
A FIRST OVERVIEW OF MORPHOLOGY OF KANOÊ*

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a first parts of speech description in Kanoê, a Brazilian isolated indigenous language, that finds endangered from short term, because it has a very small number of speakers (about five), between almost a hundred of remaining. They live dispersed in the indigenous areas of Deolinda, Sagarana and Rio Guaporé, and also a family in the border of Omeré river, in the south of Rondônia, Brazil. The partial data here introduced were carried out in two field work sessions (June 1991, January 1997) and submitted to the usual analytic methods in Descriptive Linguistics.

KEY WORDS: Endangered languages, Kanoê or Kapishana, morphology.

1 INTRODUCTION

The object of this paper is to present some aspects of the morphology of Kanoê¹ (also named Kanoê, Canoé or Kapishana, Capixana), an endangered Brazilian Indian language, that is spoken at the national border with Bolivia, in the south of Rondônia. Nowadays, this language survives in the memory of its four or five very old speakers, who speaks Portuguese as first language, and by three monolingual speakers who are recently (1995) contacted.

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The Kanoê language has been classified as “isolated” (see Rodrigues 1986 and Adelaar 1991), although Kaufman (1990, p. 49, 55) tries to relate it to Kunsá and Price (1978) thinks it may be related to the languages of the Nambikwara family.

In the other hand, Greenberg (1997, p. 94-98) presents some evidence in support of its classification as a language of Macro-Tucanoan stock. The evidence consists of fifteen words, but this includes five mistakes of interpretation or phonetic transcription: 1) the word for “breast” is not “njanõ”, but [ɲa nũ] which literally means “my breast₂”; 2) for “lizard”, the Kanoê word is not “tare”, but [kɔmɛta 'kãw] “salamander” and for “crocodile” the Kanoê word is [urɔllmũ]; 3) for “man₂”, Greenberg registers “miaʔ”, that is an imperfect phonetic transcription of the possessive [ɲa] “my, mine”, but the Kanoê words for this item are [ællwɔ] “man”, “husband” and [itɛ 'wæ]² “man”, “human being”; 4) for “sun”, the Kanoê word is [kwɪ 'ka.j] and not Greenberg’s “waruwaru” [wariwari], that means “star”; 5) the Kanoê word for “tell” is [waraɾɔɛ 'rɛ], but the verbal root is only {wara}. Thus, the evidence from Greenberg becomes reduced to 10 lexical items. Other evidence of possible relationships with other languages are presented by Van der Voort (2000).

Nevertheless, the lexical evidence of a relationship between Kanoê and other languages is still very sparse. The present article does not only contain the partial results of my research carried out in two fieldwork sessions in June 1990 and January 1997, but I will also attempt a comparison of Kanoê and other South American languages. A preliminary description of Kanoê phonology can be found in Bacelar (1992, 1994) and information on several aspects of morphosyntax, such as deictic, negation and litotes phenomenon can be found in Bacelar (1995, 1996).

2 WORD CLASSES

As in many other human languages, there are in Kanoê two important word categories: (a) “lexical words” and (b) typically “grammatical” morphemes. The first category is represented by nouns, pronouns, numerals, adverbs and adjectival and verbal roots in complex constructions. The second by particles and grammatical words properly said. In this paper, I limit myself to the description of some aspects of the first category.

2.1 *Lexical words*

2.1.1 Nouns

Nominal morphology in Kanoê seems not very complex, if we compare it to adjectival and verbal constructions. There is not gender inflections, and this semantic difference is expressed (a) by different words, in which the gender is semantically inherent or (b) by the addition of [æwɔ' rɛ] “is man” (or “is male”) or [ɛ' rɛ] “is woman” (or “is female”), after the first word. Here are some examples:

a. Inherent expression of gender:

1. [æ' wɔ]³ ‘man’
2. [ɛ:] ‘woman’
3. [tʃu' tʃu] ‘grandfather’
4. [kɛ'kɛ] ‘grandmother’

b) Lexical expression of gender:

5. [ɔpɛ||ra æwɔ-' rɛ]
jaguar man-AUX
‘male jaguar’
6. [ɔpɛ||ra ɛ-' rɛ]
jaguar woman-AUX
‘female jaguar’

7. [kuraku'ra æwɔ'rɛ]
 cock man-AUX
 'cock'
8. [kuraku'ra ɛ-'rɛ]
 cock woman-AUX
 'hen'

We may conclude that gender assignment is mainly semantically transparent and not morphologically marked. Although Kanoê does not have gender inflection, some instances of number inflection were encountered, as we can observe in the examples below:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 9. [ka'nî] 'child' | x | 10. [kanî'tɛ] 'children' |
| 11. [uru'ã] 'guy' | x | 12. [uruã'tɛ] 'guys' |
| 13. [kwi'nî] 'fish' | x | 14. [kwinî'tɛ] 'fishes' |

The suffix morpheme {-tɛ}, as a “pluralizer”, is retained also in the personal pronoun system, as we shall demonstrate in following section.

Another notable aspect of nouns is the high frequency of the suffix {-tsî'kwa}, that has the grammatical sense of “diminutive”. However, in most occurrences it leads to a semantic change, as in the following examples:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 15. [tʃutʃira'ɛ] 'machete'
'knife' | 16. [tʃutʃirajtʃî'kwa] |
| 17. [ɔpɛ'ra] 'jaguar'
(wild cat) | 18. [ɔperatsî'kwa] 'maracajá' |
| 19. [ɛ:] 'woman' | 20. [ɛ:tsî'kwa] 'girl' (little woman) |

Some nouns are composed through “genitive case”, marked morphologically by the morpheme {-ɔ} that means “possessive”, in words like as:

21. [mũjɔitê'nãj]
 mother-POSS-brother
 'maternal uncle'

22. [itsɔtsi:ɔpi 'kɔ]
 toes-POSS-nail
 'nail of toes' (toe's nail)
23. [ɛ:ɔ 'nũ]
 'woman-POSS-breast
 'woman's breast'

We may conclude that in Kanoê there are simply nouns and composed nouns that constitutes more complex NPs. It is important to note that nouns composed can also be formed by agglutination or by juxtaposition of words. Note the following complex words for animal species:

24. [i 'rɪ] 'monkey' x 25. [i rɪ tɛ kwã 'ku] 'black monkey'
 26. [ma 'pi] 'arrow' x 27. [mapi 'ka] 'bow'
 28. [ɔpɛ 'ra ɔrɔ 'nɛ] 'jaguetê' ("black jaguar")
 29. [kwi 'nĩ itɛ 'wæ] 'dolphin' (= "fish-man")

2.1.2 Personal pronouns

The personal pronouns paradigm in Kanoê is highly regular. The plural forms are created by the addition of the pluralizing suffix {-tɛ} to the singular forms, as in the following table:

PERSON	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1	[aj] 'I'	[aj 'tɛ] 'we'
2	[mĩ] 'you'	[mĩ 'tɛ] 'you'
3	[ɔj] 'he' 'she ', 'it'	[ɔj 'tɛ] 'they'

Table 1: Personal pronouns.

Some of the data suggests that in Kanoê there may be a small semantic difference between 3rd plural definite person and 3rd plural indefinite person, the latter formed by addition of [maɛ'rɛ] "also", "all":

30. [ɔj 'tɛ] definite 'they'

31. [oj ' tɛ **maɛ** ' rɛ] generic, indefinite: 'they all'

2.1.3 Possessive pronouns

The table 2 shows the system of possessive adjective pronouns in Kanoê. The plural forms are created by the suffix {-**tɔ**} to the singular forms. I suspect that this morpheme may be the result of agglutination of the pluralizer {-**tɛ**} plus the possessive marker {-**ɔ**}.

PERSON	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1P	[ɲa] 'my, mine'	[ja ' t] 'our(s)'
2P	[pja] 'your(s)'	[pja ' t] 'your(s)'
3P	[o ' j] 'his, her(s)', 'its'	[oj ' t] 'their(s)'

Table 2: Possessive pronouns.

The first person singular seems to be the result of nasalization of {**ja**}, maybe because of influence from the Portuguese possessive “minha” (“my~, “mine”). We may furthermore observe that the singular and plural second persons are marked by the initial morpheme {**p-**}, when compared to the singular and plural first persons. Therefore, I suppose that the underlying form of the singular first person is {**ja**}, and an explanation for this may be the symmetry of the system.

2.1.4 Demonstrative pronouns

There are only two demonstrative pronouns in Kanoê, which are not inflected for gender or number:

THE OBJECT IS NEAR THE SPEAKER AND THE HEARER	THE OBJECT IS FAR FROM THE SPEAKER AND THE HEARER
[jũ] 'this', 'these'	[ũ ' k] 'that', 'those'

Table 3: Demonstrative pronouns.

Examples:

32. [jũ æ'wɔ ɛrɛã-k-ɛ-'rɛ]
 DEM.prox man tail-NEG-DEC-AUX
 'This man is short (= not tail).'
33. [ũ'kɔ æ'wɔ ɛrɛã-ɛ-'rɛ]
 DEM.dist man tail-DEC-AUX
 'That man is tall.'
34. [jũ tɔwɛka'wa tɔ-ɛ-'rɛ]
 DEM.prox cane sweet-DEC-AUX
 'This cane is sweet.'
35. [ũ'kɔ tɔwɛka'wa tiri-mɔ-ɛ-'rɛ]
 DEM.dist cane bitter-APL-DEC-AUX
 'That cane is bitter.'

2.1.5 Numerals

The cardinal numerals from 1 to 9 in Kanoê are remarkable: the simple numerals [pja] “one” and [mɔw] “two” form the mathematical basis for all others (from 3 to 9), and it involves the operation of addition, as shows the table below:

QUANTITY	NUMERAL	TRANSLATION
1	[pja]	'one'
2	[mɔw]	'two'
3	[mɔw pja]	'three'
4	[mɔw mɔw]	'four'
5	[mɔw mɔw pja]	'five'
6	[mɔw mɔw mɔw]	'six'
7	[mɔw mɔw mɔw pja]	'seven'
8	[mɔw mɔw mɔw mɔw]	'eight'
9	[mɔw mɔw mɔw mɔw pja]	'nine'

Table 4: Numerals (from 1 to 9).

For **10**, we find [i'tsɔ mōw] ‘two hands’; for **15**, [i'tsɔ mōw itsɔ'tsi pja] ‘two hands two and one foot’; and for an indefinite or greater quantity of many countable objects the word quantifier [arake' rɛ] ‘many’ is used.

2.1.6 Adjective constructions

Kanoê has adjective constructions that are often placed after the noun and verbal clauses that are based on an attributive verbal-adjective root. In the first situation, the adjective word is part of a composed noun, as in the example 28. [ɔpɛ' ra wɔrɔ' nɛ] ‘jaguarê’ (“black jaguar”). In the second case, the adjective root forms an adjective clause, such as in example 32. [jũ æ' wɔ ɛrɛãkɛ' rɛ] “This man is short.” (“This man is not very tall.”) and 33. [ũ' kɔ æ' wɔ ɛrɛãɛ' rɛ] “That man is very tall.” With regard to these examples, we may also observe that the first one (32) is a negation of the second one (33), through the insertion of the negative morpheme {-k-} before the ending [-ɛ' rɛ]. There are many of oppositions like these in Kanoê. Litotes constitutes a very productive process (see BACELAR, 1996). In several instances, there are no semantic oppositions between different words such as English “beautiful” versus “ugly” or “fat” versus “thin”. In Kanoê, the semantic opposition results from the litotic construction, created by the negative morpheme {-k-}. Two more examples:

36. [pja ika' nũ ej-pɛ-kãɲũ-ɛ-' rɛ]
 POSS2PS nose big-2P-nose-DEC-AUX
 ‘Your nose is big.’
37. [pja' tɔ ikã' nũ ej-pɛ-kãɲũ-k-ɛ-' rɛ]
 POSS2PL nose big-2P-nose-NEG-DEC-AUX
 ‘Your nose are small (= not big).’
38. [ɲa i-tẽ||nũ ej-õ-tẽɲũ-ɛ-|| rɛ]
 POSS1PS RC- ear big-1-ear-DEC-AUX
 ‘My ear is big.’
39. [jatɔ i-tẽ||nũ ej-õ-tẽɲũ-k-ɛ-|| rɛ]

POSS1PL RC-ear big-1-ear-NEG-DEC-AUX
'Our ears are small (= not big).'

In order to express degrees of comparison, adjective clauses are juxtaposed in a paratactic construction, but there is semantic subordination between the clauses. Examples:

40. [urɔ 'mũ ɛrɛã-ɛ-'rɛ # kɔmɛtɑ 'kãw ɛrɛã-k-ɛ-'rɛ]
crocodile big-DEC-AUX/ salamander big-NEG-DEC-AUX
'The crocodile is bigger than salamander.'

41. [nã 'kaw ɛrɛã-ɛ-'rɛ # kiki 'tɛ ɛrɛã-k-ɛ-'rɛ]
toad big-DEC-AUX/ perereca big-NEG-DEC-AUX
'The toad is bigger than 'perereca' (small toad species).'

In many predicative clauses there is a remarkable kind of "cross-reference" between the subject and the predicate: the root of the subject noun is repeated inside the predicate of the semantically adjectival verb root, after the adjective root, such as in the examples below:

42. [pja i-**ku**'**ta** ej-pe-**kuta**-ɛ-'rɛ]
POSS2PS RC-head big-2-head-DEC-AUX
'Your head is big.'

43. [na i-'**tso** ej-õ-**tso**-ɛ-'rɛ]
POSS1PS RC-finger big-1-finger-DEC-AUX
'My finger is big.'

2.1.7 Verbal structures

In Kanoê, verbs may be intransitive, transitive-objective, transitive-locative, in a preliminary analysis. Verbal morphology is indeed a morpho-syntactic phenomenon that means that there is well-marked boundary between morphological and syntactical structures. And if we compare the verbal morphology to all other word classes, we can indubitably assume that the biggest part of the morphological complexity of Kanoê to be encountered in its verbal constructions. These constructions are usually characterized by the ending [-ɛ||rɛ] that may be the most prominent

feature of the Kanoê language. In general, predicate structures are very complex. There is a cross-reference system that involves personal pronouns (in subject function) and its respective verbal markers. These verbal markers may occur (a) in the head of a verbal structure, before the verbal root (for a small number of verbs) or (b) more frequently inside the verbal construction, after the verbal root and before the ending [E'RE] or [E'xi)], for the majority of verbs. Verbal classifiers will be subject of later studies. In the following table, the verbal markers that constitute the cross-reference system in declarative sentence are listed:

PERSON	PERSONALPRONOUN	PREFIXED TO THE MAIN PREDICATE: _____ / {V _{ROOT} }	INSERTED BETWEEN THE PREDICATE ROOT AND THE ENDING [E' r ε]
1S	[aj]	[i-]	[-o]
2S	[mĩ]	[pi-]	∅ (zero), [-mĩ]
3S	[mĩ]	∅ (zero)	[-n]
1PL	[aj' t ε]	[i-] (zero)	[-δ]
2PL	[mĩ' t ε]	[pĩ]	∅ (zero)
3PL	[oj' t ε]	∅ (zero)	[-n] ~[-ni]

Table 5: Personal pronouns and its cross-reference markers.

Cross-reference markers are usually inserted after the root of the predicate. Prefixation of cross-reference occurs less frequently, because it is limited to a verbal constructions restricted class. Examples:

44. [aj tɔ'ki i-memu-rɔ-ε'-rε]
 1S papaya 1-like-CLV-DEC-AUX
 'I like papaya.'
45. [mĩ tɔ'ki pi-memu-rɔ-ε'-rε]
 2S papaya 2-like-CLG-DEC-AUX
 'You like papaya.'
46. [[oj tɔ'ki ∅-memu-rɔ-ε'-rε]
 3S papaya 3-like-CLV-DEC-AUX
 'He likes papaya.'

Prefixation may also involve plural persons. It appears that for some verbal constructions (e.g. [i m ε m u r o ε ' r ε] “to like”, [i p a t ê ñ ũ ε ' r ε] “to know”, [i ê m t o ε ' r ε] “to know how to make”), but only the singular and plural first and person is morphologically well-marked, whereas singular and plural third persons are zero marked. This is also the same situation in the demonstrative pronoun paradigm, as we have seen in 2.1.3. Nevertheless, verbal clauses have verbal markers for the singular or plural first person (= {-**ō**}) and for the singular or plural third person (= {-**n**}), that occurs after the verbal root and before the ending [-ε ' r ε] or [-ε ' x i]. At the same time the singular and plural second person is zero marked in this position. Consequently, we may notice that there is symmetry between the first and the second type of cross-reference marking. We can resume both in the table below:

PERSON	NUMBER	VERBAL MARKER	COMPLEMENTARY DISTRIBUTION
1	singular or plural	[i-]	___ / V _{root} (before the verbal root)
		[-o]	___ / V _{root} (after the verbal root)
2	singular or plural	[pi-]	___ / V _{root} (before the verbal root)
		∅, [-mi] (zero)	___ / V _{root} (after the verbal root)
3	singular or plural	[i-]	___ / V _{root} (before the verbal root)
		[-n]	___ / V _{root} (after the verbal root)

Table 6: Number person and their cross-referencing markers.

2.1.8 Adverbs

There does not seem to be a well-defined class of adverbs in Kanoê, although I did find some words that are typically adverbial words,

because they express more or less precise spatio-temporal notions, according to their deictic functions. These words are composed for the most part of occurrences, but their internal morphology will be subject of subsequent papers. So far, the following types of adverbs have been distinguished:

a) temporal adverbial words:

a1. [**mi'ni**] “today”, “now”, “nowadays”:

47. [kanĩ-tʃĩ'kwa **mi'nĩ** paj-ε-'rɛ]
 child-DIM today born-DEC-AUX
 ‘The baby was born today.’

48. [**mi'nĩ** aj atiti mũ-õ-ε-'rɛ]
 now 1S maize plant-1-DEC-AUX
 ‘Now I’m planting maize.’

a2. [**pejalkɛ**] “tomorrow”, “after some time”, “another day”:

49. [**peja'kɛ** aj ati'ti mũ-õ-ε-'rɛ]
 tomorrow 1S maize plant-1-DEC-AUX
 ‘Tomorrow I will plant rice.’

50. [**peja'kɛ** aj tiwɛ-rɔ-õ-ε'xĩ u'ræ]
 another day 1S hunt-CLV-1-DEC-AUX wild pig.
 ‘Another day, I hunted wild pig (species).’

a3. [**kamĩ'tsi**] ~ [**kam'tsi**] “yesterday”, “certain day ago”:

51. [**kamĩ'tsi** aj atillti mũɛ'rɛ]
 yesterday 1S maize plant-DEC-AUX
 ‘Yesterday I was planted rice.’

52. [**kam'tsi** aj tiwɛ-rɔ-õ-ε'xĩ u'ræ]
 certain day ago 1S hunt-CLV-1-DEC-AUX wild pig (sp).
 ‘Certain day ago I hunted wild pig (sp).’

b) spatial adverbial words:

b1. [**jɛ'ko**] “far”:

53. [pja'to tɔj **jɛko**-ε-'rɛ]
 POSS2S house far-DEC-AUX
 ‘Your house is far.’

b2. [jɛ 'kɔ nɪkɛ 'rɛ] “no far”:

54. [ja 'tɔ tɔj jɛkɔ-nɪ-k-ɛ-'rɛ]
POSS1PL house far-3-NEG-DEC-AUX
‘Our house is not far.’ (= ‘My house is near.’)

b3. [jũ 'nĩ] “here”:

55. [aj 'tɛ patʃi-õ-rɔ-õ-ɛ-'rɛ jũ 'nĩ]
1PL to stay-1-CLV-1-DEC-AUX DEM.prox-OBL
‘We want to stay here.’

b4. [ũkɔ 'nĩ] “there”:

56. [aj patʃi-õ-rɔ-õ-k-ɛ-llrɛ ũkɔnĩ]
1S to stay-1-CLV-1-NEG-DEC-AUX DEM.dist-OBL
‘I not want stay there.’

As we can observe, the adverbial words [jũ 'nĩ] “here” and [ũkɔ 'nĩ] “there” are created with the demonstrative pronouns (see Table 3) plus the marker of “locative” [-nĩ], glossed as ‘OBL’ because this morpheme may have another functions, as instrumental marker and comitative marker. I can resume it in the table below:

FORMULA	
SPATIAL DEICTIC = {DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN -OBLIQUE}	
spatial notion for "here"	spatial notion for "there"
[jũ 'nĩ] "here"	[ũk 'nĩ] "there"

Table 7: Spatial deictic words.

In fact, the suffix {-nĩ} is very productive in order to attribute “semantic roles” as “locative” or “instrumental” at nouns, as in the following examples:

a) {-nĩ} as locative marker:

57. [tɔj-'nĩ]
house-OBL
‘in the house’, “on the house”

58. [inĩ- 'nĩ]
 fire-OBL
 ‘in the fire’, ‘on the fire’
59. [atsɔ- 'nĩ]
 village-OBL
 ‘in the village’ or ‘on the village’ (aldeia, tribus)
60. [ikuta- 'nĩ]
 head-OBL
 ‘on the head’
- b) {-nĩ} as instrumental marker:
61. [i-kɔtsɔ- 'nĩ]
 RC-hand-INSTR
 ‘with the hand’
62. [mapi- 'nĩ]
 arrow-OBL
 ‘with the arrow’
63. [tʃutsiræ-tʃikwa- 'nĩ]
 machete-DIM-OBL
 ‘with the knife (=machete-DIM)’
64. [i-kuta- 'nĩ]
 RC-head-OBL
 ‘with the head’

3. CONCLUSION

In this paper I try to provide a first overview of word classes in Kanoê. Of course, this morphological description may be subject to alterations as I advance in the analysis of the segmental morphology of this language. However, I can confirm here some features of Amazonian lowland languages (see DIXON and AIKHENVALD 1999, p. 8-9), also found in Kanoê.

In fact, as in several Amazonian languages, in Kanoê gender assignment is semantically transparent and is not marked morphologically

in the word classes. I can add still that also in Kanoê just one core argument is cross-referenced on the VP and the rules for that core argument is cross-referenced are very complex. If we look at the morphologic structure of words, a simply analysis of data in this paper reveals that there is more suffix than prefix. This is to say that Kanoê is typically a suffixed language. At the same time, I can reaffirm here that Kanoê is a SOV language, in terms of preferential syntactic order (see BACELAR, 1996). Other features (e.g. the presence of the high unrounded central vowel [ɨ], the contrast between oral and nasal vowels and a larger number of classifiers also confirm the similarities of Kanoê to the Amazonian lowland languages.

ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS:

[] = phonetic transcription	{ } = morphological representation
APL = applicative	AUX = verb time-mood-aspect
CLV = Verbal classifier	DEC = declarative mood
DEM.dist = distance demonstrative	DEM.prox = proximity demonstrative
DIM = diminutive suffix	NEG = negation/negative
OBL = oblique	# = pause, silence.
POSS1S = possessive 1 person of singular	POSS1PL = possessive 1st person plural
POSS2S = possessive 2 person singular	POSS2PL = possessive 2nd person plural
POSS3S = possessive 3 person singular	POSS3PL = possessive 3rd person plural
1S = 1st person of singular	1PL = 1st person of plural
2S = 2nd person of singular	2PL = 2nd person of plural
3S = 3rd person of singular	3PL = 3rd person of plural
1 = 1st person, singular or plural	2 = 2nd. person, singular or plural
3 = 3rd person, singular or plural	RC = relational of contiguity

UMA VISÃO INICIAL DA MORFOLOGIA DO KANOÊ

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta uma primeira visão das classes de palavras do Kanoê, uma das línguas indígenas brasileiras “isoladas”. Essa língua encontra-se ameaçada de extinção em curto prazo, dado o seu baixíssimo número de falantes (apenas cinco), entre quase uma centena de remanescentes, que vivem dispersos nas áreas indígenas de Rio Guaporé, Sagarana e Deolinda, no sul do Estado de Rondônia. Os dados parciais aqui apresentados foram elicitados em duas sessões de trabalho de campo (junho de 1991 e janeiro de 1997) e submetidos aos procedimentos analíticos usuais em lingüística descritiva.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Línguas indígenas, Kanoê, morfologia.

NOTES

1. In this work, the symbol [w+] represents a fricative bilabial approximant consonant.
2. In this paper I prefer to present data in phonetic transcription, because the analysis of the phonological system of Kanoê is under revision.

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