chapter 7

Other Word Classes

The words described in this chapter belong to word classes on their own and thus could not be included in any of the preceding chapters, or they occur in contexts which have not been covered in the preceding chapters. However, some words have already been described in detail before. This will be indicated in the relevant subsections.

7.1 Numerals

As has been described in Chapter 3, numerals usually modify nouns (cf. 3.4.2.). However, numerals are also frequently used in isolation, i.e. in counting. While numerals attested as modifiers of nouns do not exceed ten or twenty, the numeral system allows for much higher numbers.1

The numbers one to five and ten are basic numerals, while the numbers six, seven, eight and nine are complex. The basis of these complex numerals seems to have been a quinary system. Synchronically, however, this system is only realized irregularly. In the Berabe dialect, the numerals seven and nine are in accord with the quinary system by combining the numeral five with the numerals two and four respectively. The numerals are connected by dʒù, whose meaning remains unclear. In the Kuta dialect, only the numeral nine follows the quinary system and no connecting element dʒù has been attested in this dialect. In contrast to the Berabe dialect, the numeral seven is expressed with a base tʃwɛ̌mba plus the numeral two. A comparable base is used in both dialects for the numeral six, which combines with the numeral one (without its initial nasal). The numeral eight is irregular as well, since it is not five plus three but rather a reduplicated form of the numeral four plus a prefix é-. Thus, there are irregularities in the basic system as well as variation between the two dialects.

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1 The description is limited to the dialects of Berabe and Kuta, since no sufficient data are available for the Pɔ Akɔ dialect.
The numerals from eleven to twenty are the same in the two dialects Berabe and Kuta. They are composed of the numeral ten and the respective numerals one to nine. These numerals are linked with the element dʒù mentioned above—this time in both dialects.

In a few examples in the Berabe dialect, other connecting elements like tɔ̀ or gbè are attested for the numerals eleven and twelve to fourteen respectively. Their meaning and etymological origin remain unclear.