana and Eleme. Thus, Kana appears to preserve a vocalic noun class marker in numeral classifiers that have been lost in Baan, suggesting the following cline for the retention of noun prefixes in Ogonoid: Eleme >> Baan Kana Tai >> Gokana.

(8) Preservation of Noun Class Marker in Kana (Ikoro 1996: 100-1)

Gloss	**Baan**	**Kana**	**Gokana**
	pa	*ápa*	*pa*
	kpá	*ákpá*	*kpá*
	péé	*ápéé*	*péé*
	súú	*ásúú*	*súú*

2.3. Verb Morphology

We have now examined the two basic features that have been used to classify and sub-group the Ogonoid languages and have demonstrated that the diachronic picture is far from as clear as would be desirable. This problem is further magnified when examining structural data from these languages. In Ogonoid languages there are bound, cliticized or structurally configured sets of object and subject pronominal elements, and a range of elements encoding tense, aspect, and mood categories. Much of the details correspond across the languages, but the diachronic picture is far from clear. One of the paradoxes of Ogonoid structure is that while lexically the languages seem more or less to reflect accepted *Stammbaum*

[4] There appear to be a small number of words that have preserved lexicalized noun class markers encoded by syllabic nasals in Tai, e.g. *ńgbárà* 'small', *ńdè* 'type of cocoyam with heart shaped leaves' (Nwi-Bari 2002).

differentiation and to an extent phonologically as well, the situation when considering equally important morphosyntactic data from a comparative/diachronic perspective is quite different. As a group of languages with no known prehistorical data, argumentation in the analysis of the historical developments in Ogonoid is subject to a circularity in reasoning for attributing structures to the proto-language. Specifically, it is not (yet?) possible in principle to distinguish between shared innovations and common archaic retentions. Given the current geographic configuration of the Ogonoid languages, the most surprising of the structural commonalities is perhaps the significant structural correlations between Gokana and Eleme (their significant differences being perhaps less surprising) outlined below. In particular there appears to be virtually no structural innovations in East Ogonoid, questioning its existence other than as something that opposes Eleme-Baan in a tree structure.

2.3.1. Object Encoding

Among the most obvious similarities and differences exhibited across the Ogonoid languages is the inflection of pronominal objects. Like many Benue-Congo languages, Ogonoid languages use a set of grammaticalized object pronominals which serve as either clitics or object suffixes (or possibly in the case of Tai a semi-dependent, quasi-free standing element).[5]

2.3.1.1. First Singular Object

The first singular object marker appears cognate across the Ogonoid languages appearing with **m* and a following front vowel, realized as non-high in Kana-Tai and high in Eleme, lacking the vowel in the Gokana form (Proto-Ogonoid **mI*). In any event, Kana-Tai (*-mé/-mɛ/-mE)*, Eleme (*–mi)* and Gokana (*-mí)* all have their own reflexes of a putative Proto-Ogonoid construct.

(13) Kana
nɛ-mé kpugì
give-1OBJ money
'give me money'
(Wolff 1964: 44)

(14) Gokana
né-mí kpègè
give-1OBJ money
'give me money'
(Wolff 1964: 44)

(15) Eleme
né-mi ekpìì
give-1OBJ money
'give me money'
(Wolff 1964: 44)

(16) Tai
núm beè agara nú a bee me dòò
NEG.1 PST respond thing 3 PST 1OBJ do
'I did not respond to what he did to me'
(Nwi-Bari 2002)

[5] This is represented as a separate independent element in Tai orthography but we suspect they function as clitics in a manner similar to Kana.

2.3.1.2. Second Singular Object

In contrast to first singular, the second singular object marking presents a more complex picture. At first glance, it might appear that none of the major languages had cognate forms, but it may turn out that Eleme and Gokana share the same suffix, as Eleme exhibits alternations between *n* and *r* followed by nasalized vowel as in these suffixes in Gokana (*-nì*/*-ni*) and Eleme (*-rũ*), respectively, both with high vowels. This contrasts starkly with the Kana counterparts (*-à*/*-a*/*-á*). This suggests that Gokana and Eleme either share an archaic or innovated a new second singular object suffix that differs from that of Kana, which seems perhaps rather to reflect an element found also in Kana imperatives. Thus, Gokana and Eleme either pattern together to the opposition of Kana or all three show distinct developments.

(18) Kana
lú sɔ̃ ḿ-kúé=à
come when 1-call=2OBJ
'come when I call you'
(Ikoro 1996: 132)

(19) Gokana
dù sé m=kor=nì
come when 1=call=2OBJ
'come when I call you'
(Ikoro 1996: 132)

(20) Eleme
à-né-rũ ekpìì
3-give-2OBJ money
'he gave you money'
(Wolff 1964: 44)

2.3.1.3. 'Syntax' (or Morphophonology) of Object Encoding

One of the most striking features of Kana (as well as Tai apparently) is the placement of the object pronominal element. Emphatic pronominal and nominal objects follow the verb while pronominal clitic objects precede it. This appears to be a reanalysis of a second position clitic to a proclitic on the verb following an auxiliary, if no auxiliary is present, the object marker appears enclitic to the verb. As with all Tai forms cited herein the non-emphatic pre-verbal object elements are probably proclitic to the verb or may remain enclitic to the auxiliary.

(21) Kana
m̀-weè kúé alo
1SG-PST call 2SG
'I called you.'
(Ikoro 1996:208)

(22) Kana
m̀-weè a-kue
1SG-PST 2SG-call
'I called you.'
(Ikoro 1996:207)

(23) Tai
gbárà beè nè yààló irĭ
Gbara PST give coat 1PL
'Gbara gave us a coat.'
(Nwi-Bari 2002: 30)

(24) Tai
à-beè-wa nè tum
3SG-PST-3PL give advice
'He gave them some advice.'
(Nwi-Bari 2002: 60)

2.3.2. TAM categories

A range of tense/aspect/mood categories show when considered as a whole show an array of confusing correspondences when viewed from the perspective of the

'traditional' *Stammbaum* of Ogonoid. These features include marking of definite past action, progressive and habitual *Aktionsart* and imperatives, the use of verbal reduplication, and negative verb constructions.

2.3.2.1. Past

One of the basic differences in the encoding of TAM categories between Kana and Eleme is that Kana uses an auxiliary in a definite past function, while Eleme has no such past formation. Eleme constructions, whether expressed by prefixes or auxiliaries, encode aspectual distinctions not tense ones. Gokana either has no auxiliary like Eleme, or a virtually identical auxiliary to the one found in Kana. In fact, if the Kana/Gokana definite past auxiliary (*beè*/*weè*) is in fact cognate with the Eleme perfect[ive] auxiliary (*bere*), and in the case of Kana the correspondence appears to be regular, so this cognacy seems likely, it seems as if the Gokana form might even be a loan from Kana. This is indeed one of the main structural similarities between Gokana and Kana albeit one that seems to be fully grammaticalized in Kana but perhaps only partially so in Gokana. Although not in the same function, a cognate element appears in Eleme and thus this cannot be used as the foundation for a putative East Ogonoid node.

(29) Kana
m̀-weè lu
1SG-PST come
'I came'
(Ikoro 1996: 202)

(30) Tai
à beè lu
3SG PST come
'he came'
(Nwi-Bari 2002: 12)

(31) Gokana
he has...

(32) Eleme
ábéré-ʔù
3:PRF-die
'he is dead, has died'

(33) Kana
m̀ beè-ba nam
1 PST-eat meat
'I ate meat'
(Wolff 1964: 41-42)

(34) Gokana
m̀ ba nɔm
1SG eat meat
'I ate meat'
(Wolff 1964: 41-42)

(35) Eleme
m̀-ba ǹnã
1-eat meat
'I ate meat'

2.3.2.2. Progressive

Among the prefixes encoding TAM categories found throughout the Ogonoid languages is a progressive. Eleme and Tai have near-identical forms (*ga-*/*ka-*), a possible archaic feature to be attributed to Proto-Ogonoid. Kana has long *áá-*, and assuming this element is cognate with that in Eleme and Tai, it differs in having lost the initial consonant and that it is frequently fused with the subject prefix.

Gokana has a front vowel in this element (*é-*), which optionally appears with an initial *g-* (*gé-*).

(37) Kana
áá-lú
PROG-come
'he is coming'
(Wolff 1964:46)

(38) Gokana
à é-dú
3 PROG-come
'he is coming'
(Wolff 1964:46)

(39) Tai
à ga lu
3SG PROG come
'he is coming.'
(Nwi-Bari 2002: 22)

(40) Eleme
è-ka-g^{w}ĩa
3-PROG-hide
'he is hiding.'
FIELD NOTES 16.01-04-03.100

2.3.2.3. Habitual

Habitual appears to be a separate development in Gokana, Kana-Tai and Eleme. In Kana-Tai, the auxiliary *wéè/wée* is found in a habitual function, while Gokana makes use of an auxiliary *ʔóro*. Eleme on the other hand uses a suffix *–a*.

(42) Kana
m̀-wée lu
1SG-HAB come
'I usually come.'
(Ikoro 1996:171)

(43) Tai
nee wée mènà
menHAB reproduce
'Human beings reproduce.'
(Nwi-Bari 2002:43)

(44) Eleme
ǹ-de-á ǹdʒa
1SG-eat-HAB food
'I usually eat food.'
17.03-04-03.CD29-1.71

(45) Gokana
m̀ ʔóro-bà nɔm
1SG HAB-eat meat
'I usually eat meat'

Note that the auxiliary that gives rise to the Kana-Tai habitual appears to be the same (although perhaps in a separate grammaticalization) to the one that underlies the Eleme perfect[ive] (and probably also the Kana and Gokana definite past auxiliaries).

(47) Kana
m̀-wée fà nám
1SG-HAB weed farmland
'I used to weed farmland.'
(Ikoro 1996:171)

(48) Eleme
m̀-bere kɛ-a mbó
1SG-PERF slaughter-HAB
'I used to slaughter goats.'

(49) Eleme
a-bere *lɔí*
goat3SG.AP-PERF wash
'He has washed.'
I.13-08-02.3

What appears to be cognate with the Eleme habitual marker has the function of a perfect marker in Kana (51). In Tai on the other hand (52), perfect is marked by an auxiliary in *nà*.

(51) Kana
è-fà-a *nám´*
3SG.PERF-weed-PERF farm
'He has weeded a farm land.'
(Ikoro 1996:182)

(52) Tai
à *nà* *táa*
3SG PERF finish
'It has finished.'
(Nwi-Bari 2002:56)

2.3.2.4 Plural imperative

The last TAM category to be examined here is the plural imperative. This appears to be marked by a suffixed *–i* in Gokana and Eleme but by a preverbal *búí*/*bí*- the latter followed by a postverbal *–aa*. Once again, Gokana and Eleme pattern together in distinction to Kana.

(53) Kana
búí dé
PL.IMP eat
'eat (pl)!'
(Wolff 1964: 46; Ikoro 1996: 190)

(54) Kana
bì-dɔ-aa
PL.IMP-fall-PL.IMP
'fall (pl)!'

(55) Eleme
de-i
eat-PL.IMP
'eat (pl)!'

2.3.3. Verbal Reduplication

Eleme stands apart from Kana and Gokana in its extensive use of verbal reduplication in finite clauses. Note that in Kana and Gokana, reduplication forms a non-finite gerund of the verb.

(56) Eleme
nɛ-ká-mɔ̃-mɔ̃-naː-rṹ *àdɛ̌*
1PL-MOD-RMOD-see-RECP-EXP eye
'We should have loved each other.'

(57) Eleme
àŋè ka-dɛ-dé *ǹdʒa*
3SG PROG-RPER-eat food
'He is still eating.'

2.3.4. Negative verbal constructions

Negative verbal constructions vary considerably among the Ogonoid languages. Kana uses emphatic or lengthened forms of the subject pronouns. The third person forms in Kana consist of a fusing of the negative particle *n*- and the lengthened pronominal element. It may be that the lengthening in the first and

second person Kana forms reflect the absorption of the *n-* element seen in third person (perhaps originally 1 > 2/3).

(58) Kana
ḿm maa lu-na
1:NEG 1:PROG come-REP
'I am not coming again'
(Ikoro 1996: 157-158; 339)

(59) Kana
ḿm=ye kue
1:NEG 3OBJ call
'I did not call him'

(60) Kana
naa kúé=ye
3NEG call 3OBJ
'he did not call him'

There are *n*-marked pronominals and a negative particle depending on the conjugation in Tai. Tonal alternations are evident in the Tai negative too.

(61) Tai
m̀ ga si
1SG PROG go
'I am going.'
(Nwi-Bari 2002:42)

(62) Tai
nú m ga si
NEG 1SG PROG go
'I am not going.'
(Nwi-Bari 2002:42)

(63) Tai
à náa beè gɑ̀ɑ̀
3SG NEG.3 PST hesistate
'He did not hesitate.'
(Nwi-Bari 2002: 22)

In Gokana, there is a whole series of *n*-pronominals in the negative (with the tonal pattern MH for Neg.Fut, HL elsewhere).

(64) Gokana
néɛ̀ mɔn ɛ̀
NEG.1PL see 3OBJ
'we did not see him'
(Wolff 1964:48)

(65) Gokana
n-áà beè-mɔn im
NEG-3 AUX-see 1OBJ
'he did not see me'

(66) Gokana
náɛ̀ mɔn im
NEG.3 see 1OBJ
'he did not see me'?

Eleme presents a more complex historical picture. Like the other languages, there appears to be a **n* prefix (often realized, as is generally the case in Eleme, as *r* plus nasalized vowel) preceding the pronominal subject elements in the verbal complex in at least some paradigms. In past and present forms, there is a reduplication of the stem; in the negative future and negative progressive, a negative modal or irrealis inflection is found. The past and present are distinguished both tonally (HM in the present, MH in the past) and by the presence (past) or absence (present) of the negative 'particle' *(*n/r)* element found across the Ogonoid languages in negative verb formations.

(67) Eleme
m̀-bé-be òbe
1SG-RNEG-fight fight
'I don't fight.'
15.27-03-03.CD24-41.70

(68) Eleme
ré ḿ-bá-be òbe
NEG 1SG-MOD.NEG-fight fight
'I will not fight.'
15.27-03-03.CD24-55.92

(69) Eleme
rɨi mɔ̀-be-bé òbe
NEG 1SG-RNEG-fight fight
'I didn't fight.'
15.27-03-03.CD24-56.93

(70) Eleme
ró-be-bé-i òbe
NEG.2-RNEG-fight-2PL fight
'You (PL) didn't fight.'
15.27-03-03.CD24-60.98

3 Comparative Ogonoid revisited

In summary, we offer the following table showing a range of structural similarities and differences across four members of the Ogonoid language family.

(X) Partial Summary of Comparative Ogonoid Structural Features

	Eleme	**Kana**	**Tai**	**Gokana**
-C#	-	$+_i$	+	+
NC	$+_a$	$\pm_b$	-?	$-_c$
Vb redpl	+	±	-	-
NEG verb	+	-	-	+
+PST Aux	-/+	+	+	±
+pl.imp sfx	+	-	-	+
OBJ in A/SVC	+	-	-	+
1SGSUBJ	+	-	?	+
g-PROG	+	-	+	+

a. Vestigial noun class prefixes in very small number of forms
b. Remnant forms with noun class prefixes occur to small degree
c. Noun class prefixes in perhaps a half-dozen total words

Eleme is clearly different in a number of ways but this is not to be understood that Kana and Gokana form a coherent whole in opposition to Eleme. Among the salient features found in Eleme that characterizes this language vis-à-vis its attested sister languages is the complete lack of coda consonants, the relatively common if lexicalized occurrence of noun class prefixes and the use of reduplication in negative and other finite verbal clauses. Kana differs from Eleme and Gokana in its system of object marking in auxiliary and serial verb constructions and in the formation of plural imperatives. Kana, Gokana and Eleme all differ in progressive auxiliary/prefix and instrumental verbal suffix allomorphy, the system of future marking, 2nd singular object marker (although see above for arguments that Gokana and Eleme may pattern together here) and in negative formations. Conversely, Kana, Gokana and Eleme all show the same structure in 1st singular object marking (the form of the marker not its placement) and subject marking. Gokana differs from the rest of Ogonoid in having no trace of reduplication or emphatic/prosodic lengthening in negatives and the near complete lack of even

vestigial noun class prefixes. Also, Tai differs from Kana in preserving the *g-* initial progressive marker and in its perfect[ive] construction. Finally, what little is known of Baan suggests that it differs from Eleme in that it has no syllabic nasal noun class prefixes preserved, only vocalic ones.

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