

## “INFINITIVE” CLASS 15 IN DABIDA

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**Abstract:** The paper deals with the morphosyntactic properties of infinitives in the Dabida language. As in the majority of Bantu languages, Dabida infinitives are allocated to noun class 15 by virtue of their morphological structure, in particular, the nominal prefix *ku-*. Nevertheless, from the morphosyntactic point of view infinitives demonstrate a number of nominal and verbal properties that reveal their dual nature. Although these properties are not usually attested in the same *ku-* form thus contrasting the two uses, there are, however, syntactic positions where both verbal and nominal features are exhibited at once.

**Key words:** Bantu, Dabida, infinitive, noun classes

### 1. Introduction

The article investigates and compares the morphological and syntactic properties of the Dabida language units that are traditionally allocated to “infinitive” noun class 15 in Bantu studies. Dabida is an eastern Bantu (E74a) minority language, one of the “Kilimanjaro Bantu”<sup>1</sup>, spoken mainly in South-East Kenya by about 300,000 people (Philippson, Montlahuc 2006: 475). An estimated 27,000 people speak the language in North-East Tanzania (Joshua Project). The overwhelming majority of Dabida speakers are bilingual in Swahili. The language has

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Kilimanjaro Bantu’ is “a cover term for languages known as Chaga and Taita”, first introduced in (Philippson & Montlahuc 2006: 475).

no official status and exists as a set of closely related mutually intelligible dialects.<sup>2</sup>

The present description uses the data come from two Kenyan speakers of Mbololo dialect: Duncan Mwanjila and Michael Mwamba. Primary school reading tutorials “Mashomo gha imbiri” (“Dabida. First reader”) and “Chuo cha mashomo gha kawi” (“Second reading book for Taita”), as well as the “Kuanza” (“Genesis”) book of the Old Testament in Dabida were used as supplementary resources.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Infinitives in Bantu languages

The term “infinitive noun class” has existed in Bantu linguistics since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The “infinitive” class is attested in the majority of Bantu languages, but it is fully absent in Guthrie’s Zones A, C, partly in Zone B and is rather poorly presented in languages of the east, i.e. in Zones P, S, G, N (Doneux 1967, cited in Aksenova & Toporova 1990: 95). Infinitives with *ku*-<sup>4</sup> always belong to class 15 since exactly the same prefix marks canonical nouns of the class. Infinitives in their nominal usage require the same agreement affixes on their modifiers and predicates as inherent nouns do.

Class 15 canonical inherent nouns, mostly body part terms, have been reconstructed in Proto-Bantu as *\*-boko* ‘arm’, *\*-gudu* ‘leg’, *\*-tui* ‘ear’, *\*-japa* ‘armpit’, *\*-dui* ‘knee’ (Doneux 1967, cited in Van de Velde

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<sup>2</sup> The Dabida dialects listed in (Simons & Fennig 2019) are Mbololo, Werugha, Mbale, Chawia, Bura and Mwanda. But according to (Philipsson 2014), these “dialect” names represent (former) administrative, but not linguistic entities. “The main divisions emerging are the following: a S(outhern) group, to which belong i.a. the dialects of Josa, Dembwa and Mrogua, a North-Western group (Mghange) apparently close to a N(orthern) group (Werugha, Rong’e...), and Mbololo in the easternmost part of the massif” (Philipsson 2014: 350).

<sup>3</sup> The Dabida (Taita) version of Holy Bible “Biblia. Ilagho Jiboie kwa wandu wote” (lit. “Bible. Good word for all people”) was published by Bible Society of Kenya in 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Less commonly infinitives are allocated to classes 5, 9, and 14 (Schadeberg 2006: 80).

2019: 240). They have their plural in class 6 and currently only occur in a few Bantu languages since in most of them "infinitive has displaced the original small set of non-verbal nouns from class 15" (Schadeberg 2006: 80).<sup>5</sup>

The homonymy between the nominal prefixes of class 15 and the locative class 17 raises the question of whether the infinitive with *\*ku-* derives from the locative (Schadeberg 2006: 80). The claim that the infinitive marker might have originated from the locative marker is shared by a number of Bantu scholars (Guthrie 1970; Heine & Reh 1984; Block 1956; Mel'nikov & Okhotina 1994) but is not widely accepted.

This paper considers the real problem to be the "verbo-nominal" characteristics of non-inherent language units represented in Dabida noun class 15.

The majority of Bantu language experts highlight the dual nature of class 15 infinitives (Poulos & Louwrens 1994; Creissels & Godard 2005; Schadeberg 2006; Gromova 2017; Riedel & De Vos 2017). Morphologically, infinitives are assigned to noun class 15 by virtue of having a nominal prefix, but they also demonstrate a number of verbal morphological features (Schadeberg 2006: 80). These Bantu language units are often regarded as a mixed category, exhibiting both verbal and nominal properties (Creissels & Godard 2005) or as some special part of speech that is neither pure verb or pure noun (Gromova 2017 : 62), but inherits from nouns and verbs their syntactic and morphological properties correlated with their use.<sup>6</sup> As Meussen (Meussen 1967, cited

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<sup>5</sup> Thus, in Kagulu (G12, Tanzania) class 15 includes no actual nouns at all, and only contains the infinitive form of verbs (Petzell 2007). Among Bantu languages where these nouns still exist are Kuria (E 43) *koboko* 'arm', Ndonga (R 22) *kutsi* 'ear', *kwegwa* 'horn', Rwanda (J 61) *kuguru* 'leg', *kwaha* 'armpit', Nyanga (D 43) *kuboko* 'arm', Kikuyu (E 51) *kuguru* 'leg' (see Gromova 2017).

<sup>6</sup> No matter in what way infinitives or verbal nouns with *ku-* prefix are regarded in Bantu linguistics, these language units are never found in their full form in dictionaries, vocabularies and word lists of any Bantu language. It is only verbal roots or extended stems with a default final suffix that occur in alphabetical order

in Wilhelmsen 2018: 203) observes: the Bantu infinitive “is rather a noun by virtue of its prefix and through part of its syntactic uses, but also a verb by its stem, its full possibility of having infixes, and by some of its syntactic valences”.

The most radical attitude to these “infinitives” is shown by Amidu (1997), who claims that it is “fundamentally wrong” that nouns of noun class 15 are both infinitives and nouns since “infinitiveness” is a property of predicates and not of nouns (Amidu 1997: 237). On the other hand, for Block (1956), the infinitive in Bantu languages should always be considered a noun and not a verb category (Block 1956).

### **3. Morphological structure of infinitives in Dabida**

Dabida has a canonical noun class system that “does not exhibit any strong deviation from the ordinary pattern found in eastern Bantu” (Philippon & Montlahuc 2006: 475). There are fifteen noun classes and four noun subclasses in the language. Each of the main fifteen classes is a set of nouns that take the same nominal prefix and have the same agreement paradigms. Subclasses trigger the same agreement as the main classes they refer to, but have different nominal prefixes and may participate in different singular-plural pairings<sup>7</sup>. Independent noun prefixes as well as dependent prefixes occurring as agreement markers in adjectives (I), numerals (II), connective and most pronouns (III), as subject (IV) and object (V) markers within verbal forms are listed in Table 1.

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and are translated (if there is a translation) into English, for instance, as infinitives, but without *to*.

<sup>7</sup> There are 11 attested class correlations between singular and plural nouns: 1/2, 1a/2a, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10, 12/13, 11/10a, 15/6, 3a/6 and 3a/10.

Table 1

Dabida noun classes<sup>8</sup>

Class	Independent prefixes		Dependent prefixes				
	Root initial phoneme		I	II	III	IV	V
	<u>  </u> C	<u>  </u> V					
<b>1</b>	<i>mu-</i> ~ <i>m̥-</i>	<i>mw-</i>	<i>m̥-</i>	<i>u-</i>	<i>u-</i>	<i>u-</i>	<i>(mu-)m̥-</i>
<b>1a</b>	∅-						
<b>2</b>	<i>βa-</i>	<i>β-</i>	<i>βa-</i>	<i>βa-</i>	<i>βa-</i>	<i>βi-</i>	<i>βi-</i>
<b>2a</b>	∅-						
<b>3</b>	<i>mu-</i> ~ <i>m̥-</i>	<i>mw-</i>	<i>m̥-</i>	<i>ɣu-</i>	<i>ɣu-</i>	<i>ɣu-</i>	<i>ɣu-</i>
<b>3a (*14)</b>	<i>βu-</i>	<i>βw-</i>					
<b>4</b>	<i>mi-</i>		<i>mi-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>i-</i>		<i>i-</i>	<i>dʒi-</i>	<i>dʒi-</i>	<i>dʒi-</i>	<i>dʒi-</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>ma-</i>		<i>ma-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>ɣa-</i>	<i>ɣi-</i>	<i>ɣi-</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>ki-</i>	<i>tf-</i>	<i>ki-</i>	<i>tʃi-</i>	<i>tʃi-</i>	<i>tʃi-</i>	<i>tʃi-</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>vi-</i>	<i>v-</i>	<i>vi-</i>	<i>vi-</i>	<i>vi-</i>	<i>vi-</i>	<i>vi-</i>
<b>9</b>	<i>N-/  C</i> <i>voiced stop</i> , <i>N-/  C</i> <i>voiced affricate</i> , <i>∅-/  </i> <i>other consonant</i>	∅-	<i>N-/∅-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>
<b>10</b>	<i>N-/  C</i> <i>voiced stop</i> , <i>N-/  C</i> <i>voiced affricate</i> , <i>∅-/  </i> <i>other consonant</i>	∅-	<i>N-/∅-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>ri-</i>	<i>ri-</i>	<i>ri-</i>
<b>10a</b>	<i>tʃu-</i>	<i>tʃw-</i>					
<b>11</b>	<i>lu-</i>	<i>lw-</i>	<i>lu-</i>	<i>lu-</i>	<i>lu-</i>	<i>lu-</i>	<i>lu-</i>

<sup>8</sup> Dabida is a tonal language distinguishing two level tones: high and low (Philippson & Montlahuc 2003: 481), with the tonal system based on the rightward shift of high tones from their underlying position (Odden 2006: 34). However, in Mbololo, the tones seem to not play a distinctive role in the lexicon, and there is hence no tone marking in this article.

End of Table 1

Class	Independent prefixes		Dependent prefixes				
	Root initial phoneme		I	II	III	IV	V
_C	_V						
12	<i>ka-</i>	<i>k-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>ki-</i>	<i>ki-</i>
	<i>ka-Pref-R</i>						
13	<i>dú-</i>	<i>dúw-</i>	<i>dú-</i>	<i>dú-</i>	<i>dú-</i>	<i>dú-</i>	<i>dú-</i>
	<i>dú-Pref-R</i>						
15	<i>ku-</i>		<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku-</i>
16	<i>a-</i>		<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku- (a-)</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku- (a-)</i>

As shown in Table 1, prefixes of most classes have two allomorphs conditioned by the initial phoneme (consonant *vs.* vowel) of the stem. Class 15 is one of five classes in Dabida whose noun prefix has an unchanged shape preserved in any position: *ku-ki-a* ‘save, saving’, *ku-ɣor-a* ‘tell, telling’, *ku-id-a* ‘pass, passing’, *ku-obu-a* ‘fear, fearing’, *ku-ay-a* ‘build, building’. Dependent class prefixes of class 15 fully coincide with each other as well as with a noun prefix of a head noun which is not typical for most of the classes.

Dabida is among the few Bantu languages which preserved inherent non-verbal nouns marked by prefix *ku-*. They have their plural counterparts in class 6: *ku-dú* ‘ear’ ~ *ma-dú* ‘ears’, *ku-yu* ‘leg’ ~ *ma-yu* ‘legs’ and provide full-fledged agreement paradigms for all the modifiers of the head-noun within noun phrase (NP) – adjectives (1), numerals (2), connective *-a* (3), pronouns (4) – as well as for the subject (5) and object (6) markers of verbal finite forms.

- (1) *ku-yu*      *ku-latfa*  
 CL15-leg    CL15-long  
 ‘a long leg’
- (2) *ku-dú*      *ku-ṅweri*  
 CL15-ear    CL15-one  
 ‘one ear’

- (3) *ku-du*      *kw-a*       $\emptyset$ -*bokoro*  
 CL15-ear    CL15-CONN    CL9-goat  
 'ear of a goat'
- (4) *ku-yu*      *ku-ŋgi*  
 CL15-leg    CL15-any  
 'any leg'
- (5) *ku-du*      *uku*      *ku-a-sikir-a*      *nitfa*  
 CL15-ear    CL15.this    CL15.S-PRS-hear-FIN    well  
 'This ear hears well.'
- (6) *nafia-ku-βon-a*      *ku-yu*      *kw-ake*  
 1SG.PRS-CL15.O-see-FIN    CL15-leg    CL15-POSS.3SG  
 'I see his leg.'

All nouns belonging to class 15 except inherent *ku-du* 'ear' and *ku-yu* 'leg' can be regarded as secondary verbal nouns derived from verbs and their stem can be analyzed as a combination of a verb stem (primary or secondary) and a nominalizing suffix although the latter fully coincides with the default final suffix used in verbal inflection (see (Schadeberg 2006: 71)).

## 4. Morphosyntactic features of infinitives in Dabida

As noted, morphologically assigned to class 15 infinitives in Bantu are "verbo-nominal forms" that have some "dual nature". Depending on the context they mostly behave in Dabida like non-finite verb forms or like a pure noun.

### 4.1. Nominal qualities of Dabida infinitives

When functioning as verbal nouns infinitives a) express "the act of doing, of becoming or the state of being" (Ashton 1944: 123); b) do not have plural counterparts since their sense does not allow them to be pluralized; c) reveal morphological and syntactic features that are typical indicators of nounhood. Thus, they have the following nominal morphosyntactic options.

First, they take the locative suffix *-ji*.

- (7) *di-yend-e*                      *ku-fom-e<sup>9</sup>-ji*  
 1PL.S-go-FIN<sub>SUBJ</sub>                      CL15-read-NMLZ-LOC  
 ‘Let us go to class.’
- (8) *iyuo*                      *nere-koye*                      *ku-lim-e-j*i**  
 yesterday                      1SG.S.PST-be.DUR.FIN                      CL15-cultivate-NMLZ-LOC  
 ‘Yesterday I worked in the field.’

Second, they are heads in NP with adjectives (9), possessives (10)–(11), demonstratives (12) and other adnominal pronouns (13) as their modifiers.

- (9) *ku-bor-a*                      *ku-tfa*  
 CL15-sing-NMLZ                      CL15-fine  
 ‘fine singing’
- (10) *ku-fom-a*                      *kwa-ko*  
 CL15-read-NMLZ                      CL15.POSS-2SG.POSS  
 ‘your reading’
- (11) *Ø-saβau*                      *nayo*                      *i-ka-maŋ-a*                      *ku-tambu-a*  
 CL9-monkey and.CL9                      CL9.S-CONS-know-FIN                      CL15-solve-NMLZ  
*kw-aro*  
 CL15-POSS.3.INAN  
 ‘And the monkey understood its solution [of the turtle’s wink].’
- (12) *ku-dek-a*                      *uku*  
 CL15-cook-NMLZ                      CL15.this  
 ‘this cooking’
- (13) *ku-diβ-a*                      *kose*  
 CL15-hunt-NMLZ                      CL15.all  
 ‘whole hunting’

<sup>9</sup> Here locative nouns demonstrate the process of distant regressive assimilation when a low final *a* turns into a mid under the influence of the high vowel *i* of the locative suffix: *a* → *e/\_ji*.



Third, they often occur as heads of genitive NPs with the connective *-a* agreeing with the head noun (14)–(16).

- (14) *ku-lomb-a*            *kw-a*            *ḡ-ndziye*  
 CL15-pray-NMLZ    CL15-CONN    CL1-girl  
 ‘praying of a girl’
- (15) *ku-totes-w-a*                            *kw-a*            *Sodoma na Gomora*  
 CL15-demolish-PASS-NMLZ    CL15-CONN    Sodom    and    Gomorrah  
 ‘demolition of Sodom and Gomorrah’
- (16) *ku-soḡ-ek-a*                            *kw-a*            *ki-kombe*  
 CL15-lack-STAT-NMLZ    CL15-CONN    CL7-cup  
 ‘lacking of a cup’

Fourth, they trigger subject verbal agreement (17).

- (17) *numa y-a*            *ma-tuku mengi*            *ku-lomb-a*            *kw-a*  
 after    CL9-CONN    CL6-day    CL6.many    CL15-pray-NMLZ    CL15-CONN  
*ḡ-ndziye uo*            *ku-ka-red-a*                            *ma-tumbuli-o*            *ma-baa*  
 CL1-girl    CL1.REF    CL15-CONS-bring-FIN    CL6-answer-NMLZ    CL6-big  
*numa y-a*                            *ku-fw-a*                            *kw-ake*  
 after    CL9-CONN    CL15-die-NMLZ    CL15-POSS.3SG.ANIM  
 ‘After many days after the death of the girl her praying yielded great fruit.’

## 4.2. Verbal qualities of Dabida infinitives

In contrast, it can also be shown that infinitives in Dabida demonstrate verbal properties as non-finite verbal forms with no marking for Subject and TAM. Thus, they have the following verbal morphosyntactic options.

First, they are able to incorporate a verbal marker of object (both anaphoric and concordial) and the reflexive morpheme *-ku-*, taking their usual pre-stem position (18)–(20).

- (18) *ri-tfa-dim-a*                      *ku-i-βwad-a*  
 CL10.S-FUT-can-FIN              INF-CL4.O-seize-FIN  
 ‘They will be able to seize it.’
- (19) *ela ni m-beβa i-ao i-dim-ay-a*  
 but COP CL9-mouse CL9-what CL9.S-can-DUR-FIN  
*ku-m-soyod-er-a*                      *Ø-pusi?*  
 INF-CL1.O-get.close-APPL-FIN              CL1a-cat  
 ‘But which mouse would be able to come close to the cat?’
- (20) *juma y-a ma-tuku a-βi ni-tfa-yend-a*  
 after CL9-CONN CL6-day CL6-two 1SG.S-FUT-go-FIN  
*ku-ku-lol-e-a*                      *ḡ-ka*  
 INF-REFL-look.for-APPL-FIN              CL1-wife  
 ‘After two days I will go to look for a wife for myself.’

Second, they can take full object NPs as their complements (21).

- (21) *Ø-inge i-ka-kutf-u-a mi-konu ku-kab-a*  
 CL9-leopard CL9.S-CONS-clench-REV-FIN CL4-hand INF-hit-FIN  
*tʃu-i*  
 CL10a-palm  
 ‘Leopard unclenched his paws to clap his hands.’

Third, they occur in the passive form with the agent NP introduced by the preposition *ni* (as it happens with finite verbal forms) (22).

- (22) *η-guku ra-βon-ek-a mi-zi-ni mi-zi-ni*  
 CL10-hen CL10.S.PRF-see-STAT-FIN CL4-village-LOC CL4-village-LOC  
*kwa ku-fam-w-a ni βa-ndu na*  
 because.of INF-raise-PASS-FIN by CL2-man and  
*ku-fuy-w-a.*  
 INF-raise-PASS-FIN  
 ‘Hens are seen elsewhere in villages because they are raised by people.’

Fourth, they have an adverb and a locative noun as a modifier (23)–(24).

- (23) *nde-ku-tfa-dim-a*      *ku-yend-a*      *mboamboa*  
 NEG-2SG.S-FUT-can-FIN    INF-go-FIN      slowly  
 ‘You will not be able to go slowly.’
- (24) *nde-ku-tfa-dim-a*      *ku-yend-a*      *m-sidu-ji*  
 NEG-2SG.S-FUT-can-FIN    INF-go-FIN      CL3-forest-LOC  
 ‘You will not be able to go to the forest.’

Fifth, they take the place of a verbal finite form expressing the second or the third predicate coming after conjunction *na* in a chain of coordinated verbal predicates (25)–(26).

- (25) *βa-ndu*    *βe-ŋgi*    *βere-βwad-w-ay-a*      *na*  
 CL2-man    CL2-any    CL2.S.PST-capture-PASS-DUR-FIN      and  
*ku-bway-w-a*  
 INF-kill-PASS-FIN  
 ‘A lot of people were captured and killed.’
- (26) *Ø-dudu*    *w-a*      *βa-ka*      *idzi*    *wa-kund-a*  
 CL9-tick    CL1-CONN    CL2-woman    when    CL1.S.PRF-want-FIN  
*ku-va*      *ma-yi*,    *wada-turu-a*      *Ø-nama*    *y-a*  
 INF-give.birth    CL6-egg    CL1.S.HAB-pierce-FIN    CL9-meat    CL9-CONN  
*mu-ndu*    *na*    *ku-ŋw-a*      *Ø-baya*    *y-ake*      *na*  
 CL1-man    and    INF-drink-FIN    CL9-blood    CL9-POSS.CL1    and  
*ku-band-a*      *kwa*      *ma-yi*  
 INF-get.fat-FIN    because.of    CL6-egg  
 ‘When a female tick wants to lay eggs, it pierces a man’s flesh, drinks his blood and gets fat because of the eggs.’

Sixth, they occur in complex verbal constructions containing modal and phase verbs. Here they function as lexical verbs while all inflectional meanings (i.e. subject marker and TAM) are expressed by

the auxiliaries. Verbs most frequently used in this type of constructions are: *-dim-* ‘can, be able to’, *-kund-* ‘want, like’, *-fwan-* ‘oblige’, *-zoy-* ‘start, begin’, *-meri-* ‘finish, end’ (27)–(29).

- (27) *si-dim-ay-a*                      *ku-βuy-a*                      *ŋ-zuri*                      *w-a*  
 NEG.1SG.S-can-DUR-FIN                      CL15-be-FIN                      CL1-king                      CL1-CONN  
*Ø-namandu*  
 CL10-animal  
 ‘I cannot become the King of beasts.’
- (28) *ya-di-fwan-a*                      *ku-m-sikir-a*                      *M-lungu na*  
 CL1.S.PRF-1PL.O-oblige-FIN                      CL15-CL1.O-hear-FIN                      CL1-God and  
*ku-siy-a*                      *ku-yor-a*                      *Ø-tee*  
 INF-leave.behind-FIN                      INF-tell-FIN                      CL9-lie  
 ‘We are obliged to hear God and to stop telling lies.’
- (29) *m-bisi*                      *e-re-meri<ey>e*                      *ku-dz-a*  
 CL9-hyena                      CL9.S.TAM-PST-finish.FIN<sub>PFV</sub><DUR>                      CL15-eat-FIN  
*ma-vuda*  
 CL6-butter  
 ‘Hyena finished eating the butter.’

## 5. Common verbo-nominal features of infinitives

Morphosyntactic features typical for nouns and verbs respectively are not usually attested in the same *ku-* form thus contrasting the two uses of infinitives. Thus, an object marker never appears either in the *ku-* form containing the locative suffix *-ni* or in the *ku-* form followed by nominal modifiers. In view of this, while investigating the above language data we faced a serious temptation not to look at non-inherent constituents of class 15 as at some “Janus-faced units” having noun-like as well as verb-like qualities (Bernander 2017: 69), but treat them as two closely related but independent groups of words that belong to two different parts of speech – Noun and Verb, and by no means present some mixed verbo-nominal forms. We were about to believe that we deal

with non-finite forms of verbs, with their own typically verbal grammatical and distributional characteristics on the one hand and verbal nouns with the prefix *ku-* on the other hand that may be regarded as pure secondary nouns derived from infinitives by means of conversion.

But the situation appears not to be so simple since the syntactic and morphological features of *ku-* forms presented in examples above (7)–(29) are only persuasive to distinguish in Dabida the two usages of *ku-* forms but they are evidently not enough to allocate them to two different parts of speech. Expanding the analysis we have to agree that class 15 in Dabida remains a typical Bantu “infinitival” class whose non-inherent units retain both verb-like and noun-like properties (which is quite natural for the infinitive in general). Thus, there exist syntactic positions where infinitives demonstrate both verbal and nominal properties at once. Thus, the *ku-* form demonstrating morphological verbal properties can occupy the position of possessor in the genitive construction which is typical indicator of nounhood (30).

- (30) *ini si-βwad-ie*                      *Ø-fwaida*      *i-ŋgi*      *y-a*  
 I      NEG.1SG.S-have-FIN<sub>PFV</sub>      CL9-profit      CL9-any      CL9-CONN  
*ku-ku-bway-a*  
 CL15-2SG.O-kill-FIN  
 ‘I have no interest in killing you.’

Likewise, the *ku-* forms with verbal properties (in (31)–(32) taking object NPs as complements) can occupy the position after the preposition *kwa* and the complex preposition *juma ya* (where *ya* is connective) (compare with (17) where infinitive is followed by the possessive pronoun and thus demonstrates the pure nominal qualities):

- (31) *juma y-a*                      *ku-m-va*                      *Sethi, Adamu*  
 after      CL9-CONN      INF-CL1.O-give.birth      Shith      Adam  
*u-ka-kai-a*                      *mi-aku*      *ma-yana*                      *Ø-βunana*  
 CL1-CONS-live-FIN      CL4-year      CL6-hundred      CL9-eight  
 ‘After giving birth to Shith Adam lived eight hundred years.’

- (32) *na-tumi-a*                      *i-soka*      *ijo*              *kwa*  
 1SG.S.PRF-use-FIN      CL5-axe      CL5.REF      because.of  
*ku-dem-a*                      *mi-di*  
 CL15-chop-INF      CL4-tree  
 ‘I use this axe for chopping wood.’

## 6. Conclusion

As in the majority of Bantu languages, infinitives of Dabida are allocated to noun class 15 by virtue of nominal prefix *ku-*. Unlike inherent nouns of the class infinitives are derived from verbs and their structure should be analyzed as “prefix of class 15 *ku-* + verb stem + nominalizing suffix *-a*” where the nominalizing suffix coincides with the default final vowel of finite verb forms. Morphosyntactic features of infinitives also reveal their dual nature. On the one hand, infinitives can attach the locative suffix *-ni*, they occur as heads of genitive NPs and can be followed by nominal modifiers (adjectives, possessive and demonstrative pronouns). On the other hand, they are able to incorporate object and reflexive markers, they can take NPs as complements and adverbs as modifiers, take the place of a verbal finite form expressing the second or the third predicate in a chain of coordinated verbal predicates and exhibit some other purely verbal properties. At the same time there exist syntactic positions where infinitives demonstrate both verbal and nominal properties at once. In a whole this noun class still forms an open domain of research.

## Abbreviations

1, 2 – 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> person	NEG – negative
ANIM – animate pronoun	NMLZ – nominalizing suffix
APPL – applicative	O – object marker
CAUS – causative	PASS – passive
CL1, CL2.....CL15 – noun class marker	PL – plural
CONN – connective	POSS – possessive pronoun

CONS – consecutive	PRF – perfect
COP – copula	PRS – present
DUR – durative suffix	PST – past
FIN – final verbal suffix / verbal ending	REF – demonstrative of referential series
FIN <sub>PFV</sub> – final verbal suffix of the perfective form	REFL – reflexive marker
FIN <sub>SUBJ</sub> – final verbal suffix of the subjunctive form	REV – reversive
FUT – future	S – subject marker
HAB – habitual aspect	SG – singular
INAN – inanimate pronoun	STAT – stative
INF – infinitive	

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