

PROTO BANTU QUESTION WORDS

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- Bewildering **formal variation** of QWs in Bantu even within lower level groups (cf. Bastin et al. 1999 for NIPs ‘who?’ and ‘what?’)
 - multitude of seemingly related forms and forms that do not seem to have anything in common
 - often irregular correspondences between seemingly related forms
 - the forms range from very short to relatively long (‘what?’: Mongo C61 *é* vs. Mwani G401 *kínáni*)
- In this respect, QWs in Bantu resemble various **deictic forms**, such as personal indexes (substitutives and possessives) and demonstratives (rather than nouns and verbs)

- Different ways to go about such wild variation in reconstruction
 - Reconstruct a smaller range of more **common formal “types”**

- ‘what?’
 - (*-ní (see CS1354; CW, SE))
 - *-yàní (CS1926; D:1; NE, CE)
- ‘who?’
 - *náà (CS1337; D:0, NW, CW)
 - *nání (CS1343; D:3; CW, E)
 - *-yàní (CS1925; D:3; CW, E)
- ‘which?’
 - (*-ká (see CS1046; CW, SW)
 - *-kí (CS1046; D:3; CW, NE, SE)
 - *-ní (CS1354; D:3; N, CE)
 - *-pí (CS1498; D:5; NW, SW, EE)
 - *-tí (CS1728; D:2; CW, CE, SE)

- ‘where?’
 - *-pí (CS1499; D:3; W, SE)
- ‘how many?’
 - *-dìngá (CS586; D:1; NE, CE)
 - *-ngá, (*-ngánà, *-ngani; CS752; E’’ D:3)
 - *-ngápì (CS789; E’’ (D:4))

*-yàní ‘who?’ | ‘what?’

*-ní ‘what?’ | ‘which?’

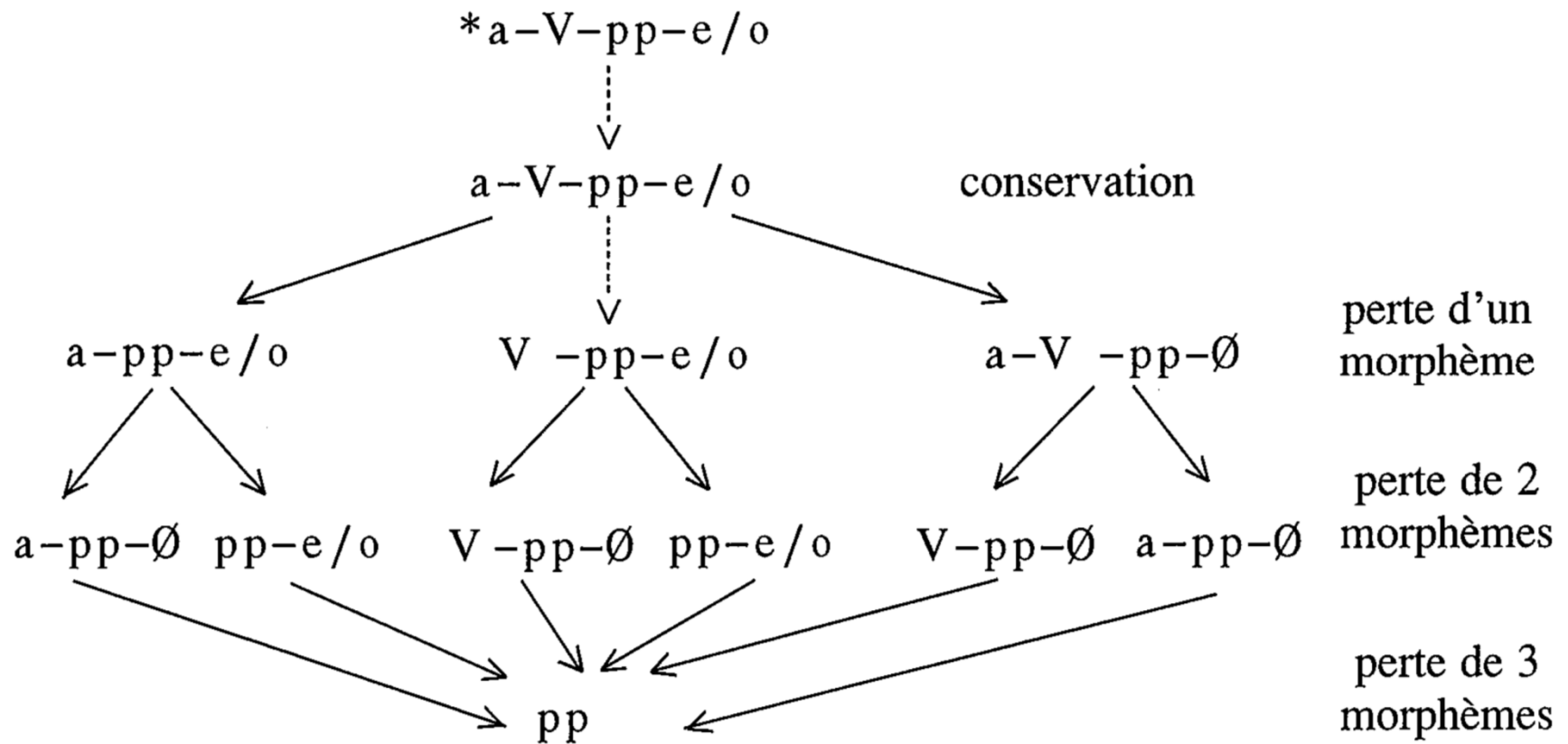
*-pí ‘where?’ | ‘which?’

- Different ways to go about such wild variation in reconstruction
 - Reconstruct a smaller range of more common formal “types”
 - Reconstruct **the simplest possible form** (pick one “type”)

“a set which looks like a fragmentary system of interrogative nouns with stem *-î*: 7 *kî-î* ‘what’, 16 *pà-î* (17 *kù-î*, 18 *mù-î*) ‘where’; but 1a *n(d)ái* ‘who’, if it belongs here, shows an element *n(d)á-* which is not attested otherwise (also *n(d)áni*).” (Meeussen 1967:103)

- *-î* ‘what?’ – a **nominal** stem with a **nominal class prefix**
- *n(d)á(n)(-)*î** ‘who?’ – a nominal stem with an unusual form and high formal variability (whose reconstruction to PB is rather problematic)

- Different ways to go about such wild variation in reconstruction
 - Reconstruct a smaller range of more common formal “types”
 - Reconstruct the simplest possible form
 - Reconstruct the **common denominator** of all the variation (which gives longer forms, rather than shorter ones)



(Kamba Muzenga 2003:228)

- Different ways to go about such wild variation in reconstruction
 - Reconstruct a smaller range of more common formal “types”
 - Reconstruct the simplest possible form
 - Reconstruct the common denominator of all the variation (which gives longer forms, rather than shorter ones)

- Try to achieve a **close match** between:
 - the observed **variation in the reflexes** of the element in question
 - **typological** knowledge of **common processes of change** that may provide us with some **cues** as to what historical sources may have produced the observed variation

(Idiatov 2007. A typology of non-selective interrogative pronominals; Workshop at ICHL 2011 on the stability of NIPs)

- QWs tend to be diachronically **unstable** and structurally **complex** (polymorphemic constructions)
- A strong predilection for **substance accretion** (first unbound, later bound → univerbation) related to:
 - prominent **information structural status** of QWs
 - very strong tendency for **continuity** in the evolution of QWs
- A strong predilection for **substance reduction** (often irregular and radical) related to:
 - **frequency effects** affecting functional words

- The **(apparent) ease** vs. **(real) difficulty** of **reconstructing QWs** is largely dependent on where accretion and reduction of substance in QWs happen vis-à-vis each other.

- accretion and reduction occur **at the same side** of QWs:
 (apparent) ease of reconstruction

Aaa → *Aaa-Bbb* → *AaBb* → *ABb-Ccc* → *ABCc*

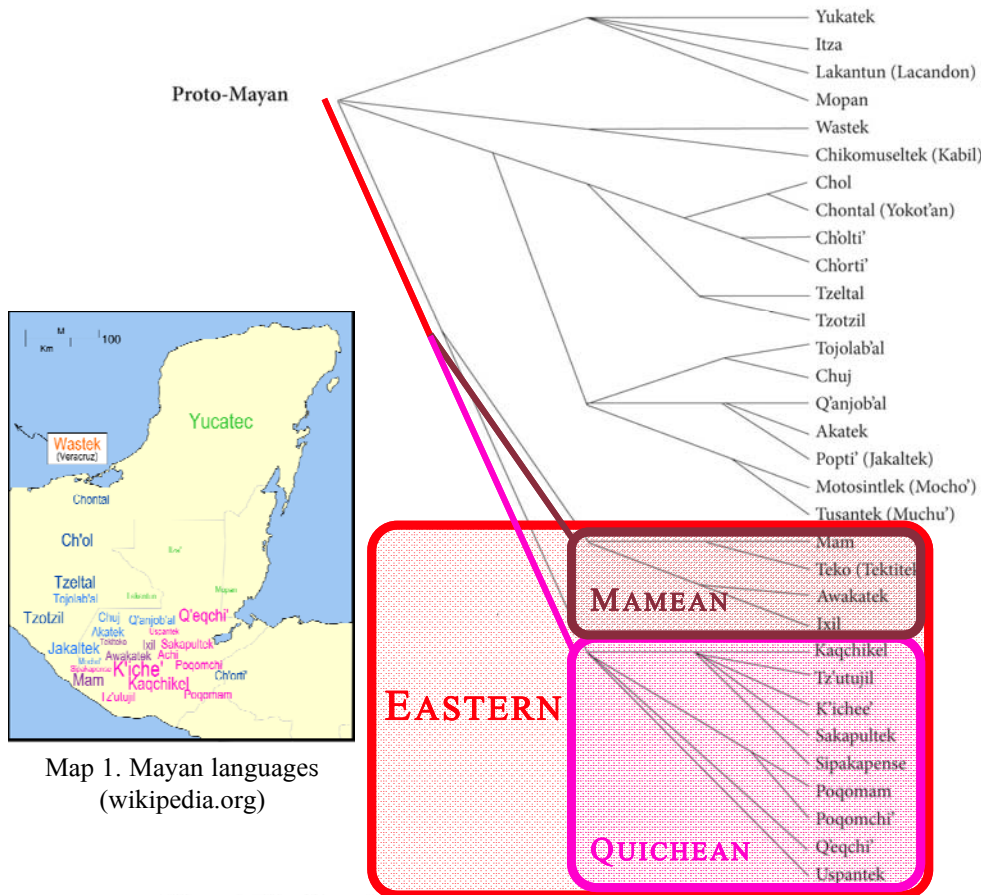
e.g. Proto Indo-European interrogative “stem” **k^w*- (Cysouw & Hackstein 2011)

- accretion and reduction occur **at the opposite sides** of QWs:
 (real) difficulty of reconstruction

Aaa → *Aaa-Bbb* → *AaBbb* → *ABb-Ccc-* → *BCc*

e.g. Eastern Mayan languages (Idiatov 2011)

Eastern Mayan languages



Map 1. Mayan languages
 (wikipedia.org)

Figure 1. The Mayan Language Family According to Kaufman (1990:62).
 (via Law 2009:19)

- “Mayan languages are **so similar** that the propriety of grouping them as a language family is readily apparent” (Fox 1978:1) and this **relationship** “was also **recognized early**, long before formal linguistic procedures have been formulated” (Campbell & Poser 2008:118)

- IPs are **extremely diverse** in Eastern Mayan
 - different **languages of the same branch**, such as ‘who?’ in Mamean (Mayers 1966:275):

Mam	<i>'alkyee</i>
Ixil	<i>'ab'il</i>
Awakatek	<i>na'j</i>

- different **dialects of a single language**, such as ‘with what?, how?’ in K'iche' (Par Sapón & Can Pixabaj 2000:94, 206):

Totonicapán	<i>jas</i>
Santa Cruz de El Quiché	<i>su'</i>
Cubulco	<i>wach</i>

- within **one dialect**, such as ‘who?’ in Cubulco K'iche' (Par Sapón & Can Pixabaj 2000:95, 203): *chinoq, china, na, pa*

- accretion on the sides vs. reduction inside of QWs: (real)
difficulty of reconstruction

Aaa → *Aaa-Bbb* → *AaBb* → *Ccc-ABb* → *CcABb* →
CBb

~ **Bantu...**

...but with:

- a slight preference for **accretion at the right**
- some **reduction also at the left**

- Common types of accreted material (often combinations thereof) for NIPs
 - various types of deictics: demonstratives, personal pronominals
 - focus markers
 - copulas
 - relativizers
 - nouns with generic semantics ('thing', 'person', 'place', 'name', etc.)
 - gender (noun class) markers
 - nominalizers (such as 'one' in 'which one?', the augment in Bantu)

- Common types of **semantic changes** with respect to QWs (and especially, lack of differentiation between ‘who?’ and ‘what?’), without (!) taking into account gender-number marking or accretion of some other nominalizing material
 - ‘(be) where?’ > ‘(be) which one?’ > ‘which one?’
 - ‘which one?’ > ‘who?’, occasionally ‘who?, what?’
 - ‘who?, what?’ > ‘who?’ or ‘what?’ when a new dedicated form of either NIP emerges
 - ‘(be) where?’ > ‘what (kind of) [N]?, which [N]?’
 - ‘what (kind of) [N]?’ > ‘which [N]?’
 - ‘which [N]?’ > ‘which one?’
 - ‘what (kind of) [N]?’ > ‘what?’, ‘who (classification, rather than identification)?’
 - constructions based on a noun meaning ‘name’ or verbs meaning ‘do, say, be’, ‘name’, ‘call’ > ‘who?’, ‘what?’, ‘who?, what?’

- [QW-root + gender-number marking] + **peculiarities of the gender-number system** > ‘who?’, ‘what?’, ‘who?, what?’
e.g. Lithuanian *kàs* ‘who?, what?’

- Common types of semantic changes with respect to NIPs (and especially, lack of differentiation between ‘who?’ and ‘what?’)
 - ‘who?’ **cannot** directly change to ‘what?’ or vice versa
(such a shift cannot be accounted for by any regular mechanisms of semantic change either)

- Reduction due to frequency effects is largely **irregular** (language- and wordform-specific)

(you can drop a morpheme, you can drop a segment or segments here and there)

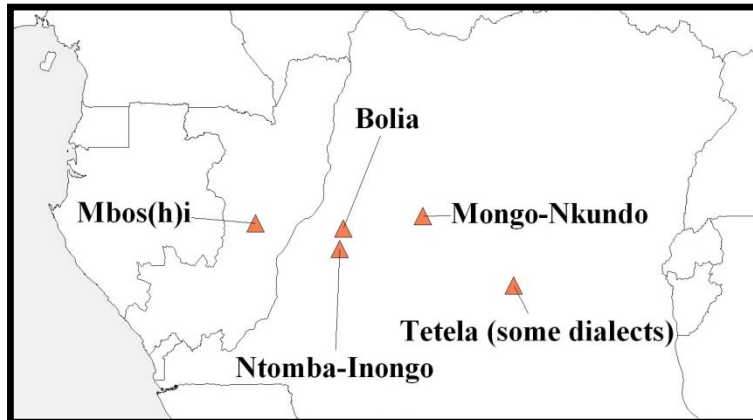
Louisiana Creole (cf. Rottet 2004; Idiatov 2007:253) ‘who?, what?’: *ki sa ki ~ ki sa ~ sa ki ~ sa* vs. French *c’est qui ça qui...* lit. ‘it is who this/that who (did this)?’

- **cosa-type** reduction (endocentric compound reduction)

e.g. Italian *cosa* ‘what?’ < *che cosa* ‘what thing?’

(like *unions* for *trade unions*)

- **Lack of differentiation between ‘who?’ and ‘what?’** in a number of languages of zone C with °n(d)a(n)i



- *ndè/nê* ‘who?, what?’ in some variants of Mbos(h)i (C30; Bastin et al. 1999)
- *nâ* ‘who?, what?’ in some variants of Tetela (C80; Bastin et al. 1999)
- *ná* ‘who?, what?’ in Mongo(-Nkundo) (C70; Hulstaert 1938, 1961, 1965, 1966, 1993)
- *ńno* ‘who?, what?’ in Ntomba-Inongo (C70; Bastin et al. 1999)
- *ńo* ‘who?, what?’ in Bolia (C40; Mamet 1960:35)

- “Reflexes” of °n(d)a(n)i as ‘who?’ and ‘what, what kind of, which [N]?’
 - Enya Kibombo D14 *nàání* ‘who?’ and *kĩ-úmà nàání* ‘what?’ (literally ‘what thing?’)
 - Ndaka D301 *àní* ‘who?’ vs. *ìmánì* ‘what?’
 - Mwani G401 *náni* ‘who?’ vs. *ki-náni* ‘what?’
 - Basaa A43 *njé(é)* ‘who?’ vs. AG-*njé(é)* ‘what kind of, what [N]?’
 - C31 Libobi + Lifonga + Gyando *ya* ‘who?’ vs. Mongo C70 AG-*yá* ‘what, what kind of, which [N]?’

- “Reflexes” of °n(d)a(n)i as **‘who?’**, **‘what, what kind of, which [N]?’**, **‘what?, how?’**
- Tswana S31 *mang* ‘who?’ vs. ‘what?, how? (it is called)’ vs. N *mang* ‘what kind of, what [N]?’ (thing, person) (but not ‘which [N]?’!) (Andy Chebanne, p.c.)

lefelo je le bidiwa mang?
 CL5.place AG5.this AG5 is.called who

‘What is this place called? (lit.: ‘Who is this place called?’)’ (e.g. Gaborone)

- Kagulu G12 =*ni* ‘what?, how?’ (compare *nhani* ‘how?’, ‘why?’, NC-*ani* ‘where?’), AG-*o* =*ni* ‘what?’ (e.g., *choni* ‘what?’ (default), *dyoni* ‘what?’ (something said)) (vs. older =*ki* ‘what?’) (Petzell 2008:89-92, 177)

- “Reflexes” of °*n(d)a(n)i* as ‘(be) what? (about a name of a person or thing)’

Tswana S31 (Andy Chebanne, p.c.)

leina	ja	setlhare	se	ke	mang?
CL5.name	AG5.CON	CL7.tree	AG7.this	COP	who

‘What is the name of this tree? (lit.: ‘The name of this tree is who?’)’ (e.g. oak)

Ngombe (C414; Rood 1958:xxi)¹⁶

(18)	a.	ngando	íyě	nda?
		CL9.village	AG9.this	who

‘What is the name of this village? (lit.: ‘Who is this village?’)’

	b.	moto	íyǒ	nda?
		CL1.man	AG1.this	who

‘Who is this man?’

- **Implication #1:** The aforementioned oddities with respect to °n(d)a(n)i can be derived from an earlier **‘which (one)?’** and ultimately **‘where?’** (in some languages, perhaps from ‘where?, how?’), but not from ‘who?’ or ‘what?’.
- **Implication #2:** No NIP *‘who?’ can be reconstructed for Proto Bantu

- In many languages, **NIPs questioning subjects** have to be framed as nominal **predicates**, often as [REL + (COP) + NIP], and cannot be controllers of agreement
 - Tswana S31 *mang* ‘who?’ vs. N *mang* ‘what kind of, what [N]?’ (thing, person) (but not ‘which [N]?’!) (Andy Chebanne, p.c.)
 - Mongo C70 *ná* ‘who?, what?’

- **Implication #3:** °n(d)a(n)i is likely to originate in a **predicative (clausal) construction**.

- Reflexes of $^{\circ}\dot{i}$ ‘**what?**’ as ‘**where?**’ (without a locative class marker)
 - Mongo C70 \acute{e} ‘what?’ and ‘where?’ with verbs with a locative argument.

ǎ-otswá \acute{e} ?

AG1-went where

‘Where has he gone?’

- **Implication #4:** The original meaning of *°-î* ‘what?’ is probably ‘(be) where?, how?’.

There are suspiciously many cases where there are **no traces of the L tone** of the presumed nominal prefix in reflexes (like in Mongo *é*)

- **Implication #5**: The original class prefix of [◦]-*í* in the meaning ‘what?’ is probably a **H toned prefix from the PP paradigm**, viz. **kí-í* rather than BGR **kì-í*.

...as is typical for deictic nominals and relative clauses, the latter (and originally probably also the former) being basically **nominalizations** used as modifiers or nominals

- Reflexes of °*n(d)a(n)i* as ‘who?’ often **do not have a CL1 prefix** (of either NP or PP paradigm), like (genderless) nouns of class 1a (cf. Van de Velde 2006).
- And since often reflexes of °*n(d)a(n)i* **cannot be controllers of agreement** we cannot actually know their class either.

(recall: °*n(d)a(n)i* is likely to originate in a predicative (clausal) construction)

- ‘which one?’ > ‘who?’ (e.g. Doneux 1971 for zone J languages)
- ‘(be) where?’ > ‘which one?’

Mongo C70 AG-*lé nkó* ‘which one?’, ‘what, which [N]?’ (lit. ‘it/(s)he/they is where?’)

- ‘(be) where?’ > ‘which one?’ > ‘who?’
> ‘what (kind of), which [N]?’ > ‘what?, how?’

Kagulu (G12; Petzell 2008:89-92, 177) (*i*)*hoki* ‘where?’
(replacing older CL-*ani* ‘where?’), AG-*hoki* ‘which (one)?,
what, which [N]?’, *yehoki* ‘who? (SG)’, *wehoki* ‘who? (PL)’

vs. ‘what?’ = *ni* ‘what?, how?’ (compare *nhani* ‘how?’,
‘why?’), AG-*o = ni* ‘what?’ (e.g., *choni* ‘what?’ (default), *dyoni*
‘what?’ (something said)), older = *ki* ‘what?’

- Irregular reduction...
- *cosa*-type reduction

Compare Kukuya (B77a) *kì-má* or Fumu (B77b) *ima* ‘what?’ vs. Enya Kibombo D14 *kì-úmà nàání* (literally ‘what thing?’), Ndaka D301 *imánì* ‘what?’ (with *àní* ‘who?’)

- Accretion by deictics, augment, copulas, reduplication...
 - Doneux (1971:134-135) on the accretion of ‘where?’ in zone J languages by (i) reduplication, (ii) addition of initial *nka-* or final *-na*
 - Enya Kibombo D14 *kiĩkiĩ* ‘what?’
 - Recall Kagulu (G12) AG-*o = ni* ‘what?’ with the *-o* demonstrative root (e.g., *choni* ‘what?’ (default), *dyoni* ‘what?’ (something said))
 - Bila (D32) *èké* vs. Komo (D23) *èkéndò* ‘what?’
 - Augment (or “predicative”) *î-* (e.g., compare Hunde (D51) *inde* ‘who? (SG)’ vs. *bende ~ bande* ‘who? (PL)’)

- Accretion by deictics, augment, copulas, reduplication...
- Accretion by *-n(d)i ~ n(d)ɪ* of ‘where?’ and ‘who?’ interrogatives

Duala (A24) *we(ni)* ‘where?’, Punu (B43) *va(ni)*, Luba (L31) *panyĩ/penyĩ* ‘where?’ (accreting °*pá-ĩ* AG16-what)

Songola Kasenga (D24) *nàíndí* ‘who?’ (vs. Enya Kibombo (D14) *kì-úmà nàání* ‘what?’ and Enya Manda (D14) *kì-úmà nàání* ‘what?’)

- $-n(d)i \sim n(d)t$

- A class 1 pronominal stem

“Par ailleurs, le préfixe pronominal a-t-il la forme *ndi-* ou *ndi-?*”
(Kamba Muzenga 2003:48)

- A (presentative, existential) copula (nominal predicative marker)
 $*n(d)\acute{i} \sim n(d)\acute{i}$

- Historically, the two are most likely related: deictic > copula

- BGR's $*n(d)\acute{a}\acute{i}$ 'who' is closer to the proto-form than BGR's $*n(d)\acute{a}\acute{n}\acute{i}$

- #1: °*n(d)ái* is from an earlier ‘**which (one)?**’ and ultimately ‘**where?**’.
- #2: **No NIP ‘who?’** can be reconstructed for Proto Bantu
- #3: °*n(d)ái* is likely to originate in a **predicative (clausal) construction**.
- #4: The original meaning of °-*í* ‘what?’ is probably ‘**(be) where?, how?**’.
- #5: The original class prefix of °-*í* in the construction meaning ‘**what?**’ is probably a **H toned prefix** from the PP paradigm, viz. **kí-í* rather than BGR **kì-í*.
- #6: ***n(d)i ~ n(d)ɪ*** – class 1 pronominal stem & presentative copula

- Idiatov (2009): *[(AG9 or AG7)-COP CL16-‘what?'] ‘(it) is **where?**’, viz. something like **(í~î-)ndí pà-í*
- The main problematic issue is the **irregularity of the reflexes of *p of the °pà-í part** of the construction, which could be accounted for by irregularity of the reduction following the univerbation of the construction
- The **palatalization/affrication and subsequent assibilation** of many of the reflexes of *d* in the construction can be accounted for by the following *í (~î)*, but this account is not completely satisfying (cf. also C70 Mongo –*yá* ‘what, which [N]?’, C31 Libobi *ya* ‘who?’)

- An **update** on the reconstruction:

**(í~í-)ndí* *yì* *à* *yí*
(AG9~24?)-COP AG9.D AG1.SM be.where?

‘it is the one who is where?’ (lit.: ‘it is that (s)he/it is where?’)
→ ‘it is which one?’ (person or thing)

- The agreement patterns of CL9 and CL1 are not uncommon in Bantu as **default agreement patterns** (cf. Van de Velde 2006)

- An update on the reconstruction:

**(í~í-)ndí yì à yí*
 (AG9~24?)-COP AG9.D AG1.SM be.where?
 ‘it is that who is where?’ (lit.: ‘it is that (s)he/it is where’) →
 ‘it is which one?’ (person or thing)

- **Mbula** (Jarawan; 7 vowel system)

à yé ‘(s)he/it is where?’ (vs. *à wá* ‘(s)he/it is well/safe’)

X (L_) nè / X (H_) nê ~ né^ʔé ‘where is X?’

|X nà yé|

cf. *X (L_) nà (Y) / X (H_) ná Y* ‘it is X’, ‘X is Y’