

(-)NDÉLÉ

The attestations of **ndélé** ‘cloth’ and **mundélé** ‘European’ collected below ultimately derive from ***-déd-** ‘swing, float, glide, hang, be light’ and its variants (Bastin et al. 2002: 885-90 [henceforth BLR3]). Alternative derivations abound, both technical claims and folk etymologies. Some force Africans’ understandings into European racial frames. For an example, consider the Kimbundu word *-zela*, ‘to be white’ (an attestation of ***-jéd-** ‘shine, be clear, ripe, favorable’) in the folk etymology recorded in Nascimento (1903:17) and De Clercq’s argument that /z/ shifts to /d/ in the context of a nasal: “*mundèle* est un terme qui semble être emprunté à la langue d’Angola (Kimbundu) et signifie <<quel’qu’un qui est blanc>>; de *kuzela* = être blanc; or [sic], en Kimbundu, z, sous l’influence de n, deviant d” (1907/1908: 454, n. 1). De Clercq’s argument is phonologically sound for Kimbundu, but requires an early, rapid spread of the loanword as well as widespread semantic convergence with the lexicon of cloth.

A simpler explanation follows recent diachronic research on regional phonology and morphology (Bostoen and de Schryver, 2015). Seeming contrasts in pronunciation between *nlélé* and *ndélé*, both terms for cloth, are actually the result of their different noun classes. These noun class distinctions are reflected in languages that distinguish trade cloth, ‘merchandise’ and currencies in the form of bundles of foreign cloth (almost always in a form beginning with the nasal cluster /nd/) from the kind of cloth worn as clothes, loincloth, or just the general term for cloth (almost always in a form beginning with the nasal cluster /nl/). Terms referencing trade cloth and currency unsurprisingly belong to noun class 9 (n-), applied to foreign things. The phonological qualities of the nasal stabilized the initial consonant of the verb stem (rather than allow it to follow the expected sound shift of ***d > /l/**) to yield *ndélé* (with some variation in the second consonant under the influence of the /nd/ nasal cluster). Terms referencing cloth in general and cloth domesticated to local usage belong to noun class pair 3/4 (*mò-* / *mì-*). This noun class pair was one of several that underwent nasal prefix syncope (a collapsing of syllables) between the late 17th and 19th centuries, yielding a series of changes in the way the noun class prefixes were pronounced over time: *mò-lélé* > *m’lélé* > *nlélé* (in the singular). This linguistic process was innovated in the heartland of the Kongo Kingdom and spread outward, never reaching the furthest languages (see, for example, Kisuku and Kintandu attestations in the far northwest and east, respectively).

In many Kongolese languages, the name for Europeans and their fellow traders in cloth developed from the application of *mò-* (the prefix form in noun class 1 and 3) to *ndélé* (the word for foreign cloth in noun cl. 9). However, the *mò-* / *mì-* noun class prefix(es) did not undergo nasal prefix syncope in this case because noun stems beginning with a nasal-consonant cluster or a vowel did not undergo nasal prefix syncope. By adding *mò-* to a stem that already began with the nasal prefix of class 9, the term *mundélé* retained its form across the early modern period, obscuring its connection to the verb stem ***-déd-**, a connection clear in the forms of the wider range of nouns, adverbs, and adjectives derived from the verb (collected below).

Attestations of the verb ***-déd-** (BLR3 887; see also the variant form ***-dém-** BLR3 920) and adjectives, nouns, and adverbs derived from it demonstrate the wider conceptualization of the actions, qualities, and things it named. Of note is a pattern in which early documentation of coastal Kongolese languages and that spoken at the capital emphasize acts of smoothing, sliding, and slipping across (lateral?) space in contrast to a sharper focus on suspension, hanging, and swinging movements (in vertical space?) seen in languages further to the interior. Associations with death by hanging and the judgement of those named with nouns derived from the verb are

likewise more frequent in the near interior (Cokwe, Ndonga). See also *-dedik- ‘to smear with oil’ (BLR3 7795) in the center of the continent.

For collections of attestations, particularly from manuscripts and other historical documents, see Bontinck 1995, Nsonde 1995; see also Guthrie CS 514, 516, 517, 536; Koelle 1854: 144; Vansina 1978: 274, 285-6; as well as the various publications of the KongoKing project affiliated with BantUGent and directed by Koen Bostoen.

ATTESTATIONS

KONGO LANGUAGE CLUSTER

Kongoid Languages

H42 HUNGAN

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **múndel homme blanc** (108); **múlel vêtement, habit, cloth** (173)

H31 KIYAKA

Ruttenberg 1999: **n-ndéla homme blanc**; **nléle linge, étoffe, habit, tissu** (157)

H32 KISUKU

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **múndedi homme blanc** (108); **múledi vêtement, habit, cloth** (173)

Piper 1977: **mudédi, mudédi, mulédi Kleid** (58)

North Kongo Languages

H16F CHILAADI

Jacquot 1982: **nlélè pagne, tissu**; **lèlè glissant, glissé**; **bùlèlò caractère glissant**; **lèlòmóná faire glisser**; **lèlòmóká glisser, ramper**; **lèlá se suicide par penaison** (191)

H11 KIBEMBE

Laman 1964 [1936]: **leleme se pendre** (390)

Kouarata 2015: **mundéle ‘blanc’**; **mundéle-mpáku ‘agent d’impôts’** (39)

UNIDENTIFIED ‘NORTH’

Laman 1964 [1936]: *North*: **lèla, kil. (N), du préc., chose qui pend, la dernière partie, le bout de qqch, le dernier petit nkanga d’une grappe de bananes, petite calébasse pour porter sous le bras** (389); *Northeast (N. of Malebo Pool—Teke?)*: **lèla (NE) pendiller, pendre; planer (dans l’air); flotter, bradir, aller tantôt d’un côté, tantôt de l’autre; balancer; marcher sur la corde** (389)

West Kongo Languages

H12 CIVILI SOUTH

Ussel 1888: **nlele le pagne** (31); **bindeli étoffes** (42); **maku muali bindele i baka: J’ai (J’ai gagné) vingt cortades** (41)

Marichelle 1902: **ndeale cortade, unite de mesure des vilis; elle varie de valeur; ndele Blanc, européen Ce mot est peut être le compose de musi ndele l’homme des cortades. C’est le blanc en effet qui les procure aux noirs** (128); **nlele pagne, nom générique de tout morceau d’étoffe** (143); **lelama être pendu, suspendu, accroché, pendre** (92); **lelika suspendre, pendre, accrocher** (92); **ndelo glissant, gras, (sol) gluant** (128)

ILALOK 2008: **lel’ (ku): le pagne, le tissu** (99); **ndeli (bi): coupons de tissus importés d’Europe et ayant servi au troc durant la période de l’esclavage** (137); **lelik’ (ku): pendre, suspendre** (99); **ndelu la glissade; glissant** (137)

Swartenbroeckx 1973 (Vili N of Point Noire): **léla pagne, étoffes à usages intimes** (239)

H16b KIYOMBE

Bittremieux 1922: ‘Nlele (min-) nw. doek, weefsel, stof, kleed, lendenkleed. fr. pagne.’ (513); ‘Mundela, mundele (mindele, bamindele) nw. blanke (man of vrouw), mijnheer. fr. blanc. (413); ‘Ndelo (zind-) nw. gladheid, iets slibberig. fr. glissant.’ (440)

De Clercq 1907/1908: **mundēle un blanc mindēle**; **nlēle, minlēle une étoffe** (454); **nlēle, nlēde étoffe** (452); **Dēngalāla être suspend** (774); **dēngidika suspend** (774)

De Clercq 1921: **nlele pour munlele, étoffe** (10); **nlele, étoffe, minlele** (15)

De Grauwe 2009: **múndeela 1/4 et 1/2+4 ‘(homme) blanc’** 74; **nléélé 3/4 étoffe, tissue, vêtement (var. nléédí, nléédé)** (85); **Lelama, être pendu; ledika, pendre** (55); **dedemuna, retourner, dedemuni** (54, discussed as examples of verbes réversifs et expansifs with the idea of extending out from a point and returning back); **ndéelo qch. de glissant** (79); See also: **nléelo 3 malchance** (85)

H16 KAKONGO (later KIZOBE)

Anon. 1772 [cited from Drieghe 2014 transcription]: **pagne. u m’lelé** (78); **un blanc, un europeen. u. mu-ndélé** (13); **unir. applanir. leleka. lelekezé; uni. egal. lelama. lélémezé; uniforme. iélélé. dédé** (125)

Anonymous 1890 (Produced near Kinguele, capital of KaKongo): **un blanc, européen: mundele, pl. mindele** (20); ‘**Etoffe: bi ndele – une cortade: ki ndele**’ (66); ‘**Pagne: m’lele, pl. mi**’ (104); ‘**Tissu, étoiffes: bindele.—pagne: mlele, pl. mi.**’ (136); **glissant, ante : ndelo. étrangler : lelika, p. keze. – Se pendre ki lelika, p. keze. – Se suspendre ...** (108)

Swartenbroeckx 1973 (N KaKongo / Fiote): **léla bout, chose qui pend**

South Kongo Languages

H16a KISOLONGO

Girolamo Merolla da Sorrento (1692) **mondelli ‘Blanc’; mondello ‘vêtement’** (p. 314 in the 1726 ed.; cited in Bontinck 1995:136)

Visseque 1890: **ndeale, art. O, pl. e, sign. Mi: marchand, merchandise. Ce mot est cabenda** (144); **ndeale (n-kentou), art. O, sign. Mou: marchande** (144); **nsi (a mi-ndeale): Europe, litt. Le pays des blancs** (158); **gosso (mou ndeale a lou) négociant, celui qui fait le négoce, le commerce en grand; trafiquant, commerçant** (52); **Nlele, art. O, pl. e, sing. Mi: pagne, pièce d’étoffe que les nègres attachment à la ceinture et qui descend jusqu’aux pieds...** (154); **mou-ana-mou-ndeale: enfant blanc, européen...** (4); **leloumouka glisser, couler sur un corps uni. Gras.** (108);

Tavares 1915: **nlele pano** (10)

H16a KISIKONGO

Van Gheel 1652 [cited from the BantUGent transcription]: **linteum, lienzo: múlele** (66); **tebernaculum: nzo a mulele** 146); **scando deslizar. • culelomona. pr. ndelomoéne** (63)

Bentley 1887: ‘**Mundele, 3, n., white man, European trader (derivation uncertain; query nlele, cloth)** (358); ‘**Nlele, 4, n., cloth (of European manufacture), a cloth, a loin cloth**’ (388); **lelama to be even, smooth, level; leleka, v., to be lubricated, slippery; lelemesa, v. t. to lubricate; lelomoka, v., to be slippery, lubricated; lelomona, v. t. to make slippery; nlelo, 4, n. slipperiness, slime; -anlelo, a. slippery, slimy** (321)

H16 EARLY SOUTHERN (LIKE KITSOTSO)

De Cannecattim 1805: **Viléle branco** (167)

East Kongo Languages

H16G KINTANDU

Koelle 1854: **nlééle ‘blanc’** (144)

Swartenbroeckx 1973 (E: Kintandu): **léla (in cl. 5) voleur adroit qui se glisse**

Central Kongo Contact Zone

H16 KIMANYANA

Laman 1964 [1936]: **múndele**, homme blanc, Européen (609); **nléle étoffe** (de fabrication européenne); **une étoffe, une nappe; un vêtement, une robe, un pagne, un manteaux** (fait ordinairement d'une grande pièce d'étoffe); **tissue, toile** (744); **Lédika**, fact. de lélama, pendre, suspendre (386); **Lélama**, v. e'état de lèla, ê. Pendu; ê. Étranglé; pendre; vendre à bon marché (389); **ndèlo** de lèlumuka qui est glissant (665); **nlèlo** ce qui est uni, glissant, poli, fausseté, paroles fausses (744)

OTHER BANTU

A44: TUNEN

Dugast 1967: **-èle** suspendre, accrocher à une cheville de bois ou un clou (47)

A75 FANG

Bibang-Oyee 2013: **eyêñ 7/8 paño, ropa, ropaje, lienzo, tejido, vestidura, vestido, tela** (109)

B76 TEKE (east)

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **múndee homme blanc** (108); **elyeamú pagne** (134)

B77b TEKE (Ifumu)

Calloc'h 1911: **lele** pendre, v. a. attacher en haut; **lelege** être suspend (289); **lele suspendre** (329)

B82 BOMA

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **mundel homme blanc** (108)

B85 YANS

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **mundel homme blanc** (108)

B85d NSONG

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **móndel homme blanc** (108)

B85e MPUR

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **úndel homme blanc** (108)

B85f NSAMBAAN

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **mándel homme blanc** (108)

B861 NGWI

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **ondyé: homme blanc** (108)

B862 LWEL

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **ɲəndél homme blanc** (108); **kyél pagne** (134)

B863 MPIIN

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **múndel homme blanc** (108)

B864 NGONG

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **lel/mí vêtement, habit, cloth** (173)

B86 DING

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **mundel homme blanc** (108)

B87 MBUUN

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **úndel homme blanc** (108)

C32 BOBANGI

Whitehead 1899: **mondele white man** (492); **lelia** to suspend, hang up; **lelibana** to be extremely thin (of flat things); **lelima** to swing (144)

C35 NTOMBA

Mamet 1955: **mɔ̀ndélé le Blanc, l'Européen** (187); **léleme tenir suspendu; léli être suspendu; lélia suspendre, hisser; lélolo dépendre ce qui est suspendu** (149)

C41 NGOMBE

Rood 1958: **bendêle, 7 vlag; drapeau** (13); **mondélé, 2 blanke, (homme) blanc** (294); **delu-delu, 5, adv. Jeen en weer slingerend, hobbelig, oscillant, cahotant. Tángo e --: slingeruurwerk; horloge à balancier** (51)

C61 MONGO

Hulstaert 1957: **ndélé drapeau, bannière** [marked as a foreign word] (1394); **léla v. int. balancer, pendre** (1126); **lelaa on. (d'état) iláká un cadaver de pendu** (1127)

G40 SWAHILI & SABAKI

Nurse and Hinnebusch 1993: ***-elel float** (attested in 8 languages) (584)

H.21 KIMBUNDU

Cannecattim 1805: **mundéle branco** (167)

Tavares 1915 **mulele pano** (10)

Nascimento 1903: **mundele branco (pessoa, europeu, especialmente o portugurz). Deriva de ndele, nome de uma ave branca, aquatica que habita nas margens do rio Bengo.** (17); **brancura undele (de mundele, branco)** (17); **mulele panno** (79)

Assis Junior 1948: **mindele brancos; homens que se trajam e adoptam hábitos europeus; mindele ta mala civilizados, ilustrados, cultos** (287); **kúlelama boiar; sobre nadar; não ir ao fundo** (204)

H41 MBALA

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **mundedi homme blanc** (108); **muledi vêtement, habit, cloth** (173)

K11 COKWE

Barbosa 1989: **ndele indivíduo de raça branca; pessoa civilizada ou que assimilou o modo de viver dos Brancos** (345); **-léla Ser, estar our tornar-se leve, fraco, desprovido de força, desidade, espessura, peso, categoria, importância, etc.; muchar, perder o viço; aclarar-se desanuviar-se; estar out torner-se claro, límpido, diáfano (o céu)** (260)

L.11 PENDE

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **múndélé, mundedi, homme blanc** (108); **mulele pagne** (134)

Gusimana 1972: **mundele ou mundedei, Blanc (Blanche), individu européen ou sense européen** (133); **lelu, adj. léger(ère), adouci (douleur); leluga vt être léger** (88)

L12A SAAMBA

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **múndel homme blanc** (108); **múlel vêtement, habit, cloth** (173)

L13 KWEZO

Muluwa and Bostoen 2015: **múndele homme blanc** (108); **múlele, milili vêtement, habit, cloth** (173)

Forges 1983: **múlèl(è) tissu** (43); **gúdyadyama être glissant** (270)

L23 SONGE

Samain 1923: **kulembelela flotter au vent; kulelema flotter sur l'eau** (76)

L31 LUBA

Declercq 1903: **lélema v. d'état, flotter à la surface de l'eau** (232)

L31a TSHILIBA

De Clercq 1936/1960: **-lélama v. d'ét. Flotter à la surface de l'eau** (130)

L31b BULUBA

Morrison 1906: lelema vi to float; lelemuka vi to float (356)

L33: KILUBA

Jenniges 1909: ki-lulu/wi-lulu 'tissue, nom général' (179); kulela flotter (81)

L53 RUUND

Nash 1991: cindèl white man (47)

M64 TONGA

Mukanzubo 2011: -leleenga hang upon, be suspended (292)

N31 NYANJA

Scott and Hetherwick 1965: (n)deru a swing; derula, deruka, ku to swing (103); leruka, ku to be light, not heavy (236)

R11 UMBUNDU

Le Guennec 1972: ochindele homem de raça branco (85); -valela pendurar (478); -lela, -leluka, -lila, -lile leve, que tem pouco peso (375)

R.21 KWANYAMA

Tobias and Turvey 1962: omundele cotton (32); endjelela(e) hang (83)

Turvey 1977: omundele wild cotton plant (97); -leka(e) hang up, suspend, esp. in carrying (50). See also: omundede one who is slothful, sluggish, idle (97).

R22 NDONGA

Tirronen 1986: omundele kind of cotton plant (from Kwanyama); oshindele white man (from Kwanyama) (254); lelema flutter, wave, tremble (in the wind); strut, swagger, be animated (181)

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(for all four rootwords)

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